



Habitat
for Humanity®
Chicago



Neighbors United Block Improvements

Let's put resources aside.

Are there projects you and your neighbors could work on together to make your block look and feel even better?

We're guessing the answer is yes. We're human after all, and making things better is in our DNA. The Habitat for Humanity Chicago Neighbors United Block Improvement Initiative is a program that may be a good fit for helping you and your neighbors achieve some of your hoped-for improvements.

This new initiative provides support for small-scale projects to neighbors who want to do something with other neighbors to show pride on their block. It's a chance for your neighbors to reconnect with each other, your block, and your community while getting something great done together.

What counts as a block improvement project?

Well, this is really up to you! You and your neighbors have the best ideas for your block. We think it's important that projects enhance the look of your block but even more importantly, that you and your neighbors get to connect and envision your block's future while carrying out your project/s.

Here are some past projects we've seen that may spark some ideas for you:

Beautification:

- Landscaping
- Window Boxes
- Cutting Overgrowth
- Straightening/
Repainting Fences

Identity:

- Welcoming Block
Signs
- House Flags
- Coordinated Address
Plates

House Improvements:

- Power-Washing
- Minor Porch
Repair/Painting
- Front Door Painting
- House Lighting
Upgrades

All of the above are great but any creative way to make your block look better and bring neighbors together is encouraged.

Your Questions Answered

Are there funds available to cover our project ideas?

Yes! Habitat for Humanity Chicago will provide up to \$1,000 per block in materials and supplies.

How many blocks can participate in this Initiative?

Initially, we will support this work on three to seven blocks per period.

How much will this cost us?

As long as your project fits within the budget scope, you will not be asked to pay for anything. We do, however, require your investment of time and energy to make sure your project/s are completed well and on time.

What are the key dates to know?

We have three project periods per year. Applications are due in advance of the period and projects and simple final reports must be completed within it.

Spring (April – May)

- Applications due before April 1
- Project(s) and simple report completed by May 31

Summer (June – August)

- Applications due before June 1
- Project(s) and simple report completed by August 31

Fall (September – November)

- Applications due before September 1
- Project(s) and simple report completed by November 30

Do we have to do the project on one day?

Not necessarily. Some projects may take a couple of weekends. For example if you were going to paint porches, you might want to have a weekend for scraping and a couple of weekends for painting. The more participants the easier it will be. If you are doing a landscaping project, you would want to do it in a day, when the landscaping is delivered. We can work with you on schedules.

Do you just give me a check for the funds awarded?

No. You will complete an order form after your block has been selected. Habitat Chicago will place the orders directly, paying for all items within budget and working with you on delivery logistics.

How will blocks be selected?

Habitat Chicago will select three blocks to receive funding for their projects for the fall period. Right now, it will be on a first come basis for applicants who meet the following criteria:

Required:

- Your block must submit a complete application
- Your block must be in the West Pullman or Greater Grand Crossing neighborhoods
- Your project/s must engage at least 8 households
- Your project/s must have a planned completion date of no later than the project period end date
- Your block must be willing to place temporary yard signs on the corners of your blocks for at least four weeks after the project completion indicating your block was a participant in the Neighbors United Initiative

Prioritized:

- Project/s with the largest numbers of residents/households participating will be prioritized;
- Project/s that will show the most visual impact will be prioritized;
- Applications that demonstrate resource use and project planning for on-time and on-budget completion will be prioritized

If your block is not chosen in one project period, it is possible it will be selected for the next one and we will work with you to improve your chance of selection.

We have a lot of seniors on our block who can't do physical projects. How can they participate?

Seniors may have kids or grandkids that could be recruited to help. They can also keep spirits high by baking cookies for volunteer and helping to serve food at the post-project celebration.

Will Habitat supply volunteers to help?

Your projects should be driven by the people on your block rather than by volunteers from outside. Habitat Chicago will not supply volunteers in most cases.

How do we address rental properties?

Reach out to the tenants for ways to contact the landlord. Contact the landlord. Tell him/her that neighbors are working to improve the block and ask him/her to participate or at least allow neighbors to do minor work on the premises.

Why should we do something on landlord properties if they don't care?

This is an important question. The fact is, you have to look at these properties and how they affect the look of the block for everybody. Everybody loses if conditions decline.

