



ATLANTA REGIONAL HOUSING FORUM

Summary and Resource Guide

“Healthy Homes, Healthy Communities, Healthy Lives”

June 1, 2011 | 9:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Loudermilk Center for the Regional Community

One of the most important factors in a family’s success is access to healthy and safe housing. A healthy home is one that is designed, constructed, maintained or rehabilitated in a manner that supports the health of residents and promotes safe, sanitary conditions as a means for preventing disease and injury (National Center for Healthy Housing). Fundamental components of this concept include a home’s structural integrity, building materials, drinking water source and system, waste disposal, mechanical systems, moisture management, ventilation, pest control and other characteristics.

Safe and healthy housing represents more than just the roof over one’s head, however. The concept of healthy homes also extends into the community. Housing is intimately tied to the community networks that support it, both physical and non-physical. The ways in which communities are designed and built, and how they function over time, indicate a broader level of health and safety that influences homes and their residents. A healthy community improves people’s health and quality of life by providing access to recreation and physical activity, safe public spaces and amenities, healthy food choices, health care services, safe and affordable housing, educational facilities, and strong social capital.

Given the range of characteristics associated with healthy housing and communities, an examination of these topics requires a wide lens. Therefore, examining the factors of a healthy home/healthy community involves studying housing-related hazards and deficiencies, but also factors in the broad physical and social environments, which include housing, urban development and community planning, land use and transportation, among others. People and processes that shape healthy homes and communities are spread over a network of public and private sector entities. Moving toward safer, more sustainable, healthier homes and communities will therefore require partnerships that bridge many different stakeholder groups.

The recent June 1 Atlanta Regional Housing Forum focused on these issues and brought in speakers from a wide array of different disciplines and organizations. These panelists and their topics included:

Mary Jean Brown, Ph.D., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC: Framing the Issue --The Data on Healthy Homes, Healthy Communities and Healthy People.

Denis Blackburne, The Woda Group, LLC: Highlights of the Sustainable Fellwood development, the successful redevelopment of existing affordable housing to a green and sustainable standard.

Andrea Pinabell, Sustainable Cities Institute: Through the Sustainable Cities Institute the Home Depot Foundation provides proactive solutions to helping create healthy and sustainable communities.

Cheryl T. Mayerik, ARC: Lifelong Communities: The Mableton Lifelong Community Example. Mableton is two years into a three year grant program designed to facilitate a lifelong community.

RESOURCE GUIDE

The following pages contain information on a range of resources related to safe and healthy homes and communities.

Local and Regional Resources

The **University of Georgia (UGA) College of Family and Consumer Sciences Cooperative Extension** translates research into action by providing information, publications and a network of trained agents in local communities in the areas of housing, family finance, healthy eating and parenting. Extension Agents work in the Atlanta area counties of Fulton, DeKalb, Cobb, Gwinnett, Clayton, Forsyth and Douglas. These individuals provide resources on healthy housing and communities, including information and programs on the indoor environment, radon education and testing, green cleaning, home safety, mold and moisture control, lead poisoning, water quality, pest management and pesticides. For more information, see <http://www.gafamilies.com/housing>.

Established in 1999 by the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association and Southface, **EarthCraft** is a green building certification program that serving the southeastern United States. By addressing the factors that impact homes in this region, including high heat, humidity and temperature swings, EarthCraft serves as a blueprint for healthy, energy, water and resource-efficient single-family homes, multifamily structures, renovation projects, community developments and light-commercial buildings. To date, more than 13,000 EarthCraft homes, multifamily units and commercial buildings have been certified. To be certified as EarthCraft, homes, businesses and communities must meet a number of criteria that ensure sustainable, efficient design and function.

<http://earthcraft.org/>

In 2003, the Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association, the Atlanta Regional Commission, the Urban Land Institute Atlanta District Council and Southface launched the **EarthCraft Communities program** – a certification system for sustainably planned and constructed communities. EarthCraft Communities offers holistic approaches to development for rural, suburban or urban projects. Through the EarthCraft certification process, communities enhance their health, livability, efficiency and overall market appeal. The EarthCraft Communities program addresses low-impact development, site selection, land disturbance, water quality and quantity management, energy, transportation infrastructure, community design, green space preservation and more.

