MESSAGE

Chief Public Health Officer

DEAR FRIENDS,

Good health is more than having a doctor and insurance. It’s also about having opportunities for education and employment, feeling safe and socially connected, having access to healthy food and quality housing, and living in a community that takes action to improve the health of its residents.

This idea that health begins in our homes, schools, and neighborhoods is helping redefine the role of government in Cambridge and many other municipalities. Over the past few years, Cambridge has embarked on multiple planning efforts that ask fundamental questions about our identity as a city: What are our shared values? What issues do we care most about? How do we create a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient community?

These interconnected plans, which include the 2015 City of Cambridge Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and Envision Cambridge, have set the stage for greater collaboration among city departments in addressing issues such as affordable housing, violence and trauma, substance abuse, climate change, and safe streets, to name a few.

In 2016, city and community partners made remarkable progress on CHIP health priority areas. Despite the challenges ahead, I believe that we will continue to make significant inroads in improving the health and well-being of all residents.

I am also proud of the Cambridge Public Health Department’s accomplishments this past year. The department’s application for national accreditation was officially accepted by the Public Health Accreditation Board in July, a milestone in becoming one of the first accredited health departments in the Commonwealth. In addition to leading CHIP efforts and performing everyday activities, the department responded to the mumps outbreak at Harvard University, worked closely with city partners on addressing the opioid crisis, and drafted regulations pertaining to medical marijuana dispensaries and urban agriculture.

Read on for more stories about Cambridge and its journey to better health in 2017.

Claude Jacob
Chief Public Health Officer
Cambridge Health Alliance
City of Cambridge
OUR STORY

Who We Are

Public health is about protecting the health of an entire population. For us, that means all people who live, learn, work, or spend time in Cambridge. Cambridge is a close-knit community of people of different races, ethnicities, cultures, languages, faiths, incomes, and lifestyles. To increase opportunities for all people to live healthy lives, the Cambridge Public Health Department provides services, analyzes and shares information, implements policies, and enforces regulations in ways that benefit everyone. After all, improving quality of life is what public health—and Cambridge—are all about.

Mission

The Cambridge Public Health Department improves the quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the city by preventing illness and injury; encouraging healthy behaviors; and ensuring safe and healthy environments.

Vision

The Cambridge Public Health Department is a leading, innovative, and model agency that facilitates optimal health and well-being for all who live, learn, work, and play in Cambridge.

Shared Values

Professionalism and Excellence

Innovation

Collaboration

Social Justice and Equity
National Accreditation

The Cambridge Public Health Department’s application for national accreditation was officially accepted by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) in July 2016. This marked a milestone in the journey to become one of the first accredited health departments in the Commonwealth.

The health department began engaging partner organizations, community members, and local government in 2013 to better understand and address the health needs of residents. This process led to the completion of three requirements for accreditation: the 2014 City of Cambridge Community Health Assessment, 2015 City of Cambridge Community Health Improvement Plan, and Cambridge Public Health Department Strategic Plan.

Public health accreditation is about more than completing plans and submitting documentation. Maintaining the designation requires an ongoing commitment to improving the performance of the department and building a lasting culture of health in the community.

In 2016, the health department turned its attention to quality improvement, critically assessing organizational strengths and weaknesses. Following the completion of a formal quality improvement plan in July, staff were invited to participate in workshops and planning activities to become familiar with the strategies and tools needed to improve departmental processes.

Staff also laid the groundwork for a departmental performance management system and began implementing the strategic plan and the city’s community health improvement plan.

Accreditation Timeline
Cambridge Public Health Department

- Process launched
- Community health assessment completed
- Health department strategic plan completed
- Health department statement of intent submitted
- Health department application submitted and accepted
- Health department will submit documentation to PHAB
- PHAB site visit and decision*

2013
2014
2015
2016
2017

* The PHAB site visit and decision will occur in fiscal year 2018 (July 2017-June 2018).
The **City of Cambridge Community Health Improvement Plan** is setting the city’s health agenda through 2020.

The plan lays out goals, objectives, and strategies for making tangible progress in four health priority areas for the city: mental health and substance abuse; healthy eating and active living; violence; and healthy, safe, and affordable housing. Two additional topics—health access and health equity/social justice—are integrated across priority areas because they are the foundations of a healthy population.

In 2016, the health department and partner organizations worked on CHIP strategies identified for implementation in Year 1 (July 2015–June 2016) and developed a Year 2 action plan. The following pages describe progress in each priority area during Year 1, including challenges and opportunities encountered while implementing the city’s first-ever community health improvement plan.

**CHIP Partners**

Here are some of the many city and community partners that are implementing the community health improvement plan.

