



Lesson 12:

Can We End Housing Insecurity?

Author: John Kruggel

In this lesson, students will compare economic costs and benefits of helping people who are experiencing housing insecurity and consider the ethical implications.

Description of the lesson

In this lesson, students will participate in a mock city council special session. The special session has been called to provide voter feedback on three proposals before the board to address the city's homeless population. Students will be given role cards identifying various members of the community with differing opinions on this topic. The setup of this lesson is that students have arrived early to the city council meeting and are going to discuss their opinion on the issue with other members of the community, meaning the opinion listed on their role card. The students will then identify if the various role cards reflect the idea of equity or economic efficiency when discussing the topic of homelessness in their community.

Teacher alert: parts of this lesson could be triggering for students who might have or be experiencing homelessness. Be mindful with your students as needed. Also, this lesson uses the term "homeless" due to the use of the term by federal and state agencies. You may want to use the term "unhoused" or "unsheltered." However, it is important to note that federal and state agencies often use these terms to refer to specific subsets of the homeless population (people living in cars rather than in shelters for example). Additional sources to help address this topic with students can be found here:

<https://education.wm.edu/centers/hope/publications/infobriefs/documents/whateducatorscando2013.pdf>

Economics

Economics is the study of decisions made by individuals, businesses, and governments when facing scarce resources. Policy makers often face a trade-off between equity and efficiency when implementing policies. Focusing on efficiency attempts to maximize the benefits from resources. Focusing on equity recognizes that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances. These two goals can be in tension with one another. To allow for more equity, we must give up some efficiency and vice-versa, greater efficiency is obtained at a loss to equity.

Ethics

In 1948, the United Nations drafted [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). Article 25 section 1 expressly addresses the issue of housing¹. "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services." Focusing on equity attempts to distribute prosperity so that each individual has at least a minimum of wealth. Individuals focusing on efficiency believe maximizing the allocation of resources will provide the best use of those resources. This lesson allows students to analyze the trade-offs policy makers face balancing efficiency and equity while addressing the issue of homelessness.

¹ United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

Objectives:

After completing this lesson students will be able to:

- analyze economic costs and benefits of a public policy issue including alleviating or reducing housing insecurity.
- evaluate ethical considerations of a public policy issue, specifically homelessness.
- assess the role of efficiency and equity faced by policy makers.

Standards

[Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics²](#)

- Standard 2: Decision Making
 - Effective decision making requires comparing the additional costs of alternatives with the additional benefits. Many choices involve doing a little more or a little less of something: few choices are “all or nothing” decisions
- Standard 3: Allocation
 - Different methods can be used to allocate goods and services. People acting individually or collectively must choose which methods to use to allocate different kinds of goods and services.
- Standard 16: Role of Government and Market Failure
 - There is an economic role for government in a market economy whenever the benefits of a government policy outweigh its costs. Governments often provide for national defense, address environmental concerns, define, and protect property rights, and attempt to make markets more competitive. Most government policies also have direct or indirect effects on peoples’ incomes.

Concepts

Decision Making/Cost-Benefit Analysis, Roles of Government, Efficiency/Equity

Time Required

90 minutes

² Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics: <https://www.councilforeconed.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/voluntary-national-content-standards-2010.pdf>

Materials Needed

- Slide presentation: [Can We End Housing Insecurity?](#)
- Pens/pencils, one per student.
- Copies of Activity 12.1: Homeless Housing Options for the City of Econopolis, one per student.
- Copies of Activity 12.2: Citizen Role Cards, cut around the dotted lines and distribute one card for each student assigned a role of a local voter (26 total).
- Copies of Activity 12.3: Interview Record, one per student.
- Copies of Assessment 12.1, one per student.

