



**For Immediate Release**

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**Partners Announce Project to Combat Infant Mortality in Toledo Neighborhoods**  
*Ohio Department of Health Invests \$850,000 in Healthy Lucas County Project*

Toledo, OH – The Ohio Department of Health is investing \$850,000 into a Healthy Lucas County project to combat infant mortality in Toledo’s central city area neighborhoods that includes working with residents to determine what they need to improve health and well-being, the partners announced while marking September as National Infant Mortality Awareness Month.

The project also involves recruiting 150 pregnant women who live in seven census tracts in the 43604, 43608, 43609, 43611 and 43620 ZIP codes into home-visiting programs to support women in delivering healthy babies. These women also are eligible for rental assistance for up to 12 months and up to \$500 for transportation, car care and utilities.

The grant funding is part of a nearly \$40 million investment in Ohio’s 2018-19 budget to address infant mortality statewide. The Healthy Lucas County project was one of three chosen for the Ohio Department of Health’s Infant Vitality Community Intensive Pilot Project.

“The most effective infant mortality reduction strategies are implemented at the local level,” said Sandra Oxley, Chief of Maternal, Child and Family Health at the Ohio Department of Health. “Working with local partners to identify evidence-based strategies provides the greatest opportunity to impact the community.”

The grant was awarded to the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio, which coordinates the project and the Healthy Lucas County coalition of community health improvement organizations. Key partners in the project include Mercy Health, Neighborhood Health Association, ProMedica, Toledo-Lucas County Health Department, their home-visiting programs and the Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB care coordination system.

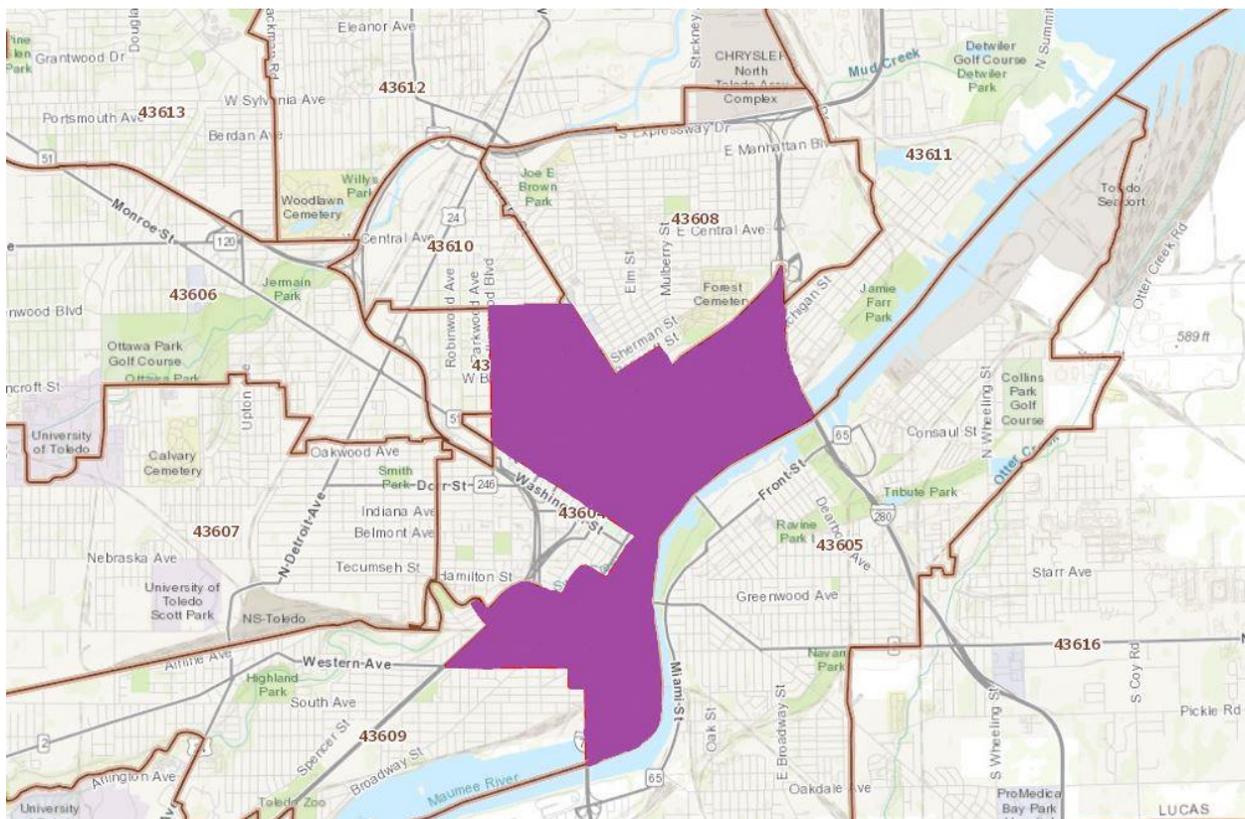
As part of the project, four AmeriCorps service members are being hired to help work with central city area residents to determine what they need to improve health and well-being. Project partners also are inviting key organizational and resident leaders to take part in collaborative decision making by serving on Healthy Lucas County’s Neighbor Advisory Council.

“We really want to understand what these neighborhoods need to thrive, and that starts by getting input from our neighbors and truly listening to their concerns and suggestions,” said Selena Coley, project coordinator at the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio’s Northwest Ohio Pathways HUB.

In 2016, the infant mortality rate for African American babies in Lucas County was 14.2 per 1,000 live births, nearly three times as high as the infant mortality rate for white Lucas County babies at 5.0 per 1,000 live births, according to Ohio Department of Health statistics.

The Healthy Lucas County project enhances existing efforts by home-visiting programs to reduce preterm birth rates and low birth weight rates in the seven census tracts, which were chosen after Lucas County data related to infant mortality was assessed. More than half of the 11,372 residents in these census tracts are African American, and 78% of female residents are living below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

The area in the map below indicates the location of the project’s seven Lucas County census tracts in Toledo: 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 103.



For more information about Healthy Lucas County, please visit [healthylucascounty.org](http://healthylucascounty.org)