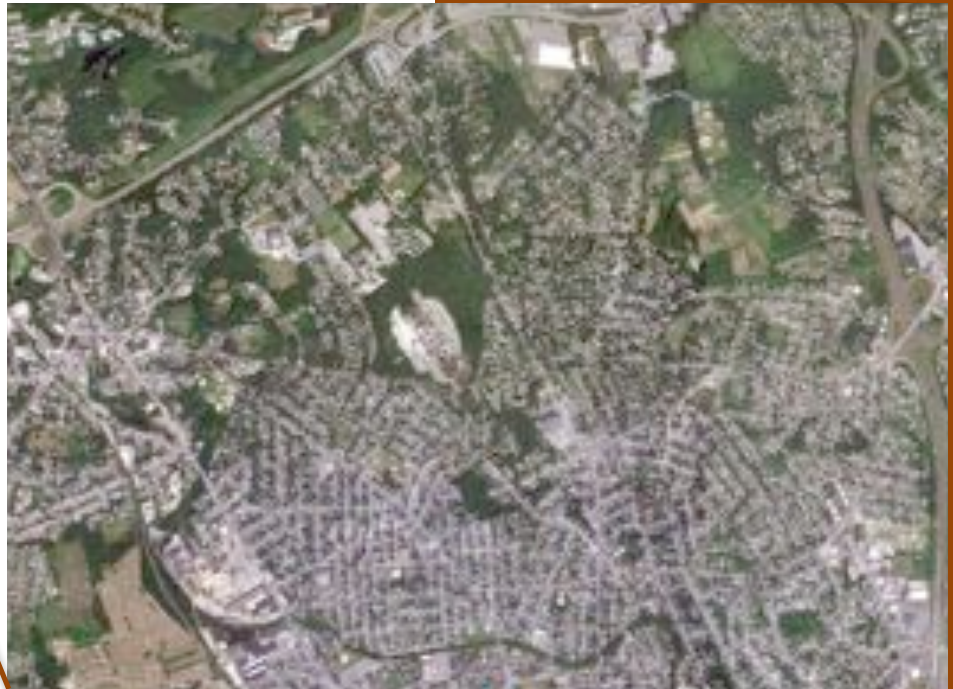
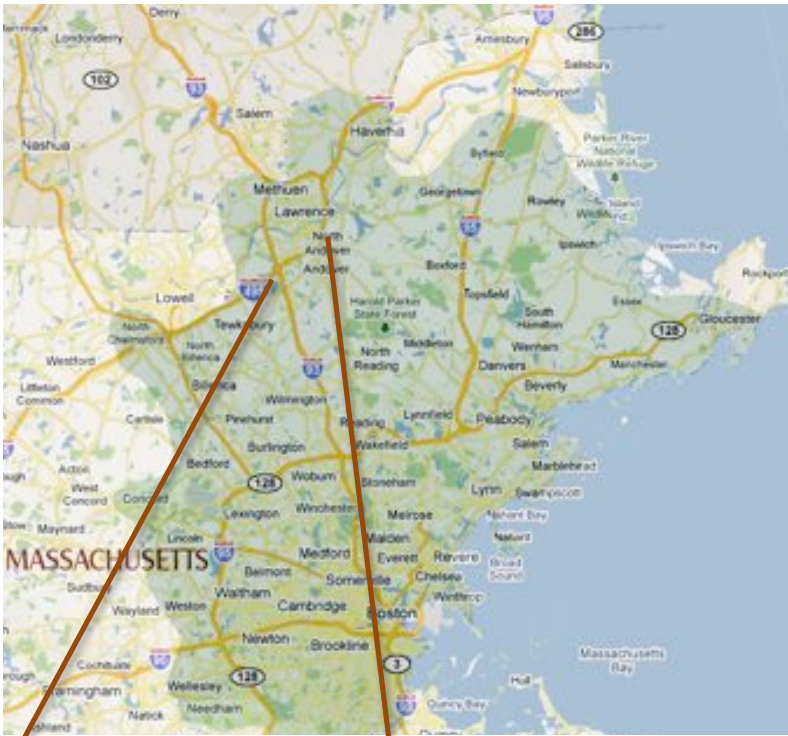


Focus on Arlington:

A Local Operating Manual



MIT@Lawrence
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MIT@Lawrence Fall 2011 and City of Lawrence Community Development Department

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1.0 Executive Summary



1.1. Introduction

There are great opportunities in the Arlington neighborhood. In this document, we analyze three main issues and provide recommendations to the City of Lawrence for how to best move forward in each issue area. These areas are: *vacant land inventory and analysis, illegal dumping and banned waste, and healthy food access.*

Our intention was to provide background information on each topic and then to provide step-by-step recommendations for how to best deal with each topic. Thus, this document is meant to be a “how-to” manual for attacking some of the issues in the Arlington neighborhood.

1.2. Vacant Land Inventory and Analysis

There are many different possibilities and options when dealing with vacant lots. Our preference for reuse of vacant lots in Lawrence is **pocket parks** and **community gardens**. Additional parks can generate strong community interest, and can unite the community as they create a new green space for themselves.

There are many reasons for these recommendations. First, green space can help to make a community safer¹. Second, green spaces may curb dumping and other illegal activities. Third, they are cheap to build and maintain.

Legal compliance must be achieved when dealing with foreclosed homes. Foreclosed homes can be a physical danger to the neighborhood, and also can influence property prices.

See Section 4 for step-by-step recommendations on how to create these green spaces and how to deal with foreclosed homes.

1.3. Illegal Dumping and Banned Waste

The presence of illegally dumped and littered trash is a perennial problem in Lawrence in general and in Arlington in particular. For this portion of the report, our goals were: to continue the investigation from the spring 2010 practicum into existing waste management and illegal dumping conditions in Lawrence, the Merrimack Valley, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; to look at what’s being done in nearby municipalities (including Andover, Lowell, Methuen, North Andover, Salem, and Tewksbury) with respect to dumping enforcement, banned waste management, education about the issues, and similar, paying attention to what is being done nearby that is not being done in Lawrence; and to provide recommendations, after taking into account budgetary, regulatory, and other constraints.

¹ <http://www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/saferneighborhoods.htm>

After considering the current conditions in Arlington and Lawrence as well as the conditions in nearby municipalities, we found, among other things, that the systems and plans for oversight of illegal dumping and waste management in the City of Lawrence appear to be clear and straightforward and that the supervisory agencies appear to be enforcing the laws against illegal dumping as much as is feasible with their limited resources. We also found, however, that the process for Arlington residents to acquire banned waste stickers is complicated and onerous, that it is very difficult to find accurate and non-contradictory information about waste management in Lawrence, and that the fees and disposal options in Lawrence seem more expensive and more difficult than in other municipalities.

Based on these findings, we present a series of recommendations centered on **outreach to residents**, including a variety of **targeted communication strategies**, as well as facilitating **simpler and more convenient options for waste disposal**, with an array of recommendations that range from simple changes in process to possibilities for a system overhaul.

See Section 5 for more detail on these recommendations, including step-by-step guidance for implementation.

1.4. Healthy Food Access

Health data suggests that children in Arlington are disproportionately unhealthy. This is a concern because lack of access to nutritious foods has far-reaching consequences on children. It affects their physical and cognitive development, and increases their susceptibility to other diseases. Increasing healthy food options can facilitate the realization of health-related goals. The Mayor's Health Task Force and community partners have ongoing and nascent efforts to respond to this challenge, making it an opportune moment to transform Arlington's food environment.

To help the Task Force prepare for these efforts, MIT@Lawrence used existing USDA data and conducted a walk-through survey to paint a better picture of Arlington's food environment. This revealed that parts of Arlington meet the federal classification standards for "food deserts," and that there are more than twenty corner stores in the neighborhood. MIT@Lawrence used this information, and identified healthy food interventions in other cities, to make recommendations that will help the Mayor's Health Task Force achieve its goals.

The recommendations are: (1) Gather more information and coordinate new research initiatives to create a strong information-sharing network to collaboratively identify and solve health-related problems. (2) Use food desert classification and other evidence-based data to identify and obtain external resources to support local initiatives. (3) Launch a corner store initiative to engage all members of the Arlington neighborhood, including corner store owners.

See Section 6 for more detail on these recommendations.

1.5. Collaborations and Linkages

There are many opportunities for collaboration between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the City of Lawrence, and the many non-profit groups that work in the city. We advocate for continual communication in order to bring about transformative goals in Arlington.

The individual sections in this report highlight numerous challenges in Arlington. Analyzing vacant lands and homes, addressing large-scale dumping, and attacking the childhood obesity issues in the neighborhood seem very disparate in scope, but we would argue that there is a tight connection between the three. Vacant land and homes can have a negative impact on the psyche of a neighborhood; this can lead to lack of pride in that community. Continued dumping will occur as land stays vacant and unused, and no supermarkets or businesses will want to locate there, leading to unhealthy eating amongst the Arlington youth. These problems are tightly knit.

2.0 Introduction

Change is imminent in Lawrence's Arlington neighborhood. In the fall of 2010, The Community Group (TCG), a community organization, received a federal planning grant to create the Arlington Community of Excellence (ACE)². The ACE is a Promise Neighborhood, a continuum of "cradle-through-college-to-career" solutions for children and youth to lift them out of poverty. The Promise Neighborhood theory of change holds that a focus on the educational outcomes is not enough; transformation requires the integration and improvement of a wide range of services that touch children's lives. In other words, the ACE requires an all-hands-on-deck approach to achieve the transformation it envisions.

The City of Lawrence Community Development Department's (CDD's) long-standing goal to improve the quality of life in the city is aligned with the ACE vision. The CDD has worked to create opportunity in the city's most vulnerable communities through its planning functions, but also by way of supporting local community development initiatives. Thus the City has a critical role to play in the realization of the ACE.

With this manual, MIT@Lawrence provides information, as well as proposes ideas and concrete next steps, on how the City can support the realization of the ACE's stated goals. The manual's areas of focus are: *vacant land inventory and analysis*, *illegal dumping and banned waste*, and *health food access*. These three topics are CDD priorities, and they are also linked to the ACE's success.

Change in Arlington will happen through the focused and collaborative efforts between those dedicated to its improvement. Ideas are ripe; it's time to see them through.

2.1. Summary of Research Process

MIT@Lawrence came to decide on its three areas of focus—*vacant land inventory and analysis*, *illegal dumping and banned waste*, and *health food access*—through a deliberative process. Our first step was to gather information. Our team met with CDD staff and with members of local organizations, including The Community Group, Groundwork Lawrence and Lawrence CommunityWorks. We also examined previous neighborhood studies and plans.

Based on the information we gathered, we identified three broad areas of concern that we felt were particularly relevant to the Arlington District:

- Neighborhood health and safety;
- Community engagement and pride of place; and
- Communication and coordination of services.

Within each of these three areas of concern, we created a list of issues that met two criteria: 1) the City has or can play a role in mitigating the issue, and 2) this mitigation will contribute to the realization of the ACE vision. During an in-person meeting, CDD staff identified which of the issues on our list were priorities for their department or for the City as a whole and which were topics for which the City could use additional guidance in strategizing helpful responses. From the issues that CDD identified, we then

² <http://www.arlingtononthemove.org/>

selected three areas for which we felt we could make actionable contributions: *vacant land inventory and analysis*; *illegal dumping and banned waste*; and *healthy food access*.

3.0 Arlington and Context

The City of Lawrence is a former mill city located in the Merrimack River Valley in Essex County, Massachusetts. Known as “The Immigrant City,” Lawrence has attracted workers from other parts of the world for more than a century, most recently from Central and South America, as well as the Caribbean. Lawrence is among the poorest cities in the U.S., with 27.3 percent of its approximately 71,000 residents living below the poverty line, compared to 13.5 percent statewide³. The City is 71.1 percent Hispanic, compared to 8.3 percent statewide⁴, with a high percentage of immigrants (30.6 percent⁵) and a high percentage of individuals for whom English is not their primary language—19.6 percent of residents under 18 and 62.3 percent of residents 18 and over speak English “less than very well”, 9 and 17 times the state rate, respectively⁶. As The Community Group (TCG) observed, “Lawrence is a powerful archetype of small cities and immigrant communities across the country”⁷; the challenges the City faces are as difficult to overcome as they are common. Current City officials and residents are facing a range of obstacles as they work to improve conditions in Lawrence, including dilapidated and contaminated infrastructure; old and substandard housing stock; and an ongoing City budget deficit.

