

New project for Habitat for Humanity

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Plans to help 200 more families

Updated: Thursday, 20 Jun 2013, 9:40 AM EDT

Published : Thursday, 20 Jun 2013, 9:33 AM EDT

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GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (WOOD) - Habitat for Humanity has said, "welcome home" to more than 400 families in Kent County.

24 Hour News 8 set out to cover its 30th anniversary celebration but found a much bigger story, one that could change your neighborhood.

We went to check out a home that the organization's volunteers have been working on every Thursday on Grand Rapids' southeast side. But we learned that house is part of a much bigger picture for the Wealthy Heights Neighborhood and the City. The residence at 336 Robey Place SE is the 10th home to be rehabbed in the Wealthy Heights area.

Habitat for Humanity has far surpassed its work that began three decades ago. Instead of transforming a home, the group is now working on entire neighborhoods.

"Lives are being built from a foundational place and then we're seeing just the beautiful blossoming of a brand new neighborhood coming back to life," said Mary Buikema of Habitat for Humanity of Kent County.

More than just raising spirits, the neighborhood projects are raising home values. Habitat for Humanity is working on residences on four streets between Diamond Street and Fuller Avenue along Wealthy Street.

Most of the Habitat homes are more than a century old, foreclosed and nearly forgotten.

Until now.

"A lot of the neighbors have started to do the same thing to their homes too, so the whole block gets spiffed up. It's really nice," said Chad Forman from Spartan Stores.

The work is not stopping here. After 30 years, Habitat for Humanity is ramping up its workload.

Soon the organization's helping hands and tools will move to the city's westside. It's a major project.

In the next two years, Habitat for Humanity plans to help 200 more families using several programs. Specifically, it will be working on about 40 homes. Many of them will be near Harrison Park Elementary School, Sibley Elementary School, Cesar Chavez Elementary School and Godfrey Lee Elementary School.

This summer and beyond you will likely see many more Habitat for Humanity signs around Grand Rapids, and a fresh look to some of the city's oldest neighborhoods.