Procedure

1. Explain to students that today's lesson will involve evaluating an issue affecting more than [650,000 Americans](#)³ according to a recent press release by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. That issue is the lack of housing faced by many Americans. Display slide 2.
Teacher note: This number represents the total number of homeless – sheltered and unsheltered. Determining the exact number of people who experience housing insecurity in the United States is a difficult task due to the transient nature of some of the homeless population. The Department of Housing and Urban Development conducts counts of people who are in emergency shelters or transitional housing during their Point-in-Time (PIT) Count estimates over the last 10 days in January. These numbers are from the Jan. 2023 count. More information on the PIT estimates can be found [here](#)⁴. You can find a link to information about your specific state listed in the Resources section. It might be good to discuss with students why this number might underestimate the number. More information on the possible undercounting can be found [here](#)⁵.
2. Explain that today's lesson will give the class the chance to address some of the economic and ethical issues surrounding the problem of homelessness. They will do this through an activity involving a mock city council meeting. Tell the students that the city of Econopolis has a problem. Open Arms, their homeless shelter, has reached capacity. The city planner has created three possible solutions to their capacity issue. The planner has named these solutions Option 1, Option 2, and Option 3.

³ The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2023-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

⁴ US department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Point in Time Estimates:

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/ahar/2023-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us.html>

⁵ <https://homelesslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/HUD-PIT-report2017.pdf>

3. We will address the economic efficiency and equity behind each possible solution. Display slides 3 and 4.
 - a) **Economic efficiency** refers to a state in which the allocation of resources yields the greatest net benefit⁶.
 - b) **Equity** refers to justness and is distinguished from equality: whereas equality means providing the same to all, equity means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances⁷.
4. Ask students if they think policymakers should focus more on economic efficiency or equity when making decisions. Display slide 5. **Answers will vary but should rely on the definitions of economic efficiency and equity.**
5. Distribute copies of Activity 12.1: Homeless Housing Options for the City of Econopolis.
 - a) Explain that Option 1 involves expanding the existing shelter. The current homeless shelter operates from 6:00 pm to 9:00 am every day. Occupants are provided dinner and breakfast. They are also provided a cot and bedding (mattress, pillow, sheet, blanket) for sleeping. The shelter currently has four large rooms used as sleeping quarters. The rooms also have small closets to allow for temporary storage of personal items while you sleep. Each room has capacity for ten individuals (40 total individuals). The shelter maintains a staff of five workers and a director. Option 1 would expand the shelter to allow for twenty additional individuals by creating two additional large rooms and expanding the current dining space, kitchen, and increasing the restroom facilities to sustain the expanded capacity. This option would cost the city two million dollars. Display slide 6.
 - b) Explain that Option 2 involves building a new seven story apartment building to create semi-permanent housing. Display slide 7. The apartment building would contain twenty-eight apartments (4 per floor). Each apartment would contain two bedrooms, a full bathroom, a kitchen, small dining area, and a small living space. The apartment building would have central air conditioning and heat maintained at a central location. The building would also have access to an on-site laundry facility. The city has located land for this apartment adjacent to the downtown business district. This option would cost the city ten million dollars.

⁶ Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute: https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/economic_efficiency

⁷ National Association of Colleges and Employers: <https://www.nacweb.org/about-us/equity-definition/>

- c) Option 3 would create a more permanent housing option of a neighborhood of twenty-five small single-family homes ranging in size from 1,000 square feet to 1,500 square feet. Display slide 8. Each home will occupy roughly $\frac{1}{5}$ of an acre. The homes would each have three bedrooms, one and a half bathrooms, a laundry room, a kitchen with a small dining area, and a living room. The community would center around a park containing a playground for neighborhood children and a walking track for the families to use. The park would also contain a retention pond to help regulate stormwater. The city has located ten acres of land on the east side of town neighboring existing communities. This option would cost the city fifty million dollars.
6. Distribute role cards from Activity 12.2: Citizen Role Cards to all students. Display slide 9. Explain that they will be representing different citizens of Econopolis who are attending today's city council meeting to voice their concerns.
- Teacher note: there are 26 Citizen Role Cards, you may need to duplicate some if you have more than 26 students.**
- a) It may be worthwhile to run through the cards with your class and have them identify which cards reflect the concept of equity and which reflect the concept of economic efficiency.
 - b) Some cards attempt to balance both concepts, others attempt to highlight inherent biases that may occur when discussing this topic. This might be a reflection point for the class to discuss how individual incentives/biases may reflect people's beliefs on policy issues.
7. Each student represents a member of Econopolis who has concerns about the proposals created by the city planner. They have all shown up to address the city council before their vote. The city council chamber is not opened yet, and they should talk with some of their fellow citizens to get their opinions on the proposals.

