



Healthy Neighborhoods

Annual Report
July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

Dear Friends,

Strong and healthy neighborhoods are essential to building a robust community.

A healthy neighborhood provides an opportunity-filled environment, leading to improved health, social, and economic outcomes for its residents.

Yet, we know that Chicago's predominantly Black neighborhoods have faced decades of systemic disinvestment.

Globally, Habitat for Humanity's vision is a world where everyone has a decent place to live. We live into this vision by taking a neighborhood-focused, community development-oriented approach to our work in Chicago, where neighborhoods, in particular, shape so much of their residents' quality of life.

Currently, we are at work in West Pullman and Greater Grand Crossing. By focusing our complementary programs in these neighborhoods, we seek to not only help households access the long-term benefits of affordable homeownership, but also to strengthen the image, market, and physical and social conditions of the neighborhoods at large.

In this report, you will find a featured story for each month of fiscal year 2021, which highlights the numerous ways our programs work together to foster healthy neighborhoods.

This work would not have been possible without your unwavering support. From all of us at Habitat Chicago, thank you for catalyzing change throughout another challenging year. Together, we are building a healthier, stronger Chicago.

Sincerely,



Jennifer L. Parks
Executive Director



Daniel Marszalek
President, Board of Directors



JULY

Neighborhood Grants Initiative: Community Broadcasting

In July, we were proud to fund a community broadcasting project for Ring of Hope, a Greater Grand Crossing-based community space, as part of our Neighborhood Grants Initiative.

By accessing our funds, available to any group of residents in our focus neighborhoods wishing to make a positive impact on their community, Ring of Hope established an ongoing informational resource covering topics like health and safety, credit repair, and estate and property protection.

At the height of the pandemic, this group recognized the toll of separation on their neighbors and dug in to creatively form community in new ways that continue today.

“The more that the community knows, the more they are empowered to change their lives. This project helps us to see that as a community, we face some of the same challenges, and working together is part of the solution.”

- Anthony, Neighborhood Grants Initiative project group member

why does this matter?

Connected, informed neighbors shape a community’s resiliency. By encouraging opportunities for peer-collaboration, our Neighborhood Grants Initiative aims to not just fund positive activities, but also to fortify the social fabric of the neighborhood.



AUGUST

Volunteer Appreciation

For our August highlight, we recognize the thousands of volunteers that catalyze our work. For many months, as a result of the pandemic, we had to halt our in-person volunteer opportunities for the safety of our community.

When it was time to welcome them back, we were relieved, overjoyed, and once again inspired. Time and time again, we are in awe of the active commitment of our volunteers and the initiative they take to push back against the deep-rooted inequality in housing and neighborhood investments in Chicago.

Take Stevan Molinar. Stevan has been a volunteer Crew Leader on our build sites since 2018 and joined our Associate Board in 2020. Stevan has always believed that you should serve your community. It was a concept that was engrained in him, growing up on military bases as the son of an enlisted airman, and he took those lessons and applied them to his adult life.

When we were able to re-open our construction sites to volunteers in the summer, Stevan was one of the first in line to get back to building.

"We have to live together in this world. We shouldn't be stepping on others to lift ourselves up; instead, we should help each other out. Not for any financial reward, but simply because it's the right thing to do. Volunteering with Habitat has directed me to learn more about the history of fighting for affordable housing..."

Accessing fair housing and the benefits of stable housing was and still remains an uphill battle against entrenched prejudices. These discriminatory practices add up. Habitat offers us all an opportunity to fight this by investing our time and resources in neighborhoods that have been neglected as a result of biased systems."

- Stevan Molinar, Habitat Chicago Volunteer Crew Leader and Associate Board Member

why does this matter?

Habitat Chicago volunteers have great power to positively influence the image of a neighborhood.

By learning about the systems that have impeded investments into Black communities, visiting our focus neighborhoods to see their strengths first-hand, and digging in on the build site to improve the physical conditions of the community, volunteers have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the communities we serve to see our direct impact.