<http://earthcraft.org/communities>

UGA is also a training partner with the National Center for Healthy Housing and offers a two-day course called **Essentials for Healthy Homes Practitioners**. The training makes the connection between health and housing and takes a holistic approach to resolving problems in the home related to ventilation, moisture, pest management, lead hazards, radon, volatile organic compounds and safety. The training brings together professionals in public health, environmental health, lead poisoning prevention, weatherization, energy conservation, radon mitigation, code enforcement, mold remediation and education to learn more about improving our indoor environment. More information is available online at http://fcs.uga.edu/ext/housing/training/healthy_home.php.

At the end of the second day of training and for an additional fee, participants have the opportunity to take an exam to earn the **Healthy Homes Specialist Credential**, a certification through the **National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)**. See <http://www.neha.org/credential/HHS/index.htm> for more information on the exam. The next course will be held in Athens on June 13-14.

By 2030, one out of every five residents of the Atlanta region will be over the age of 60, and the **Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) Lifelong Communities (LLC)** program helps address the fact that many cities and neighborhoods in Metro Atlanta are not designed for an aging population. The LLC program promotes places where individuals can live throughout their lifetimes with access to housing and transportation options, healthy lifestyles, and access healthcare and other important services. For more information, see <http://www.atlantaregional.com/aging-resources/lifelong-communities-llc>.

The **City of Atlanta SHINE** (Sustainable Home Initiative in the New Economy) initiative is a new residential weatherization program that provides rebates for qualifying home energy efficiency improvements. Funded by federal grants, SHINE offers homeowners the ability to receive up to \$3,500 in rebates towards air sealing, insulation improvement, weather stripping, caulking, and the replacement of leaky doors and windows. During the program's pilot phase, 15 local contracting firms performed energy assessments on more than 125 Atlanta homes, converting roughly a third of those into energy efficiency improvement projects. The SHINE program aims to assist residents in reducing their carbon footprint, support green jobs, and show residents the importance of sustainability as they experience firsthand the positive impacts and cost savings of their home improvements. More information is available online at http://www.atlantaga.gov/mayor/shine_080410.aspx.

In addition, this Saturday, **June 4**, homeowners will be able to receive eligibility information from SHINE representatives and contractors at the Southface SWEET (Southeast Weatherization and Energy Efficiency Training) Center at the corner of Piedmont and North Avenues. Representatives will be on site to discuss home assessments, improvements and rebates, and demonstrate home retrofitting and energy-efficiency techniques.

National Resources and Reports

The **Alliance to Save Energy** offers on its website consumer and lender resources for energy-efficiency financing and HERS. Included are a brief overview and lender's guide on energy efficiency-financing, a national directory of lenders, links to HERS/EEM organizations and an EEM guide for the homeowner. More information is available online at <http://www.ase.org/topics/saving-money-and-energy>.

The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Environmental Health** leads a national program to improve public health by promoting a healthy environment and preventing premature death, avoidable illness and disability caused by non-infectious, non-occupational environmental factors – especially for vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. As part of this program, CDC has launched the Healthy Community Design Initiative, aimed at improving public health by linking public health surveillance with community design decisions; improving community design decisions through tools such as the Health Impact Assessment; educating decision makers on the health impact of community design; building partnerships with community design decision makers and their influencers; conducting research to identify the links between health and community design; and translating research into best practices. More information is available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces>.

The **Costs and Benefits of Green Affordable Housing** is a systematic study conducted to evaluate the costs and benefits of greening in the affordable housing sector. The report, a publication of New Ecology and the Green CDCs Initiative, surveyed green affordable housing projects around the country and conducted detailed case study analyses of the costs and benefits of sixteen projects for which adequate data was available. This report can be downloaded here: <http://www.housingtrustonline.org/download/GreenAffordableHousing.pdf>

Design for Health (DFH) is a collaborative project that serves to bridge the gap between the emerging research base on community design and healthy living and the everyday realities of local government planning. The first phase of DFH (2006-2008) created innovative, practice-oriented tools to help integrate human health into urban planning and environmental design in nineteen partner communities. The second phase is focused on tool development and public education. For more information, see <http://www.designforhealth.net>.

Energy Star, a joint program of **EPA** and **DOE**, promotes products and practices that benefit the environment while saving the consumer money. Energy Star provides extensive information online regarding Energy-Efficient Mortgages (EEMs), which are mortgages that credit a home's energy efficiency in the mortgage itself. EEMs are typically used to finance the often higher cost of purchasing a new home containing energy-efficient features. Other types of EEMs, called Energy Improvement Mortgages or EIMs, can be used to finance existing homes that will have energy efficiency improvements made to them. For further information, see http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=mortgages.energy_efficient_mortgages.