8. Hand out Activity 12.3: Interview Record. Tell the students they need to interview five of their classmates and fill out the interview record form. After they have interviewed their classmates, they should answer the questions “Which argument did they find the most convincing and why” and “Which argument did they find the least convincing and why.” **Teacher note: You may want to have students interview more than five of their classmates to ensure they hear a wide variety of arguments on the issue.**
 - a) You may prefer to break students into small groups to ensure they each interact with a mix of role cards reflecting perspectives of equity and economic efficiency. If so, one proposed way to group cards would be:
 - i. Group 1: Role cards 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26
 - ii. Group 2: Role cards 2, 7, 12, 17, 22
 - iii. Group 3: Role cards 3, 8, 13, 18, 23
 - iv. Group 4: Role cards 4, 9, 14, 19, 24
 - v. Group 5: Role cards 5, 10, 15, 20, 25
9. After the interviews are finished, ask students: “How many of you had an argument on your Citizen Role Card that emphasized economic efficiency?” “How many of you had an argument on your Citizen Role Card that emphasized equity?” Display slide 10. **Answers will vary. This is a good time to circle back to the sections addressing the economics and ethics in the lesson description.**

Closure

10. Explain to students that economics involves making decisions while facing scarcity. Oftentimes these decisions can be difficult, especially with policies that may impact someone’s life or livelihood. Economists often focus on efficiency because it is seen as the most cost-effective way to allocate resources. There are times when efficiency may need to balance with equity to ensure a more just society.
11. Display slide 12. Ask students:
 - a) Which speaker brought up a concern you agreed with? **Answers will vary but should include one of the concerns addressed in Activity 12.2: Citizen Role Cards.**
 - b) Which speaker brought up a concern you disagreed with? **Answers will vary but should include one of the concerns addressed in Activity 12.2: Citizen Role Cards.**
12. Finally, ask students if they have a deeper understanding of the complexity regarding some of the issues facing policymakers. **Answers will vary, but many students will recognize the complex cost-benefit analysis many policymakers face when deciding which policy to support.**

Assessment

13. Distribute copies of Assessment 12 to each student.

Some sample assessment items:

1. Which of the following could be considered an economic cost of housing the homeless?
 - a. Housing the homeless could reduce the cost of emergency medical care.
 - b. A stable home could increase workforce participation.
 - c. Homeless populations are more susceptible to the spread of illnesses. Reducing homelessness could help reduce the spread of illnesses.
 - d. **Housing the homeless could increase government spending.**

2. Which of the following could be considered an economic benefit of housing the homeless?
 - a. Providing housing for the homeless could reduce the existing housing supply.
 - b. Determining who gets a home or shelter first could create inequalities.
 - c. **The costs of providing homes for the homeless may be offset by the reduction in providing government programs for the homeless.**
 - d. People living next to rehomed homeless may have concerns about the safety of their community.

3. Economic efficiency focuses on _____, while economic equity focuses on _____.
 - a. Distributing prosperity equally; maximizing benefits from resources
 - b. Providing resources to everyone; ensuring everyone has access to resources
 - c. **Maximizing benefits from resources; distributing prosperity equally**
 - d. Ensuring everyone has access to resources; providing resources to everyone

4. What role do you think economic efficiency should play in determining government policy? ***Answers will vary, but students should address some of the concerns brought up through the role cards in Activity 12.2.***

5. What role do you think economic equity should play in determining government policy? ***Answers will vary, but students should address some of the concerns brought up through the role cards in Activity 12.2.***

6. After hearing the arguments made by your classmates, structure your argument to the city council of Econopolis. Which proposal do you support? Be sure to address the costs and benefits for Option #1, Option #2, and Option #3. Address if you think policymakers should focus more on equity or efficiency when making policy. ***Answers will vary, but students should address some of the specifics addressed in each Option (dollar amount needed, families helped, etc.). They should also pull in some of the details included in their interviews.***

Extension

A. Children facing housing insecurity could be an important concern for your students and a subject they might want to explore in a deeper, more meaningful way.

