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\$1M HUD Grant To Study Green Healthy Housing

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The University of Illinois at Chicago has received nearly \$1 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to study the benefits of green healthy housing.

The funding was made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

UIC researchers will evaluate the health and monetary benefits when low-income residents move from distressed, unhealthy public housing into green, affordable, healthy housing.

At a time when the nation is simultaneously facing a housing problem, a financial crisis, unemployment, and rising health care costs, the project will help policymakers learn whether substantial savings in medical care may be achieved through green healthy housing, said David Jacobs, principal investigator of the project.

The first housing laws in this country were set up to deal with public health problems such as tuberculosis and cholera.

"The diseases we are now confronting are more chronic in nature," said Jacobs, who is adjunct associate professor of environmental and occupational health sciences at the UIC School of Public Health. "But we still think that housing plays a large role in health outcomes."

The study will enroll approximately 300 residents who previously lived in dilapidated housing that has now been demolished, but who now live in new green affordable housing. The demolished housing was known for increased prevalence of [asthma](#), respiratory health problems, lead poisoning, injuries and other health hazards, according to Jacobs.

Researchers will compare data on the residents' health status before and after they moved.

The green healthy housing, developed by Brinshore Development, LLC, has improved energy efficiency, fresh air ventilation, smooth and cleanable surfaces, integrated pest management, improved moisture control, housing components without lead-based paint, and other green features, including building envelope improvements, insulation, air sealing, compact fluorescent lamps and improved lighting controls.

A health survey of residents and a review of Medicaid expenditures three years before and three years after they moved will provide information about respiratory, cardiovascular, neurological, mental health and injury-avoidance. Air sampling will take place in some of the new housing units, and visual assessments of the new housing will be compared to inspection data of the old housing.

Researchers expect that the green housing residents will have improved respiratory health due to better ventilation, mold and moisture control, and reduced particulate matter, said Jacobs.

Integrated pest management and lower-toxicity pesticides may improve neurological outcomes; security and safety improvements may reduce stress; and playgrounds and other features of the built environment may reduce injuries lead to improved cardiovascular health, he said.

"A similar study done in London found that medical expenditures went down by seven fold," Jacobs said. "We expect there may be similar and significant

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the National Center for Healthy Housing, Peter Levart of Brookings Development, and Dr. Samuel Dorevitch of the UIC School of Public Health.

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