The Arlington District, called “one of the City’s poorest yet most vibrant areas”⁸, is a neighborhood in the northwest corner of the City of Lawrence. The traditional boundaries of the neighborhood are Arlington Street along the northern edge, the Spicket River along the southern edge, Jackson Street along the eastern edge, and Broadway along the western edge. This area covers almost 400 acres of land, which is about 8.5% of the City’s total area; however, with about 20% of the City’s residents living within the neighborhood, this makes for a highly dense neighborhood (averaging nearly thirteen dwelling units per acre of dry land)⁹. The neighborhood as delineated here consists of approximately 15,000 people. Residents dwell in about approximately 5,000 units of modest housing—mostly small-scale multi-family dwellings and two-family homes mixed with some single-family homes and a few larger apartment buildings¹⁰, which were originally built for a set of mills along the Spicket River. The area also includes commercial development along corridors on Lawrence Street and on Broadway¹¹.

Arlington face many challenges on a daily basis. The neighborhood is one on Lawrence’s lowest-income neighborhoods. Median family income in Arlington as of 2008 was approximately \$34,000, which is low compared to the Lawrence median family income of \$37,000 and significantly lower than the region’s median of \$80,600¹². The Massachusetts Department of Education reported in 2009 that 93 percent of the children at the Arlington Elementary School were from low-income families, while 87 percent of the

³ American Community Survey 2005-2009

⁴ American Community Survey 2005-2009 Table B03002.

⁵ City-Data Massachusetts: foreign born residents, <http://www.city-data.com/races/races-Lawrence-Massachusetts.html>

⁶ American Community Survey 2005-2009 Table B16004.

⁷ Arlington Community of Excellence Promise Neighborhood Implementation Application, page 2.

⁸ Arlington Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, page 1.

⁹ Arlington Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, page 5.

¹⁰ Arlington Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, pages 5 and 6.

¹¹ Lawrence Practicum 2011, E. Glenn and J. Buckley.

¹² Claritas, Inc., “Demographic Snapshot 2008,” and HUD, “Fiscal Year 2008 Income Limits for Public Housing and Section 8 Programs,” 13 February 2008, for Lawrence, MA-NH HUD Metro FMR Area, <http://www.huduser.org/>, cited in Arlington Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, page 10.

same children qualified for the free lunch program¹³. Flooding is a constant risk in some parts of the neighborhood – in the past fifteen years the neighborhood has experienced four 100-year floods¹⁴. In recent years, the neighborhood has also been impacted by waves of foreclosures (which have hit Arlington harder than other Lawrence neighborhoods—see Section 4 for more details); unemployment (Arlington’s unemployment rate has traditionally been lower than that of Lawrence, and Lawrence’s unemployment rate topped 18 percent as of March 2011, versus the state rate of 8.2 percent for the same period¹⁵); arson; and street violence (the City of Lawrence’s rate of violent crime was 711.8 per 100,000 in 2009, 56 percent higher than the state rate, and there were 78 major school safety incidents at the Arlington Middle School in 2010¹⁶).

Despite the challenges, the Arlington District is also one of the most vibrant neighborhoods in the City of Lawrence. “Stores are busy, children and families are present, street-life is active and communal, residents know each other, and strong community institutions thrive here; from a design perspective, the built environment already includes many elements that planners promote for walkable, dense, communal, energy-efficient, and diverse urban settings”¹⁷. Building on these strengths, while mindful of the numerous challenges, the City’s Community Development Department has been interested for some time in strengthening the Arlington neighborhood. In August 2009 the CDD published the Arlington Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, which sought to design a plan to “stem the tide of foreclosures, stabilize the neighborhood, and generally improve the quality of life for Arlington neighborhood residents”¹⁸.

Other efforts to bring about transformational change in Arlington are underway. One exciting project that will beautify the community is the Spicket River Greenway Project. This project is aimed at making a walkable path alongside the Spicket River, thus beautifying the neighborhood and attempting to engender a sense of community pride of place. Last year the sponsoring organization, Groundwork Lawrence, received a \$2 million grant to begin the highly anticipated project.

Another large effort to spur action in the neighborhood was the grant application that was submitted by TCG to the U.S. Department of Education for a Promise Neighborhood grant for the ACE. If obtained, this grant would have provided significant funding to organizations within the Arlington neighborhood. On December 19, 2011, the U.S. Department of Education announced the grantees for Promise Neighborhood implementation grants, and unfortunately the ACE was not among the neighborhoods selected¹⁹. Nonetheless, the process of compiling the grant application acted as a catalyst for dialogue among local organizations and agencies about the future of Arlington. It initiated networks among local service providers, it helped propel TCG’s efforts to create a family resource center for the neighborhood, and hopefully it will continue to serve as a focal point for working toward positive change within the

¹³ Massachusetts Department of Education, Arlington Elementary School, “Selected Populations,” Lawrence Public Schools School District Profile, 2008-2009, cited in Arlington Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, page 11.

¹⁴ Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, cited in Arlington Community of Excellence Promise Neighborhood Implementation Application, page 3.

¹⁵ Department of Revenue (DOR), Division of Local Services, “Labor Force and Unemployment Data, 1990-2009” (citing the Division of Unemployment Assistance), Municipal Data Bank, <http://www.dls.state.ma.us/mdm.htm>, cited in the Arlington Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, page 9.

¹⁶ Massachusetts DESE School Safety and Discipline Report 2010, cited in Arlington Community of Excellence Promise Neighborhood Implementation Application, page 3.

¹⁷ Lawrence Practicum 2011, E. Glenn and J. Buckley.

¹⁸ Arlington Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, page 1.

¹⁹ “Obama Administration Announces 2011 Promise Neighborhoods Grant Winners”, Available online at <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/obama-administration-announces-2011-promise-neighborhoods-grant-winners>.

community. TCG has stated that they will continue to work toward the goals they set forth in their Promise Neighborhood application, to the extent that it is financially viable, despite the lack of a federal grant²⁰. Whether or not funding is immediately found to advance the goals of TCG, it should be noted that the proposed Promise Neighborhood plan is a great resource for anyone interested in working to improve the Arlington District. It contains a wealth of information about Arlington, it outlines potential organizational alliances, and it brought people and organizations together to identify concrete problems and solutions in the neighborhood.



Figure 3.1. “Bread and Roses – Lawrence 1912” (detail), Ralph Fasanella

²⁰ Pers. comm. from Sharon Thompson, The Community Group, email to Maryann Hulsman, September 21, 2011.

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Land Inventory and Land Analysis

Jahangir Akbar
Leif Francel

4.0 The Report on Land Inventory and Land Analysis

4.1 Background

Importance of Land Management

Land management is a complex issue that requires a deep understanding of the needs of a community, as well as the ability to allocate scarce resources in the best possible way. Over the years, the City of Lawrence has made great efforts to address some of these issues; in conjunction with the MIT@Lawrence partnership, the City has implemented some changes that have improved its capacity to deliver services to residents. The focus on developing an integrated land management system serves not only to help the City manage its inventory, but to provide a better experience for residents of the Arlington neighborhood.

Public Safety

It is natural for any individual to want to live in a safe and secure neighborhood, one that is free from crime and man-made hazards. Due to the high level of vacant lots and homes that exist within the Arlington neighborhood, public safety has become an issue of great concern. Vacant lots are a threat to public safety for numerous reasons; the primary reason is that vacant lots can be used by individuals engaging in illegal activities, such as selling or using drugs. This type of illegal activity creates a precedent whereby others begin to congregate and engage in such activities. This may both jeopardize the safety of residents and create a perception that resident safety is in question, creating an intimidating environment for neighbors. In particular, school-age children are most at risk with regards to this activity, since bullying and other forms of intimidation often occur during after-school hours²¹.

The preponderance of vacant homes is another public safety issue. A vacant home is an attractive target for transients and therefore can cause concern within a community. One of the major reasons for the concern is that illegal residents of a home increase the chances of the home catching fire. During cold winters, transients will often try to find a place to stay, and during their tenure use candles and gas heaters as sources for lighting and heating. After observing the neighborhood, it was noted that there is a high level of density and that the homes are in close proximity with one another. If a fire breaks out inside a vacant home, the chances of it spreading to neighboring properties is quite high. It should therefore be in the City's interest to make sure to minimize the number of vacant homes, and to properly secure any vacant properties.

²¹ Promise Neighborhood Grant Application

Health

The health issue is quite important with regards to vacant land within the Arlington district. Given the high level of dumping that is apparent in the neighborhood, the health and welfare of everyone living within the neighborhood is at risk. A particular cause for concern is the health of children. In the Arlington neighborhood there is a lot of household trash dumped on vacant lands. In addition, there is a high amount of litter that fills the streets. Since these are open spaces, children naturally gravitate to open spaces and make them play areas. It is therefore a cause of concern that the children are playing in an area that contains high amounts of trash. The agglomeration of refuse can lead to diseases being spread. It should therefore be a priority to clean up these vacant lots so that the health of the residents is not harmed.

Pride of place

A clean and tidy neighborhood results in a certain pride amongst its residents. By having an aesthetically pleasing environment, individuals become more proactive to stop others from negatively altering the environment. One example is the illegal dumping that currently goes on because it seems to be considered the norm; however, if this mindset were changed, then individuals would be more likely to actively prevent dumping themselves. Creating a sense of neighborhood pride can truly change the character of a neighborhood.

The Arlington Community of Excellence, a Promise Neighborhood

The plan for the Arlington Community of Excellence (ACE) seeks to provide a stable community for all people, but especially young people. A neighborhood with many distressed properties and dumping is not conducive to such a mission. It is hoped that the ACE will spark a renaissance within Arlington and push community groups to engage in new and creative projects for the betterment of the community. The opportunity exists for community groups to collaborate with one another; however, initiative needs to be taken to start a dialogue about what needs to be done and how to move forward.

4.2. Context

After reading numerous documents about the neighborhood, talking to City officials, and conducting fieldwork in the neighborhood, we believe that we have obtained a strong understanding of the neighborhood. The main issues within the neighborhood relate to enforcement of existing laws and also the lack of budget and manpower that is available to the City. These deficiencies inhibit the City from implementing a coordinated strategy against vacant lots and homes.

Enforcement

Land management is a tough problem for the City because there are only a limited amount of enforcement options that the City can impose. With regards to homes, a home can remain vacant for an indefinite period of time, as long as the property is not a threat to public safety and all property taxes are paid. In this regard, the City is at the mercy of the owner as to when the house will be reoccupied; this can lead to the proliferation of vacant homes. With regards to vacant land, the City inspector can issue a violation if the land has any trash on the premises. If the owner of the property fails to pay the fine then a lien is placed on the property. If the lien amount remains unpaid then the City has the right to acquire the land in lieu of payment. Typically the threat of a lien prompts compliance. However, if the land is not worth much money, then there is a disincentive to pay the lien. New strategies need to be developed here.

Budget and Staffing

Due to the economic recession coupled with the overall decline of Lawrence, the budgetary situation with the City is grim. Cuts have been made to many departments and additional cuts may be on the horizon. As a result, the City lacks the necessary manpower to tackle some of the toughest challenges. During fiscal year 2011, there was a proposed layoff of 115 employees within City government, including the Director of Planning, and a number of Department of Public Works (DPW) employees²².

However, City departments have been quite adept at obtaining other sources of finance aside from their respective budgets. There are numerous grants that City departments apply for at both the state and federal level. While these grants are not guaranteed sources of funding, they are a way for the departments to augment their budgets and engage in special projects. One such source of funding are Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and it is estimated that the federal government is appropriating \$1.9 million to the city in fiscal 2011²³. This money can be used a variety of ways, and targeted to specific neighborhoods, if the right amount of political will exists.

One of the major problems with the lack of funds is that it slows down the City's ability to gain positive momentum in their efforts to deal with issues of land management. While it would be optimistic to assume that the financial situation will change for the better in the near future, a more realistic approach to the situation would be to push City officials to introduce more creative and innovative measures to deal with their land management issues. Given the renewed focus on the Arlington neighborhood, an opportunity exists to engender effective change.