1. Ask students to estimate how many K-12 students in your state are homeless. Display the interactive map from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness: [https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/map/#fn\[\]=1300&fn\[\]=2900&fn\[\]=6400&fn\[\]=10200&fn\[\]=13400](https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/map/#fn[]=1300&fn[]=2900&fn[]=6400&fn[]=10200&fn[]=13400). This map contains data on homeless populations from each state. If that map is not available, you can use this one from the Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness: https://www.icphusa.org/interactive_data/the-united-states-of-homelessness/
2. Use the dropdown menu directly below the map on the left-hand side of the site to scroll to your state. This will give you specific data identifying how many homeless students were reported for your state.
Teacher note: *The data will most likely indicate a larger population of homeless students than the total homeless population for the state. This is due in part to the way the government gathers data on their homeless population versus how schools report homeless populations attending their school. The state relies on data gathered through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s annual Point-in-Time Count during the last 10 days in January, checking shelters and public spaces. Schools report their homeless population throughout the school year. This gives schools a larger chance of identifying their homeless population than the state and national governments.*
3. Ask students if their estimate was close to the numbers reported by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. **Answers will vary, some students may be shocked at the number of homeless students in their state.**
4. Finish by showing the class this video from Frontline discussing a 14 year old’s view of “Hidden Homelessness.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L08YYKwgXHw> this is part of Frontline’s “Growing Up Poor in America” series: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/growing-up-poor-in-america/>
5. Ask students how they could help students in their school who might be facing housing insecurity.

B. How do cities in the real world deal with housing insecurity? Have students compare and contrast the policy decisions made by the city of Houston and the city of San Diego regarding their shortage of housing for their homeless populations.

1. Distribute copies of this article. <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Two-cities-tried-to-fix-homelessness-only-one-15825633.php>
2. Have them create a T Chart with Houston written on the top of one column and San Diego written on the top of the other column.
3. Have the students write four summary sentences in each column.
 - a. One sentence should address the problems facing Houston and San Diego.
 - b. One sentence should address the solutions Houston and San Diego attempted.
 - c. One sentence should address the economic or financial costs faced by the decisions made by Houston and San Diego.
 - d. One sentence should address if the student agrees or disagrees with the decisions made by Houston and San Diego.
 - e. At the bottom of the T Chart the students should explain why they agreed or disagreed with each city's decision.
4. It might be interesting to have students read about San Diego's recent efforts to address their homeless population in this article from the San Diego Union Tribune:
<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/commentary/story/2024-01-02/opinion-six-months-san-diego-safe-campsite-homeless-balboa-park>
 - a. Of note with this article, it is an opinion column written by a San Diego City Council member. It might be good to follow-up with a question tying in the ideas of equity and economic efficiency with the possible incentive of a politician writing this article.

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Activity 12.1: Homeless Housing Options for the City of Econopolis

The city of Econopolis has a problem. Open Arms, our homeless shelter, has reached capacity. Our city planner has created three possible solutions to our capacity issue. They have titled these solutions Option 1, Option 2, and Option 3. Each option has its own costs and benefits. The local newspaper has published each option and local citizens requested a special meeting for the city council to discuss these proposals. Here are summaries of the three proposals.

Option 1: Expand Open Arms.

- The current homeless shelter operates from 6:00 pm to 9:00 am every day.
- Occupants are provided dinner and breakfast.
- They are also provided a cot and bedding (mattress, pillow, sheet, blanket) for sleeping.
- The shelter currently has four large rooms to house sleeping quarters. The rooms also have small closets to allow for temporary storage of personal items while you sleep.
- Each room has capacity for ten individuals.
- The total capacity for the existing shelter is 40 total individuals.
- The shelter maintains a staff of five workers and a director.

This proposal would:

- Expand the shelter to allow for twenty additional individuals.

To do this we would:

- Create two additional large sleeping quarters.
- Expand the current dining space and kitchen.
- Increase the restroom facilities to sustain the expanded capacity.

Final price tag for Option 1: \$2,000,000.

Option 2: Build a new seven story apartment building to create semi-permanent housing.

- Each floor would contain four apartments. This would allow for twenty-eight total apartments.