SEPTEMBER

Homebuyer University

In September, we proudly graduated the first of two cohorts of Homebuyer University students for the year. This open-to-all, five-part preparatory course readies students with the knowledge, tools, and resources to be able to successfully purchase their first home.

Homebuyer University is taught by experts in the homebuying industry in a neutral, low-pressure setting. Students learn the steps of the homebuying process; identify their homeownership goals; create action plans for financial, community, and lending readiness; and by the end of the course, are ready to pursue their homeownership goals.

“[Homebuyer University] has been a truly fantastic experience, and one I've suggested to almost everyone I know. It made crystal clear what I needed to do in order to own a home someday and explained elements that I had no understanding of before I took the class.

Just as importantly, if not more so, this course taught me financial literacy, something I've long struggled with, and long feared. To be honest, this process has been very moving, and an emotional journey. I didn't think I'd ever really understand how money works, or that I'd ever own a home; I have a long way to go, but I have faith that I'll be able to pursue a very real, concrete dream of mine: to own my own home.”

- Ean, Homebuyer University graduate

why does this matter?

While Homebuyer University puts the individual student front and center, it is also designed with neighborhood health in mind. New homeowners infuse a community with so many assets, from a swelling of invested caretakers, to improved municipal and commercial sway, to augmenting the density that helps schools, businesses, and transit thrive.



OCTOBER

Women Build

In October, nearly 400 women volunteered on our West Pullman build sites as a part of our annual Women Build, alongside our women homebuyers. Why?

To help their fellow women overcome the gendered hurdles (such as uneven caregiving responsibilities and the gender pay gap) to owning stable homes in neighborhoods of opportunity. Leading up to and throughout October, our Women Builders raised a remarkable \$393,000 to help fund construction and ensure long-term affordability for our buyers.

"We have a group of incredible women that come together and have done amazing fundraising for other incredible women. It's amazing to see this helping not only women and families, but so many more people. It's building a community. We're very lucky to participate in that and it was also so much fun to do!"

- Isabel Perez, Women Build Team Leader

why does this matter?

The benefits of affordable homeownership are immense, not just for the owners, but their community at large. High rates of long-term homeownership have been found to increase civic engagement, decrease crime, and improve high school graduation and college attendance rates. By helping women who have been locked out of traditional loans, Women Build creates a path for more women to access the benefits of homeownership for their families and contribute to the wellbeing of their communities.



NOVEMBER

Resident Meetings

Year-round, Habitat Chicago prioritizes scheduling listening and knowledge-sharing sessions with neighborhood residents. These ongoing conversations with neighborhood stakeholders help inform both our short- and long-term plans in our focus neighborhoods, ensuring our work complements the efforts and aspirations of the community members.

In November, we met with representatives from the South Oakwood-Brookhaven Neighborhood Organization (SOBNO), a 50+ year-old community organization made up of neighborhood residents who are dedicated to the prosperity of Greater Grand Crossing.

From organizing clean-up days to advocating for institutional inclusion, the members of SOBNO use their intimate knowledge of the community to shape it for the better. We are grateful to have the chance to learn from this group and find great inspiration in their ideas for the future of Greater Grand Crossing.

why does this matter?

Residents understand their community far better than any organization can, and embracing their knowledge when planning neighborhood investments can be the difference between service blind spots or service efficacy; project failure or project success; reception coolness or reception enthusiasm.

Listening to, hearing, and championing neighborhood residents is not only the right thing to do, it's also the smartest thing to do to make the best use of our resources.



DECEMBER

Neighborhood Grants Initiative: Holiday Decorations

In December, with an infectious air of holiday cheer, an enthusiastic group of West Pullman neighbors accessed our Neighborhood Grants Initiative funds to plan and coordinate block decorations for the season.

By engaging every single neighbor in the decision making and in a synchronized first lighting, this group brought their entire block together in a way they had never experienced before.

“Part of what makes Christmas so festive are decorations and lightings that adorn our homes and neighborhood. But why we decorated our block is to make people happy, stimulate those childhood feelings and let our neighbors know we are friendly, sociable people with hopes to build a strong relationship with them, especially during these times.”