²²<http://www.cityoflawrence.com/Data/Sites/1/documents/fy1120budget20presentation.pdf><http://www.cityoflawrence.com/Data/Sites/1/documents/fy1120budget20presentation.pdf>

²³http://www.cityoflawrence.com/Data/Sites/1/documents/2011_action_plan.pdf

4.3. Methodology

Data

As part of the study into the Arlington neighborhood, data was collected with regards to real-estate owned (REO) homes, vacant lots, and dumping. The data used for the study included GIS parcel data records and property information provided by the Assessor's office. In addition, field-based data collection was undertaken in order to obtain up-to-date information about vacancy and dumping intensity. In addition, Internet resources were consulted to obtain the market price of property in Lawrence. The method for recording data included creating a scale for the level of dumping intensity on vacant land, as well as determining if a piece of land was vacant or not.

Assumptions

As part of the analysis many assumptions were made during the course of data collection. One of the major assumptions was to focus on the core of the Arlington neighborhood. This was due to the fact that the majority of properties existed in the area bounded by Lawrence Street, Broadway, Arlington Street, and the Spicket River. As a result of this, some vacant lands, while technically within the Arlington district, were excluded due to being outliers. This was based on the fact that these properties were in the periphery and that dumping was not occurring on them in any serious manner. Another major assumption related to what constituted vacant land, as this concept is subjective, given that all land actually has a rightful owner. A uniform system was devised for determining whether a piece of land was vacant: the basic approach was to see if the land was taken care of; if the land was in disrepair then it was assumed for the purposes of this study that the land was vacant and the owner was absentee.

Analysis

The methods for analyzing data included using ArcGis for mapping purposes, and using Microsoft Excel for data analysis. By using ArcGis we were able to visualize data collected during our fieldwork; this data, in conjunction with data provided by the Assessor was used to make the maps that are in this report. The maps were analyzed in order to understand the phenomena of property vacancy that exists in the Arlington neighborhood.

Limitations of Study

Certain limitations exist within the study conducted because the analysis is static and analysis was not conducted using time-series data. As such, some observations with regards to the number of vacant lots and REO homes will become outdated relatively quickly given the changing nature of the City. In addition, the severity of dumping in the neighborhood continually changes given that the Department of Public Works (DPW) proactively cleans up dumping sites. However, it can be said that the recommendations provided are based in fact, even though the analysis was conducted in a static environment.

4.4. Vacant Lots and Dumping

Vacant lots are an omnipresent reminder of the economic condition of the Arlington neighborhood. These lots resulted because of the numerous housing demolitions that occurred in years past. Demolitions arise because a home is condemned by the City due to being structurally unsound and a threat to public safety. Demolitions are a cost effective way to remove an aging and unsound home from a neighborhood. The rationale for a sustained demolition campaign is to clear areas of blight in order to bring life back into the neighborhood. However, with regards to Lawrence, the policy of demolition inadvertently transformed the City's problem with vacant homes into a problem of vacant lots.

While on the face of it, dealing with vacant lots is less risky and cheaper than dealing with a vacant home, there are still many issues that arise from having to manage an inventory of vacant lots. One of the main issues is preventing a lot from becoming a dumping ground for the neighborhood. In this regard, the City has attempted to be proactive but the manpower available to the city has historically remained inadequate to deal with the large number of vacant lots; and as a result many of the lots have become dumping grounds.

After many years of holding a number of vacant lots, the city was able to divest itself from some plots during the housing bubble. Some of the vacant lots were sold to adjoining property owners, so that they could be put to better use. The City also sold some of its vacant lots to “would-be” housing developers’ intent on building new housing on the land. One of the benefits of purchasing a vacant lot is that the demolition has already been undertaken, and that the site is clean and can be built on after a thorough environmental analysis and permitting process. This seemed attractive to developers looking to build new housing stock in Lawrence, during the housing bubble. However, due to the financial crisis, many of these homebuilders were unable to complete their projects, leaving the lots once again vacant. As a result of all of this, the neighborhood contains a significant number of vacant lots that are in private hands, and a problem persists: how to develop these lots and keep them secure and free of dumping?



Figure 4.1: Vacant lot in Arlington neighborhood

Analysis

After extensive data collection in the Arlington neighborhood, it was determined that 47 vacant lots exist. These lots vary in size and shape, ranging from 0.035 acres (1,534 square feet) to 1.33 acres (57,930 square feet). From the parcel data, it appears that most of the lots are small and scattered about the neighborhood. The scattering effect creates the perception that the lots are pervasive and exist on every block; however, after conducting additional analysis that appears to not be the case.

After mapping the data, a cluster formation emerged on the southeast corner of the neighborhood core (see Figure 4.3). This cluster pattern is indicative of one of the problems that exist within the neighborhood with regards to vacancy—the vacant lots that are clustered in the southeast corner are within the 100-year flood zone. See **Figure 4.2** for the floodplain map for the City of Lawrence. There are approximately 17 vacant lots that are within the direct floodplain, as designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The floodplain map provided below shows the severity of flooding that is possible within the plain, and the risk that is posed to the neighborhood. As recently as 2006, there was a flood that submerged a significant area of the Arlington neighborhood. As result of the floods, selling vacant lots within the flood zone has become a difficult task. Any private party that wants to sell a plot in the zone must disclose that the property remains in the flood zone, and this creates a disincentive on the part of the buyer to purchase the land and develop it for a productive use. This appears to be a major hurdle with regards to vacant lot remediation.

Additionally, the City, which also owns parcels in the flood zone, maintains a policy of not selling any properties that are within the flood zone, since any development would run the risk of flooding in the event that the Spicket River exceeded its banks. This is a reasonable policy on the part of the City, as they understand the difficulties of managing such land, and have experienced potential builders backing out of development projects given the chance for damage as a result of flood. Thus, the presence of the flood zone results in a situation where some of the vacant lots within the neighborhood often remain undeveloped and unattractive for development.

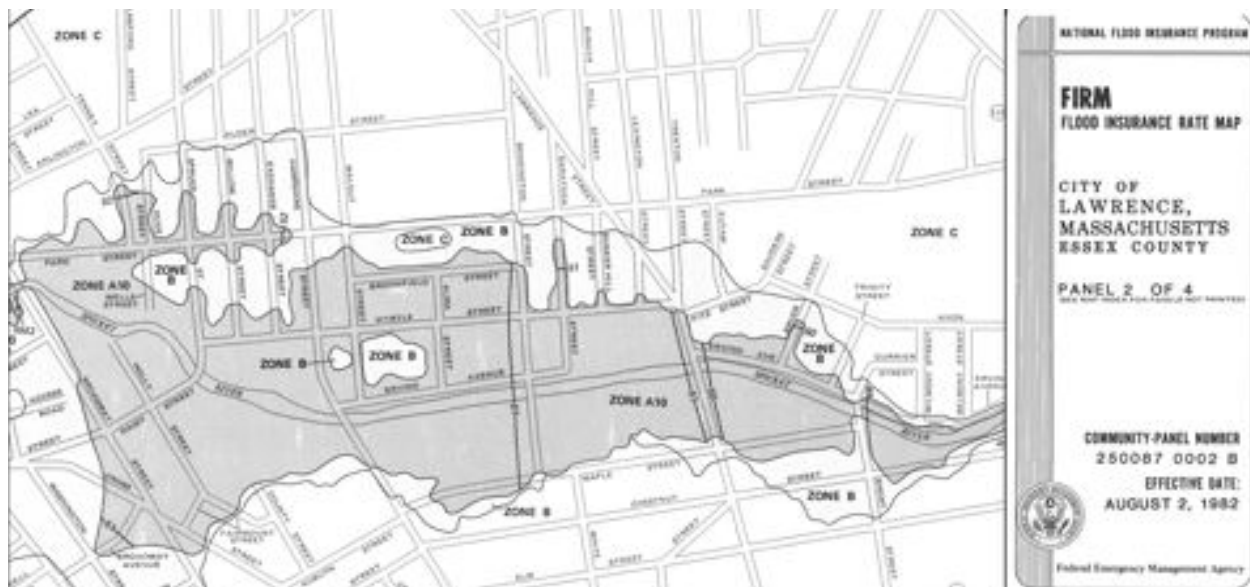


Figure 4.2: Flood Insurance Rate Map, 1982

However, aside from the properties that exist within the flood zone, there are numerous plots of land that remain unused throughout the neighborhood and are in private hands. Over the years the City has divested itself from many properties, especially during the housing boom of the 2000s; in 2010 the city generated \$300,000 from selling city owned properties²⁴. However, after the financial crisis occurred many of the properties that were planned for development were abandoned, given the lack of financing available. As a result, many of the properties that the City sold during this time remain vacant and have become a burden for the neighborhood as a whole.

Over time, these plots have become dumping grounds for the community. While conducting field research, we found that a significant number of these properties contained various amounts of trash. Part of the analysis included documenting the type of trash on the grounds, as well as the intensity of dumping. See **Appendix 4.1** for a map showing the composition of trash present on each vacant lot, and see **Appendix 5.10** for the dumping intensity rating of each plot in the neighborhood. The type of trash that was most prevalent during the assessment was household trash and bulk trash. The abundance of household trash showed that individuals were using vacant lots as their personal dumping ground. In addition, the litter that was on the properties showed that it seemed acceptable to dump trash on the property. With regards to bulk trash, there were numerous instances of observing mattresses and televisions strewn about in vacant lots. These items have prescribed disposal methods, and it appears that there is a breakdown with regards to the residents understanding the procedures in place with respect to the ordinances.

We found that another striking pattern existed with respect to trash dumping: the highest intensity of dumping also coincided with the clustering of vacant properties in the southeast corner of the neighborhood. In this part of the neighborhood there are currently seven REO properties that are vacant, in addition to the numerous vacant lots, all of which result in a significantly blighted area. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that visibility is reduced in this particular area—the Spicket River borders this area and there is a line of trees that obscures the view. It is believed that these physical features are a contributing factor with regards to the excessive dumping that is taking place in this part of the neighborhood. What was observed during fieldwork was that there was a considerable amount of dumping on the sidewalks and embankment of the Spicket River in this area. The dumping along the embankment appears to have been done with impunity; and this seems to reinforce the hypothesis that a lack of visibility is a contributing factor to the dumping. What was also noticed is that the streets in this part of the neighborhood are small, and from observation there is significantly less traffic flowing on them. This lack of traffic may provide the perfect opportunity to an individual that is engaged in trash dumping. In particular, individuals dumping commercial waste from the back of pick-up trucks need to be obscured from neighbors' lines of sight.

Another possible reason is that since there is observable blight in the area, it perpetuates a frame of mind that legitimizes dumping because others are engaging in this activity. This is typically called the “broken windows” effect because a lack of up-keep can result in a snowballing that can bring the area down as a whole.

