

Building a Community

Below Level Differentiation

■ Reading and Discussion Tips:

- To introduce the concept of neighborhood revitalization at the start of Day 1, ask students to brainstorm what they think of when they hear the word *community*. Have students share what they think makes a good community, and explain how neighborhood institutions or features (like litter-free streets or safe parks) help foster their sense of community. As students offer information, record their ideas in a concept web on the board. Write the word *community* in the center of the board and transcribe students' answers in circles around it.
- If time allows, read "A Helping Hand for Hard Times" together in class. Encourage students to raise their hands when they have a question or need clarification. Pause to discuss each question before continuing to read the article.

■ Activity Tips:

- Instead of requiring each group to write a 1–2 page paper before making the poster, have groups make a short, informal outline to organize their information.
- Students may need more class time to research their topics and make their posters. Allow students an extra day to prepare their posters so that more of Day 2 can be spent researching the community improvement initiative (CII).
- During the class discussion on Day 3, have the class scribe take his or her notes on the blackboard so that the rest of the class can follow along.

■ Assessment Tips:

- In lieu of assigning a grade for the paper, observe students as they work together during class time. Determine grades as a group based on students' cooperation and effort, in addition to how well they demonstrate an understanding of their CII.

Above Level Differentiation

■ Reading and Discussion Tips:

- Ask students to investigate the history of neighborhood revitalization further. Using government websites and other resources, have students make a timeline demarking important legislation and events that occurred as urban renewal in the 1950s transformed into the neighborhood revitalization initiatives today.
- Have students write a report on the Twin Cities' neighborhood revitalization video. In the report, students should briefly summarize the video and then pick one aspect of the Twin Cities' project to analyze (such as the collaboration of the mayors from the two cities). Students should explain how and why this aspect was beneficial to the Twin Cities' revitalization efforts.

■ Activity Tips:

- Ask each student group to give a formal presentation of their CII and poster. Students should review proper presentation etiquette, and each group member should be responsible for presenting an aspect of the project.
- Instead of a group paper, have each student individually compose a paper for Part 1 of the activity.
- Contact an individual who has a role in promoting community wellbeing (such as the mayor, city council member, police officer, or park ranger) and ask him or her to speak to the class about how his or her job helps keep the community safe, clean, unified, etc. Emphasize to students that even after a neighborhood is revitalized, it takes the care and effort of many individuals to maintain community health. After the presentation, students should write a reflective essay on what they learned.

■ Optional Extension Tips:

- Encourage student leaders to take charge of the newspaper assignment by becoming "editor in chief" of their group. These students should delegate tasks to their group members that mimic a real newspaper, choosing a person to do layout design, photography, proofreading, etc.

Building a Community

Grades 9–12

Objectives

Students will:

- learn about Habitat for Humanity's Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative and how it works to improve communities.
- read about the process of neighborhood revitalization and how small, localized efforts can combine to create widespread change.
- use skills of collaboration and cooperation to work with a group to make a poster depicting one aspect of neighborhood revitalization.

Educational Standards

Common Core State Standards

Literacy in History/Social Studies

- Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies.

National Civics Standards

- How can citizens take part in civic life?

National U.S. History Standards

- Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in contemporary United States

Scope

- 3 class periods (45 minutes each)

Materials

- poster board
- scissors
- markers
- access to the Internet for educator use (day 1)
- access to the Internet for student use (day 2)
- **Fact sheet:** Neighborhood Revitalization: Get the Facts
- **Worksheet:** On "A Helping Hand for Hard Times"
- **Worksheet:** Doing Our Part

Lesson Plan

In this lesson, students will learn about Habitat for Humanity's Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NRI) and how it goes beyond simply helping individual homeowners. It takes a broader approach, making contributions that will improve the bonds, station, and morale of an entire community. In groups, students will research a single facet of a hypothetical NRI project in detail and make a wedge-shaped poster on the topic. Student groups will assemble their posters so they create a circle, and they will discuss how individual initiatives together make for holistic, widespread change in a community.

