

PLACE MATTERS

The Arizona Partnership for Healthy Communities "Place Matters" series identifies how factors outside of health care impact health, identifies successful evidence-based practices for improving health outcomes, and demonstrates evidence of cost savings in healthy communities work. This piece in the series examines the connections between housing and health.



ARIZONA PARTNERSHIP FOR
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



Families who have trouble paying for housing are 84% more likely to delay necessary medical care and 116% more likely to postpone purchasing needed medications.

Only 1 out of every 4 extremely low income renters can find an affordable apartment in Arizona.



\$100B



Health care costs for treating diseases caused by obesity are estimated at approximately \$100 billion. Investment in prevention - including housing and healthy communities - reduces overall health care costs.



Residents of the most walkable communities within the county are more likely to meet the U.S. Surgeon General recommended 30 minutes per day of moderate activity.

**QUALITY
OF LIFE**



Seniors in supportive housing are half as likely to enter nursing homes as seniors in buildings without supportive services.

A Housing First program in Seattle serving homeless individuals with severe alcohol problems showed a health care costs savings of \$42,964 per person per year. This more than offsets the \$13,440 per person costs of housing and services provided to program participants.

\$43K

PER PERSON
PER YEAR
SAVINGS

PLACE MATTERS: THE INTERSECTION OF HOUSING AND HEALTH

Updated April 2018

Our health is inextricably tied to where we live. **Having access to safe, stable, and affordable homes – particularly in communities with access to mass transit, parks, and healthy food – can lead to better physical and mental health** and improve overall quality of life for Arizonans.

When housing is affordable, families have more income to spend on healthy food and health care, which leads to better health outcomes. Families in affordable housing experience less stress, leading to better mental health. Children in affordable homes have better health and education outcomes.

The neighborhoods where homes are located also impact health. The physical condition of the neighborhood and its social and community characteristics, including access to food and transportation options, are significant factors in the health of the residents.

Supportive housing – a combination of affordable housing and support services designed to help people use housing as a platform for health – helps our most vulnerable populations.

HIGH HOUSING COSTS AFFECT HEALTH

Access to safe and affordable housing leads to better physical and mental health and improves the wellbeing of individuals and families.

Families stretched to pay the rent often cut back on other necessities like health care and food.

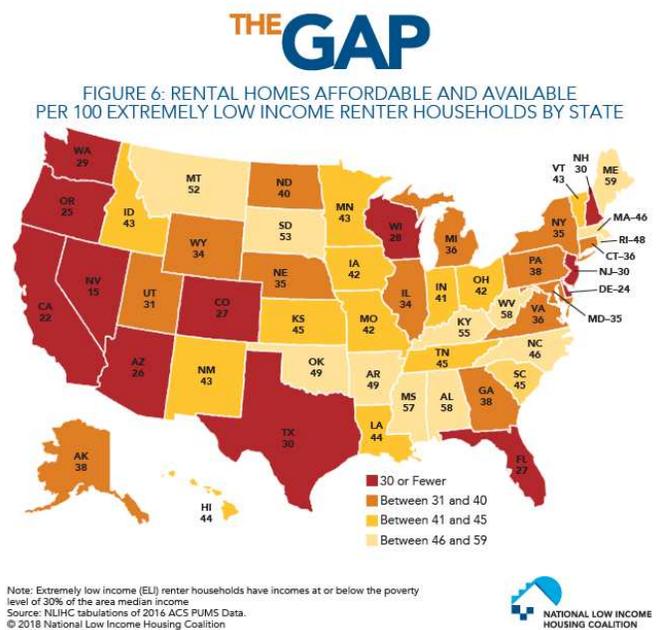
Families having trouble paying for housing are 84% more likely to delay necessary medical care and 116% more likely to postpone purchasing needed medications.¹

The lack of adequate low-cost housing causes families to live in overcrowded situations and in poor quality housing which leads to poor health.