²⁴<http://www.cityoflawrence.com/Data/Sites/1/documents/fy1120budget20presentation.pdf><http://www.cityoflawrence.com/Data/Sites/1/documents/fy1120budget20presentation.pdf>

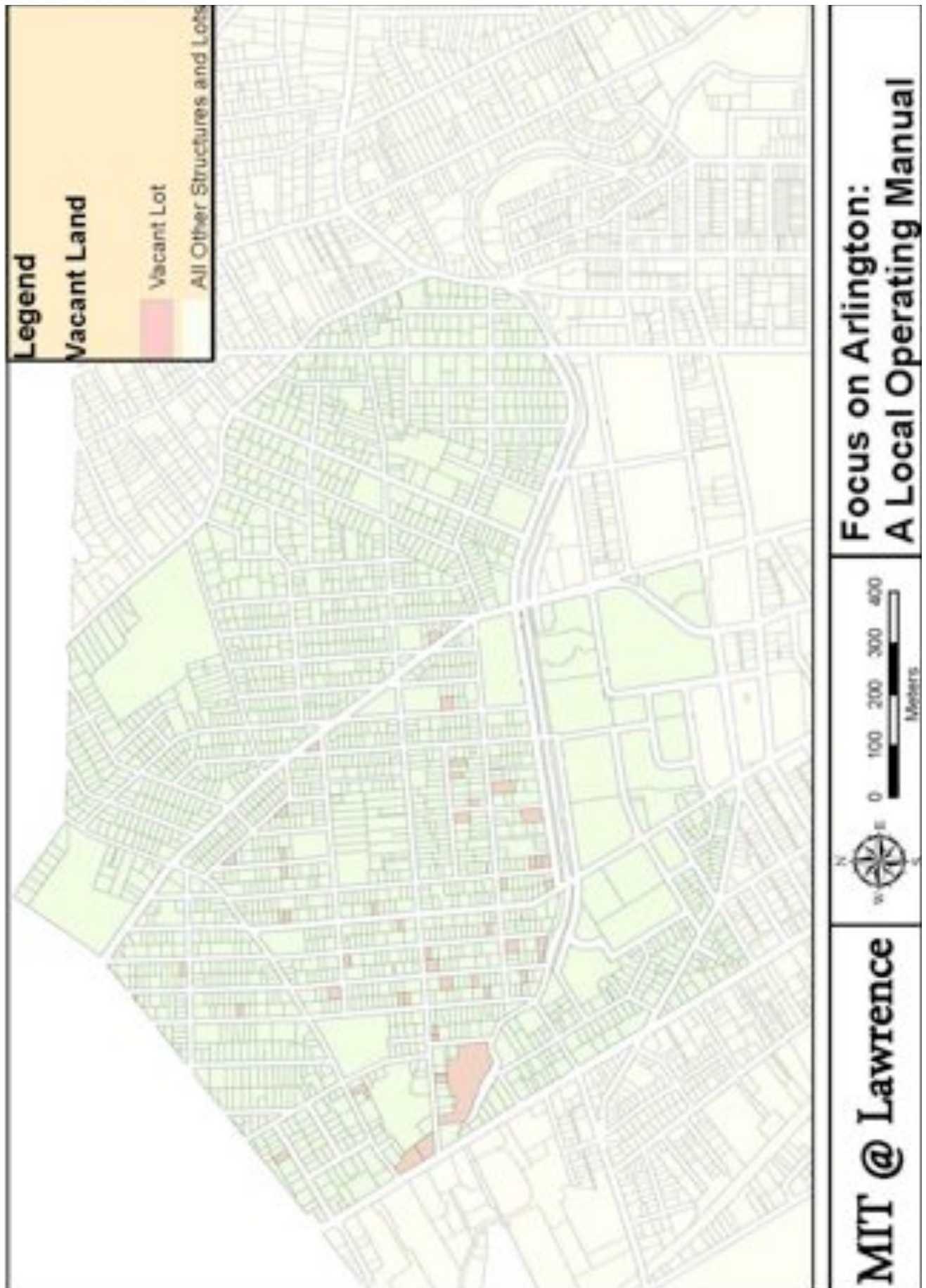


Figure 4.3: Vacant lots in the Arlington Neighborhood

4.5. Real Estate Owned Homes

A real estate owned (REO) home is a property that is owned and managed by a lending institution such as a bank. The main reason that a bank might come into possession of a property would be because the previous homeowner defaulted on his or her loan. As a result, the bank seizes the property as a way to recoup their losses and secure their collateral. Typically, once the property is in the bank's possession, an attempt is made to sell it on the open market to a private party. However, given the recent economic crisis, and the acute lack of easy financing available, many homes on the market are unable to be sold. Even though the market prices for homes are considerably lower than they were during the peak of the housing boom, selling a home still remains quite a difficult task.

The bank is typically at the mercy of the economic cycle; when the economy as a whole recovers, the better the chances are that the bank is able to resell the home. If a bank is unable to sell a home, the house is likely to stay vacant for an extended period of time. A major issue with regards to vacant bank-owned homes, is the fact that a bank does not have the capacity nor the interest to maintain the homes; in many cases the banks are usually geographically removed from the vacant property and do not have a local contact person. According to City officials, even though banks are far removed from these properties, they actively pay their taxes in order to avoid any City liens and violations.

Vacant homes can have many negative effects on a neighborhood. One of the most significant effects of large scale vacancy is that it creates a downward price spiral. This plummeting of price is driven by demand. As potential home buyers come to realize the true level of vacancy that exists within a neighborhood, they become discouraged from purchasing, and this results in a decrease in demand, and an associated correction in price. The reduction in price not only affects the seller but also existing homeowners, as their property values could possibly decrease to the point where they become "underwater" on their mortgages; meaning that they owe more to the mortgage lender than the property is actually worth.

A second problem with vacant homes is that they attract crime. Since the homes are vacant, they provide an opportunity for individuals to engage in acts of vandalism and theft. A particularly common act of theft and vandalism is the stealing of mechanical, plumbing, and electrical systems, as this renders the building useless. The cost of the damage inflicted is severe enough to dissuade a potential home buyer from investing in the property. Another problem of vacancy relates to illegal occupations. In some cases, squatters occupy a vacant building and live there illegally, in turn fostering an environment in which other illegal activities such as drug selling and using may occur. In addition to crime, the possibility of a structure fire increases due to the illegal occupants living in the home.

Even though there are numerous vacant properties that exist within the Arlington neighborhood, the purpose of this study is to look at a specific subset of vacant properties: REO homes. It is thought that understanding how to better address vacancy issues at a smaller scale, will provide insight into how to tackle the problems that exist on the larger scale.

Analysis

After collecting data related to REO homes it was determined that there were 25 bank-owned properties within the Arlington neighborhood. This is a significant number, given the relatively compact size of the neighborhood. The plot sizes of the properties range from 2,700 square feet to 10,000 square feet. In addition, as shown in Figure 4.4, a definite clustering pattern emerges in the southeast corner of the neighborhood core. What can also be seen is that a variety of institutions control these properties. Some of the entities that own the properties consist of quasi-governmental agencies (e.g., Fannie Mae) and sophisticated international lending institutions (e.g., Deutsche Bank). The great array of institutions highlights the fact that many lenders were willing to provide finance to individuals seeking to purchase properties during the boom years; however, when the economic situation changed the lenders became stuck with the collateral. It seems from observation that many of these entities are not interested in the properties themselves, but are just holding them because they cannot do anything else with them in the short term.

One major problem with the REO homes is that the ones that are clustered in the southeast corner are also in the flood plain. There are approximately 10 vacant homes that are within the direct floodplain, as shown in **Figure 4.2**. Because the properties are in the floodplain it can be very difficult to entice a buyer to purchase them. In addition, since the banks are geographically removed from the neighborhood, they are not particularly aware of the flood plain issue, or the economically depressed nature of the community. This lack of knowledge contributes significantly to the lack of attention and upkeep of the properties.

Aside from clustering pattern that emerges in the southeast, there are numerous other properties scattered throughout the neighborhood. In particular, there are four REO properties that exist in a main commercial district, see **Appendix 4.2** for a map of bank owned properties against the city zoning map. By having vacant commercial properties, the City is losing an opportunity to develop its commercial district and move forward with its economic development goals. Commercial properties carry significantly more value than residential properties, and also have the potential to be job creators, as there is a multiplier effect related to the creation of businesses within a community. In addition, commercial properties provide a stream of income to the city in terms of permits, taxes, and utilities; all of which help contribute to improve the financial health of the City. Aside from economic benefits, there are social benefits to establishing a vibrant commercial district, as it becomes a point of community interaction and pride.

With regards to the price of housing in Lawrence, it is quite interesting to see how things have changed over the past decade. **Table 4.1** presents a graph of the average price of a home in Lawrence over the last decade. It can be seen that there is a sharp acceleration during the beginning of the decade, and then an equally sharp decline towards the end. The year over year price drop from 2010 to 2011 was 11.5%²⁵. This is an enormous decline in terms of personal wealth, as most individuals' wealth is tied to the equity in their home. The steep decline in prices contributes significantly to the continuing housing problem because it seems that potential home buyers are waiting for the market to completely bottom out. However, if individuals continue to wait until purchasing the homes, the prices will further drop, and result in an even worse downward spiral. It is therefore of utmost importance to fix the problems related to REO homes.

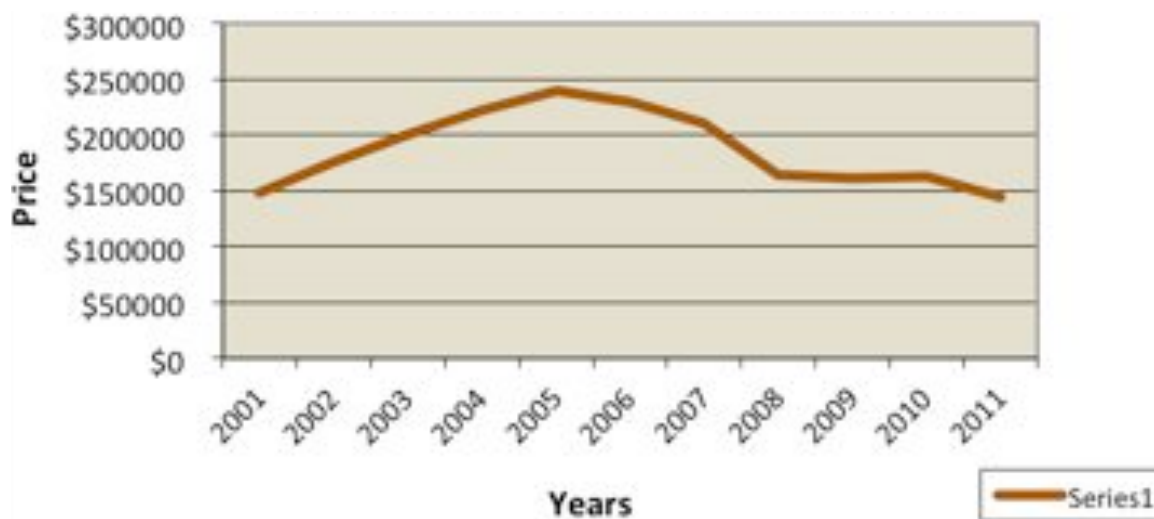


Table 4.1: Average Home Price in Lawrence, MA.

Source: Zillow

²⁵ http://www.zillow.com/local-info/MA-Lawrence-home-value/r_46179/

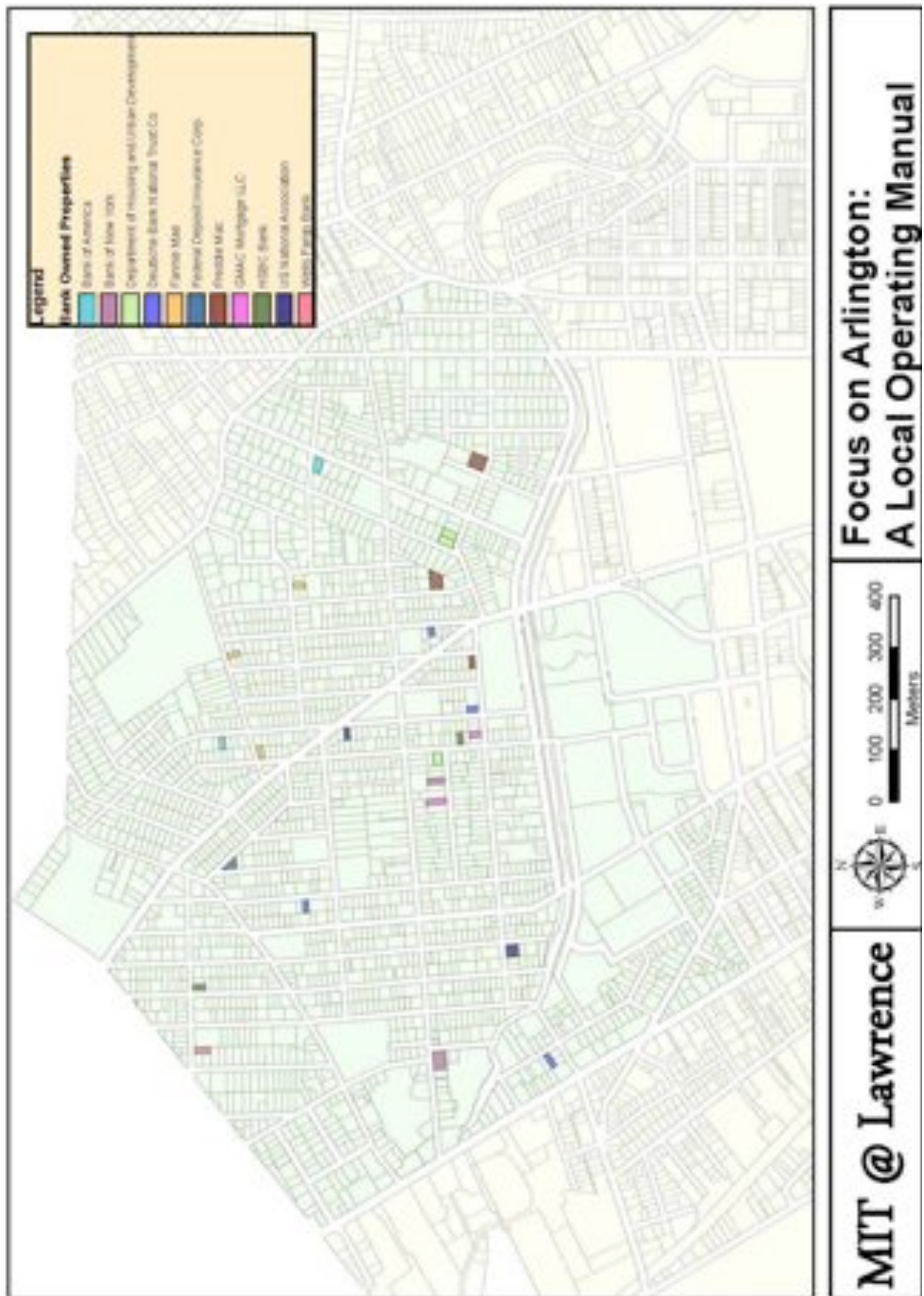


Figure 4.4: Real Estate Owned Homes in the Arlington Neighborhood

4.6. Recommendations

There are many different possibilities and options when dealing with vacant lots. Our preference for reuse of vacant lots in Lawrence is **pocket parks** and **community gardens**. Additional parks can generate strong community interest and can unite the community as they create new green space for residents.

