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## LOCAL NEWS

More: [Get To Know 2nd Ward Candidates](#) & [Taskforce Holding Second Annual Summit](#)

### [Need To Get The Lead Out In GR! Older Homes Hold The Biggest Threat](#)

The Grand Rapids Times  
1-22-2016  
By Rick Pulliam

**Grand Rapids** – One of the biggest questions asked by Grand Rapids residents is what are the chances of the city of Grand Rapids having problems with lead in our water system similar to that of Flint, Michigan?

"It is highly unlikely, but the unique thing about Flint is that they went from putting one kind of water to another," said Paul Haan of the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan. "It's kind of like ordering a Coke and the waiter brings you Seven - Up. In Flint, they really changed the chemistry of the water and that's what caused the problem. He added, "In Grand Rapids, we are staying the course to the same the same things that we have done for a long time, as far as how the water utilities treats the water or what they call corrosion control."

Haan went on to say, "We have a really stable program here in Grand Rapids, so it is highly unlikely that we will see anything similar to what Flint is currently going through."

What we see in Grand Rapids, though are children that have high levels of lead from sources identified as houses painted with lead - based paint and the dirt surrounding the houses.

"I don't want to in anyway minimize the situation in Flint because it is a tremendous tragedy, but when you compare Grand Rapids to Flint, we have a lot more people, which means that we have a lot more lead poisoning cases than Flint," said Haan.

"In 2015, 112 kids under six were lead poisoned in Flint. With the Flint crisis going on, the state is more up - to - date with their data," Haan said. "The year that we have data for in Grand Rapids is 2013 and in Kent County about 550 kids were lead poisoned. We have a lot of lead poisoned kids here, but it's just different circumstances."

Most of the City of Grand Rapids is considered high - risk, and most of the concentration tends to be in certain zip codes of certain neighborhoods with older housing, particularly distressed neighborhoods.

"You don't see kids lead - poisoned far out on the northwest or northeast side of town where the housing is newer; and you don't see a lot of kids lead poisoned in the Heritage Hills area because the houses are impeccably maintained," said Han. "In working class neighborhoods, we tend to see the number of lead poisoned kids goes up, particularly southeast and southwest."

Anyone who is living in Grand Rapids and has a child that is one or two years of age should be have the child tested for lead poisoning every year.

Grand Rapids, MI

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By Alex Thomas

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By Pastor David May, Assistant to the President

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If they have never been tested and are under the age of six, then they should also be tested.

"If you currently are in the WIC program, they will do a blood test or when you bring your child to a regular doctor's appointment, ask for the test." Haan also advises, "If you lived in the South when your baby was little and now you are living in Grand Rapids and the baby is three - years - old, then that child should be tested for lead poisoning as well," he said.

For more information about lead poisoning and testing, please visit [www.gettheleadoutgr.com](http://www.gettheleadoutgr.com).

"I also want people to know that the State of Michigan has money to fix houses preventatively before kids are poisoned; or if kids are affected, we can get money to families to fix their houses. Landlords are eligible also, and they can get the lead issues taken care of in the house. The program is currently funded through the State of Michigan. We used to have federal funding through the city of Grand Rapids, but we can get the state to help people out."

Those who may have questions or concerns can give Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan a call at 616 - 241 - 3300.

"The situation in Flint is terrible and unfortunate, but it has kind of awakened a sleeping giant — that is the number of kids poisoned in Flint, and in the last few years, the more than 5,000 kids lead - poisoned in Michigan. It is time to pay attention to this. Leaders have forgotten over the years that this affects communities."

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### [Get To Know 2nd Ward Candidates](#)

The Grand Rapids Times  
1-22-2016

In advance of the Grand Rapids City Commission's public interviews with 2nd Ward Commission Applicants next Tuesday afternoon, City Clerk Darlene O'Neal has posted the full applications and supplemental information supplied by each of the 11 applicants on the City's Web site.

Residents wanting to learn more about the candidates can view the PDF containing the background material at <http://grcity.us/Pages/11-applicants-vie-for-vacant-2nd-Ward-Commission-seat.aspx>.

The City Commission is expected to conduct a series of initial interviews with the following candidates beginning on Tuesday, Jan. 26 from 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. in the City Hall Ninth Floor City Commission Chambers:

John A. George, Joseph D. Jones, Terrence P. McGee, William A. Mohr, Stephanie L. Mull, James R. Rinck, Jared T. Secor, Tamara J. VandenBerg, Robert VanRavenswaay, Louis M. Wagner, Michael C. Zalewski.

The meeting will be televised live on the Grand Rapids Information Network, Channel 26.

Based on results of those interviews, the top three ranked candidates (announced on Jan. 27) will participate in a Town Hall meeting on Monday, Feb. 1 at the GRPS University, 1400 Fuller Ave NE, 7 p.m. Residents can speak about the remaining top candidates for the office at a 7 p.m. public hearing Tuesday, Feb. 9. Following the public hearing, the City Commission will conduct second interviews with the top candidates at its Tuesday, Feb. 16 City Commission special meeting.

The entire seven-week process wraps up on Tuesday, Feb. 23 as the City Commission will debate and then take a formal vote to appoint a Commissioner for the Second Ward at the 7 p.m. evening Commission meeting. The new Second Ward Commissioner will be sworn in and take his or her seat at the same meeting.

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### [Taskforce Holding Second Annual Summit](#)

The Grand Rapids Times  
1-22-2016

**GRAND RAPIDS** — The Strengthening Neighborhoods Taskforce is announcing the registration is now open to the free Strong Neighborhoods, Strong City: Inclusion and

243-3538

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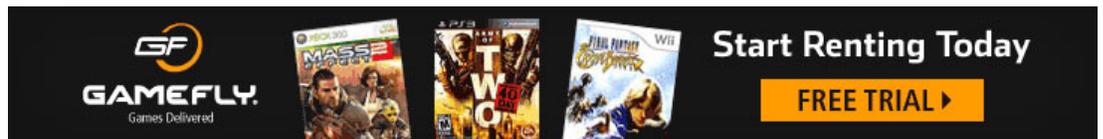
Painting By Jeff  
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247-8722

Community Building Grand Rapids Neighborhood Summit.

Held in partnership with the Grand Rapids Public School District, the event is scheduled for Friday, March 11 from 9:45 a.m. until 4 p.m. at GRPS University at 1400 Fuller Ave NE.

The daylong conference, organized with direction from Taskforce co - chairs Jorge Gonzalez, Grace Johnson, Rachel Lee and Jamiel Robinson, is open to the public and will feature breakout workshops and breakout session topics focusing on affordable housing, schools, economic and community empowerment and race and equity.

For more information on this free event or to RSVP, please visit <http://summit.grcity.us> or confirm attendance via e-mail at [summit@grand-rapids.mi.us](mailto:summit@grand-rapids.mi.us). Lunch will be provided and seating is limited, so the courtesy of an RSVP by February 26 is requested.

A black banner for GameFly. On the left is the GameFly logo with the tagline "Games Delivered". In the center are three game covers: Mass Effect 3, Tekken 6, and Final Fantasy XIII-2. On the right, the text "Start Renting Today" is displayed above a yellow button that says "FREE TRIAL ▶".

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