

Lesson 7 Handout**A Model “Green Town”**

Instructions: read the excerpt from the book *This Changes Everything* below, then respond to the questions. Excerpt from *This Changes Everything*, by Naomi Klein:

“In 2007, a super tornado ripped through the [rural town of Greensburg, Kansas], turning about 95 percent of the town into rubble. As a result of an extraordinary, community-led process that began just days after the disaster, with neighbors holding meetings in tents amid the wreckage of their former lives, Greensburg today stands as a model “green town,” often described as the greenest in America. The hospital, city hall, and school have all been built to the highest certification level issued by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). And the town has become a destination for hundreds of policy makers, anxious to learn more about its low-energy lighting and its cutting-edge green architecture and waste reduction, as well as the wind turbines that earn municipal revenue by producing more power than local residents need.

Most striking of all, this “living laboratory” is taking place in the heart of an overwhelmingly Republican-voting county, where a great many people are entirely unconvinced that climate change is real. But those debates seem to matter little to residents: the shared experience of tremendous loss, as well as the outpouring of generosity that follow the disaster, have, in Greensburg, rekindled the values of land stewardship and intergenerational responsibility that have deep roots in rural life. “The number one topic at those tent meetings was talking about who we are—what are our values?” recalls Greensburg mayor Bob Dixson, a former postmaster who comes from a long line of farmers. He added, “Sometimes we agreed to disagree, but we were still civil to each other. And let’s not forget that our ancestors were stewards of the land. My ancestors lived in the original green homes: sod houses.... We learned that the only true green and sustainable things in life are how we treat each other.” (pg 406-407)

Questions:

1. How is a crisis like a natural disaster a moment of change that can lead to something better or worse?

2. According to the text, how did values play a central role in the decisions made by the citizens of Greensburg to build a model "green town?"

3. How did the crisis faced by the people of Greensburg transform these types of activities: Political, Social, Economic?

4. Would you describe the Greensburg, Kansas recovery as a success? Justify your response.