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<th>City of Cambridge</th>
<th>Community Partners</th>
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<td>Cambridge Public Schools</td>
<td>AIDS Action Committee/Needle Exchange</td>
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<td>City Manager’s Office</td>
<td>and Overdose Prevention Program</td>
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<td>Community Development Department</td>
<td>Bay Cove Human Services/CASPAR</td>
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<td>Department of Human Service Programs</td>
<td>Cambridge Community Center</td>
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<td>Department of Public Works</td>
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<td>Domestic and Gender-Based</td>
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<td>Violence Prevention Initiative</td>
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<td>Food and Fitness Policy Council</td>
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<td>License Commission</td>
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<td>Peace Commission</td>
<td>Institute for Health and Recovery</td>
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<td>Police Department</td>
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<td>Public Health Department</td>
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<td>Transition House</td>
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Events such as the 20th annual Family Literacy Fun Day at City Hall (above) help create a strong sense of community by bringing together residents, civic leaders, and staff from city agencies and nonprofits.
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Health Priority

GOAL: Support and enhance the mental, behavioral, and emotional health of all, and reduce the impact of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

The city selected mental health and substance abuse as a health priority because many residents and service providers were concerned about the prevalence of mental disorders and addiction in Cambridge; the cost and availability of services; and how stigma and other underlying issues may keep people from seeking help.

Year 1 activities focused on raising awareness about mental illness and substance use disorders, promoting the safe disposal of unwanted medication, and helping people at high risk of overdose get into treatment.

YEAR 1 HIGHLIGHTS (July ’15 – June ’16)

Mental Health First Aid is a groundbreaking public education program that helps the community identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. In Year 1, 98 people completed the eight-hour training, facilitated by the Cambridge Public Health Department. Participants included public health, school, and other city staff; nonprofit professionals; Medical Reserve Corps volunteers; and residents.

Pro EMS ambulance service, with city and hospital partners, completed a pilot project that provided recovery coaching services to 15 people with chronic alcohol and drug addiction.

OPEN (Overdose Prevention and Education Network), a four-city coalition led by the health department, provided timely information to the community about opioid prevention, intervention, and treatment. In Year 1, OPEN launched a bimonthly e-newsletter and Twitter account; produced a public service announcement on safe medication disposal; continued to share information at community events and on the OPEN website; created a brochure on prescription misuse that was made available at two Cambridge pharmacies; and organized “The Opioid Epidemic: Engaging Our Communities,” a strategy session held in May 2016 during which 30 stakeholders from Cambridge, Everett, Somerville, and Watertown identified top priorities for the coming fiscal year. OPEN is funded by a federal grant awarded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.
The police department launched a program in which detectives and police social workers help overdose victims overcome addiction through coaching, developing treatment plans, securing placements in treatment centers, and coordinating care. The police department also tracked drug overdose data to identify trends and gauge progress, and developed a treatment and support services referral sheet for overdose victims and their families. In Year 1, police responded to 250 overdose cases in Cambridge. Of these cases, 112 were followed-up with by detectives in the Special Investigations Unit, who referred 33 cases to the department’s licensed social worker.

The city encouraged residents to safely dispose of unwanted medications by sponsoring three community “take-back” events; accepting medication at the city’s Department of Public Works’ four household hazardous waste collection days; offering pre-paid mailers to the public; and maintaining a 24/7 medication disposal kiosk at the police department. In 2016, the city collected over 9,800 pounds of unwanted medication.

In January 2016, Cambridge received a five-year, $425,000 federal grant through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to reduce prescription drug misuse among the city’s public high school students. The health department is leading this initiative.

The health department continued developing a local overdose surveillance system that will allow the city to better understand, track, and respond to overdoses in Cambridge. In Year 1, staff conducted an audit of existing overdose-related data sources and formed partnerships with Pro EMS, Cambridge Health Alliance, AIDS Action Committee’s Needle Exchange and Overdose Prevention Program in Cambridge, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

A four-city substance abuse prevention collaborative comprised of Arlington, Cambridge, Everett, and Somerville completed a year-long needs assessment to better understand underage drinking in these communities. The team then developed strategies focused on reducing access, countering youth misperceptions about alcohol, and decreasing community acceptance of underage drinking. This work is supported by a five-year, $500,000 federal grant awarded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

A total of 184 staff from establishments licensed to pour alcohol in Cambridge completed the health department’s 21 Proof training, which is designed to reduce underage drinking in bars and restaurants.

Tiki’s Story:
Journey of a Recovering Opioid Addict (View on YouTube)

The day I overdosed, I ended up in Mount Auburn Hospital. It’s still a little bit of a blur, but two detectives had come to my bedside. When you’re doing drugs and illegal activity, you pretty much stay away from the police as much as possible. I’m fortunate enough that I opened up to them. They saw that I really wanted to help myself. The detectives put me in touch with a social worker who works directly in connection with the Cambridge Police Department. She helped me with my health insurance to figure out how to get into an IOP, which is an Intensive Outpatient Program, which I just graduated from.

It’s one of the hardest things to realize that you are an addict—to say I’m an addict, and I need help. No matter how big you are, no matter how strong you are, you do need help. You can’t do this yourself.

