

DENVER HEALTHY HOMES INITIATIVE

Northeast Denver Housing Center

Year of Grant: 2000

**Contact: Wendy Hawthorne
303-337-3334, ext. 233**

The Northeast Denver Housing Center (NDHQ) is requesting funds for a Healthy Housing Initiative demonstration program in northeast Denver. The Healthy Homes Initiative will be fully integrated with the Denver Lead Hazard Control program to leverage additional HUD Lead Grant funds and housing and non-profit matching funds. Using these grant funds, approximately 88 units will undergo major healthy house interventions. The Initiative includes a team of housing, health, environmental health, and weatherization agencies from both the private and public sector.

This demonstration project will be focused in Northeast Denver. The number of families living in poverty in the target area is 31% according to the 1990 census. More recent data shows that this area is still a pocket of low-income within a prosperous city, with average household incomes only 60% that of the average in Denver as a whole. According to the 1990 Census, the target area has a population that is 42% Black (not of Hispanic origin), 39% Hispanic, and 17% White (not of Hispanic origin). The target area of this study includes six of Denver's twelve Enterprise Communities.

The potential for high prevalence of housing-based environmental illness or injury is high in the target area. The target area includes a Superfund site designated in response to elevated lead and arsenic concentrations in residential yards due to a history of smelting in the area. A 1995 blood lead survey found that the target area has over five times the incidence of children with elevated blood lead levels over 10 ug/dL (16.2%) than was found in Denver County as a whole (3.2%). From 1960 to 1995, Colorado had the greatest increase in death rates among African Americans in the United States and Denver Health treated over 2300 low-income children for asthma in 1999. The target area has three major risk factors suggesting a high asthma rate: a high percentage of African Americans, a high percentage of low-income children, and severe air pollution due to industry and highway activity. All of the City of Denver is designated as Zone I (highest potential) for radon, and Denver Environmental Health estimates that 1/3 to 1/2 of Denver homes have radon levels above the EPA recommended action level of 4 pico Curies of radon per liter of air. Data from Sun Power, the low-income weatherization agency, suggests that there may be a significant number of homes with combustion safety problems in the target area. In 1999, Sun Power had to replace or repair 76 furnaces for safety problems in the low income homes weatherized. Approximately 40-50% of these homes were in the target area. Finally, the older homes in the target area, many of which are in poor condition, suggest a potential for other health and safety problems. Almost half of the homes were built before 1940 and 92% were built prior to 1978. So many homes are in deteriorated condition that the Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) as designated parts of the target area as a "focus area", which provides homeowners with grants for exterior home improvements.

This demonstration project brings together a working partnership of housing, weatherization, code

enforcement, health, and environmental health organizations. The team includes:

- Northeast Denver Housing Center, a community-based housing organization
- Sun Power, Inc., the low-income weatherization agency for Denver County
- DURA, the City of Denver's emergency home repair and single family rehab organization
- Neighborhood Inspection Services, the housing code enforcement agency for Denver
- Denver Health and Hospitals, the main safety net health provider for Denver's low-income families
- Denver Environmental Health, the city agency responsible for air quality, radon, the Superfund initiatives, and lead poisoning case management
- An asthma expert from National Jewish Medical and Research Center,

NDHC will be the main implementing agent of the grant. NDHC is a community-based organization that has operated programs in affordable housing acquisition rehabilitation for rental and home ownership, community-based education and training, property management, and housing counseling in the target neighborhood for 18 years. In 1996, NDHC was one of 25 agencies to receive national recognition by HUD for its "Continuum of Program Enriched Housing" by HUD. NDHC will manage the day-to-day activities of the program, operate a revolving loan/grant fund for lead hazard reduction, organize and participate in community outreach and education programs, and manage the subcontracts for Healthy Homes interventions. NDHC will work with its partners to fully integrate Healthy Homes investigations and interventions into Denver's affordable housing programs, low-income weatherization, Superfund activities, and code enforcement. NDHC will also establish links between the various housing and health partners to facilitate future referrals, case management, and general collaboration.

An estimated 88 units will undergo healthy home interventions under this demonstration project. Forty-eight of these homes will result from the integration of the Lead Hazard Control program and the Healthy Homes Initiative. Homes that are undergoing Lead Hazard Control will also be eligible for a more comprehensive Healthy Homes inspection and interventions. An additional 20 homes will be referred to the program by medical staff in response to a low-income child with diagnosed illness or injury related to the home environment. Finally, 20 homes will be identified through the low-income weatherization program. In all cases, the grant and loan fund will be used to improve the health and safety of the living environment of young children of low-income families. NDHC will manage a revolving loan/grant fund that will be used to pay for the lead hazard reduction. Repayment terms will depend on the income of the resident or landlord and their willingness to keep the home affordable and list it on a lead-safe registry.

The project will result in economic opportunity in the target community. NDHC will recruit low-income people to be healthy home inspectors and housing rehab workers, making use of its relationships with local welfare-to-work programs, youth employment programs, and other community organizations. General contractors will also be recruited from the neighborhood as well as the black and Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Much of this recruitment and job skills training is already underway for the Lead Hazard Control Program. The Healthy Homes Initiative will allow us to offer opportunities to more people and to enhance the business opportunities of those participating in the Lead program. This grant project is intended to raise awareness and to increase the capacity of the business community (e.g. contractors, risk assessors, lead inspectors), non-profit affordable housing developers, City agencies, and the health community to create healthy housing for low-income children. The end result will be a sustainable program, integrated into several existing programs, that will increase opportunities for fair housing as well as address documented environmental justice issues in the target neighborhoods.