There are many reasons for these recommendations. First, green space can help to make a community safer²⁶. Second, these green spaces might curb dumping and other illegal activities. Third, they are cheap to build and maintain. To achieve the below goals, please see Operational Actions section for step-by-step explanations.

- **Pocket Parks**

Pocket parks are miniature-sized parks, often no bigger than one lot size. There are examples in urban and suburban areas around the country and world. One group that has been particularly successful is Keep Indianapolis Beautiful, Inc., in Indianapolis, Indiana²⁷. These parks are quite easy to physically create, can be built and maintained with volunteer resources (for example, National Honor Society volunteers from Lawrence or Central Catholic High Schools), and can be funded by numerous sources, including the City.

Pocket parks are cheap to build and maintain, usually with an initial price tag of under \$20,000. Oftentimes the parks can be built for quite a bit less than even this \$20,000 amount. This price tag is one of the main reasons that we so heartily recommend pocket parks. With such minimal cost, yet great benefits to the community, it seems to be a win-win situation. There is low initial cost and low continued maintenance costs to the city, yet the benefit is tremendous, with a new green space that can be used for recreation, relaxation, or just to transform a vacant lot that may be an eyesore into a place that the community can be proud of.

Pocket parks can be a few benches, maybe a little brickwork for a pathway, and some trees. The key is that there is a place for people to sit down and relax. Some municipalities create expensive and elaborate pocket parks, but we do not recommend this for the Arlington neighborhood, as we believe that there is little purpose in spending large amounts of money when more vacant lots could be converted to pocket parks with the same amount. Thus, we advocate simple and low-cost pocket parks, enabling more vacant lots to be turned into pocket parks.

We believe that, if done successfully, pocket parks could be a tremendous benefit to the community, and more citizens will be clamoring for an expansion of pocket parks onto their street. The city would provide a valuable service with these parks, yet do it for a very reasonable cost, especially if construction and maintenance is done by volunteers or non-profit groups.

²⁶ <http://www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/saferneighborhoods.htm>

²⁷ http://www.kibi.org/pocket_parks

- **Community Gardens**

Community gardens have become very popular in many cities across America, from former industrial cities like Cleveland²⁸ and Detroit²⁹, to smaller towns like Gary, Indiana³⁰. As we noticed during our site visits for analysis, some lots are already used for gardening. We fully support the concept of community gardening; in fact, the Arlington neighborhood has already experienced success with these gardens.

Some studies actually suggest that urban farming can feed 100% of a city's population³¹. While we are not suggesting that Arlington can provide for its entire food needs through community gardens at any point in the near future, we do think that community gardens can provide a healthy food source for many residents of the neighborhood. As addressed later in this document, healthy food access is a major issue in Arlington, and community gardens can begin to address this issue.

One possible complication with community gardens is that they may require cleanup if there are toxins in the soil, leading to additional costs. That being said, many cities with extensive industrial histories have successfully implemented community gardens, although the effort is oftentimes initiated by citizens or non-profit groups. Thus, we suggest that the city makes it as easy as possible for community gardens to be put in place by other groups or individuals, and to assist with the cleanup of contaminated sites. The EPA can provide assessments and also help with cleanup of the polluted land³². A resource guide is in the footnote below.

- **Foreclosed properties**

As described in Chapter 8.28 of the Lawrence Code of Ordinances³³, foreclosed and abandoned properties need to be inspected and maintained by the owner. We would recommend greater enforcement of the listed \$300 monthly fine. This will keep the properties safer for the citizens of the neighborhood. We would also recommend a greater focus of municipal housing development dollars in the neighborhood on foreclosures rather than new housing development. By focusing on foreclosures, the City may have the opportunity to acquire desired properties at a bargain price. Cleaning up the abandoned or foreclosed properties may also create a way to attract new residents to the neighborhood.

A main reason for greater enforcement of the \$300 fine is to keep owners aware that they have an abandoned property that is damaging the neighborhood. One house can make a neighborhood look blighted; owners should be kept aware that their property could be a cause for concern to the neighborhood. We encourage the city to buy foreclosed properties if the price is acceptable. A situation where the building is not owned by the city is optimal, but should be used in situations where the property is a huge detriment to the neighborhood and the owner is unable to sell or maintain the property. Buying the property should not necessarily be the first step taken, but should be an option if the property continues to blight the neighborhood.

²⁸ <http://realestate.msn.com/article.aspx?cp-documentid=25990100>

²⁹ <http://detnews.com/article/20100811/OPINION03/8110347/Detroit-community-gardens-grow-optimism;>

<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/usa/Urban-Farming-Grows-in-Detroit-134053423.html>

³⁰ <http://posttrib.suntimes.com/news/lake/8364806-418/story.html>

³¹ <http://www.smartplanet.com/blog/cities/could-cities-rely-100-on-urban-agriculture-for-their-food/915>

³² cepm.louisville.edu/PDFdocs/brownfields_local_ag.pdf

³³ <http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientID=14860&stateID=21&statename=Massachusetts>

- **Communication - Improved communication between all interested parties**

Whether it is the City, the MIT students, or the non-profits - can lead to more efficient and more equitable improvements to the Arlington neighborhood. For example, we occasionally had difficulty obtaining information about the neighborhood that we knew existed. Improved coordination could have enabled us to accomplish even more and to possibly provide even stronger recommendations to the City due to our increased knowledge of the neighborhood. For future MIT@Lawrence students, this could make their experience even more streamlined. Also, strong communication will be needed if volunteers are asked to mobilize for pocket park or community garden implementation. Open channels of communication are required to ensure that pocket parks or community gardens are created and maintained successfully.

Green Space can make a community safer

Research has shown that greening vacant lots can actually make a community safer. This may seem counter-intuitive to those that argue that parks are exclusively gathering centers for gangs or inappropriate behavior, but the studies make clear that deserted or vacant land is actually more dangerous for a community. Please use these scientific and academic articles to better advocate for pocket parks and community gardens to members of groups that may be skeptical of the benefits of additional green space.

These studies include:

- [Atlantic Cities Article](#)³⁴
- [American Planning Association study](#)³⁵
- [UPenn Study](#)³⁶

Possible Budget

While it is impossible to predict the budget for putting a pocket park in the Arlington neighborhood, we can reference other projects around the nation to inform our hypothesis. Using information from the Montclair Safety and Improvement Council of Oakland, CA, it is obvious that work can be done for \$15,000-\$20,000 if volunteer help is utilized³⁷. Every site will probably need minor cleanup and additional costs for park benches and similar amenities like stone pathways or shrubbery, yet with volunteer labor, the cost is exponentially less than if the city contracts out to a landscaper.

Let us take a look at some of the major costs for the Montclair Short Line pocket park:

\$2000 - Site cleanup
\$2199 – Park Benches
\$2000 – Welcome Sign
\$4000 – Stone Wall

The total cost was \$15,674 for the project in 2006. There are plans for greater landscaping, additional paths, and more signs, but these additional plans await donations until implementation.

³⁴ <http://www.theatlanticcities.com/neighborhoods/2011/11/greening-vacant-lots-linked-reduced-gun-violence/526/>

³⁵ <http://www.planning.org/cityparks/briefingpapers/saferneighborhoods.htm>

³⁶ <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/11/111117140420.htm>

³⁷ http://montclairsic.org/slpp_budget.htm

The power of the above example is to show that pocket parks can be done very cheaply. If the land has already been acquired by the city, and volunteers are willing to donate their time for cleanup and maintenance responsibilities, then costs can be cut dramatically. Yet the benefits of the park are enormous, and in the very least prevent a vacant lot from becoming or staying an eyesore. Some cities build pocket parks for hundreds of thousands of dollars. Other places do it for around \$15,000. Volunteer help is required to lessen the cost, so mobilization of the neighborhood and of community groups is essential for success.

4.7. Properties with the Greatest Potential

Properties Chosen

- **491 and 493 Hampshire** - the plot total is about 6,400 square feet, across the street from high-occupancy building, and census data shows that there are many children in the area.
- **50 Bromfield Street** - corner of Bromfield and Alma.

Rationalization for Properties Chosen

1. Square plots.
2. In a residential district.
3. Not located on a busy street.
4. Acquisition would be relatively inexpensive
5. Not many parks nearby.

With the above lots, we wanted to just give some examples of plots that would be suitable for possible pocket parks or even community gardens. For example, both plots chosen were regular and square in shape. They both exist on non-primary transportation arteries in the neighborhood, meaning that they are a little quieter and safer for pedestrians accessing the park than a lot might be on a busier road.

Using the city assessor's database, we observed that the price of the lots in the part of the neighborhood near the chosen plots was rather cheap, making it a relatively inexpensive acquisition for the city. Finally, the chosen plots serve an observed need, at least from a bird's eye view, of an area of the neighborhood low on green space. Putting pocket parks in these chosen plots would help to give that part of the neighborhood greater space in which to relax.

The Hampshire Street lots are exceptional because there are two lots right next to each other that could combine to make an even larger green space, and also because there is a higher density building located right across the street. This high density building has little green space on its actual property; we believe that a park would be used extensively by these residents. The Bromfield Street property is also good because it is actually somewhat protected from traffic, as Alma Street actually dead ends right into Bromfield.

Again, we want to emphasize that these plots are only examples of plots that we believe will work. For reasons we do not know, some plots may not be as good as some others; for example, the owner may be unwilling to sell, the neighbors may vigorously oppose the park, or the location may not be the best for the city. We just wanted to provide examples for possibilities, yet we encourage searches for new locations that may even better suit the needs of the neighborhood and the city.