Enterprise Community Partners, Inc. is a national innovator in affordable housing policy and financing, using its partnerships and expertise to advocate at the federal level, leverage public and private capital, and create new community development solutions. The **Enterprise Green Communities** initiative began in 2004 and, in five years, invested \$700 million to build and preserve roughly 16,000 green affordable homes. The next generation of the initiative launched in 2009, with a national call to action and a \$4 billion commitment to green affordable housing. The initiative offers financing, grants and technical assistance to developers to build affordable housing that promotes health, conserves energy and natural resources and provides easy access to jobs, schools and services. For more information, see <http://www.greencommunitiesonline.org>.

The **Federal Housing Administration (FHA)** and the **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** established the **Energy Efficient Mortgage Program** to encourage people to purchase greener homes and/or make environmentally friendly renovations to existing homes. EEM can also be used with the FHA Section 203(k) rehabilitation program. Homebuyers can also benefit from a larger tax deduction with the EEM program. Eligible persons must meet FHA income requirements and be able to make the monthly mortgage payments. The cost of the improvements that may be eligible for financing as part of the mortgage is either five percent of the property's value or \$4,000, whichever is greater. For more information, see <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/eem/energy-r.cfm>.

This **Green and Healthy Affordable Homes** project in Worthington, Minnesota is one of the nation's first demonstrations of how rehabilitating low-income housing using green and healthy principles affects the health of residents. The main health-related features of the green and healthy renovation on this Enterprise Green Communities project included ventilation improvements, use of low-volatile organic compound (VOC) building materials, radon testing and mitigation, integrated pest management, Energy Star bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans, and moisture management measures. Information is online at <http://www.practitionerresources.org/cache/documents/673/67397.pdf>.

The **National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH)** conducts research to find scientifically valid and practical strategies for making homes safe and healthy. Through its education and training programs, NCHH alerts families and those who serve them to hazards in the home environment. NCHH's policy work translates its scientific and technical work into government and non-governmental standards, programs, and policies. For more information, see <http://www.nchh.org/Home.aspx>.

The **National Housing Conference's (NHC)** research affiliate, the **Center for Housing Policy**, performs research aimed at expanding awareness of housing needs, identifying solutions to housing challenges, and informing future housing policy. Some of the Center's recent work includes reports on the impacts of affordable housing on both health and education.

The Impacts of Affordable Housing on Health:

http://www.nhc.org/media/files/Insights_HousingAndHealthBrief.pdf

The Impacts of Affordable Housing on Education:

http://www.nhc.org/media/files/Insights_HousingAndEducationBrief.pdf

The Center will also be offering webinars on **June 7, 9 and 10** that highlight the intersections of housing and health, housing and education, and housing and the economy. Registration is available online at <http://forum.housingpolicy.org/group/affordablehousinggeneral/forum/topics/upcoming-webinar-series-on>.

The **Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET)** was founded by the National Association of State Energy Officials and Energy Rated Homes of America in 1995. RESNET offers an excellent primer on home energy rating systems (HERS) and EEMs, as well as contact information for HERS programs across the country and lists of certified home energy raters and lenders offering EEM. More information is available online at <http://www.resnet.us>.

The **Sustainable Cities Institute (SCI)** is an initiative of the Home Depot Foundation. One of the Institute's guiding principles is that a sustainable community effort consists of a long-term, integrated and systematic approach to developing and achieving a healthy community by jointly addressing economic, environmental, and social issues. SCI has two distinct parts: a website and a city program that includes a panel of sustainable development and planning experts. The SCI website is a dynamic online toolbox that was initially built by the Home Depot Foundation but will be shaped by its users, who post, comment and contribute to the website. From its homepage, the user can navigate through technical silos including Economic Development, Water, Materials Management, Land Use and Transportation; as well as through classrooms, communication labs, a planning center and a library. In addition, there are forums, webinars, a calendar, City Profiles and an interactive "Sustainable City" map. For more information, see <http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/view/page/home/home>.

The **U.S. Environment Protection Agency (EPA)** maintains an Indoor Air Quality website that details the substances and hazards that can cause indoor air pollution in the home, their effects on human health, and steps residents can take to protect themselves from home indoor air pollution. For more information, see <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/index.html>.

The **U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)** provides a wealth of information on home energy efficiency and conservation through its **Energy Savers** website. Topics covered include home design, electricity use, insulation and air sealing, landscaping, appliances, heating and cooling, water use, and lighting. More information is available online at <http://www.energysavers.gov>.