—“Tiki,” a former Belmont resident who shared his story of addiction and recovery with the Cambridge Police Department.
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Health Priority

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES: Opioid Crisis

Under the Baker administration, Massachusetts has mounted a multifaceted response to the opioid crisis, including enacting breakthrough legislation, revamping the state’s prescription monitoring program, and adding 455 treatment beds to the system since January 2015.

Despite these comprehensive measures, opioid and fentanyl-related deaths in the state continued to climb during the first six months of 2016. The escalating death toll speaks to the reality that opioid addiction is typically a life-long disease and extremely difficult to treat, even when government is taking aggressive action.

If there is a silver lining to this epidemic, it is that medical and public health professionals, EMTs, police, schools, and other groups in Cambridge and elsewhere are recognizing that addiction is a disease—not a personal failing or crime. Cambridge stakeholders will continue to address addiction holistically through harm reduction strategies and innovative programs to prevent substance abuse among youth and help those seeking treatment.

LOOKING AHEAD

In Year 2, the health department will launch its two teen alcohol and drug abuse prevention campaigns at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, and begin a state-mandated program in which trained staff will have a brief conversation with all ninth grade students to assess their risk for substance abuse.

The health department expects to release the first series of Cambridge overdose surveillance reports in spring 2017. The reports will include information on hospital visits, ambulance incidents, geographic hotspots, and demographic trends.

Also in Year 2, OPEN will work on expanding opportunities for medication disposal, train human service providers and food service providers on how to respond to an overdose, and implement regional strategies identified for fiscal year 2017.

“Recovery is lifelong and we’re here to help.”

—Melisa Lai Becker, MD, emergency department physician at Cambridge Health Alliance
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Healthy Eating and Active Living Health Priority

GOAL: Make it easy for people to improve health and well-being through healthy eating and active living.

Cambridge is nationally recognized for its collaborative and innovative approaches to healthy eating and active living.

Two decades ago, a diverse team of public health professionals, civic leaders, city staff, academics, parent activists, and the Cambridge Public Schools came together to address obesity among the city’s school children. This collaboration resulted in school cafeterias serving healthier and locally grown foods, parents receiving annual health and fitness progress reports on their children, the establishment of school gardens in all elementary schools, and the adoption of model school nutrition policies.

Since the late 2000s, city and community partners have focused on creating a healthy, sustainable, and equitable food and fitness environment throughout Cambridge. Recent accomplishments include establishing the Cambridge Food and Fitness Policy Council; introducing salad bars and international cuisine in school cafeterias; increasing the purchasing power of low-income residents at farmers markets; launching a popular bike-share program; renovating city parks and playgrounds; and creating a safer environment for walking and biking.

“It is heaven to be able to grow food—it’s the best source of affordable, fresh, nutritional produce [for low-income residents].”

—Cambridge resident, urban agriculture “listening session” at Fresh Pond Apartments, 2015
YEAR 1 HIGHLIGHTS (July ’15 – June ’16)

The Cambridge Food and Fitness Policy Council’s Urban Agriculture Task Force, led by the Cambridge Public Health Department and the city’s Community Development Department, held “listening sessions” in seven neighborhoods and began drafting a comprehensive urban agriculture policy, including a zoning ordinance amendment, public health regulations, guidance documents, and permit applications. Also in Year 1, the task force held focus groups on beekeeping and backyard hens with local experts and practitioners, city staff, and residents to understand best practices and how to mitigate nuisance concerns.

The Cambridge Public Schools secured funding in 2015 to serve free breakfast in the classroom to all students at Fletcher Maynard Academy, with the hope that no child would start the school day hungry. In Year 1, students kick-started their mornings with healthy items like egg sandwiches, breakfast burritos, and zucchini bread. Nearly 80% of Fletcher Maynard Academy students participated in the program, and more than 70% of teachers thought the program had a positive impact on their students’ health.

The Cambridge SNAP Match Coalition, led by the health department, raised $22,000 in 2016 to help residents with low incomes afford to buy fresh, local food at Cambridge farmers markets. The funds allow shoppers using SNAP (formerly food stamps) benefits to double their purchasing power up to a $15 value per visit at three participating markets.

The Healthy Market Program, a joint initiative of the health department and the Community Development Department, continued working with four local convenience stores to promote healthy foods and beverages, and to make it easier for neighborhood residents to eat healthier. Activities included providing in-store advertising and marketing support, distributing promotional items, and building relationships with store owners. Also in Year 1, staff met with state funders and city partners to assess the program.

COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Healthy Eating and Active Living Health Priority

Over 70% of Fletcher Maynard Academy teachers believe that “breakfast in the classroom” has had a positive impact on students’ health.
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Healthy Eating and Active Living Health Priority

Hubway, the metro-Boston bike share program, grew in ridership and membership, with the system logging nearly 122,000 trips in Year 1. Six of the ten most heavily used stations in the system are located in Cambridge, which joined the program in 2012. In addition, the city installed 128 bike racks and nine bike parking stalls in Year 1.

