



## DESIGNING A STRONG AND HEALTHY NYC: Housing Matters

Health happens outside the doctor's office – the neighborhoods in which we live, work, learn and play impact wellbeing and our ability to live healthy lives. For example, housing has a major impact on health in NYC, and unequal access to stable, affordable and safe housing contributes to health disparities that persist in many NYC communities.<sup>1</sup>

### Housing **STABILITY** matters for health.

The limited supply and high cost of housing in NYC means that many New Yorkers struggle to find a permanent and stable place to live. Evictions and foreclosures – and threats of evictions and foreclosures – are common, often forcing people into temporary or overcrowded housing and homelessness.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Losing one's home, or living with the constant threat of homelessness, harms health.**

- Adults living in unstable housing have higher rates of depression, anxiety and cardiovascular disease, and children are more likely to be depressed and have behavioral problems (e.g., violent behavior, addiction), compared with those with a stable place to live.<sup>4-6</sup>
- People who are homeless have higher risk of mental and behavioral health issues, communicable diseases, like tuberculosis and pneumonia, and complications from chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, hypertension), since managing medications and treatments without a home is extremely difficult.<sup>5</sup>

### Housing **AFFORDABILITY** matters for health.

Not only does the high price of housing in NYC result in housing instability, it also makes it harder to engage in healthy behaviors.

- Housing that is too expensive leaves little money for other basic health necessities, like nutritious food and health care, which in turn increase risk for chronic disease and related complications.<sup>8</sup>
- High housing costs also force many to work long hours or multiple jobs, which increases stress, harms mental health, and reduces time for healthy activities, like exercise and spending time with family.<sup>8,9</sup>

As the cost of living in NYC communities increases, long-time residents often struggle to pay rising rents, forcing many to move from their homes. This burden disproportionately affects Black, Latino, and immigrant communities in NYC, and it harms their health by:

- Reducing access to services that support health. Neighborhood-based services—like food banks and doctors who community members trust and who accept their health insurance – are often essential to helping low-income New Yorkers maintain their health, moving to a new neighborhood breaks connections to these resources, limiting access needed health care and social services.<sup>8,9</sup>

# HEALTH HAPPENS OUTSIDE THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

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#### FACTS & STATS:

1 in 3 New Yorkers spends more than 50% of their income on rent, which increases risk for eviction and homelessness.<sup>3</sup>

Nearly 1 in 7 children attending public schools in NYC will experience homelessness by the time they are 11 years old.<sup>7</sup>

Households that spend more than 50% of their income on rent spend 40% less on food and 75% less on health care each month than those with lower rent burdens.<sup>10</sup>

Between 1990 and 2010, the number of Black residents in gentrifying neighborhoods (areas experiencing growth and rising rents) decreased by 20%.<sup>18</sup>

- Forcing many to leave behind social support systems, which have been shown to lower smoking rates, increase physical activity, improve mental health, lower risk of strokes and heart attacks.<sup>8, 11-17</sup>

## Housing QUALITY matters for health.

The high cost of housing in NYC means options are limited for families, forcing many to accept living conditions that are unsafe.

### Landlord neglect can result in numerous threats to health, including:

- Mold and pest infestations, which cause respiratory problems, like asthma,
- Peeling paint, which can expose children to lead, which negatively impacts brain development,
- A lack of heat or air conditioning, associated with increased mortality, especially among older adults, and
- Structural hazards, such as broken fixtures or staircases, which can lead to injuries that result in disability, and illness.<sup>21</sup>

To afford rent, many are forced to live in overcrowded housing, which also harms health.

### Overcrowded housing can lead to:

- Psychological distress in both adults and children,
- Illnesses, like pneumonia and tuberculosis, and
- Social, behavioral and educational problems in children.<sup>1, 21, 23-25</sup>

## HEALTH matters for HOUSING.

Although housing has a major impact on the health of New Yorkers, health can also impact access to housing.

### People with an illness, injury or disability have less financial security. Illnesses and other health conditions can result in lost wages or job loss, which increases risk of:

- Eviction, foreclosure, and homelessness, and
- Loss of employer-based insurance, potentially increasing out-of-pocket medical costs and further reducing one's ability to pay their bills.<sup>27, 28</sup>

### People with an illness, injury or disability face more difficulty finding housing.

- Many homes are not accessible for people with physical disabilities that impact their mobility (e.g., homes without stairs or with bathrooms that are large enough for a wheelchair).<sup>29</sup>
- People with a mental illness or developmental disability face high rates of housing discrimination.<sup>30</sup>
- People with certain health conditions are often denied emergency housing. For example, many shelters cannot accept patients who require oxygen tanks or who need antibiotics administered via an IV (common after some surgeries).<sup>31</sup>

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the Fund for Public Health in New York, The United Hospital Fund, and The New York Academy of Medicine (the Academy) together lead the New York City Population Health Improvement Program (PHIP). With funding from the New York State Department of Health, the NYC PHIP aims to support regional and local planning related to population health and health equity. As part of the PHIP, the DOHMH and the Academy launched Designing a Strong and Healthy New York City (DASH-NYC), which aims to facilitate information sharing and partnerships across sectors to advance efforts related to the social determinants of health and promote health equity for all New Yorkers.

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Approximately 40% of diagnosed childhood asthma is a result of exposure to mold and/or pests in the home.<sup>19</sup>

About half of the nearly 18,000 fall-related hospitalizations in NYC happen in homes, many of which are caused by substandard housing maintenance.<sup>20, 21</sup>

Over 45% of all New Yorkers living in overcrowded homes were born outside the US, and nearly 70% have a head of household who is an immigrant.<sup>22</sup>

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1.5 million Americans are in danger of losing their home due to a medical crisis.<sup>26</sup>

Half of all foreclosures are due, in part, to a medical problem.<sup>26</sup>

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