4.8. Case Studies

1. Some of the biggest buzz right now surrounds Los Angeles and that city's pocket park initiative. Los Angeles has many small, vacant lots all over the city, similar to Lawrence. The initiative is new, and can be a great example for the rest of the nation if done successfully. The current budget for these new parks is between \$250,000 and \$700,000, excluding costs of acquisition for all ten parks initially planned. Additional information can be found [here](#)³⁸ and [here](#)³⁹.
2. This [article](#)⁴⁰ shows that pocket parks have been successful around the world. Lawrence would not be alone if they put in pocket parks! In numerous countries around the world, and many cities in America, pocket parks have been put in place and are well-loved by their communities. Some of the parks have received significant funding for beautification; obviously, pocket parks can be built far more simply, and we would recommend a cheaper and simpler park in the Arlington neighborhood. For many cities, pocket parks are expensive endeavors, and are used for different purposes than we intend or recommend for the Arlington neighborhood. For example, in Japan, the parks are sometimes used for exercise stations, or are the only park in the nearby area due to the nation's population density. Arlington can use examples from around the world to make its own pocket parks more beautiful, all while remembering that different localities have different budgetary restraints.
3. A danger of pocket parks is putting in too much concrete, or too many sculptures, and not focusing on the need for green. All of this could change as the concept of a pocket park changes. While we would recommend green pocket parks, it is possible to create urban spaces that push the boundaries of traditional parks. See the TIME article [here](#)⁴¹.
4. This [study](#)⁴² by the University of Washington discusses pocket parks from Philadelphia, PA, to Savannah, GA. As the article states, "One of the unique and exciting characteristics of pocket parks is that they may be created out of vacant lots or otherwise forgotten spaces. Many pocket parks are the result of community groups, private entities or foundations reclaiming these spaces for the benefit of the local neighborhood." Indeed, these parks can provide recreational green space for all income levels in the Arlington neighborhood with the supportive help of the neighborhood and community groups.

Secondary Recommendations

There are additional actions that can streamline the process for the City and MIT@Lawrence, and also could make it easier for the City to make progress when MIT is not involved:

1. Hire an intern - Hire an intern from the local community college, or the closest college that has a GIS program. The internship can be either paid or unpaid. The intern can keep track of data,

³⁸ http://www.dailynews.com/news/ci_19396120

³⁹ <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2011/11/villaraigosa-wants-a-more-livable-la-with-50-pocket-parks.html>

⁴⁰ <http://shareable.net/blog/pocket-parks-blossom-to-create-shareable-spaces>

⁴¹ <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2082612,00.html>

⁴² http://depts.washington.edu/open2100/pdf/2_OpenSpaceTypes/Open_Space_Types/pocket_parks.pdf

update the assessor, walk the neighborhood to observe where dumping might be, etc. [Here](#)⁴³ is a list of the institutions that are involved with GIS work.

2. Put a park in the southwest portion of the neighborhood. Much of the land along the Spicket River that will not be part of the Spicket River Greenway could be turned into pocket parks since they are in the flood plain. Of course, in the physical design, we would encourage an acknowledgement of the fact that the land can indeed flood, and we would discourage expensive infrastructure like playground equipment.
3. Community Land Trusts are an option for this neighborhood. "A community land trust is a nonprofit corporation which acquires and manages land on behalf of the residents of a place-based community, while preserving affordability and preventing foreclosures for any housing located upon its land."⁴⁴ Some important characteristics of CLTs are their protection from foreclosure and their affordability, as the price is actually set by the residents within the CLT. One of the most successful community land trusts is actually located in Boston. The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative has successfully empowered its impoverished neighborhood within Boston, and could be a great role model for a possible community land trust in the Arlington neighborhood. Their contact information can be found [here](#)⁴⁵, and their knowledge and expertise could inform Lawrence of the possible costs of the plan for the Arlington neighborhood.

⁴³ <http://www.mass.gov/mgis/gisedu.htm>

⁴⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_land_trust

⁴⁵ <http://www.dsni.org/index.shtml>

Focus on Arlington:

A Local Operating
Manual



**Illegal Dumping
and Banned
Waste**

Maryann Hulsman

5.0 The Report on Illegal Dumping and Banned Waste

5.1 Background

Problem Statement

The presence of illegally dumped and littered trash is a perennial problem in Lawrence in general and in Arlington in particular. Past MIT@Lawrence practica have addressed the issue, most recently in the spring of 2010, because of its import. In December of 2009, according to the 2010 practicum report, Mayor Lantigua claimed “the top priority for his administration was to clean up the city”⁴⁶. More recently, the Arlington Community of Excellence (ACE) Community Survey Results, a survey of Arlington neighborhood residents with children 18 years or younger living at home, found that of the respondents who provided feedback in an open-ended question about what changes they wanted to see in their neighborhood, 34% mentioned the need for cleaning up the streets and parks⁴⁷.

The issue of unwanted trash in Arlington can be thought of as consisting of two main problems—one is littering and the other is illegal dumping (defined here as the illicit disposal of large objects or large amounts of waste). While both are important, this report is focused on illegal dumping. One reason for this choice is that, whereas the issue of littering is generally tackled largely as a challenge in changing the behavior and attitude of all of an area’s residents, a goal that seems difficult to make progress on in one semester, the issue of illegal dumping involves many institutional and logistical factors that might be altered more easily, and to some effect, over the course of a semester. Another reason for this choice has to do with the “broken-windows effect”. The broken-windows effect says that there are signaling effects associated with urban disorder and vandalism, so that the less it *looks* like people take care of a place the less people *actually* take care of a place, which worsens in a vicious cycle. Conversely, the theory also states that monitoring and maintaining urban environments may stop further vandalism or disorder. Our hope is that, in taking steps to prevent illegal dumping in Arlington, we will be helping to reduce large-object waste disposal while also moving toward a neighborhood with fewer “broken windows” to signal people to litter.

The presence of unwanted trash affects the quality of life for all residents in Arlington, since they have to live in a place with frequent visible reminders that their neighborhood is falling below typical standards for aesthetics and maintenance. The issue also has the potential to affect how both residents and non-residents perceive and treat Arlington. Residents may feel that the Arlington is not being treated well by outsiders who dump trash and/or by the City, whose responsibility it is to pick up trash, while non-residents may perceive the neighborhood as a place that residents don’t respect and/or a place where outsiders can dump trash illegally without being sanctioned. All of these potential effects are problematic and can compound the broken-windows effect discussed above.

⁴⁶ MIT@Lawrence, *Taking Back Lawrence: Cleaning and Transforming the Canals and Alleyways*, Cambridge, MA: 2010, page 2. (Included in this report as Appendix 5.2)

⁴⁷ UMass Donahue Institute and Research & Evaluation Group, Arlington Community of Excellence (ACE) Community Survey Results (Second Draft), prepared for The Community Group, June 1, 2011.

Focusing on the issue of illegal dumping dovetails with the aims of the Arlington Community of Excellence Promise Neighborhood, which strives for children to feel supported and appreciated in their neighborhood and community. Any substantial removal of unwanted debris from the Arlington neighborhood is expected to help all residents, including children, feel more pride of place and feel like they live in a more appreciated neighborhood.

The issue of illegal dumping in Arlington is also tied closely to the previously discussed issue of vacant lots and empty buildings, since a piece of property that isn't being watched by a resident isn't as likely to be defended from illicit activity. While nearby neighbors may care very much about whether dumping occurs on a nearby vacant lot, they aren't likely to be as effective at deterring or preventing illegal dumping as a resident of the property would be. They are probably less likely to take action against dumping that they see happening in real time because they don't know all the details of the situation and/or don't feel that they have authority or responsibility to step in; they also don't have the property rights and therefore don't have as much authority to pursue action by the City.

Our goals for this portion of our class's work were as follows:

1. To continue the investigation from the spring 2010 practicum into existing waste management and illegal dumping conditions in Lawrence, the Merrimack Valley, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
2. To look at what's being done in nearby municipalities (including Andover, Lowell, Methuen, North Andover, Salem, and Tewksbury) with respect to dumping enforcement, banned waste management, education about the issues, and similar, paying attention to what is being done nearby that is not being done in Lawrence.
3. To provide recommendations, after taking into account budgetary, regulatory, and other constraints.

Definitions

For the purposes of this report, illegal dumping refers to the illegal disposal of trash by residents and non-residents, including dumping by contractors. In Lawrence and in Arlington this includes dumping in vacant lots, on abandoned properties, on sidewalks, in alleys, in or adjacent to parks, and adjacent to the cemetery. In the Arlington neighborhood some common types of illegally dumped waste include TVs, tires, "white goods"⁴⁸, couches and other furniture, and debris from construction or demolition⁴⁹ projects.

⁴⁸ "White goods" is defined by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection on a banned waste Fact Sheet (see Appendix 5.1) as "appliances employing electricity, oil, natural gas or liquefied petroleum gas to preserve or cook food; wash or dry clothing, cooking or kitchen utensils or related items. These typically include refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers, clothes washers, clothes dryers, gas or electric ovens and ranges, and hot water heaters." Note that despite the fact that white goods are illegally dumped in Arlington, their value as scrap means that they are usually picked up off the streets quickly, making them a minor part of the overall illegal dumping issue.

⁴⁹ Construction and demolition materials, commonly known as "C&D" waste, is a classification of banned waste that requires special handling facilities and is therefore more likely to be dumped illegally than is general trash, which can be disposed of in trash cans or dumpsters without any penalty.

The term “banned waste” in Massachusetts refers to wastes that are not allowed to be placed in landfills or burned in incineration facilities. Rather, they must be diverted from the waste stream before waste is either gathered by a waste hauler or disposed of at a waste facility (e.g., a transfer station). In other words, residents are not allowed to put banned wastes in their curbside trash—they must separate them out—and waste haulers are not allowed to collect banned wastes with the normal waste stream. The types of materials that become banned waste are determined at the state level. **Appendix 5.1** lists materials that are currently classified as banned wastes in Massachusetts.

The aforementioned common types of illegally dumped waste in Arlington— TVs, tires, couches and other furniture, and debris from construction or demolition projects—are all banned waste except for the couches and furniture. For the sake of this report, couches and furniture will be included in the concept of “banned waste” because they are banned from curbside disposal and require a fee for disposal.

5.2 Context and Existing Efforts

Prior Reports Prepared

As mentioned above, in the spring of 2010 the MIT@Lawrence class addressed illegal dumping as part of their project, which was entitled *Taking Back Lawrence: Cleaning and Transforming the Canals and Alleyways*. This report (excerpts of which are included in **Appendix 5.2**) looked at dumping in the alleyways and canals around Lawrence, and particularly in the North Commons neighborhood, and based on their findings they presented several recommendations regarding illegal dumping and waste management:

1. First, the City of Lawrence needs to **create a vision** for solid waste management and clearly state what it seeks to accomplish with regard to the cleanliness, safety, and sustainability of the City’s alleyways and canals.
2. Then, the City must enforce that vision by creating **specific ordinances** and **laws** against illegal dumping of solid waste. Next, the City needs to create a process for **disseminating information** about these regulations to the public; it must also determine which departments will be charged with **enforcement**. Lastly, a **uniform system of issuing fines and penalties** against dumping offenders must be established and executed.
3. Moving forward, the City must **delegate specific roles** to each city department that addresses illegal dumping. From our research, we inferred that there is currently a high level of confusion in Lawrence about which city departments are responsible for handling trash dumping.
4. Finally, we recommend implementing an **inclusive strategy** that emphasizes transparency and education. The Mayor and City representatives need to reach out to all members of the community and engage them in the problem-solving process. This requires the sharing of information regarding the City’s vision, making the laws understandable, and educating people on where to seek help on questions and concerns around illegal dumping. Also,

information must be provided in English and Spanish, and potentially other languages⁵⁰.
[emphasis in original]

We used these findings and recommendations as the beginning of our investigations, but found that some conditions in Lawrence had changed since 2010.

Stakeholders

The following agencies, businesses, and organizations are either officially or tangentially involved in illegal dumping, waste management, and/or neighborhood clean-up efforts in Arlington. **Figure 5.1** shows the typical steps involved in dealing with illegally dumped trash in Lawrence.

- City of Lawrence Department of Inspectional Services (DIS).** The DIS is the agency that receives and responds to complaints about illegal dumping. When a complaint is submitted via a phone call, a submittal on the City's website⁵¹, or in person at City Hall, the DIS tries to get information from the complainant (such as a license plate number or a description of a person or vehicle) that will help them identify the person or organization at fault. The DIS investigates all complaints, and if they can identify the party at fault they issue a citation (and, we assume, require the party to remove the illegally dumped materials⁵²). If the citation is not paid to the DIS within 30 days, it goes to the City's collections entity. In the case that the DIS cannot identify the party at fault, they refer the case to the DPW for clean-up. In the past year, according to staff at the DIS, enforcement has improved dramatically due to more employee-hours being made available for investigating and issuing citations as well as more employee-hours being put toward taking the cited parties to court. Due to the fact that both the DIS and the DPW are short-staffed, our understanding is that actions taken by these departments to deal with illegal dumping are currently mostly responsive and reactive, responding to calls from residents or from other City departments. Neither department currently has enough staff to seek out illegally dumped waste for either enforcement action or clean-up. **Appendix 5.3** includes a blank citation form and a blank call record form from the DIS.
- City of Lawrence Department of Public Works (DPW).** The DPW is the agency that is responsible for picking up illegally dumped waste, once alerted by DIS that it needs removal. The DPW is also the agency that liaises with and oversees Allied Waste, the company that hauls waste in Lawrence. The DPW oversees the sticker program that residents must use to dispose of bulky/banned wastes through curbside pick-up with Allied Waste, and they also host "drop-off days" at the DPW yard, at which residents can drop off various banned wastes (not including couches or other furniture) on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month from May through October. (Note that the DPW yard is located in the middle of Arlington.)