■ Preparation:

Before beginning the lesson:

- Make copies of the fact sheet and the two worksheets.
- Prepare the student posters by purchasing six poster boards. Cut each poster board into a wedge ("pie slice") shape. Use a compass to form the shapes precisely; when the six wedges are placed side by side, they should form a complete circle, with each wedge representing 1/6 of the circle.
- For homework, have students familiarize themselves with Habitat for Humanity and its goals by taking the online "Quick Tour" at http://www.habitat.org/quicktour/0_welcome.htm and browsing the website.
- Ensure that your classroom computer is capable of playing the following video for the class: <http://www.youtube.com/user/tchabitat#p/u/0/p3xlEwoV53k>.
- Arrange for students to use the computer lab for one class period.

■ Procedure:

Day 1 **Distribute and discuss “Neighborhood Revitalization: Get the Facts.” View and discuss the video featuring Habitat for Humanity’s Twin Cities affiliate office and their neighborhood revitalization project.**

1. Pass out copies of “Neighborhood Revitalization: Get the Facts” and give students time to look it over. Use the fact sheet to discuss neighborhood revitalization with students.

- Ask students the following questions: What is neighborhood revitalization? How did neighborhood revitalization grow out of urban renewal, and how do these two movements differ? Why might neighborhood revitalization projects be more successful and/or effective than projects run solely by government agencies? How can individual organizations, like Habitat for Humanity, initiate or contribute to a neighborhood revitalization project? How does a neighborhood revitalization project differ from a project enacted by a single organization?
- Encourage students to reflect on their own community. Ask students: In what ways does your community affect or shape your life? What community areas (such as parks or libraries) do you enjoy? Do you know anyone who contributes to the community, and if so, how does he or she help?

2. On a classroom computer, show students the video found at <http://www.youtube.com/user/tchabitat#p/u/0/p3xlEwoV53k>.

- Ask students to consider how each person or organization featured in the video plays a special role in neighborhood revitalization. What specific values, influence, and perspective does Jeff (from the Neighborhood Council) offer? Pose this same question in regards to Diane (from the City Council), Mayor Rybak (from Minneapolis) and Coleman (from St. Paul), Sue (from Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity), and Dawn (from a community development organization).
- Point out that, as Sue notes in the video, the Carter Work Project was drawn to the Twin Cities because of the collaborative work that was already being

done for Hawthorne and other local communities. Ask students: How does combining efforts from multiple civic groups result in a widened sphere of influence?

3. Distribute the worksheet on “A Helping Hand for Hard Times.” Have students read the Habitat for Humanity article at http://www.habitat.org/hw/decent_housing/Helping_Hand.aspx and fill out the worksheet as homework.

Day 2 **Discuss the worksheet on “A Helping Hand for Hard Times.” Introduce the neighborhood revitalization poster project.**

1. Briefly go over student responses to the worksheet on “A Helping Hand for Hard Times.”

- Ask students to consider how Habitat for Humanity’s primary initiative—building decent and affordable housing accessible to people who currently lack it—led to the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative. How does the NRI reflect and extend Habitat’s existing practice of having community members and future homeowners work at the build site? Even though NRI has a broader scope, what goals do the NRI and Habitat’s core initiative share?

2. Introduce the neighborhood revitalization poster project. Divide students into six groups. Give each group one of the wedge-shaped pieces of poster board, as well as a copy of the “Doing Our Part” worksheet.