Each apartment would contain:

- Two bedrooms
- A full bathroom (toilet, sink, vanity, and shower)
- A kitchen and small dining area.
- A small living room.
- The apartment building would have central air conditioning and heat maintained at a central location.
- The building would also have access to an on-site laundry facility.

Location:

- The city has located land for this apartment adjacent to the downtown business district.
- This location would provide easy access to many of the workplaces for tenants as well as access to the local grocery store and schools.

Final price tag for Option 2: \$10,000,000.

Option 3: Build a neighborhood of twenty-five small single-family homes.

- This option creates a more permanent housing solution.
- Homes would range in size from 1,000 square feet to 1,500 square feet.
- Each home will occupy a lot of land roughly $\frac{1}{3}$ of an acre in size.

Each home would contain:

- Three bedrooms
- One and a half bathrooms (one bathroom would have a sink, vanity, and toilet only, the other would have a shower as well as the sink, vanity, and toilet).
- A laundry room and a kitchen with a small dining area.
- A large living room.

The community would center around a park containing:

- A playground for neighborhood children
- A walking track for the families to use.
- A retention pond to help regulate stormwater and prevent flooding.
- The park would have 3 school bus stops to service the local families.

Location

- The city has located ten acres of land on the east side of town neighboring existing communities.
- This location is within walking distance to bus stops for the city bus line.

Final price tag for Option 3: \$50,000,000.

Activity 12.2: Citizen Role Cards

Cut out each of these citizen role cards and distribute them to all of your students. Students will use Activity 12.3: Interview Record to interview five classmates. After each interview, students should fill out their Interview Record form.

Card #1: Social Worker #1: I am a local social worker. I am willing to support any of these proposals. I want to stress that a stable home has been shown to increase self-sufficiency and workforce participation. Increased workforce participation can increase tax revenue for the government and may help offset the costs of these programs.

Card #2: Community Organizer: I am a local community organizer. I prefer Option 3. I worry that creating a large apartment complex could lead to an increase in crime. Earlier efforts by cities to create similar apartment style housing for people in need of housing have sometimes backfired and led to an increase in crime in those areas.

Card #3: Police Officer: I am a local police officer. I want to voice my support for either Option 2 or Option 3. New York City created a program for housing their homeless (the [Frequent User Service Enhancement Initiative](#)) and saw a 40% reduction in incarceration rates among their participants. This reduction in crime could free up our police force to better serve the community.

Card #4: Concerned Home Owner #1: I am a local homeowner and am opposed to Option 3. I live in the neighborhood located next to the proposed site for Option 3. I worry creating low-income housing next to my neighborhood will decrease the value of my home and may make it difficult for me to sell my house.

Card #5: Concerned Home Owner #2: I am a local homeowner who is worried about Option 2 and Option 3. I do not think the city has the proper infrastructure needed to support the additional housing. Have we looked at how these will impact our sewage lines and our water intake? Have we conducted the needed traffic studies to understand how these options will impact local traffic? We may want to slow down and do the proper amount of preparation to make sure we can support these plans.

Card #6: Concerned Business Owner: I am a local business owner and I oppose Option 2. My business is located next to the proposed location for that apartment building. I worry the creation of those apartments will increase crime in the area and drive customers away from my business.

Card #7: Developer #1: I run a local construction company. We specialize in building apartment complexes. I worry building Option 3 will oversaturate the housing market and drive down housing prices for local homeowners.

Card #8: Developer #2: I run a local construction company specializing in single family homes. I prefer Option 3. I worry that creating a large apartment building will ruin the feel of our community. A neighborhood with a park is a much more appealing solution and will add to the already pleasing community we have.

Card #9: Open Arms shelter staff: I work at Open Arms. I am worried Option 1 will increase the capacity of our shelter without addressing the additional staffing we need to meet the needs of the increase in capacity. Has any money been set aside to increase the size of our staff? We may end up burning out the current staff and replacing one problem with another.

Card #10: Local teacher #1: I teach at the local high school. I want to say I support Option 2 or Option 3. Having Open Arms available is very nice. However, the lack of a stable home life has a negative impact on our students. Creating a stable home could have a positive impact on our students and their families. Stable housing could help create a better future for those students who are impacted. I urge you to consider Option 2 or Option 3.

