

Improving Health through Housing

The Kresge Foundation Works to Eliminate Dangerous and Unhealthy Housing

■ Prioritizing Healthy Housing

[The Kresge Foundation](#) is a national foundation with strong roots in Detroit, Michigan. In recent years, Kresge has taken a proactive approach to help communities around Detroit and around the country reach long-term prosperity, including through investments that promote health by improving environmental and social conditions of low-income and vulnerable populations.

The combination of Detroit's aging housing stock and increased poverty has resulted in thousands of poorly maintained, unhealthy homes. Housing conditions linked to health concerns include: lead, a known neurotoxin; allergens and asthma triggers such as dust, mold, moisture and pests; poor insulation and weatherization; fire and carbon monoxide hazards; and structural deficiencies like broken steps and railings. Further, studies have shown that about half of children in the public school system have elevated blood lead levels which have been strongly correlated with low standardized test scores. Building on a 2009 initiative to reduce childhood lead poisoning in low-income housing through lead testing and treatment programs, Kresge's health program has prioritized eliminating environmental and safety hazards and addressing the underlying causes of unhealthy homes through regional and national work.

■ Remediating Unhealthy Conditions

As part of its regional efforts to advance the healthy housing field, Kresge has supported ClearCorps Detroit and other community organizations to remediate unhealthy and dangerous conditions in 180 homes. The foundation uses a case management system to track each household through intake, enrollment, assessment, remediation, follow-up and maintenance. This system helps the foundation track interactions between grantees, clients and partner agencies, as well as to lower costs, reduce errors, and better track outcomes for program evaluation. Further, a GIS map developed by Wayne State University allows project partners to identify homes with lead poisoned children, asthma incidents and injuries.

The foundation is complementing these remediation efforts with a focus on policies that promote long-term systematic change. Kresge is supporting organizations advocating for stronger building codes and legal action against landlords responsible for unhealthy housing conditions. Other groups are producing model legislation encouraging healthier homes.

■ Scaling Up Nationally

Helping this work scale up nationally, Kresge is working to improve health outcomes through healthier and safer housing through the [Advancing Safe and Healthy Homes Initiative](#), which is supporting nonprofits in Oakland, CA; Los Angeles, CA; Greensboro, NC; Omaha, NE; and Newark, NJ. The foundation is also a leader in the [Health and Housing Funders' Forum](#), a collaboration of foundations and funder affinity groups interested in sharing information, strategies and outreach to expand investment in healthy housing work.

To learn more visit:

[Kresge Foundation's Health Program](#)

[ClearCorps Detroit's Health Homes Detroit Project](#)