

World Habitat Day | Earth 911

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For decades, habitat conservation has been such a major focus of environmentalism that some people have come to think of the environmental movement as one that cares more about creatures than people. This attitude contributes to the artificial distinction between environmentalism and [environmental justice](#).

But the truth is that humans depend on [ecosystem services](#) as heavily as any other animal does. Whether you're talking about wild animals or humans, the basic right to exist depends on access to adequate shelter. For humans and other species to thrive, our human habitats – cities and towns – need to become less toxic and more resource efficient.



World Habitat Day

Thirty years ago, the United Nations designated the first Monday in October (this year October 5) as World Habitat Day. The observance is a reminder of our collective responsibility for the future of the human habitat. It directly supports UN [Sustainable Development Goal 11](#): Sustainable Cities and Communities. This goal aims for resilient, inclusive, safe, diverse cities by 2030.

Each year, global celebrations focus on a theme to make human shelter more inclusive, affordable, and sustainable. The theme of World Habitat Day 2020 is "[Housing For All: A better urban future](#)." The thematic focus is Goal 11's target of adequate, safe, and affordable housing with basic services for all by 2030, with particular attention to upgrading slums.

Pandemic Habitats

This theme is unexpectedly timely during the pandemic, when staying at home is the best way to preserve health and safety. At the same time, the pandemic has generated an economic crisis that threatens [at least 30 million](#) people with homelessness in the U.S. alone.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has also limited this year's UN-sponsored activities. The UN has selected [five winners](#) to join the Habitat Scroll of Honor recognizing outstanding contributions in the field of development. The winning projects improve urban lives, provide housing, and highlight the plight of the poor or displaced. But compared to past years, there has been little activity surrounding World Habitat Day.

Habitat for Humanity

In the U.S., Habitat for Humanity provides many opportunities for individuals to contribute to the success of World Habitat Day.

You can learn about the global [Solid Ground](#) advocacy campaign to improve access to land for shelter and [spread the word](#) on social media about the importance of human habitats. Take action through Habitat's [Cost of Home](#) advocacy campaign. And if you want to make a direct difference, [volunteer](#) with Habitat for Humanity.

Habitat Starts at Home

Individuals can also look for ways to make housing in their own communities more affordable and sustainable.

Encourage your local elected officials to pursue [emerging strategies](#) to create more [sustainable](#) affordable housing in your community. Encourage them to support [green building codes](#) that raise the bar for energy efficiency and conservation in all new construction.

In your own home, make sure all your [remodeling projects](#) are eco-friendly, and if you have the space, consider building an [accessory dwelling unit](#) that could both generate income for you and provide quality, eco-friendly housing for someone who needs it.

Feature image by [Jon Tyson](#) on Unsplash

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