



MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN



**Community Foundation**  
for Greater Buffalo

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR GENEROSITY.



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 27, 2017

Contact: Sharon Linstedt

(716) 851-4246 / slinstedt@city-buffalo.com

---

**MAYOR BROWN, ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE POLONCARZ AND  
THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR GREATER BUFFALO MARK  
NATIONAL LEAD POISONING PREVENTION WEEK**

---

*New Renovate Right! billboards, to increase public awareness of  
Lead Safe Work Practices, make debut throughout City of Buffalo and Erie County*

Buffalo, NY – Mayor Byron W. Brown joined with Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz and representatives of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo to unveil new billboards to educate City of Buffalo and Erie County residents on lead-safe renovation practices.

The 60 ‘Renovate Right!’ billboards, which include 30 in the City Buffalo, are aimed at both homeowners and tenants making any renovations which could disturb pre-1978 lead-based paint. The billboards were put up this week to mark National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, which runs from October 22-28. They will be posted in rotating locations through late January 2018.

“What might seem like a minor project - just scraping a door frame or a window sill to remove chipped or peeling paint before giving it a fresh coat - has the potential to spread dangerous lead dust, which could cause lead poisoning,” Mayor Brown said. “We hope these new billboards cause do-it-yourselfers to visit the updated WipeOutLead.com website, or call the Erie County Department of Health at 961-6800, to learn some very easy, lead-safe work practices to prevent lead poisoning.”

There is currently a schedule of eight free, 6-hour Lead-Safe Work Practice classes scheduled between November 1, 2017 and March 28, 2018. Pre-registration is required. Full course information is available at [www.wipeoutlead.com](http://www.wipeoutlead.com)

The new billboards are part of a continuing partnership between the City of Buffalo, Erie County and the Community Foundation to tackle lead poisoning problems. The partnership was formally announced in May 2016 to leverage the skills and assets of the two governments, and the nonprofit organization, in the war on lead.

Mayor Brown also announced today that the City’s Office of Permit and Inspection Services (OPIS) personnel conducted lead inspection weekend blitzes over the past year to crack down on owners of residences with exterior peeling and chipping paint. The inspections targeted the five Buffalo zip codes where children have been found to have the highest blood lead levels.

OPIS inspectors checked 5,158 structures and wrote up notices of violations on 574 properties. The owners of those poorly maintained properties must be brought into compliance or they will be referred to the City of Buffalo Housing Court. If found guilty, the property owner is subject to a fine of up to \$1500 and/or fifteen days in jail.

The ordinance change also requires that landlords who are cited for lead-based paint hazards must take a federal government-approved Repair, Renovation, and Painting certification course.

Those who are found to be in violation are also referred to the Erie County Department of Health, triggering Erie County monitoring for both exterior and interior health violations, focusing on children with elevated blood lead levels.

Under tougher regulations for owners of one and two-family rental units and property managers enacted in 2016, the City has also collected over 10,000 lead notification forms, signed by tenants of Buffalo rental properties, which attest they were informed their dwelling was built before 1978 and is likely to have lead-based paint. Landlords who failed to return completed forms, or whose forms contained errors, will receive a second notice, and be subject to removal from the City's Rental Registry for non-compliance.

"The Renovate Right! billboards are another tool in our box to expand the fight against lead poisoning and will be a vital part of raising awareness on the dangers of lead for homeowners and renters. Erie County continues to invest in anti-lead efforts, with a 5-year investment of \$3.75 million to provide personnel to inspect more homes and handle more cases of children with elevated blood lead levels," said County Executive Poloncarz. "Commitment and partnership are the keys to addressing this issue and I thank the City of Buffalo and Community Foundation for joining us in the fight."

Simultaneously, The Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo is funding a Community Action Plan on Lead Poisoning. The Action Plan will be a collaborative community strategy on lead poisoning that will include recommendations for an informed strategy to eliminate lead poisoning in our community.

"The Community Foundation is pleased to partner with the City and the County, as well as 43 members of the WNY Coalition to Prevent Childhood Lead Poisoning. Together we have worked to increase awareness of lead poisoning and the importance of working safely when renovating, repairing and painting older homes. Lead poisoning is 100 percent preventable and we are determined to eliminate it from our community," said Cara Matteliano, Vice President, Community Impact, Community Foundation.

"With additional support from foundations and the United Way, we have commissioned a thorough study of the conditions that generate lead poisoning in Buffalo, and we will release the recommendations of that Community Action Plan on Lead Poisoning in the next six to eight weeks," Matteliano added.

Since 2010, the Community Foundation has been working diligently with the Western New York Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning to educate the public on home health hazards and lead poisoning. Lead poisoning can lead to permanent developmental delays, lifelong learning difficulties and low I.Q. scores.

The Community Foundation, with its partners, wants to ensure that every child in our region is able to live in a healthy home through the Wipe Out Lead Campaign.

The City's OPIS has also been handing out lead-safe brochures to contractors, tenants and homeowners, who come to City Hall seeking permits or asking questions about renovations.

The City has also created a new Renovate Right! brochure with the same theme as the new billboards. Those brochures will be distributed at City community centers, local hardware stores and block clubs.

Under the multi-pronged initiative to educate homeowners, renters, and landlords about lead-based paint hazards, the City has distributed more than 250,000 lead information flyers, in eight languages, via City of Buffalo Community Centers, Citizens Services Clean Sweeps, Youth Services, the Office of New Americans, Buffalo Public Schools, and dozens of community organizations. That education effort is continuing.

For more information on the dangers of leads and how to prevent lead exposure and poisoning, visit: [www.wipeoutlead.com](http://www.wipeoutlead.com) or call the Erie County Health Department's lead section at 961-6800 (Option 4).

City of Buffalo residents with lead questions or concerns can call the Citizens Service Office at 311.

###