

East Harlem health impact assessment shows importance of affordable housing to the health of community residents

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Today, the New York Academy of Medicine released the second Health Impact Assessment (HIA) conducted in New York City's history and the first for the community of East Harlem. The East Harlem HIA shows the many ways that the rapid disappearance of affordable housing, and the widespread prevalence of substandard housing, may affect the health and wellbeing of city residents, especially in low-income, urban areas.

By combining the concerns and interests of community residents, advocates and other stakeholders, with a wide range of data and analytic methods, HIAs assess the potential health impact of policies or plans that might be linked to changes in housing, transportation, business development or other activities.

East Harlem, the Academy's home and one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city, has lost almost 2,000 units of [affordable housing](#) since 2011 and is estimated to lose more than 6,000 over the next 10 years. When a community loses affordable housing—especially in a dense, expensive urban area—residents experience displacement, increased homelessness and other stresses that lead to poor health outcomes. These issues may be magnified in an area such as East Harlem, where residents already endure substandard and poorly maintained housing, as well as disproportionately high rates of hypertension, diabetes, asthma, infant mortality, drug addiction and challenges to mental health.

The HIA—"East Harlem Neighborhood Plan Health Impact Assessment: Connecting Housing Affordability and Health"—also supports a key aspect of Mayor Bill de Blasio's Affordable Housing Plan. It identifies the plan's Mandatory Inclusionary Housing requirement as a crucial part of maintaining a stable, health-supporting environment in urban communities.

"The Academy's HIA was conducted to inform the implementation of the housing component of the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan—a document that is the result of the Academy working collaboratively with East Harlem residents, organizations and City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. Our intent is to help residents and policy makers see that housing policy is also health policy and encourage the inclusion of HIAs in all, relevant city planning processes. HIAs are a critical tool for understanding the positive, and possibly negative, effects of a range of policies on the health of urban residents." said Jo Ivey Boufford, MD, President of the Academy.

"In East Harlem, we are actively considering what policies, programs and investments are important to the future of our community, and we're thankful to The New York Academy of Medicine for assessing the broader health impacts of those proposed changes and ensuring long-term health outcomes improve for local residents," Mark-Viverito said.

Provided by New York Academy of Medicine

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