Card #11: Local teacher #2: I teach at the local elementary school. I want to say that I care deeply for my students and want the best for them. I worry Option 2 or Option 3 would cause our student population to increase. Our schools are not equipped to handle a significant increase in students. We would need to hire new teachers and support staff. We might also need to expand the schools to fit the increase in student population. Increased class sizes have been shown to negatively impact learning. Please consider Option 1.

Card #12: Local high school student: I am a student at the local high school. In class we discussed that Albuquerque, New Mexico reported saving over \$3 million in 2014 due to housing a large portion of their homeless population. While our population is different from Albuquerque's it might be worth noting that other cities have seen a budgetary benefit to housing their homeless rather than maintaining shelters.

Card #13: Concerned taxpayer: I live in Econopolis and pay a lot in taxes each year. I look at the cost of these options and see they each cost millions. How are we going to pay for these plans? Are we going to increase property taxes for businesses or homeowners? Are we going to cut the budget of other city programs to help cover the cost of these projects? I think all of these options are too expensive. I want us to find a cheaper alternative and I think a lot of your voters feel the same way.

Card #14: Emergency room doctor: I am an emergency room doctor at the local hospital. Almost 33% of all national emergency room visits involve providing care for homeless citizens who don't have family medical care or insurance. The average cost of an emergency room visit in America is \$3,700. On average in America, homeless people spend 3 nights per visit in the hospital, which can cost more than \$9,000. Option 2 or 3 could reduce emergency medical care needed and benefit the city.

Card #15: Advocate for the homeless #1: I have worked with a lot of the homeless population in Econopolis. Housing assistance for the homeless reduces the likelihood they will stay homeless or become homeless again. One 2020 study shows that up to 80% of the costs of housing assistance are offset by the potential benefits in the first 18 months. Not having a permanent address makes finding and keeping a job very difficult. Providing a more permanent housing option is a better solution than increasing our existing shelter.

Card #16: Religious Leader: I am a youth minister here in Econopolis. In 1948, the United Nations created The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 25 states, "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services." I believe it is the obligation of the government to provide for its citizens. The United Nations would seem to agree with me. I strongly support Option 3 and would also support Option 2. I will be sure to mention my support to my congregation.

Card #17: Local citizen #1: I am certainly concerned about adequate housing for our homeless population. However, I am worried about the cost of option #2 and option #3. It seems we could do a lot with ten million dollars; we could certainly do many things for the community with fifty million dollars. I worry paying for either of those two options will eliminate other projects which might benefit the community.

Card #18: Local citizen #2: I worry Option #2 and Option #3 are providing a lot without requiring anything in return. Are we removing personal responsibility by providing free housing to individuals? Should we require something from them in return for these housing options?

Card #19: Recently married citizen: I just got married two months ago. My spouse and I put off getting married until we could afford a home for our family. We did not receive any housing options from Econopolis. Why are we providing housing for some of our citizens, but not others?

Card #20: Local retiree: My spouse and I saved for years to buy our first house. I worry that providing housing for local citizens is sending the wrong message to our youth that they don't have to work hard to earn something.

Card #21: Advocate for the homeless #2: The National Alliance to End Homelessness [cites studies](#) on providing permanent housing for homeless people creating more stable lifestyles for participants. Participants were also more likely to attend supportive services to address substance abuse or mental health when provided permanent housing than people who were not provided permanent housing. Option #3 is our best option to better address the needs of our homeless population.

Card #22: Social worker #2: I work with many of our local citizens struggling with substance abuse. I worry that our substance abuse programs will have their funding cut to help pay for these expanded housing options listed in Option #2 and Option #3. I think expanding our existing homeless facility provides the option to spend more money on programs which address one of the root causes of homelessness and unemployment, substance abuse. If we could expand our services, we could help more citizens and might even be able to reduce the homeless population.

Card #23: Local business leader #1: I think a better use of our resources would be to try to bring in some new businesses to Econopolis. New businesses would provide more job opportunities and better income. Those opportunities would help our local homeless population earn a better life and they could move into their own apartment. They would have a higher sense of self-worth and be providing for their local community.

