



## The Conditions of Home: Health, Safety, and Access

### CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

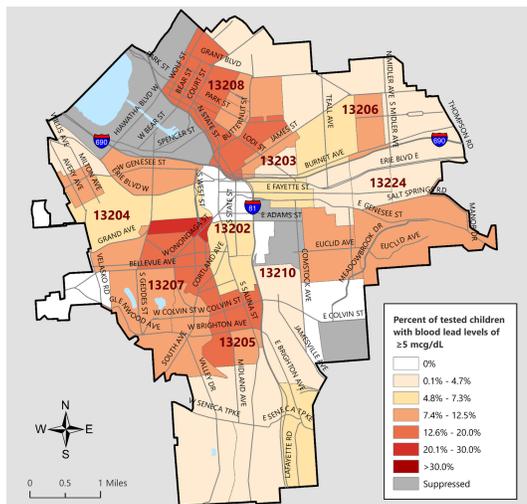
The 2024-26 Lender Center for Social Justice Student Fellows are **Tommy DaSilva** (Public Health), **Darla Hobbs** (Pan African Studies), **Jamea Johnson** (Public Health), **Shreya Potluri** (School of Architecture), and **Sabrina Lussier** (Citizenship & Civic Engagement, Geography, and Environmental Sustainability & Policy), working under the guidance of **Professor Miriam Mutambudzi**, 2024-26 Lender Center for Social Justice Faculty Fellow. Dr. Mutambudzi is an Associate Professor in the Maxwell School's Public Health Department, where her teaching and research focuses on the social determinants of health affecting vulnerable populations. She also serves as a Faculty Affiliate of the Center for Aging and Policy Studies (CAPS), the Aging Studies Institute, and the Maxwell School Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion.

### INTRODUCTION TO THURSDAY MORNING ROUNDTABLE (TMR)

Syracuse University's Lender Center for Social Justice and the Office of Community Engagement are co-sponsoring the relaunch of the **Thursday Morning Roundtable (TMR)**, celebrating its 60th anniversary as a trusted public space for local learning, dialogue, and civic engagement on issues that matter to the community. This fall, TMR returns to in-person gatherings with a new **2025-2026 series: "Just Syracuse: Conversations for a Thriving City,"** featuring rotating community venues, diverse local voices, and on-demand professional recordings. We begin our community conversations with a focus on the complex issue of housing in Syracuse, addressing themes like affordability, health, safety and access, while sharing success stories and new developments.

## REDLINING'S IMPACT ON ACCESS:

The highway corridor reinforces the legacy of redlining implemented through the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) maps and the Federal Housing Administration's (FHA) lending practices beginning in 1934. Because of racial segregation, minority neighborhoods were seen as undesirable for investments by developers and business owners, leading to systematic denial of mortgages and insurance which deprived residents of access to resources and economic opportunities. This segregation continues to have substantial impact on affected areas, including dangerous levels of lead exposure.



Onondaga County Health Department Lead Poisoning Prevention Program Elevated Blood Levels Among Tested Children by Census Tract Syracuse, NY, 2024

## BARRIERS TO ACCESS:

1

### FOOD

**Food deserts** are areas that lack access to affordable and nutritious food options. Areas located west of the highway have limited access to major supermarkets and residents are often unable to access them consistently. According to the United States Census, approximately 30-32% of households in affected neighborhoods **lack access to a vehicle**, which causes many to rely on walking and the Syracuse transportation system (Centro).

2

### GOOD HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS

The disproportionate **exposure to pollution and hazardous environments** causes environmental injustice for minority communities who have been historically excluded from equitable infrastructure and environmental protections. This is evident in Syracuse where redlining and subsequent urban renewal placed I-81 and multiple industrial sites (including a waste plant, and SU's steam station) adjacent to historically marginalized neighborhoods.

In addition to pollution, **lead poisoning** remains a significant concern for individuals living in unsafe dwellings that were built before 1978 when lead-based paint was still in use. Approximately 65% of these older dwellings are occupied by low-income and Black residents, where accountability for lead remediation among landlords remains limited.

3

### HEALTHCARE

In 2022, a Community Health Survey indicated that residents felt difficulty getting appointments with healthcare providers and waiting long periods of time. Accessing healthcare providers physically and connecting with them face-to-face has proved to be an adversity for many.

Health insurance coverage rates have improved in the past 10 years in Onondaga County. Nonetheless, recent changes in Medicaid qualification and renewal processes have resulted in **thousands of Central New Yorkers losing coverage**, including an estimated 9,000 in Onondaga County.

Source: Onondaga County Health Department (2022). *Community Health Survey Report, 2022*. Syracuse, NY.