- Lisa, Neighborhood Grants Initiative project group member

why does this matter?

Individuals who are proud of their community are often its best advocates. From initiating home upkeep to block beautification to social gatherings, proud residents can encourage residential stability and attract new buyers, significantly strengthening a neighborhood's outlook.

By funding project ideas that exalt the good in a community, our grants initiative seeks to underscore this subtle component of neighborhood health.



JANUARY

The Solutionists' Circle

In January, we established a new giving community, The Solutionists' Circle. Habitat for Humanity is widely known for building houses, but to truly achieve our vision of a world where everyone has a decent place to live, we know we must do more.

We must build sustainable and lasting partnerships to make significant investments in our work.

Formed alongside Habitat Chicago champion Cameron Avery, The Solutionists' Circle is a group of supporters who have generously committed to investing in and sustaining our mission. This dedicated group understands that our vision is big, our goals are long-term, and that we must be collaborative, creative, and charitable to effect positive change on both an individual and community level.

"What a privilege it is to be able to support Habitat Chicago and work as a community to provide long-term housing solutions for so many families."

- Cameron Avery, Retired, K&L Gates / Bell, Boyd, & Lloyd

why does this matter?

Habitat Chicago is committed to cultivating significant partnerships with donors so that, together, we can make impactful investments in our focus neighborhoods. Years of discriminatory disinvestments have put these neighborhoods at risk of decline, and we are at a pivotal moment to positively impact their trajectory.

The Solutionists' Circle members, alongside thousands of other caring donors, are committed to our long-term vision of building strong and equitable neighborhoods.



FEBRUARY

Homeownership Beginnings

In February, we qualified and welcomed our seven newest homebuyers into the Affordable Homeownership Program. Commencing a 12-month journey to homeownership, these households commit to working alongside their future neighbors to complete homeownership success classes, skill-building construction hours, and preparatory steps for their affordable loans.

“Home means a foundation for me. It means a future. It’s a legacy. A home is somewhere I can be old in. Put my heart, my soul, my sweat, tears, everything into and to grow into something beautiful. It means a future for not only myself, but my family, my legacy, and generations to come.”

- Lisa, Habitat Chicago homebuyer

why does this matter?

Our Affordable Homeownership Program, with its requirements, is not the easiest path to homeownership. Accordingly, the buyers who join our program are incredibly hard-working and disciplined, but above all, intentional about their vision of homeownership. They want long-term stability, a maintained asset for generational transfer, and a connected community. By working towards these ends, our future homeowners are also working to benefit the neighborhood into which they move.



MARCH

Neighborhood Grants Initiative: Opening New Doors

In March, Bray Temple CME, a church located in Greater Grand Crossing, realized a long-lived hope of restoring the public face of its building with the installation of a set of warm, welcoming new doors. The church found the impetus to start this project through our Neighborhood Grants Initiative.

With a small grant secured, project group members then enthusiastically raised the balance of funds through peer donations, and doggedly worked through barrier after barrier to install the doors that reflect the beauty they see in their community.

"We voted on one design, we raised the necessary capital, we prayed through COVID concerns and delivery delays, we circumvented our milling problems, and we patiently worked things out with our contractors.

Our efforts yielded a new door thereby bringing additional beauty to the church, increased curb appeal to the community and added security. Our project alone has evoked so many positive responses and others who wish to do the same to their property for the good of the entire community."

- Reginald, Neighborhood Grants Initiative project group member



why does this matter?

When neighbors are invested in their community, their drive for continuous improvement can produce remarkable accomplishments—from the upkeep of individual buildings, to the care of community spaces, to advocating for institutional resources. Our grants initiative celebrates and enables the creativity and energy of residents who, far and away, have the best motivation and ideas for strengthening their community.

APRIL

Four-Home Dedication Celebration

In April, we held a home dedication for four Habitat Chicago homebuyers in West Pullman – Donshay, Joyce, Lisa, and Myeasha –celebrating their hard-earned accomplishments of becoming homeowners while surrounded by family, friends, and the community who helped build their new homes.

