

Habitat for Humanity Case

Executive Summary

As CEO, Corinne O'Connell must lead Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia through difficult decisions, including those that impact families across Philadelphia living in housing crises. Habitat Philly seeks to transform lives through affordable housing, focusing on building and repairing homes. For home repairs, the average investment has grown from \$3500/repair in 2011 to \$30,000/repair in 2025. The goal for each repair is to stabilize homes, making them safe, warm, and dry. As the repair program grows, the leadership team is faced with determining the proper balance between making a significant investment in a certain number of properties and making a more nominal investment in more properties.

Background

Corinne O'Connell is the CEO of Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia, a nonprofit dedicated to providing affordable housing solutions. With a background in history, politics, and nonprofit leadership, she has guided the organization from a small-scale operation to a more robust force in Philadelphia. Under her leadership, Habitat Philly's team has grown from seven employees in 2009 to 86 in 2025. Their budget has increased from \$800K to \$18mm in that same timeframe. This resulted in expanding from building 1-2 houses per year to 20, with an additional 150 home repairs completed annually.

O'Connell focuses on collaboration, equity, and long-term community impact, balancing financial constraints with the urgent housing needs of the city's most vulnerable residents.

Philadelphia faces a severe housing crisis, with 121,000 owner-occupied homes in disrepair and 27,000 residents lacking running water. Habitat Philly invests an average of \$30,000 per home for critical safety repairs, but this amount is often insufficient for comprehensive restoration. Repairs focus on issues that are more structural and functional than aesthetic, permitting residents to have a safe place to call home.

Additionally, Habitat must ensure that repairs support long-term residents rather than inadvertently contributing to rising property values that displace them. Through strategic funding, regional and national partnerships, and ethical decision-making, O'Connell must balance funding with upholding the organization's core mission: ensuring housing as a human right. With construction costs rising at a rate faster than inflation, Corinne and her leadership team must determine how to most impactfully distribute their resources.

Based on their budget, Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia can repair 150 homes at an average cost of \$30,000. However, they could repair less homes with more money for repairs, causing the

houses to be more improved. For example, improving 75 homes for \$60,000 would allow for the cost increase in construction materials. Habitat prioritizes resources to maximize impact while maintaining financial sustainability. *Habitat has a strong mission based on securing access to affordable homes for Philadelphians.*

Case:

Should Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia repair 150 homes in Philly for about \$30,000 each, or should they repair 75 homes for about \$60,000 or more?