- Have each group pick one of the following community improvement initiatives (CII’s):
 - Purchasing and rehabilitating foreclosed houses
 - Building decent and affordable houses
 - Making exterior repairs to homes (see “A Brush with Kindness”)
 - Partnering with AmeriCorps
 - Opening up a ReStore outlet
 - Cleaning and maintaining public areas (parks, school playgrounds, etc.)
- Explain that each group should use the Internet to research their assigned community improvement initiative. Students should fill out the “Doing Our Part”

worksheet to help them direct their research. The final project will have two parts:

- Part 1: Using a word processor, compose a 1–2 page (double-spaced) paper about your CII. Your paper should include a description of your topic, a summary of what your CII does, and an explanation of who your CII primarily affects (individual homeowners, children, homeless people, etc.). Your paper should also address why a community needs your CII—in other words, how a neighborhood is affected when this need is neglected.
- Part 2: Fill out the poster board wedge with information about your CII. Transcribe the main points of the paper onto the poster in bulleted list form. Include a title. Try to make the poster aesthetically pleasing.
- Give students the rest of class to work on their papers and posters, which will be due in class the following day. Encourage students to meet after school to finish the project.

than the sum of its parts; the effects of a broad-based revitalization project can transcend the impact of any individual CII. Ask students how neighborhood revitalization might result in the following:

- increased pride in one’s community
- reduced crime rate
- higher property values
- reduced unemployment
- reduced homelessness
- As the class engages in their discussion, ask one student to volunteer to be the class scribe. The scribe should take notes on the salient points of the discussion as it occurs and submit the notes at the end of class.
- After class, use a black marker to transcribe the discussion notes onto a clean sheet of poster board. In the hallway outside your classroom, hang both the completed circle poster and the discussion notes poster, so that passing students may observe them and learn about neighborhood revitalization.

Day 3 **Students submit their posters. Discuss how individual CII’s contribute to the overall success of a neighborhood revitalization project.**

1. Arrange desks to form a ring around the center of the classroom. Students should first submit their papers and then gather in the middle of the ring with their poster wedges. Groups should arrange their posters together on the floor. Together, the collection of class posters should create a full circle.

2. Engage students in a discussion about the effects of neighborhood revitalization.

- Ask each group to describe to the rest of the class how their CII individually contributes to the community-wide revitalization effort. Then ask students to observe if any two or three CII efforts coincide or complement each other. How can a ReStore complement the effort to rehabilitate foreclosed homes? How can an AmeriCorps partnership coincide with the goal to build decent and affordable homes?
- Point out to students that the whole can be greater

■ Assessment:

When evaluating the group paper, consider:

- are all the necessary elements present?
- is the writing clear and smooth?
- is the depiction of the CII accurate and detailed?

When evaluating the poster discussion, consider:

- did the group demonstrate understanding of how their CII fits into the larger neighborhood revitalization effort?
- did all group members participate in the discussion?

■ Optional Extension:

Ask students to view the list of Habitat for Humanity affiliates participating in the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative at http://www.habitat.org/newsroom/2010archive/06_28_2010_HFHI_NRI_affiliates.aspx. From this list, have each group select an affiliate office in or near your home state. Each group should contact and conduct an interview with a member of that affiliate office. In the interview, students should investigate how community members plan and initiate a real neighborhood revitalization project. Have students ask the following interview questions:

- What needs in the community does your NRI target?
- What organizations (aside from Habitat for Humanity)

are participating in your NRI?

- How are members of the community participating in your NRI?
- What role does the government (federal, state, or local) play in your NRI?
- What are some of the individual projects (painting, house building, etc.) that comprise your NRI?
- How will you measure the success of your NRI?

Encourage students to brainstorm additional questions of their own. After the interview, have groups compose a newspaper article reporting on the affiliate's NRI, using the interview material as the primary source for the article.

If students become inspired to join an NRI, remind them that not all communities currently have NRIs in progress; Habitat for Humanity's initiative is localized at select communities around the country. If your local neighborhoods lack an NRI, remind students that they may still contact their local Habitat for Humanity affiliate office and donate their time to improving the lives of people in their community, one family at a time.