Card #24: Local business leader #2: These plans use too many taxpayer dollars without thinking about bringing in any additional revenue to offset the costs. We should spend that money on job training opportunities for our local citizens. Better training would provide better skills and would give our local citizens a chance to increase their income through increased productivity.

Card #25: Local environmentalist: I worry that Option #2 and Option #3 don't take into account the environmental strain new buildings can have on the local ecosystem. Perhaps our best option is to expand Open Arms and use the resources we save on creating a solar or wind farm on the land scouted for Option #3. We could use those resources to provide cheap, environmentally friendly power to our city, which is greatly needed.

Card #26: Advocate for the homeless #3: When I was in high school, my mother, sister, and I spent over a year without stable housing. My mother lost her job during the recession and couldn't find work for almost two years. She couldn't keep up with the house payments when she lost her job and we ended up losing our house. My mom worked hard to take care of all of us. She worked odd jobs but couldn't find a good job because of the economy. Many families face housing issues through no fault of their own. We need to do what we can to help our community.

Activity 12.3: Interview Record

You are waiting in the front foyer of the town hall for the city council meeting to start. While waiting, you decide to strike up a conversation with some of the other people waiting to speak at the meeting. Find five of your classmates and ask them why they are at the meeting. Record their information below:

Interview #1

1. Role card number and title:
2. What were their key talking points/concerns?
3. Were they more focused on economic efficiency or on equity?
4. Which of the 3 policies do you think they support (Option #1, Option #2, or Option #3)?

Interview #2

1. Role card number and title:
2. What were their key talking points/concerns?
3. Were they more focused on economic efficiency or on equity?
4. Which of the 3 policies do you think they support (Option #1, Option #2, or Option #3)?

Interview #3

1. Role card number and title:
2. What were their key talking points/concerns?
3. Were they more focused on economic efficiency or on equity?
4. Which of the 3 policies do you think they support (Option #1, Option #2, or Option #3)?

Interview #4

1. Role card number and title:
2. What were their key talking points/concerns?
3. Were they more focused on economic efficiency or on equity?
4. Which of the 3 policies do you think they support (Option #1, Option #2, or Option #3)?

Interview #5

1. Role card number and title:
2. What were their key talking points/concerns?
3. Were they more focused on economic efficiency or on equity?
4. Which of the 3 policies do you think they support (Option #1, Option #2, or Option #3)?

Which argument did you find the most convincing and why?

Which argument did you find the least convincing and why?

Assessment 12

1. Which of the following could be considered an economic cost of housing the homeless?
 - a. Housing the homeless could reduce the cost of emergency medical care.
 - b. A stable home could increase workforce participation.
 - c. Homeless populations are more susceptible to the spread of illnesses. Reducing homelessness could help reduce the spread of illnesses.
 - d. Housing the homeless could increase government spending.
2. Which of the following could be considered an economic benefit of housing the homeless?
 - a. Providing housing for the homeless could reduce the existing housing supply.
 - b. Determining who gets a home or shelter first could create inequalities.
 - c. The costs of providing homes for the homeless may be offset by the reduction in providing government programs for the homeless.
 - d. People living next to rehomed homeless may have concerns about the safety of their community.

3. Economic efficiency focuses on _____, while economic equity focuses on _____.
 - a. Distributing prosperity equally; maximizing benefits from resources
 - b. Providing resources to everyone; ensuring everyone has access to resources
 - c. Maximizing benefits from resources; distributing prosperity equally
 - d. Ensuring everyone has access to resources; providing resources to everyone

4. What role do you think economic efficiency should play in determining government policy?

5. What role do you think economic equity should play in determining government policy?

6. Do you agree with the United Nations “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services?” Defend your answer.

7. After hearing the arguments made by your classmates, structure your argument to the city council of Econopolis. Which proposal do you support? Be sure to address the benefits that argument lists for Option #1, Option #2, and/or Option #3. Address if you think the benefits listed in that argument are valid and why.

8. After hearing the arguments made by your classmates, structure your argument to the city council of Econopolis. Which proposal do you least support? Be sure to address the costs that argument lists for Option #1, Option #2, and Option #3. Address if you think the costs listed in that argument are valid and why.