The Safe Routes to School program, launched by the Community Development Department in 2015, supports and encourages safe walking and biking to school. In Year 1, the city expanded the program to five public schools; surveyed students (K–8) to better understand travel patterns to school and identify the barriers to walking and biking; collected data on how Cambridge Rindge and Latin School students travel to school; and gave bicycle and pedestrian safety trainings to approximately 200 students (pre-K–8).

The Community Development Department released The Cambridge Bicycle Plan: Toward a Bikeable Future in fall 2015. The 143-page plan provides the framework for developing a transportation system in which people of all ages and abilities can bicycle safely and comfortably throughout the city.

In March 2016, the city formally adopted Vision Zero and Complete Streets policies. Cambridge became the 17th city in the U.S. to commit to Vision Zero, an international initiative aimed at eliminating death and serious injury from traffic accidents. Complete Streets is a transportation policy and design approach that makes it safe and easy for everyone in the community to walk, bike, drive, or take public transit.

“The fundamental guiding principle for this plan is to enable people of all ages and abilities to bicycle safely and comfortably throughout the city.”

—The Cambridge Bicycle Plan: Toward a Bikeable Future
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Healthy Eating and Active Living Health Priority

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Healthy eating and active living (HEAL) strategies have been integrated into recent public health, early childhood, transportation, and citywide plans, a vital step in making healthy foods and fitness opportunities available to all residents. Moving forward, it will be important to coordinate cross-departmental activities to prevent duplication of efforts and ensure efficient use of staff time.

As HEAL initiatives become more sophisticated and far-reaching, the city may be faced with difficult decisions. For instance, with the adoption of Vision Zero and Complete Streets, how will the city balance the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers? Regarding food insecurity, how can Cambridge create sustainable funding to ensure that low-income residents have access to healthy foods?

LOOKING AHEAD

In Year 2, the city’s Department of Public Works will install five seasonally operated water bottle refill stations in local parks. The project is funded by a $40,000 award from the city’s Participatory Budgeting initiative.

The health department’s Healthy Market Program will implement a new, tiered program structure designed to increase the number of participating stores.

The Community Development Department will continue implementing programs and policies aimed at creating a safe environment for walking and biking throughout the city.

Over 350 children ran and biked in the seventh annual Run & Ride at CambridgeSide. This free kids’ duathlon is an innovative community collaboration between CambridgeSide mall; the city’s police, fire, human services, and health departments; and additional sponsors.
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Violence Health Priority

GOAL: Establish a new community norm that strives for peace and justice, and provides a comprehensive approach to address all forms of violence.

Advocates and civic leaders have expressed concern for many years about the pervasiveness of domestic violence in Cambridge and the need for a coordinated, comprehensive response to this complex issue.

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviors and tactics used by one person over another to gain power and control. This may include verbal, financial, emotional, sexual, and/or physical abuse. Domestic violence occurs in heterosexual, as well as same-sex partnerships, and crosses all ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic lines.

Year 1 activities focused on assessing the city’s strengths and gaps in addressing domestic and gender-based violence, designing targeted domestic violence trainings for service providers and public safety personnel, and engaging men as advocates against domestic violence.

YEAR 1 HIGHLIGHTS (July ’15 – June ’16)

The city’s Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative published an assets and needs assessment report in 2015 that synthesized interviews with staff from over 50 organizations. The report offered recommendations for early prevention, raising awareness among service providers, and reducing barriers to services, especially for survivors from other cultures.

The initiative developed a multi-session training for Cambridge service providers to empower them with the skills, knowledge, and resources to help clients experiencing domestic violence. A total of 65 people attended the training series, which featured presentations from experts, role-playing, and case discussions.

The initiative educated Cambridge first responders on best practices for responding to high-risk cases, supporting children at the scene of an incident, identifying elder abuse, and other topics. The mandatory training was attended by personnel from the Cambridge Police Department (260 participants), Cambridge Fire Department (209 participants) and Emergency Command Center (38 participants).

MENding camBRIDGE is a men’s leadership group that engages men in challenging stereotypes around masculinity and becoming active allies in working to end gender-based violence. Year 1 activities included co-organizing White Ribbon Day activities and hosting a public screening of the film, A Mask You Live In.

The annual candlelight vigil on the steps of Cambridge City Hall is held the first Wednesday in October in observance of national Domestic Violence Awareness Month.
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Violence Health Priority

“People in violent relationships [may] also face other pressing issues, such as homelessness, joblessness, mental illness and/or addiction.”


CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The CHIP team faced challenges in coalition-building, including establishing a common agenda, identifying champions from key partner organizations, and having a lack of familiarity with the internal culture and decision-making dynamics of partner organizations. In addition, some strategies identified in the 2014 planning process were determined to be infeasible, while others lacked subject matter experts to implement them. Learning from these experiences, the team has assigned Year 2 strategies to individuals “at the table” who have the motivation and expertise to execute the work successfully.

