



Detroit Stories

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Detroit gets \$9.7 million to fight lead exposure in homes

Michigan Public | By Sarah Cwiek

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Sarah Cwiek / Michigan Radio

Detroit will use a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to fight lead hazards in 450 homes.

The effort will target 48209, one zip code in southwest Detroit. It was chosen because of its high percentage of very old housing stock, and high poverty rate. It's also a designated "Opportunity Zone," a designation for certain low-income communities that gives capital gains tax cuts for investments in those zones as part of President Donald Trump's 2017 tax cut package.

Denise Fair, Detroit's Chief Public Health Officer, says that 90% of lead poisoning cases

their mouths, or be exposed to lead dust in the home or in surrounding contaminated soil.

“So with this funding, the Detroit health department will expand our primary prevention efforts in the community, with door-to-door outreach education, and also in-home lead testing,” said Fair.

Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan says the program will target 450 low-income, homeowner-occupied homes with young children. The city will also conduct “healthy homes” assessments in 120 housing units.

“This is exactly what the program’s intended to do,” Duggan said. “Keep people in their homes, keep people safe, keep the children from being exposed to lead.”

HUD is distributing more than \$300 million nationally to fight lead exposure in homes, including more than \$15 million in Michigan. Grand Rapids received \$4.2 million, and Warren \$1.3 million. Detroit received the single largest grant, a collective \$9.7 million.

Although lead poisoning in Detroit has declined dramatically over the past 20 years, state data show that 7.3% of the city’s children tested in 2017 had elevated blood lead levels—the highest lead poisoning rate in the state. That included 6.7% of children in 48209.

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Sarah Cwiek

Sarah Cwiek joined Michigan Public in October 2009. As our Detroit reporter, she is helping us expand our coverage of the economy, politics, and culture in and around the city of Detroit.

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