Only 1 out of every 4 extremely low-income renters can find an affordable apartment in Arizona.² Overcrowded conditions are associated with respiratory diseases, poor mental health, elevated stress levels, increased rates of infectious disease, and high blood pressure.³ Low-income families are more likely to live in housing with rodents, mold, lead paint, and structural problems.⁴

Families struggling to pay rent often move multiple times. This leads to greater stress levels and poorer health and education outcomes for children.

Children in families that move frequently are at an increased risk for mental health and behavioral problems, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and poor school performance.⁵



¹ M. Kushel et al., "Housing instability and food insecurity as barriers to health care among low-income Americans," *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 2006, Vol. 21, Issue 1.

² National Low Income Housing Coalition, *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes*, 2018.

³ National Alliance to End Homelessness, *The State of Homelessness in America*, 2014.

⁴ The Joint Center for Housing Studies, *The State of the Nation's Housing*, 2014.

⁵ M. Weitzman et al., "Housing and Child Health," *Current Problems in Pediatric Adolescent Health Care*, 2013, Vol. 43, No. 8.

Homelessness has an especially harmful impact on the health of young children, and health risks for newborns are increased when a mother is homeless, both before and after her child is born.

Children who experienced pre-natal or post-natal homelessness were at least 20% more likely to have been hospitalized since birth than children who had not experienced homelessness. Children who experienced both pre-and post-natal homelessness were 41% more likely to have been hospitalized since birth.⁶

Children's HealthWatch estimates the cost of hospitalizations of young children attributable to homelessness were over \$238 million nationally in 2015 alone.

HOUSING IN WALKABLE, MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOODS WITH ACCESS TO MASS TRANSIT, PARKS, AND HEALTHY FOOD PROMOTES GOOD HEALTH

Neighborhood attributes impact health. The physical condition of the neighborhood can support or hinder resident's efforts to live healthy lives.

Residents living near parks are much more likely to engage in regular physical activity.

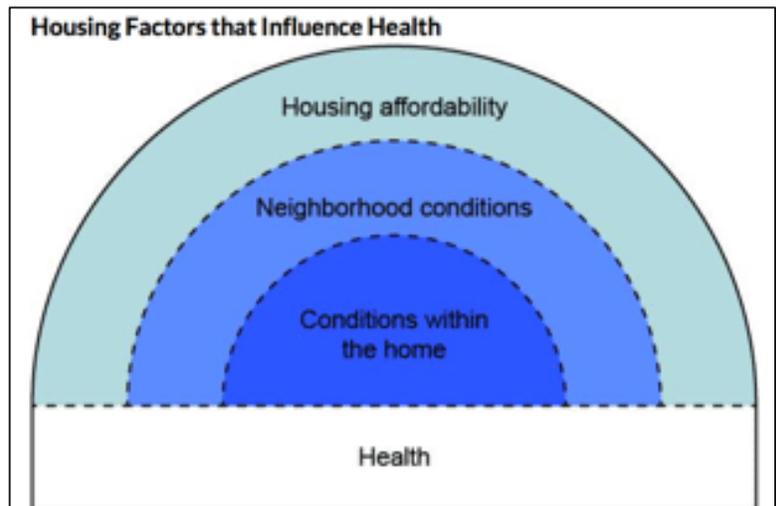
Low-income communities often lack parks and other recreational spaces which contributes to disproportionately higher rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and stroke.⁷

Mixed-use, transit-oriented development increases opportunities for walking and bicycling, transit ridership, and overall physical activity.

Clustering housing with schools, offices, retail parks, and grocery stores within neighborhoods increases pedestrian activity and reduces obesity.⁸

Lack of access to healthy food also contributes to poor health.

