

# ARP Healthy Homes Program



June 2022

## Program Outline

### Introduction:

The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Erie (RACE) is a recipient of funds from the City of Erie's allocation of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 (also called the "COVID-19 Stimulus Package"). ARPA was signed into law in March 2021, as a measure to aid the country's recovery from the economic and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In accordance with that measure, the objective of RACE's Healthy Homes program is to promote healthy and safe housing, in order to ultimately reduce lead poisoning, hospitalizations, injuries, illnesses, or deaths caused by preventable home health or safety hazards

At a time where families are spending more time in their homes, this objective couldn't be more important. An environmental hazard such as lead-based paint can have severe irreversible health effects on children and adults when exposure time is increased. The continued fight against COVID-19 has left many families no choice but to remain in their homes, therefore causing prolonged exposures to these and other housing-related health hazards.

The program will evaluate, identify, and address health-related hazards within homes in the city of Erie. Funding for this program was provided by the City of Erie through the American Rescue Plan

### Purpose of the program:

The Healthy Homes Program addresses multiple diseases and injuries related to housing conditions. The initiative takes a comprehensive approach to these activities by focusing on housing-related hazards in a coordinated fashion, rather than addressing a single hazard at a time. The ARP Healthy Homes program builds upon the Authority's other rehabilitation programs in an effort to address a variety of environmental health and safety concerns including: lead, allergens, asthma, carbon monoxide, home safety, and pests, and is unique among RACE programs in that it can provide rehabilitation related to housing issues or triggers that are of specific detriment to the current occupant.

This mission will be accomplished by:

- Conducting comprehensive Healthy Home Assessments of residences to identify potential health/safety risks, including biological agents, chemical agents, and structural deficiencies.
- Providing education and intervention strategies which can be implemented to prevent or reduce identified risks before negative outcomes occur or worsen.
- Collaborating with healthcare providers and neighborhood groups throughout the city to increase awareness of healthy homes principles and services available to mitigate hazards, particularly for households within qualified census tracts (QCTs).
- Promoting a healthy homes philosophy to the general public and local government entities to increase awareness and understanding of potential hazards and the types of illnesses and injuries related to those hazards.

**Healthy Homes activities may include the following types of work:**

- **Keep it Dry** Prevent water from entering your home through leaks in roofing systems or in basements due to poor drainage. Assess interior plumbing to determine if there are leaks.
- **Keep it Clean** Control the source of dust and contaminants. Create smooth and cleanable surfaces. Reduce clutter. Use effective wet-cleaning methods.
- **Keep it Safe** Store poisons out of the reach of children and properly label. Secure loose rugs and keep children's play areas free from hard or sharp surfaces. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and keep fire extinguishers on hand.
- **Keep it Well-Ventilated** Ventilate bathrooms and kitchens and use whole-house ventilation for supplying fresh air, to reduce unwanted moisture and the concentration of airborne contaminants in the home.
- **Keep it Pest-free** All pests look for food, water and shelter. Seal cracks and openings throughout the home. Store food in pest-resistant containers. If needed, use sticky-traps and baits in closed containers, along with the least toxic pesticides, such as boric acid powder.

- **Keep it Contaminant-free** Reduce lead-related hazards in pre-1978 homes by fixing deteriorated paint, and keeping flooring and window areas clean using a wet-cleaning approach. Test your home for radon, a naturally-occurring dangerous gas that enters homes through soil, crawlspaces, and foundation cracks. Install a radon removal system if levels above the EPA action level are detected.
- **Keep it Well-Maintained** Inspect, clean, and repair your home routinely. Take care of minor repairs and problems before they become large repairs and problems.

### **Eligibility:**

Assistance may be provided only when the household annual income, which includes the income of all persons who occupy the residence, is determined to be at or below 300% of the area's Federal Poverty Guidelines, which may be revised from time-to-time by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The federal government has determined that those living within areas that have been identified as qualified census tracts have been inherently disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Those applicants need only to qualify on income to be eligible for this program. Applicants who live within the City of Erie but who do not reside within areas identified as qualified census tracts, must provide evidence of documented hardship directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to qualifying on income.

### **Homeowners – Owner-Occupant:**

Homeowners who reside within their property and meet the eligibility requirements above will receive assistance to remediate any Healthy Homes issues identified within their home, up to the program limit.