LOOKING AHEAD

The work of the Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative will be guided by a five-year strategic plan focused on creating a network of culturally aware services for survivors, fostering cultural awareness among service providers, and ensuring early and consistent prevention education to youth.

Cambridge police officers will receive training in trauma-informed law enforcement, which teaches officers how to manage their own job-related trauma and how to interview and support trauma victims.
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Healthy, Safe, and Affordable Housing Health Priority

**GOAL:** Ensure a socioeconomically diverse community through the preservation and expansion of high quality, healthy, and safe housing that is affordable across income levels.

A shortage of safe, affordable housing directly impacts the health of the community. Poor indoor air quality, lead paint, and other hazards can lead to serious illness and injury. Families who lack affordable housing may experience financial difficulties, housing instability, overcrowded living conditions, and other issues.

Year 1 CHIP strategies focused on preserving and expanding affordable housing for residents with low and moderate incomes, as well as securing housing for homeless residents.

Affordable housing has been a top priority in Cambridge since the end of rent control in the 1990s. To sustain an economically diverse community, the city has made substantial investments in affordable housing during the past 20 years. The city’s Community Development Department manages and implements these efforts, in partnership with governmental, nonprofit, and private-sector organizations.

Housing is considered affordable when tenants or homeowners pay no more than 30% of their household income on housing costs. In Cambridge, there are over 7,600 affordable units—about 15% of the city’s current housing stock. These units are located throughout the city, and include Cambridge Housing Authority rental units, inclusionary housing located in market-rate developments, and city-subsidized affordable housing.

The most significant funding mechanism for creating and preserving affordable housing in Cambridge is the Community Preservation Act (CPA), adopted by City Council and voters in 2001. Between fiscal years 2002 and 2015, the city allocated $115 million in CPA funds for affordable housing, which leveraged an additional $434 million in public and private investments and resulted in the creation and preservation of over 1,600 affordable units.

For people experiencing or at risk for homelessness in Cambridge, city and community partners provide a range of services. The city’s Department of Human Service Programs works with a network of housing and service providers, known as the Cambridge Continuum of Care (CoC), to alleviate homelessness through prevention, assistance toward self-sufficiency, and the provision of a continuum of housing and support services. The CoC is facilitated by the human services department.

“I never dreamed we could afford to live in such a beautiful place. With the money we are saving because of the city’s affordable rental program, we are able to save more for our daughter’s education. We are so very lucky.”

—Veli Albano, Cambridge resident

* The Community Preservation Act is a financing tool for Massachusetts communities to leverage funds to preserve open space, protect historic sites, and expand and preserve the supply of affordable housing.
YEAR 1 HIGHLIGHTS (July ’15 – June ’16)

The Cambridge City Council voted to allocate 80% ($9.36 million) of fiscal year 2016 Community Preservation Act funds for affordable housing, the maximum amount allowed under Massachusetts law.

Three CPA-funded affordable housing developments were completed in Year 1: Temple Place, a 40-unit new construction rental property built by the Cambridge Housing Authority; Bishop Allen Apartments, a 32-unit former expiring-use property that Just-A-Start acquired, preserved, and renovated; and Putnam Square Apartments, a 94-unit former expiring-use senior housing property that Homeowners Rehab, Inc. acquired, preserved, and renovated.

Three CPA-funded projects began in Year 1: Construction of Port Landing Apartments (20 new affordable units) on a long-vacant site in the Port neighborhood; reconstruction of Cambridge Housing Authority’s Jefferson Park State housing complex (104 sustainable units); and the preservation and renovation of over 105 affordable units at Briston Arms Apartments, a former expiring-use property.

The city released the 87-page Cambridge Inclusionary Housing Study, a commissioned report that recommended increasing affordable housing set-aside standards to 20% in new market-rate housing developments; strengthening the inclusionary housing program; and producing family-sized units.

Community development staff helped place over 195 households in affordable inclusionary rental units, including 15 middle-income households. The department also approved inclusionary housing plans for new developments, which will create 110 affordable units.

Just-A-Start’s mediation program assisted over 225 renters, landlords, and condominium owners, and addressed 90 cases of housing-related issues. In addition, Just-a-Start, through the Cambridge Continuum of Care, received a one-year, $278,932 federal rapid re-housing grant that will provide housing search, rental assistance, and tenancy support services to 10 households experiencing homelessness.

The CoC received federal funding to support a multidisciplinary team of street outreach, assessment, and housing navigation staff who will prioritize the most vulnerable homeless clients for limited housing resources.

Five new rental subsidy vouchers were allocated to the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership to house individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in Cambridge.

The city’s Multi-Service Center provided homelessness prevention services to 78 households (162 people), which included assistance with preventing evictions, resolving landlord-tenant disputes, and paying back rent. This work was supported by a federal grant.
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Healthy, Safe, and Affordable Housing Health Priority

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The Cambridge housing market remains one of the most expensive in the nation. The median sale price of a two-bedroom condominium was $629,000 in 2015, up from $575,000 in 2014. According to a Community Development Department analysis, the median asking rent for a two-bedroom apartment was $2,750 a month in 2015. These prices are far beyond what low and moderate-income households can afford.