Convenience stores, gas stations, and fast food outlets are often the only food retailers available in low-income neighborhoods making it difficult for residents in these areas to buy fresh fruits and vegetables and other health food.⁹



Braveman et al. 2011/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING HELPS VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Supportive housing helps the most vulnerable populations in our communities by combining affordable housing with coordinated services to help people struggling with chronic physical and mental health issues maintain stable housing and receive appropriate health care. Research shows that supportive housing effectively helps people with disabilities maintain stable housing and reduce health care costs.¹⁰

Supportive housing helps people with disabilities live stably in communities.

A Housing First program in Seattle which serves homeless individuals with severe alcohol problems showed that the health care costs savings of \$42,964 per person per year, mainly in Medicaid-reimbursed health services. This more than offset the \$13,440 per person costs of housing and services provided to program participants.¹¹

⁶ National Housing Conference and Children's HealthWatch, [Housing as a Health Care Investment: Affordable Housing Supports Children's Health](#), March 2016.

⁷ National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity, Public Health Law and Policy, and KaBOOM!, [Playing Smart: Maximizing the Potential of School and Community Property Through Joint Use Agreements](#), 2012.

⁸ Lawrence Frank and Company, Inc., ["A Study of Land Use, Transportation, Air Quality, and Health in King County, WA,"](#) 2005.

⁹ A. Shaffer, ["The Persistence of L.A.'s Grocery Gap: The Need for a New Food Policy and Approach to Market Development,"](#) Occidental College, 2002.

¹⁰ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [Supportive Housing Helps Vulnerable People Live and Thrive in the Community](#), May 2016.

¹¹ M. Larimer, et al. ["Health Care and Public Service Use and Costs Before and After Provision of Housing for Chronically Homeless Persons with Severe Alcohol Problems,"](#) JAMA, 2009.

People with disabilities in supportive housing reduce their use of costly systems.

A supportive housing program in New York City combines independent housing with case management services for people who are mentally ill and chronically homeless. A study found that 90% of the costs of the supportive housing program was covered by reductions in the use of other public services such as jails and emergency rooms.¹²

Seniors trying to age in place also benefit from supportive housing.

Seniors in supportive housing were half as likely to enter nursing homes than seniors in buildings without supportive services.¹³

SOLUTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE INTERSECTION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HEALTH

Investing in housing should be viewed as a health care investment that reduces public spending on health care by improving the health of children, families, and vulnerable populations.

The Arizona Partnership for Healthy Communities recommends the following solutions for improving the intersection of affordable housing and health:

1. **Create more affordable housing.** According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2018 *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes*, approximately 1 out of every 4 extremely low-income renters can find an affordable apartment in Arizona. This translates to a shortage of 159,599 affordable homes. Potential ways to create more affordable housing include:
 - Expand funding for the State and National Housing Trust Funds and encourage funding for new projects to include healthy community components
 - Expand Arizona's Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program and encourage the inclusion of healthy community components in funding decisions
 - Provide more rental assistance vouchers
 - Invest in supportive housing, which pairs affordable housing with supportive services
1. **The State of Arizona should integrate housing and supportive health services** to improve the delivery system of both sectors. Possible ways to do this include:
 - Encourage linkages within AHCCCS (Arizona's Medicaid program) between housing and healthy community programs, city planning, and transportation departments
 - Make greater use of Medicaid services for supportive housing
 - Create a system for shared planning and preparation of coordinated supportive services

Additional Resources describing the connection between housing and health:

[Issue Brief: Housing & Health](#)

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

[Where We Live Matters for Our Health: The Links Between Housing and Health](#)

RWJF Commission to Build a Healthier America

[Housing and Health: Time Again for Public Health Action](#)

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Arizona Housing Coalition 
Speaking up for home and hope

We would like to thank the Arizona Housing Coalition for their expertise and insight developing this concept paper.

¹² Culhane, Metraux, Hadley. "Public Service Reductions Associated with Placement of Homeless Persons with severe Mental Illness in Supportive Housing." *Housing Policy Debate*, 2002, Vol. 13, Issue 1.

¹³ Castle & Resnick. "Service-Enriched Housing: The Staying at Home Program." *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, July 2014.