⁵⁰ MIT@Lawrence. *Taking Back Lawrence: Cleaning and Transforming the Canals and Alleyways*. Cambridge, MA: 2010, page 10. (Included in this report as Appendix 5.2)

⁵¹ Residents can submit a complaint on the "Contact Us" page of the City's website, at <http://www.cityoflawrence.com/contact-us.aspx>.

⁵² Confirm with the DIS.

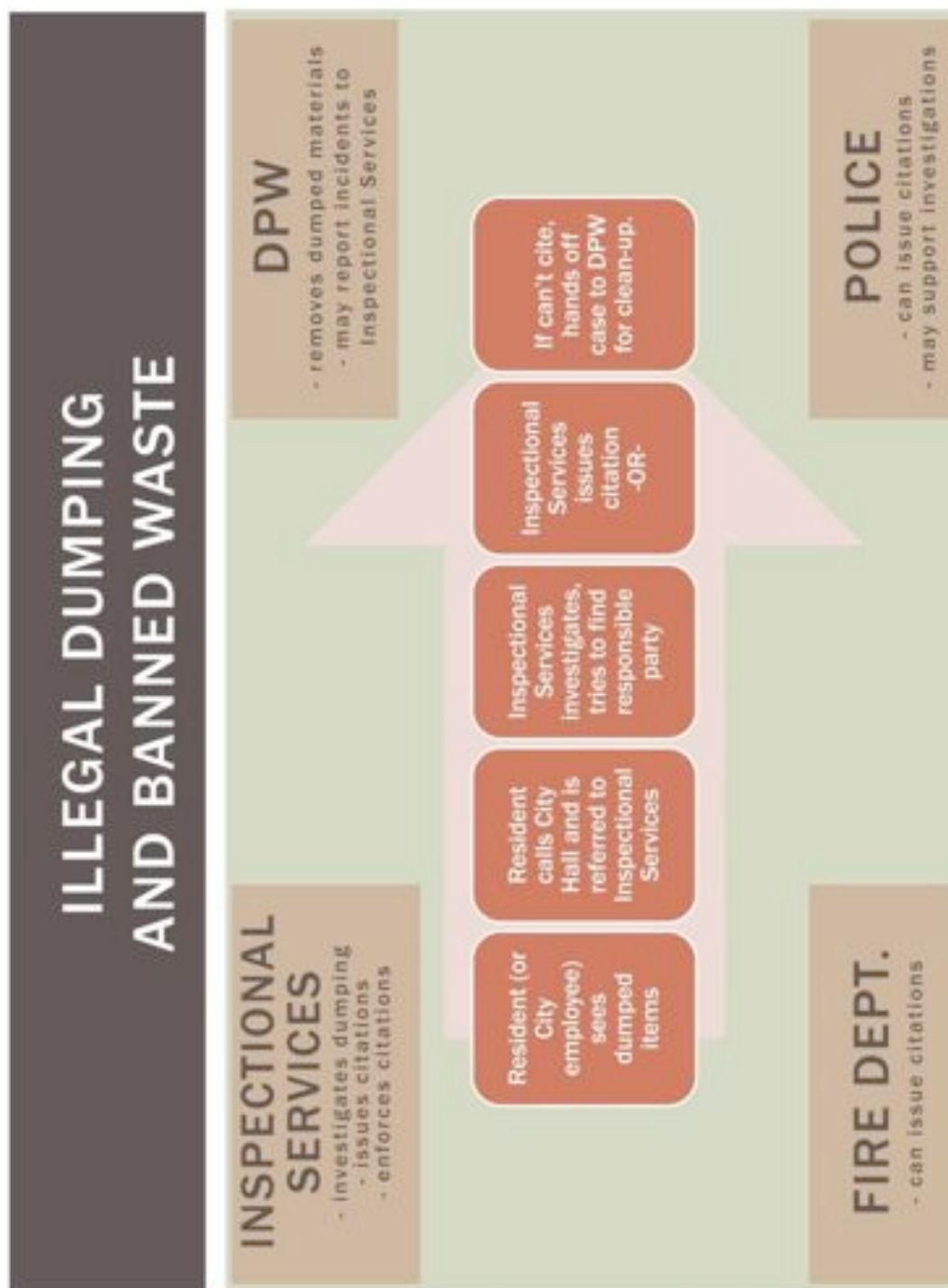


Figure 5.1: How Illegal Dumping is Handled in Lawrence

There are two departments within the DPW that deal with waste management and litter in some way, but both of them are short-staffed (and note that the DPW as a whole has dramatically shrunk over the past several decades)—the Street Department currently employs four people who, among other duties, assist in removing illegally dumped waste; and the Parks Department currently employs four people who deal with trash removal in public parks.

- **City of Lawrence Community Development Department (CDD).** The CDD is focusing on the Arlington neighborhood in its current **community** development efforts, and is interested in all efforts that might improve overall community conditions. The CDD is also the sponsor of this report and provided advice and comments over the course of its preparation.
- **City of Lawrence Fire Department.** The Fire Department can and occasionally does issue citations for illegally dumping and for dumped materials that block a fire lane, but the Fire Department generally participates in this process by alerting DIS if they notice illegally dumped materials.
- **City of Lawrence Police Department.** The Police Department can and occasionally does issue citations for illegally dumping and for other related offences, and the Police Department may sometimes help the DIS investigate more egregious cases of illegal dumping, but the Police Department generally participates in this process by alerting DIS if they notice illegally dumped materials.
- **Allied Waste** (the local waste hauler). Allied Waste picks up curbside trash and recycling from all residents of Arlington. They are also the entity that residents can contact to make appointments to dispose of bulky trash and some banned wastes (see below, Procedures, for details). Allied Waste and the City of Lawrence together set the prices for picking up bulky and banned wastes. Note that Allied has no responsibility for any illegally dumped materials, nor does it have responsibility for any bulky or banned waste unless an pick-up appointment has been made by the resident disposing of the waste.
- **Environmental Health Working Group, Mayor's Health Task Force.** The City of Lawrence Mayor's Health Task Force includes an Environmental Health Working Group that is working on providing ways for Lawrence residents and businesses to learn about environmental health issues and providing opportunities for those who wish to work on environmental health issues. Their interests include dumping, litter, and waste management.
- **Groundwork Lawrence.** Groundwork Lawrence is a non-profit community-based organization that does work in, among other areas, environmental and open space improvements. These improvements include trash pick-ups in areas around Lawrence, including Arlington.
- **The Community Group.** The Community Group is the non-profit organization behind the Arlington Community of Excellence Promise Neighborhood. As noted above, they strive for children in Arlington to feel supported and appreciated in their neighborhood and community, and any substantial removal of unwanted debris from the Arlington neighborhood is expected to help them in their efforts to create more pride of place in local residents.

Other stakeholder groups may include unidentified community-based organizations or informal

networks of residents that deal with subjects such as neighborhood revitalization, the environment, and environmental justice. However, we have not heard of any such Arlington-based organizations or networks, during our conversations with the City, The Community Group, Groundwork Lawrence, or Lawrence Community Works (another local community-based organization).

Legal Framework—Commonwealth and Municipal Laws

Waste management and illegal dumping are regulated both at the state level and the local level in Massachusetts.

- **City of Lawrence Garbage Collection and Disposal Regulations.** City regulations regarding waste management, illegal dumping, and littering are contained in Chapter 8.08 of the City of Lawrence Municipal Code. **Appendix 5.4** includes Chapter 8.08 in its entirety. The regulations prohibit dumping (fine of \$300) and littering (\$70), and they set the fees for disposal of several types of banned waste.
- **City of Lawrence Proposed Home Rule Petition.** At time of print, an amendment to the ordinances for the City of Lawrence seeking the approval of a Home Rule Petition regarding illegal dumping is in process of being considered and a public hearing is set for December 10, 2011. The Home Rule Petition concerns the following: “To provide for a program of enforcement against illegal dumping within the city limits and to establish fines and other penalties for illegal dumping and a method of collecting said fines and penalties”⁵³. If passed, our understanding is that this amendment would allow the City to increase fines for illegal dumping in order to pay for increased enforcement measure, including additional surveillance cameras⁵⁴.
- **Commonwealth of Massachusetts Waste Disposal Ban Regulations.** MassDEP issues orders that restrict or prohibit the disposal or transfer for disposal of certain solid wastes (310 CMR 19.017). See Appendix X for a November, 2011, bulletin on current banned wastes in Massachusetts. MassDEP also performs the following oversight in the context of municipal waste compliance: [MassDEP] reviews and approves compliance plans and performs inspections to ensure that solid waste management facilities are complying with the waste bans and meeting all monitoring, signage, training, inspection, record keeping and hauler/generator notification requirements. The agency also works independently with solid waste management facilities to identify haulers and generators—including businesses, institutions, and municipalities—that dispose of banned materials⁵⁵.
- **Commonwealth of Massachusetts Dumping Regulations.** The Commonwealth of Massachusetts sets a statutory maximum fine for illegal dumping at \$25,000 per day of violation

⁵³ City of Lawrence Public Hearing Doc. 226/2011 In City, available online at <http://ma.mypublicnotices.com/PublicNotice.asp?Page=PublicNotice&AdId=2602554>.

⁵⁴ Pers. comm. Patrick Blanchette, Department of Inspectional Services and pers. comm. Dan McCarthy, Land Use Planner, Office of Planning.

⁵⁵ Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, *Municipal Compliance Fact Sheet: Waste Bans*, available online at http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/laws/mc_bans.pdf.

(MGL c.111, Section 150A). The Massachusetts Attorney General's office prosecutes illegal dumpers both criminally and civilly⁵⁶, while MassDEP conducts administrative enforcement.

The Massachusetts Environmental Strike Force (Strike Force) is a state-level organization that investigates and prosecutes illegal dumping, among other environmental crimes. More specifically, it is:

An interagency unit comprised of [sic] scientists and engineers from [MassDEP], environmental police officers from the Department of Fish & Game, State Police, and prosecutors from the Office of the Attorney General. The Strike Force gathers evidence during undercover investigations, carefully builds cases against alleged environmental violators, then takes them to court⁵⁷.

Procedures for Legal Disposal of Banned Waste and Bulky Trash

In Arlington, as in the rest of Lawrence, residents have several options for legally disposing of banned waste items such as TVs, computer monitors, tires, and white goods, as well as bulky waste such as furniture. (For information on curbside disposal of trash, recycling, and yard waste in Arlington and in Lawrence, see **Appendix 5.5**.)

The three main options for residents are described below, and **Figure 5.2** shows the requirements for each option in order to legally dispose of a TV.

1. **Curbside Disposal With Sticker.** Residents who wish to dispose of these items by leaving them on their curbs must go to City Hall during the hours of 8:30am and 4:30pm, Monday through Friday, and purchase a sticker from the DPW. Stickers can only be paid for by check. After purchasing a sticker, residents must call Allied Waste and make an appointment for a day to leave the item curbside in front of their home. (**Appendix 5.3** includes a scanned CRT sticker.)
2. **DPW Drop-Off Days.** Residents may bring most banned waste items to the DPW yard (which is located in the Arlington neighborhood) on their drop-off days, which occur on the second and fourth Saturdays of May through October, from 8:00am until noon. At the yard they must pay the disposal fee by check. Note that the DPW yard does not currently accept white goods or any furniture.
3. **Local Transfer Station.** Residents may bring banned waste items or bulky trash to various local transfer stations (such as the North Andover Transfer Station or LL&S Recycling). Fees for banned and bulky wastes may vary dramatically depending on the transfer station and the type of material, and not all transfer stations accept all forms of banned or bulky waste.