Getting Started!

I'm interested. What do I do next?

If you want to involve your block in this initiative, follow these steps:

- 1. Recruit your neighbors.** It's important to get as many people as possible involved. We'd like to see at least eight households involved on each block to maximize the impact and reach of your idea. But eight is only a guideline: if 25 people from 10 households want to participate, that's great; if six households have a compelling project that will have an impact, that's good too. You can understand that in order for this to make a difference, we need to have more than just 2-3 people participating on a block.
- 2. Pull people together.** Gather interested folks to discuss potential ideas and roles. This is a good way of for neighbors to get to know each other before the project. This can't be emphasized enough. Working on a project to make the block beautiful is one way to bring neighbors together and instill a greater desire to work together in the future. As a group, address the following points (Tip: use the included worksheet to go through each of these):

- **Look at the capacity you have on your block.** You may have people knowledgeable in painting, landscaping, and carpentry. Figure out the skills you already have and how they might influence which project you pursue.
 - **Walk the block with your neighbors.** Look carefully – not just for what you don't like but what you do like that can be built on. Identify what are the things you want to do that will make the block look great.
 - **Estimate the costs.** When you identify your project, work together to roughly estimate the costs to do it, including materials, tools and food. This initiative will fund up to \$1,000 per block, so you need to be confident that your project can be completed successfully within that budget or plan for covering additional expenses.
3. **Fill out and submit the simple application form.** We have included a very simple application form at the end. Fill it out and submit to Habitat Chicago for approval by the deadline. Late applications may not be considered for the project period. You may request an electronic application by emailing neighborhoods@habitatchicago.org.
 4. **Wait for approval.** Once Habitat Chicago makes selections, we will contact you. If you are approved, we will get you all of the information you need to get going on your project. If you are not selected, we will discuss with you how to improve your application and/or whether the next program period may be more appropriate.

Did we forget something?

You may have a host of other questions and we want to work with you to make this successful. Please contact our neighborhoods team at Habitat Chicago: 312-563-0296 or neighborhoods@habitatchicago.org.

Neighbors United Block Improvements Initiative

Pre-Application Worksheet*

*Please note: this worksheet is just for you and your neighbors. Its completion is optional but we hope it helps you plan for the submission of a successful application and to set you up well for your project/s if your application is selected.

You do not need to submit this worksheet, only the application.

Step 1: Recruit Your Neighbors.

We have identified a core group of neighbors who will lead this effort and who will connect with other neighbors on the block. Here's our list:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Step 2: Identify Skills and Talents.

We have identified the following talents from among our neighbors, which may help us identify which project/s to pursue:

Name: _____	Skill: _____
Name: _____	Skill: _____
Name: _____	Skill: _____
Name: _____	Skill: _____
Name: _____	Skill: _____

Step 3: Walk the Block.

We have walked our block and identified what we like and what we think could be better. Here's our list:

What We Love	What Could Be Better
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Step 4: Brainstorm Project Ideas.

Based on our skills list, our assessment of the block, the timeline for completion and the available funds, here are some ideas for improvement projects on our block.

Step 5: Identify Project. Identify Approximate Costs. Identify Timeline.

We've narrowed our brainstorm down to one project idea (or one set of related projects):

Project/s: _____
Approximate Cost: _____
Potential Project Date/s: _____

Step 7: Identify Recruitment and Celebration Ideas.

If our project is selected, we know we will need to recruit more neighbors. Here are some ideas for recruiting and celebrating with our neighbors (once the project is done!):

Recruitment Captain: _____
Recruitment Tactic: _____
Recruitment Tactic: _____
Celebration Idea: _____

Step 6: Submit the Application by before the first day of the project period.

- We have filled out the attached application and submitted it to Habitat Chicago by the deadline.

4. What will you do to ensure your neighbors will participate?

5. When will the project take place?

6. What do you think the project will cost?

7. Is there anything else we should know?

Agreements:

- If selected, we will work with Habitat Chicago to submit material orders in a timely manner so that our project may be completed on time.
- If selected, we agree to place temporary yard signs on the corners of our block for at least four weeks after the project completion indicating we participated in the Neighbors United Initiative.
- If selected, we agree to submit a simple final project report within one week of the completion of the project.

Signature: _____ Date: _____