Meanwhile, the cost of producing affordable housing in Cambridge has risen dramatically in recent years, a problem exacerbated by stiffer competition for increasingly limited state and federal resources. It is also difficult for affordable housing developers to find and secure properties, due to the relative scarcity of sites in Cambridge and competition from market-rate developers. Once a site has been purchased, the permitting process can be challenging, particularly if there is opposition to the project.

For the homeless community, housing challenges are even greater. Families and individuals transitioning out of homelessness often need access to both permanent affordable housing and supportive services, such as ongoing case management and assistance accessing health care and social services. Demand for permanent supportive housing—a model that combines permanent affordable housing with access to supportive services—far exceeds the current supply in Cambridge.

In addition, shifting federal funding priorities have resulted in reduced U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding for supportive services, which is impacting Cambridge’s ability to provide these services to households experiencing or transitioning out of homelessness.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, there is widespread support for affordable housing in Cambridge among city officials, city councillors, and residents. This longstanding commitment is demonstrated by the city’s housing programs, policies, and financial investments that have helped thousands of individuals and families remain in Cambridge since the end of rent control.

Mayor Denise Simmons (pictured) and the Cambridge City Council have been strong proponents of affordable housing. In September 2015, City Council voted to triple the fees that commercial developers must pay the city to help preserve and create affordable housing.
COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Healthy, Safe, and Affordable Housing Health Priority

LOOKING AHEAD

The city will continue to seek opportunities to protect and expand its supply of affordable housing, including creating new affordable housing, preserving expiring-use developments, and expanding existing zoning tools that support affordable housing.

In Year 2, the city will advance recommendations for amending the inclusionary housing provisions of the Cambridge zoning ordinance. The Community Development Department’s housing division will work to advance several new affordable housing developments on recently acquired properties, and continue providing an array of housing services to the community. In addition, the housing division will work with tenants, owners, advocates, and others on preserving the affordability of the remaining housing developments with affordability restrictions at risk of expiring in 2020.

The Cambridge Continuum of Care will implement the coordinated access network and rapid re-housing projects funded by HUD. The group will also apply for over $4 million in homeless assistance funds through HUD’s annual Continuum of Care competition.

The Cambridge Public Health Department and the city’s Inspectional Services Department will design a campaign to educate tenants about housing code standards. In addition, the two departments and the city’s Human Rights Commission will publish information on the city’s website about childhood lead poisoning prevention and Massachusetts lead laws. In 2017, the health department will host a workshop for tenants, condo associations, and landlords on how to implement smoke-free policies in multi-unit housing.
Our Work

The Cambridge Public Health Department (CPHD) offers an array of vital services. Some programs respond to urgent health matters, such as investigating foodborne illness outbreaks and treating sick or injured children in the public schools. Others set the stage for a healthy life, such as the Let’s Talk! early childhood literacy program and environmental health services that reduce hazards in homes and neighborhoods.

The department is also a key source of credible information and data on health issues impacting the city. Through health marketing campaigns, data reports, and outreach activities, the department empowers residents to make healthy choices and seeks to engage the public in local health issues.

Finally, the department advocates for change and develops policies that improve the health and well-being of all people in Cambridge. This work ranges from promulgating health regulations to contributing to the city’s climate change efforts to building coalitions, such as the Cambridge Food and Fitness Policy Council.

Here is a snapshot of health department activities in 2016.

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

**National Accreditation:** The Cambridge Public Health Department’s application for national accreditation was officially accepted by the Public Health Accreditation Board in July. The department also completed its quality improvement plan; worked with partner organizations on community health improvement plan strategies identified for implementation in Year 1 (July 2015–June 2016); and developed a Year 2 action plan.

**National Leadership:** Claude Jacob, Chief Public Health Officer, began his year-long term (July 2016–June 2017) as president of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), the national organization for the country’s 2,800 local health departments.

**COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION**

|335| Communicable disease reports that required follow up by public health nursing and epidemiology staff in 2016. In addition to routine investigations, nursing and epidemiology staff responded to a large mumps outbreak, a measles exposure at a Cambridge shopping mall, and multiple food-borne illness cases.|

|835| People who received free flu shots from health department staff at public flu clinics, homeless shelters, and other venues in fall 2016.|
Our Work

1,979 Patient visits to the Schipellite Chest Center at Cambridge Hospital for evaluation and treatment of latent and active tuberculosis in 2016. The Cambridge tuberculosis program is operated by the health department. CPHD public health nurses also made home visits to Cambridge residents with active or suspect TB, and began offering tuberculosis testing to the public in fall 2016.

Mumps Outbreak: Sixty-six mumps cases were confirmed in the Harvard community between Feb. 29 and Aug. 31. The department worked with Harvard University Health Services and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to facilitate diagnosis and laboratory testing, develop public health messaging, and conduct contact tracing. CPHD staff interviewed over 50 people with suspected or confirmed mumps, and over 150 of their close contacts.