Buyers gave voice to not only their appreciation for arriving at this point in their journeys, but also to the immense potential of the future, knowing their status as homeowners strengthens their personal agency to shape both the welfare of their households and community.

“Today, for me and my family - this is a wonderful day. It's going to be a chance for us to own a part of Chicago, become property owners, and then it's going to be one of those things where you can pass something down to the next generation and something for my son to live in and grow in.”

– Joyce, Habitat Chicago homeowner, on her home dedication day

why does this matter?

By working in geographically-concentrated areas, our programs reinforce each other in strengthening the trajectory of a neighborhood. Central to these are our homebuilding and homeownership efforts.

Habitat Chicago seeks to maximize the impact of our multi-million-dollar, multi-year investments in our focus neighborhoods by building high-quality homes and fostering buyers' intent to pursue long-term homeownership and strengthen their communities.

Habitat Chicago's Spring Home Dedication 2021



MAY

Habitat Chicago's Annual Benefit: Under One Roof

In May, we hosted our Annual Benefit, virtually bringing hundreds of Chicagoans together around the vital cause of affordable homeownership. Together, we raised over \$240,000 to fund new home construction.

We also heard from a passionate line-up of speakers, including:

- Habitat Chicago homeowners
- Israel Idonije, humanitarian and former Chicago Bear
- Nate Marshall, poet and West Pullman native
- Samir Mayekar, Deputy Mayor for Economic and Neighborhood Development, City of Chicago

“In my previous apartment, I lived in a building with four apartments. I didn’t know any of my neighbors... I didn’t know anything about them. And here [with Habitat], when you go through the program and the classes and you’re using your time to get to know your neighbors, it’s very important. You get to know them. They look out for you; you look out for them. And you become like a family.”

— Tonya, Habitat Chicago homeowner at the Annual Benefit

why does this matter?

The diverse voices of our speakers and the unwavering generosity of our supporters demonstrate a key component of how Habitat Chicago operates: we bring people together to effect long-lasting change.

Our success and ability to build affordable homes that foster community hinge on the words, actions, and contributions of thousands of individuals from all walks of life. Thank you for your continued support.



JUNE

Neighborhood Grants Initiative: Planters Everywhere

In June, with the help of Neighborhood Grants Initiative funding, the neighbors of Colonial Village in West Pullman ambitiously came together to coordinate a 16-block beautification effort by placing and planting commercial-sized planters at the entrance to every block in their community.

As one of 20 Neighborhood Grants Initiative projects funded for the year, this undertaking was all the more impressive as few neighbors knew each other at the project start. However, they recognized an opportunity to form ties through the shared goal of creating a welcoming environment and organized themselves energetically to produce stunning results.

“The project was mainly done to bring out people from the entire community in order to get them involved in a project that would allow neighbors from every block throughout the community to engage together...There were people of all ages participating and the group thought the entire event was most enjoyable. All while we were planting the flowers, we were getting thumbs up, honking horns, and people rolling down their car windows saying how nice the planters were looking.”

— United Neighbors of Colonial Village, Neighborhood Grant Initiative project group

why does this matter?

Active residents – those who self-organize and always make efforts to involve others – often end up strengthening not just the project at hand, but also their neighbors' sense of place and care.

There are many ways to invest in neighborhood health, and top amongst these for us is to support active neighbors given their unparalleled ripple effects in their communities.



ReStore Highlights

We proudly operate ReStore Chicago, a 30,000 square-foot home improvement resale store. ReStore Chicago helps individuals access quality and affordable home goods to create a safe and warm home environment for themselves, while simultaneously fueling our mission and keeping useful products out of landfills.

ReStore accomplishments in fiscal year 2021 include:

- 4,440 product donations made to ReStore
- 991 tons of useful goods diverted from landfills
- 11,343 volunteer hours invested by caring citizens

“I recently read a news story about a Chicago veteran who became a new homeowner thanks to Habitat for Humanity. Having six veterans in my family, this really touched me. In a small way, I feel like I contributed to this [home]ownership and I am very proud to volunteer at ReStore!”

