# Lessons Learned: 2017 Greater Birmingham Habitat for Humanity Builder’s Blitz

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## Project Summary

The 2017 Builder’s Blitz brought together approximately two dozen local builders to sponsor and construct homes in the Eastlake neighborhood of Birmingham, AL. The event took place over several weeks during the summer of 2017 and aimed to jump-start development in a new Habitat-planned neighborhood. I served as a Maintenance Coordinator and Assistant Materials Coordinator, with a primary focus on materials logistics and on-the-ground coordination.

## Key Stakeholders

- Local Builders and Contractor Teams: Provided labor, materials (in some cases), and expertise.  
- Habitat for Humanity Staff: Oversaw coordination, homeowner relations, volunteer management, logistics.  
- Homeowners: Partner families working toward homeownership through sweat equity and financial education.  
- Vendors and Suppliers: Delivered construction materials to a central staging area for redistribution.  
- Volunteers: Assisted in general site support roles.

## What Went Well

- Strong Builder Participation: The number of participating builders met or exceeded initial goals, and overall morale was high.  
- Community Impact: The Blitz accelerated development in Eastlake and generated goodwill among stakeholders and the broader public.  
- Team Flexibility: Staff and volunteers adapted to changing demands with professionalism and enthusiasm.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

### 1. Communication with Homeowners

Observation: Several homeowners expressed that they felt disconnected from organizational decision-making and updates during the Blitz process.  
  
Lesson: There needs to be a consistent, bidirectional communication channel between homeowners and staff, particularly during high-tempo builds.  
  
Recommendation: Assign a dedicated homeowner liaison or team member to maintain weekly contact, answer questions, and translate construction timelines into homeowner-friendly language.

### 2. Materials Logistics and Site Distribution

Observation: Materials were delivered to a central location but there was no structured process to ensure timely delivery to individual home sites. Builders sometimes waited or improvised, leading to delays and inefficiencies.  
  
Lesson: A centralized inventory system requires a complementary distribution plan tailored to each house's unique build timeline.  
  
Recommendation:  
- Develop and share a staging-to-site delivery schedule with all builders prior to the Blitz.  
- Use pre-assigned site delivery coordinators or volunteers to act as runners.  
- Designate and train a small team for on-site dispatch, communicating via handheld radios or group SMS.

### 3. Underused Communication Channels

Observation: Habitat staff had access to communication tools such as SMS, voicemail, and email that were not fully leveraged during critical phases of the Blitz. This limited responsiveness, especially for urgent material requests or site needs.  
  
Lesson: Real-time, low-friction communication is vital when coordinating with multiple independent teams across a large build site.  
  
Recommendation:  
- Establish a daily coordination SMS group including the logistics lead, site supervisors, and one representative from each builder’s crew.  
- Encourage the use of staff voicemail and early check-ins for overnight supply requests or site-specific issues.  
- Where appropriate, explore WhatsApp group chats as a supplemental channel for builders and Habitat staff already using the app.

## Conclusion

The 2017 Builder’s Blitz demonstrated the capacity of collaborative local effort to rapidly impact housing development. The lessons drawn from this event highlight key improvements that could increase the efficiency, inclusivity, and responsiveness of future Blitz builds. Addressing communication barriers—both interpersonal and logistical—will be essential for scaling similar events in the future.