160 People at Cambridge homeless shelters who were immunized against meningococcal disease by CPHD nurses and Cambridge-Somerville Healthcare for the Homeless staff. The on-site vaccination clinics, which ran from March to July, were organized as a precautionary measure after five people in the Boston homeless community were diagnosed with the disease.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Early Literacy: To support parents in talking and reading with young children, the Agenda for Children Literacy Initiative, through its Let’s Talk! program, distributed 8,871 children’s books to families and childcare providers, including 300 multilingual books funded through the city’s Participatory Budgeting initiative; made home and maternity ward visits to 880 families with newborns; led 47 workshops for parents and childcare providers; organized StoryWalks and multi-session playgroups for young children; and co-organized Family Literacy Fun Day and the third season of Cambridge Book Bike.

The literacy initiative’s Pathways to Family Success program serves low-income immigrant parents and their elementary school-aged children, with a focus on family engagement and family literacy. During two program cycles offered in 2016, staff organized 27 parenting and family literacy activities for 26 families. Six Pathways families participated in a “PhotoVoice” project in which they described the program’s positive impact on their lives using photographs and words.

This poster was featured in the Pathways to Family Success PhotoVoice Exhibit at City Hall.
Our Work

Healthy Eating and Active Living: The Cambridge SNAP Match Coalition, led by the health department, raised $22,000 in 2016 to help residents with low incomes afford to buy fresh, local food at Cambridge farmers markets. In addition, the department’s Healthy Market Program continued working with four local convenience stores to promote healthy foods and beverages.

Staff supported the city’s Safe Routes to School Program by securing funding for a middle school cycling training program; collecting data on how Cambridge high school students travel to school; and assisting with events.

The department awarded ten $500 mini-grants in May to school programs and other groups to develop activities that promote healthy eating and physical activity. The mini-grants were co-funded by CPHD and Cambridge and Somerville Whole Foods Market stores.

Cambridge received a #1 ranking in preventing childhood obesity from Let’s Move! Cities, Towns and Counties, part of former First Lady Michelle Obama’s comprehensive campaign to ensure that kids can grow up healthy. Cambridge was one of four Massachusetts communities and 99 municipalities nationwide to earn a “gold medal” in each of the initiative’s five goal areas.

52 Men who participated in Men’s Health League programs in 2016. The Men’s Health League also played an active role in MENDing cambBRIDGE and local fatherhood initiatives; organized a “Boys to Men” leadership brunch; and co-hosted the annual Hoops ‘N’ Health sports tournament and health fair, which attracted over 600 people, including 240 players.

The Cambridge Dads initiative, a collaboration between the literacy initiative and the Center for Families, launched a “Read Up! Show Up! Speak Up!” discussion series and a podcast for fathers in 2016.
Our Work

Substance Abuse Prevention: OPEN (Overdose Prevention and Education Network), a four-city coalition led by the health department, shared timely information about opioid prevention, intervention, and treatment at community events and through its website, Twitter account, and e-newsletter; produced a public service announcement on safe medication disposal; participated in Cambridge medication “take-back” events; and organized OPEN’s second annual stakeholder strategy session.

Epidemiology staff continued developing a local opioid overdose surveillance system. In 2016, the team collected and analyzed real-time data from Pro EMS, monthly data from Cambridge Health Alliance, and annual data from AIDS Action Committee’s Needle Exchange and Overdose Prevention Program. Data summary reports will be available to the public in 2017.

To reduce underage drinking in bars and restaurants, the department gave 21 Proof trainings to 154 bartenders, waiters, managers, and owners of Cambridge establishments licensed to pour alcohol. The department also began implementing two separate federal grants aimed at reducing prescription drug misuse and underage drinking, respectively, among youth in the Cambridge Public Schools.

Violence Prevention: The department co-led MENding camBRIDGE, a men’s leadership group that engages men in challenging stereotypes around masculinity and becoming active allies in working to end gender-based violence. Together with this group and city partners, CPHD organized Cambridge White Ribbon Day events in March and the city’s domestic violence vigil in October.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

Local Emergency Preparedness: Staff participated in a 10-month National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) program that mentors new preparedness managers and provides them with the tools, resources, and state and federal connections to navigate the complex landscape of public health preparedness.

In September, the department completed a state-approved public health emergency preparedness work plan and related action plan. As part of this work, staff conducted an emergency dispensing site (EDS) activation drill with city partners to measure response time to an incident requiring the rapid distribution of vaccines and medication; and conducted an EDS facilities set-up drill at a CPHD flu clinic.

Regional Preparedness: Under a new agreement with the state, Cambridge Health Alliance became the sponsoring agency for the newly formed Region 4AB Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition. The Cambridge Public Health Department served as the host agency from 2003 through June 30, 2016 for the health departments in the 27 communities that comprised Emergency Preparedness Region 4B.