Neighborhood Revitalization: Get the Facts

Neighborhood Revitalization (n):

Strategic plan to improve a neighborhood or community using the combined efforts of concerned neighborhood citizens, community-improvement groups, nonprofits, and/or governmental organizations

Neighborhood Revitalization: A History

- Neighborhood revitalization has its roots in urban renewal. Urban renewal was a government-led initiative that focused on improving overpopulated and troubled urban areas. In 1949, the U.S. government passed the Housing Act, which offered federal funds for the betterment of these communities.
- Though it achieved some success, urban renewal was a problematic movement. Residents of the communities that underwent urban renewal were often not included in the changes that affected them. Instead of helping residents improve and develop their communities, urban renewal projects often involved simply demolishing troubled communities, resulting in thousands of individuals being displaced from their homes.
- In the 1960s, the term “urban renewal” was replaced by “community development,” a term that is often used interchangeably with “neighborhood revitalization.” Unlike urban renewal, this movement was led by civic leaders and citizens. Community development projects emphasized the involvement of concerned community members as part of the development process; they improved troubled areas without razing them or displacing residents.
- Today, neighborhood revitalization projects are often led by nonprofit organizations like Habitat for Humanity, or by individual community development

institutions, which are usually run by local or state governments or universities.

FACT: One out of every six people in the United States lacks a decent, affordable home.

In order to succeed, a neighborhood revitalization project must address the specific needs of the affected community. There is no general “revitalization plan” that will work for every neighborhood. However, neighborhood revitalization projects often include the following:

- Generating support from the community
- Reducing the number of foreclosed or vacant houses
- Painting and refurbishing the exterior of neighborhood homes
- Constructing new homes
- Reforming public policy
- Cleaning public areas like parks and streets
- Making neighborhood homes more affordable

How Do You Know if It’s Working?

There is not always an easy way to measure the success of a neighborhood revitalization project. Sometimes success is measured by a decrease in the number of foreclosed or vacant homes, or by a survey of how many homes are in distressed condition.

Other times, success is simply visible to the citizens of a revitalized community. Since neighborhood revitalization projects require broad involvement from every part of the community—individuals, local government, schools, nonprofits, and business owners—the effect is widespread. Residents are invested in the future of their community and quickly notice when circumstances begin to change.

On “A Helping Hand for Hard Times”

Directions: After reading the Habitat for Humanity article “A Helping Hand for Hard Times” (http://www.habitat.org/hw/decent_housing/Helping_Hand.aspx), consider the following questions to enhance your understanding. Write your responses on the lines below each question.

1. What is the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, and how does it differ from the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NRI)?

2. Pick one of the “core components of the initiative” listed on the website. How does this component contribute to the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative?

3. How can Habitat for Humanity “have a larger and more powerful impact” by purchasing and renovating foreclosed homes rather than building them from the ground up?

4. Is funding from the NSP the only source of money for Habitat for Humanity’s NRI? If not, from where else does Habitat for Humanity get its funds?

5. Briefly describe why Liberty City, Florida, is currently in need of neighborhood revitalization.

6. Dallas Habitat Director Jeff Kramer is quoted as saying, “a home was just one piece of the puzzle.” In the context of neighborhood revitalization, what does this mean?

7. Re-read the statements in the article made by Laquita Green. How does participating in Habitat for Humanity’s NRI and other revitalization projects make individuals feel invested in their community?

Doing Our Part

Directions: Use this worksheet to help you organize your research about a community improvement initiative.

1. What is your initiative?

2. Who participates in this initiative?

(e.g., community members, members of an organization, local government officials)

3. What physical materials are necessary for your initiative?

(e.g., paint and paintbrushes, trash bags, construction tools)

4. What is the result of your initiative?

(Are streets cleaner? Are houses safer? In other words, what is the purpose of your initiative?)

5. Who are the main beneficiaries of your initiative?

6. How would a community be affected if your initiative did not occur?
(In other words, why is your initiative necessary?)

7. What community problems does your initiative NOT address?
(In other words, what other kinds of initiatives might be necessary for community-wide change to occur?)

8. What types of organizations or initiatives could address these remaining problems?
(In other words, what organizations would it be beneficial for your initiative to partner with in order to have a broader impact?)
