

Green Retrofit Initiative

Spotlight on Smoke-Free Housing



Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation & Urban Edge



Our Stories

Two Boston-based nonprofit affordable housing providers enrolled in [Local Initiatives Support Corporation \(LISC\) Boston's Green Retrofit Initiative](#) — [Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation \(JPNDC\)](#) and [Urban Edge](#) — have taken steps to adopt smoke-free housing policies.

At JPNDC the effort began in 2011 when their property manager [Peabody Properties](#) secured a [Boston Public Health Commission](#) grant to support implementation at three family developments and three elderly properties. Initial resident surveys showed that over 75% of residents wanted to live in a smoke-free property. This input formed the basis for resident meetings to roll out the program, which included access to free smoking cessation services and resources. Lease addendums added during the annual income recertification process finalized the new requirements. The resident response has been very positive. "My grandchildren who struggle with asthma are much happier visiting me since the building went smoke-free," explained one resident. [Health Resources in Action \(HRiA\)](#) and the [Public Health Advocacy Institute \(PHAI\) at Northeastern University](#) also provided critical support to get the program up and running.

The success has led JPNDC to expand smoke-free policies throughout its portfolio of over 400 homes. Peabody Properties has implemented similar policies at more than 45 properties and is actively transitioning 18 additional properties – totaling 5,200 units that will be smoke-free. Beyond the health benefits, the changes reduce fire risks and unit turnover costs.

Resident Surveys Support Action

In 2013 Urban Edge was deeply engaged in planning a renovation of 65 units of family housing at the Roxbury-based Walnut Washington Apartments. As

"Given the positive response, we are moving to take our portfolio smoke-free."

*Marianne McLaughlin,
Asset Manager, JPNDC*

Smoke-Free Housing

- Prohibits smoking in common areas, residential units, and on nearby grounds
- Is legal & nondiscriminatory

The Benefits

- Saves \$1200 to \$3000 in unit turnover costs. ¹
- Reduces cigarette fire risk, the leading cause of residential fires. ²
- Promotes wellness by reducing asthma and allergy risks. ³

"Providing healthy environments and promoting wellness is central to our mission."

Lynne Sales, Director of Resident Services, Peabody Properties



COST OF REHABILITATING A RESIDENTIAL UNIT

- Nonsmoking
- Light Smoking
- Heavy Smoking

General Cleaning	\$240	\$500	\$720
Paint	\$170	\$225	\$480
Flooring	\$50	\$950	\$1,425
Appliances	\$60	\$75	\$490
Bathroom	\$40	\$60	\$400
TOTAL	\$560	\$1,810	\$3,515

Data reflect surveys from housing authorities and subsidized housing facilities in New England. Collected and reported by Smoke-Free Housing New England, 2009.



“The process was resident-driven. We also anticipate lower unit turnover painting and cleaning costs.”

Robert Torres, Director of Community Engagement, Urban Edge



part of the initial survey to better understand resident needs, the team included a new question asking about interest in a smoke-free living environment. The results were overwhelmingly positive; 80% of respondents said they preferred to live in a smoke-free building. Driven by the residents, the Urban Edge team and its property manager [WinnResidential](#) discussed the smoke-free initiative at monthly resident meetings, drafted a policy and lease addendum, and provided residents with access to smoking cessation support and resources through [MassHealth](#). Critical to the success, according to Detra McGovern of WinnResidential, were tools provided by the Boston Public Health Commission. The program went into effect on January 1, 2014 with a soft rollout, and full implementation in August 2014 to coincide with the end of construction. The response has been positive across the board.

Urban Edge also offered financial counseling services to help residents understand the financial impact of smoking. One resident learned that they were spending more per month on cigarettes (\$300) than rent (\$280). This counseling, along with MassHealth cessation support, helped the resident to quit and use the savings to pay down back rent, improving their financial security. Urban Edge is currently using resident surveys to guide future smoke-free decisions. A newly completed building at Jackson Commons is also smoke-free, creating healthier environments for 37 families.

“I was surprised that so many residents were willing to jump in feet first. The statistics about asthma were helpful to explain the rationale, and the supports provided for smoking cessation really made a difference,” explained Robert Torres, Urban Edge’s Director of Community Engagement.

Boston Partners

[LISC Boston](#), [HRiA](#), [PHAI](#), the [Boston Public Health Commission](#), and the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#) provide resources to assist affordable housing owners in adopting green and healthy property management practices that reduce operating expenses and create healthier and more comfortable living environments for residents and staff.

Green Retrofit Initiative

The [Green Retrofit Initiative](#) is a program designed to help affordable housing owners navigate our state’s utility and clean energy programs. In partnership with building science expert [New Ecology, Inc.](#), LISC Boston has worked with 50 owners statewide to implement energy efficiency, renewable technologies, water conservation, smoke-free housing, integrated pest management, and green cleaning. For more information, contact Mike Davis at mdavis@lisc.org (617-338-0411) or go to bit.ly/liscgreen.

References

1. Smoke-Free Housing New England, 2009 & WinnResidential, 2016.
2. NY Office of Fire Prevention and Control, Revised Regulatory Impact Statement, 2003.
3. US Surgeon General, Secondhand Smoke Exposure in the Home, 2006.

Prepared by

[Tohn Environmental Strategies, LLC](#)

Local Initiatives Support Corporation, 95 Berkeley St #301, Boston, MA 02116 | bostonlisc.org