People who completed Mental Health First Aid training in 2016. The trainings were facilitated by health department staff.
Our Work

**Trauma Response:** As a member and facilitator of the Cambridge Community Response Network, the department responded to two gun-related incidents in the Port neighborhood by convening community meetings and connecting those impacted to trauma, behavioral health, and counseling services. In response to the Cambridge fire, the department established a “fast track” protocol for connecting affected residents to Cambridge Health Alliance’s Department of Psychiatry.

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

**150** Home visits by Cambridge-Somerville Healthy Homes staff to families of children with asthma and elevated lead levels who reside in Cambridge and surrounding communities.

**Lead Poisoning Prevention:** The department assisted the Cambridge Public Schools in its efforts to ensure that all water fountains and faucets in the public schools were below the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) “action level” for lead in drinking water. Staff also produced a CCTV public service announcement about testing young children for elevated lead levels.

**Cambridge Fire Recovery:** Environmental health staff provided guidance to residents and city departments on food safety and indoor air quality, and advised the Inspectional Services Department on proper management of asbestos-containing debris and other building materials.

**Climate Change:** The department held a climate change workshop with representatives from city departments, hospitals, and community organizations to prioritize strategies for addressing the needs of people most vulnerable to rising temperatures, flooding, and other local climate change scenarios. Findings will inform the forthcoming Cambridge Climate Change Preparedness and Resilience Plan.

**Mosquito-Borne Disease:** Fifteen residents statewide tested positive for West Nile virus in 2016, including three Cambridge residents. CPHD prevention efforts included ensuring that over 7,000 storm drains on city and university property were treated with larvicide; overseeing the posting of over 70 mosquito advisory signs in designated parks and playgrounds; and publishing regular updates on the department’s website and Twitter page.

The East Middlesex Mosquito Control Project, which provides mosquito control services to Cambridge, began surveillance for the Asian tiger mosquito (Aedes albopictus) in 2016. This mosquito species has been detected in small numbers in the Boston area and can transmit the Zika, chikungunya, and dengue viruses.
Our Work

REGULATORY

1,019 Licenses and permits issued in 2016 related to laboratory biosafety, laboratory animals, indoor ice rinks, tanning salons, body art, bodywork, burials, and funeral directors.

Biotechnology: The department issued 128 laboratory biosafety permits to firms and research institutions conducting regulated investigational or manufacturing activities in Cambridge. This was the most rapid increase in permits issued since the city’s Recombinant DNA Technology Ordinance took effect in 1977.

Medical Marijuana: The department drafted a local regulation for medical marijuana dispensaries in coordination with the city’s community development and law departments. CPHD staff will be responsible for oversight and enforcement of the regulation, which will strengthen local accountability; address affordability and mobility concerns among customers; and specify enhanced health and safety requirements for medical marijuana dispensaries.

Urban Agriculture: As part of the Cambridge Food and Fitness Policy Council’s effort to develop a comprehensive urban agriculture policy for the city, staff solicited input from people with bee sting allergies; drafted hen-keeping and beekeeping public health regulations; organized a focus group with commercial urban farming experts and city staff to better understand how to regulate certain farming practices; and helped secure a $20,000 grant to evaluate the evidence-based health benefits of urban agriculture.

SCHOOL HEALTH

44,127 Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) student visits to School Health Program* nurses for illness, injury, medication administration, and medical procedures during the 2015–2016 academic year. School nurses also cared for 1,020 children diagnosed with a physical or developmental condition.

Vision & Hearing: School nurses provided vision screenings to 3,879 students (resulting in 570 referrals for care), hearing screenings to 3,096 students (resulting in 48 referrals), and postural screenings to 1,534 students (resulting in 240 referrals) during the 2015–2016 academic year.

* School health services are provided to the Cambridge Public Schools through a collaborative agreement with the Cambridge Public Health Department.
Our Work

2,907 Cambridge school children (pre-K–4) screened for tooth decay by the department’s Healthy Smiles program during the 2015–2016 academic year. Of these students, 23% were referred for treatment.

100% of all CPS kindergartners met state immunization requirements by early October 2016, including seven children with medical or religious exemptions.

Healthy Eating: The department supported “Breakfast in the Classroom” at Fletcher Maynard Academy during the 2015–2016 academic year by handling program logistics, conducting classroom observations, and designing and implementing parent and teacher surveys. CPHD nutrition staff also conducted eight elementary and upper school cafeteria “taste tests” of a Haitian chicken dish, as well as cooking activities for families at two “Let’s Cook and Move” events.

Clinical Oversight: The School Health Program continued to provide health care oversight and clinical guidance to three Cambridge nonpublic schools, as well as city-managed preschools and camps.

A Fletcher Maynard Academy student enjoys breakfast in the classroom.

OTHER

CPHD launched its departmental Twitter account (@CambHealth) in April 2016. Top tweets addressed substance abuse, West Nile virus, flu clinics, extreme weather, emergency preparedness, domestic violence, suicide prevention, community events, and social justice.
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