### **Homeowner - Non- Owner-Occupant:**

Landlords and their tenants are eligible to participate in this program. Landlords will be required to provide 20% of the total project cost, which is due at the contract closing. Program eligibility will be based on the tenant's household income and COVID-19 impact information. Only buildings containing four (4) or less units are eligible. Mobile homes, buildings containing more than 4 units, and properties zoned for commercial use are not eligible.

**Relocation:**

Relocation assistance will be provided to occupants during any lead abatement activities. If abatement activities are required as part of the Healthy Homes remediation, occupants will be relocated for a maximum of 8 days. Details about relocation will be discussed on an as-needed basis with program participants.

**Criteria for the Selection of Properties:**

- All residents must be income-qualified. Units housing children aged five (5) and under who have an elevated blood lead level (EBL) or other-diagnosed housing-related illness will receive priority consideration;
- In the opinion of the Redevelopment Authority, the structure must be habitable and structurally-sound, and it must be occupied at time of assistance;
- Owner-occupant or tenant's gross income must be verified to be in accordance with the eligibility requirements outlined above;
- Property taxes, water/sewer/refuse, and mortgage (if applicable) must be current, or proof of current, active payment plan must be provided. The dwelling must be covered by a current, valid homeowner's insurance policy unless special accommodations are made during the time of application;
- Lead hazard control work is within the program's scope and budget;
- Tenant applicant(s) agree to participate in the program and provide all necessary documentation to RACE;

**Funding:**

For owner-occupied dwellings, the grant pays for 100% of the cost of remediating the identified health-related hazards up to a programmatic funding limit. For non-owner-occupied dwellings, 80% of the cost of remediating the identified health-related hazards is paid through the grant. The other 20% of the cost is paid by the landlord. In addition, if the project exceeds the funding limit, the landlord must pay 100% of the amount exceeding the funding limit.

## **Land Contracts:**

Individual(s) purchasing units by a land contract will be considered as owner-occupant(s) provided that the following conditions are met:

- The unit must be the principal residence of the individual(s);
- There must be a written land contract properly recorded in the Erie County Recorder of Deeds Office;
- The individual(s) must have made payments for at least six consecutive months or for 10% or more of the contract amount.
- If all of the above conditions have not been met, the individual(s) will be treated as tenants in a rental property, requiring program participation by the owner.

## **Itemization of the Application and Lead Hazard Removal Process:**

### **Summary of the Process:**

1. Upon successful review of the application, a RACE inspector will visit the property to take pictures and sketch a floor plan to develop a preliminary estimate of how much work might be required;
2. A Health Assessment of the property will be conducted. If it is determined that lead-based paint is a hazard to the residents, a combination Lead Inspection/Risk Assessment will be conducted;
3. RACE will solicit bids for the required remediation work from pre-qualified, licensed contractors;
4. The project will be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder;
5. The applicant and contractor will meet with a RACE representative to discuss relocation (if applicable) and to sign the contractor agreement, notice to proceed, mortgage, and other ancillary forms;
6. The work will be scheduled;
7. Occupants may be relocated on the day that the work is to begin; (PA Act 44 lead abatement requirement)
8. The work will be performed;
9. Upon completion of the work, a Healthy Homes clearance assessment will be conducted. If applicable, a lead clearance test will occur.
10. Before the contractor is paid in full, the property owner must sign a document stating that the work is satisfactorily complete per the Scope of Work.

### **Miscellaneous:**

- Contractors will be required to use electricity and water at the property. No reimbursement will be given to the homeowner or tenant.
- The contract to perform the healthy homes remediation work is between the property owner and the contractor only. The role of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Erie is to provide funds and coordinate the activities required to have contractors perform the work, and to see that they receive payment for their work.
- When the work is completed and the property owner attests to the fact that the work is complete and satisfactory, the role of RACE is concluded. If future communications are required, it should be between the **property owner and the contractor**.
- Contractors use medium-grade materials and **warrant** their workmanship for **one year**. The property owner should become familiar with the manufacturer warranties on all materials.
- Applicants will be required to sign an affidavit stating that under penalty of law, all information provided in the application is true and correct.
- Occupants may not be allowed on premises while lead work is on-going.