– Anna Tobin, ReStore volunteer since June 2021



INTERNATIONAL

Mission

While we work locally and autonomously in Chicago, we share the vision of a world where everyone has a decent place to live, with other Habitats working across the globe. Since 2012, we have been sister affiliates with Habitat Malawi. Through this relationship, we dedicate a percentage of our income to support their critical work, which provides housing to orphans and vulnerable groups, water and sanitation projects, and disaster relief and rehabilitation services.

In fiscal year 2021, we proudly contributed \$42,000 to Habitat Malawi, funding nine housing projects.

“The toilet (we had) wasn’t built properly, and it leaked when it rained. Children would fall into the pit and there would be a terrible accident...The new toilet has really helped. We don’t have accidents anymore... We used to get sick a lot. Now we don’t. We haven’t had a case of cholera in a long time. And we make sure that the toilet is always clean to avoid the diseases we used to get with the old toilet.”

— Diana, beneficiary of Habitat Malawi’s Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Program



On the Horizon

Even as we look back on a year of investments, our direction is firmly facing forward. We are excited to continue building on our progress to date in support of the unsung neighborhoods and residents of our city who are both its heart and its potential.

Here’s some of the plans we have on the horizon for fiscal year 2022:

We’ll finish our most recent development in West Pullman and our first homes in Greater Grand Crossing, closing with affordable loans for approximately nine buyers.

We’ll equip three cohorts of Homebuyer University students to pursue successful homeownership.

We’ll expand our investments in community grantmaking to support enthusiastic community groups in West Pullman and Greater Grand Crossing, and we’ll offer the program to Austin residents for the first time.

We’ll begin exploring service expansion into critical home repairs, rehab construction, and post-purchase owner support.

Ways to Get Involved

No matter who you are or where you come from, there's a place for you at Habitat Chicago. You belong here and there are many meaningful ways to get involved.

donate

a one-time gift or become a member of The Blueprint community by setting up a recurring gift to ensure the sustainability of our mission.



learn

more about the dynamic neighborhoods of West Pullman and Greater Grant Crossing by visiting our website.



shop

at Restore Chicago to find new and gently-used home goods, building supplies, and more. Pay a fraction of the retail price while keeping usable items out of the landfill and supporting Habitat Chicago's mission.



share

information about our programs to help more Chicagoans improve the quality of life for themselves, their families, and their communities.



join

us in building a stronger Chicago by organizing a volunteer day on one of our build sites for your company, school, faith group, friends, or family.

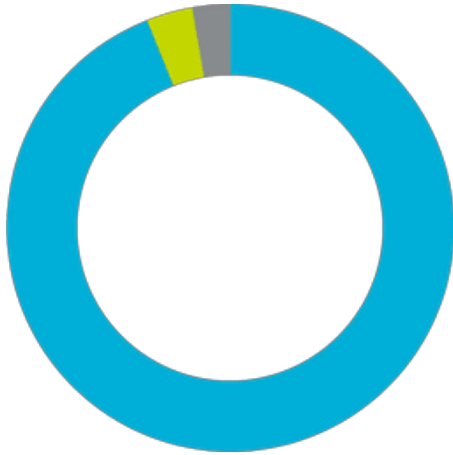


participate

in Women Build as a team leader or individual to help more women overcome the gendered hurdles to homeownership.



Financials



Revenue

- Contributions - \$3,230,540
- Restore - \$117,341
- Program Revenue - \$86,058

Total Revenue: **\$3,433,939**



Expenses

- Programs - \$2,023,754
- Fundraising - \$634,164
- Management - \$316,538

Total Revenue: **\$2,974,45**

Supporters & Champions

Hi July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

We are thankful to all of you - our community of caring, dedicated individuals - who stand with us day in and day out, helping to hammer a nail, fund a clean-up project, or conduct an education workshop. Your belief in our mission is its power, and we have immense gratitude for you.

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