In this lesson, students analyze why some neighborhoods are seen to be “attractive and healthy” and why others are seen to be “undesirable.” The lesson continues by having students analyze the effects of neighborhoods on the health of those who reside in them. Why is it that place matters?

**Day One**

Invite students to think of a neighborhood that could be described as “healthy,” “attractive” and “desirable.”

Have students gather in groups of four or five, then ask them to compile a list of descriptors and features of such a neighborhood. Possible answers include:

- Trees
- Shops
- Schools
- Open spaces, such as parks and plazas

Invite the student groups to share what they came up with. Write their list on the board.

Encourage students to think of a neighborhood that could be described as “in decline,” “unattractive” and “undesirable.”

With students in their same groups, ask them to compile a list of descriptors and features of such a neighborhood. Possible answers include:

- Numerous liquor stores
- Few shops
- Boarded-up buildings
- Criminal activity

Again have the groups share their lists, writing them on the board.

To compare neighborhoods, draw on the following options.

Option #1: Have students bring in pictures of neighborhoods.

Option #2: Have students draw pictures of neighborhoods.

Option #3: Show a clip(s) from *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?* Episode 5: “Place Matters.” You can find excerpts at www.unnaturalcauses.org/video_clips.php?vid_filter=Episode%205%20-%20Place%20Matters
DAY TWO

Pose the following questions to the class:
• Why are some neighborhoods attractive and healthy? What are the reasons or causes?
• Why are some neighborhoods in decline and unattractive? What are the reasons or causes?

(The discussions prompted by these questions are not meant to be exhaustive and complete, but rather are meant to build schema for the subsequent activity.) Have each student group complete the following chart to help the students explore the reasons some neighborhoods are characterized as attractive and others are seen to be in decline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unattractive neighborhood features</th>
<th>Reasons/causes</th>
<th>Attractive neighborhood features</th>
<th>Reasons/causes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boarded-up buildings</td>
<td>Foreclosures</td>
<td>Parks</td>
<td>Healthy inhabitants</td>
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</table>

Distribute this second chart so that student groups can explore the effects that positive and negative features have on neighborhood residents. You might ask students to focus on the effects these factors have on health.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unattractive neighborhood features</th>
<th>Effects</th>
<th>Attractive neighborhood features</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No grocery stores</td>
<td>Poor diet for residents</td>
<td>Recreation areas</td>
<td>Exercise opportunities</td>
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DAY THREE

Have student groups choose a neighborhood in decline, real or imagined. Utilizing their charts from the previous activity, ask the groups to brainstorm the features of the neighborhood and the health effects these features have on the residents. In addition, have each group work on a proposal to improve the conditions of the neighborhood and the health of the residents.

**Homework:** Each group writes a summary of its findings, including the proposal for improving the neighborhood, to be presented to the class in an oral report.
DAY FOUR

Oral Reports
Student groups present their findings to the class.
Invite the class to assess the presentations using the following guidelines:

Presenting group members ________________________________

Neighborhood ________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of neighborhood</th>
<th>Effects on residents</th>
<th>Clarity and completeness of presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

Share student assessments of the oral reports and decide on the strongest presentations.

Contact Assignment
Have students interview local government officials for primary research about neighborhoods in their area. Allow students to determine an area of focus for their interview and formulate appropriate questions.

Possible Areas of Focus:
• Are there any plans to improve the neighborhood? If so, what are they?
• Why do some neighborhoods have more resources and services than others have?

Students report back on their findings and compile a class report.

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