Table 5.1 lists the prices for disposing of each item through Allied Waste or the City of Lawrence DPW, as taken from the City of Lawrence website in December 2011. Note that these prices may be different from those at the nearby transfer stations, some of which are shown in **Appendix 5.6**.

⁵⁶ Pers. comm. Jennifer Davis, Attorney, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

⁵⁷ Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Enforcement: Massachusetts Environmental Strike Force, available online at <http://www.mass.gov/dep/about/organization/aboutesf.htm>.

While **Appendix 5.6** lists a number of transfer stations and other waste handling facilities, we found only two locations within a 45-minute drive of Arlington that accept drop-offs from Lawrence residents and businesses. These two transfer stations are shown in **Figure 5.3**.

The options for banned waste and bulky trash disposal for businesses in Lawrence were not examined in detail for this report, but businesses do not receive curbside service for trash or recycling and must contract individually with Allied Waste or another waste hauler for all their waste management needs. One business type that is of particular interest in this report is private building contractors, since C&D waste is such common illegally dumped material. If they do not have any agreement in place with Allied Waste, building contractors must haul their debris to a nearby transfer station such as the North Andover Transfer Station or LL&S Recycling, both of which take C&D waste.

The procedures for legally disposing of banned wastes and other bulky trash are complicated, onerous, and require prior knowledge of both waste regulations and Lawrence's waste management infrastructure. Recommendations regarding these procedures are discussed later in this report.

ILLEGAL DUMPING AND BANNED WASTE

To get rid of a TV, you need...

Curbside With Sticker

- Knowledge of where to go to get a sticker
- Transportation to City Hall
- Time for an errand between 8.30am-4.30pm on weekdays
- \$10
- A checkbook
- Phone number for Allied Waste

Drop-Off Days at DPW

- Knowledge of when drop-off dates are
- Place to store the object until drop-off dates (May through November, twice/month)
- A vehicle or means to get TV to DPW yard
- Time for an errand on a Saturday, 8am-noon
- \$10
- A checkbook

Transfer Station

- Knowledge of transfer stations and drop-off times
- Transportation to the transfer station (15-min drive)
- Time for an errand when the transfer stations are open
- \$10

Figure 5.2: Options for Disposing of a TV in Lawrence

Object Type	Disposal Fee
TVs (CRTs)	\$10 each
Computer monitors (CRTs)	\$10 each
White goods (e.g., refrigerators, washing machines, clothes dryers, water heaters)	\$25 each
Tires	\$2 each
Small furniture (e.g., chairs, doors)	\$10
Large furniture (e.g., sofas, loveseats)	\$20
Demolition materials (e.g., wood)	\$18 per bundle
Mattresses	FREE
Carpet by the yard	FREE

Table 5.1: Disposal Prices for Banned and Bulky Wastes in Lawrence



Figure 5.3: Transfer Stations Near the City of Lawrence and Arlington

Enforcement and Penalties

As discussed above, enforcement is performed by the DIS, with occasional support from the Fire Department and the Police Department. The DIS's enforcement procedures at this time are primarily reactive rather than proactive, due to limited staffing, but our understanding is that they respond to every notification of illegal dumping, investigate cases with evidence of the at-fault party, cite offenders when they are found, and follow up on every citation⁵⁸. (In the past year, as mentioned above, enforcement has improved dramatically due to more employee-hours being made available for investigating and issuing citations as well as more employee -hours being put toward taking the cited parties to court.)

In the past, the DIS has used video camera surveillance on dumping "hot spots" to enhance their ability to identify and pursue individuals or organizations that dump illegally in Lawrence. The formerly used cameras presented several difficulties, since they required an electrical power source (which usually necessitated obtaining cooperation from a nearby homeowner) and were difficult to monitor because of the technical requirements⁵⁹. However, the DIS is about to install one new camera, which is solar-powered to eliminate the need for cooperation by homeowners and which allows for much easier monitoring using wireless transmissions⁶⁰. Provided that the new camera is effective, the DIS wishes to purchase and install more if and when funding becomes available.

The fine for illegal dumping in Arlington is currently set at \$300, the fine for littering is set at \$70⁶¹. As noted above, an amendment to the ordinances for the City of Lawrence is currently being considered, and if passed would "provide for a program of enforcement against illegal dumping within the city limits and to establish fines and other penalties for illegal dumping and a method of collecting said fines and penalties"⁶². If passed, our understanding is that this amendment would allow the City to increase fines for illegal dumping in order to pay for increased enforcement measure, including additional surveillance cameras⁶³.

Education and Outreach

We observed three means through which the City conveys information about waste management to Lawrence residents: one method is to post information on the DPW and DIS websites, one is to have flyers posted on the walls in the DPW and DIS offices at City Hall, and the third is to have hand-outs sitting on counters in the DPW and DIS offices at City Hall.

⁵⁸ Pers. comm. Peter Blanchette, Department of Inspectional Services.

⁵⁹ Pers. comm. Peter Blanchette, Department of Inspectional Services.

⁶⁰ Confirm details with the DIS.

⁶¹ Lawrence Code of Ordinances, Section 8.04.130, available online at <http://library.municode.com/showDocumentFrame.aspx?clientID=14860&docID=2>.

⁶² City of Lawrence Public Hearing Doc. 226/2011 In City, available online at <http://ma.mypublicnotices.com/PublicNotice.asp?Page=PublicNotice&AdId=2602554>.

⁶³ Pers. comm. Patrick Blanchette, Department of Inspectional Services and pers. comm. Dan McCarthy, Land Use Planner, Office of Planning.

The text on waste management from the DPW website, which can be found in **Appendix 5.7**, is spread out over several webpages in different places. It is difficult to navigate, some information is difficult to find, some information seems to be contradictory, and some information is not presented at all. We did not find Spanish translations of the DPW or DIS websites.

We did not observe any City efforts to convey information to the public regarding illegal dumping. There is no mention of illegal dumping on the DIS or DPW websites (**Appendix 5.7**).

Appendix 5.8 includes copies of all literature available as hand-outs at the DPW and DIS when we visited in November 2011.

Resources Available

Like most government entities, the City of Lawrence is currently constrained in terms of its budget. The DIS, DPW, and CDD are all working hard to do as much as they can with limited financial resources and even more limited staff.

The following resources may also be useful in while attempting to address the issues of illegal dumping and banned waste disposal:

- **Massachusetts Sustainable Materials Recovery Program Grants.** MassDEP administers grants through the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program (SMRP), which is designed to: increase the diversion of materials from the solid waste stream by supporting reuse and recycling programs, and to decrease the toxicity of the waste stream by supporting household hazardous waste diversion and encouraging the use of environmentally preferred products⁶⁴.

The SMRP application has six grant categories. Two grant categories seem like they may be applicable to the City of Lawrence. One is “Pilot Programs and Regional Initiatives”, which can be used to fund a) pilot programs for difficult-to-manage wastes, b) innovative education and outreach strategies, and c) a variety of regional coordination efforts, among other things. The second is “Targeted Small Scale Investments”, which can be used to fund recycling outreach and educational materials as well as local reuse and material exchange programs.

- **City of Lawrence Website.** The City of Lawrence maintains a website to which all departments have access. Currently, the information regarding waste management, banned waste, and dumping is difficult to find and confusingly arranged, but the website could be utilized to clearly explain current conditions, rules, and requirements.

⁶⁴ *Sustainable Materials Recovery Program, Municipal Application – Grant Guidance*, available online at <http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/smrpguid.pdf>.

Constraints and Challenges

We have identified the following constraints and challenges that currently circumscribe the City of Lawrence's possible actions and/or make legal waste disposal in Arlington more difficult.

- The minimum cost of banned waste disposal is set at state level, which means that the City must either charge residents for disposal of banned wastes or opt to pay for the disposed items as part of the City budget.
- The budget of the DIS currently limits a) the amount of surveillance cameras that the DIS can purchase and install and b) staff-hours available for oversight and enforcement of illegal dumping.
- The budget and staffing capacity of the DPW currently limits a) clean-up response times and frequency for illegal dumping and b) the options for banned waste drop-off days, times, and locations in Lawrence.
- There are limited options for disposal of overflow waste (e.g., C&D debris from contractors, general overflow trash from move-outs or clean-outs by residents, couches), with the closest dumping options being North Andover Transfer Station (15-minute drive; \$140/ton tipping fee for residents) and LL&S Recycling (15-minute drive; \$120/ton tipping fee for residents).
- Transportation options in Arlington are unusually constrained. In the ACE Community Survey Results, 58% of the respondents to questions about automobiles reported "that they did not own a functioning automobile and only 5% had two vehicles. For those without automobiles, the most common modes of transportation were taxis and rides from family and friends." The "Types of Transportation Most Frequently Used" (multiple selections allowed) were "taxi" (66.7%) and "ride from family and friends" (42.9%). The response "own automobile", even with multiple selections allowed, only received 33.3%⁶⁵. These statistics indicate that it is likely challenging for Arlington residents to bring overflow waste to nearby transfer stations.
- Income levels in Arlington are low, which may mean that some residents' ability to spend money on legal disposal of banned waste may be limited.
- Language barriers are prevalent in Lawrence and Arlington, with 62.3% of Lawrence residents 18 and over speaking English "less than very well"⁶⁶, which may mean that some residents may have a difficult time finding information on waste management.

These constraints and challenges are addressed through our recommendations, below.

⁶⁵ UMass Donahue Institute and Research & Evaluation Group, Arlington Community of Excellence (ACE) Community Survey Results (Second Draft), prepared for The Community Group, June 1, 2011.

⁶⁶ American Community Survey 2005-2009, Table B16004, as cited in *Arlington Community of Excellence ACE) U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods Program Implementation Grant 2011*, prepared by The Community Group.

5.3 Case Studies

The MIT@Lawrence practicum report from the spring of 2010, *Taking Back Lawrence: Cleaning and Transforming the Canals and Alleyways*, included a brief write-up of the practices of several nearby cities of similar size to Lawrence with respect to the issue of illegal dumping. The write-up can be found in **Appendix 5.2**.

Waste Management in Nearby Municipalities

In preparation for this report we attempted a survey of the practices of several nearby municipalities—Andover, Lowell, Methuen, North Andover, Salem, and Tewksbury—with respect to illegal dumping and banned waste management. The results of our survey can be found in **Appendix 5.9**. Due to time constraints, difficulties in identifying the appropriate City employees to speak with about illegal dumping, and difficulties in reaching City employees on the phone in general, our investigations did not result in enough information to produce a full picture of any municipality's practices. However, the survey did allow for some interesting findings, particularly in the area of banned waste management, which was easier to investigate since so much information could be found on municipal websites; and even the absence of information, in the case of illegal dumping practices, was revealing.

To begin with the absence of information, it was interesting to discover that it was rare to find any reference to illegal dumping on municipal websites. Lowell's website had a form for residents to fill out if they notice illegal dumping, but that was the only reference among all six municipalities, and the form did not indicate which department oversaw or responded to the submitted complaints. It was also interesting to find how hard it was to discover, through phone calls to the municipality, which agency had oversight for illegal dumping.

Regarding banned waste management and waste management in general, the most intriguing observation was the straightforward point that there is very wide variation in rules, regulations, facilities, and practices among seven neighboring municipalities. Some municipalities have their own private transfer stations; one municipality did not have curbside trash service; each had slightly different recycling collection arrangements; only a few hosted banned waste drop-off days; and they all had completely different arrays of options to offer their residents in terms of where and how to dispose of banned waste and bulky trash. Most interestingly to us, although this may not be unusual, we noticed that each municipality that works with Allied Waste has a different set of arrangements regarding the services that Allied offers, and some contracts are much more convenient and cheaper (for point-of-service use, at least) for residents. In Tewksbury, for example, residents may put bulky non-banned trash items (including wood and couches) out at the curb free of charge, only needing to make an appointment with Allied first⁶⁷.

For further details on the differences among municipalities, please see **Appendix 5.9**. For additional information regarding municipal waste handling facilities, please see **Appendix 5.6**.

⁶⁷ Tewksbury Recycling Committee, http://www.tewksbury.net/Pages/TewksburyMA_BComm/CO/trcindex.

5.4 Data and Mapping

At time of print, we had not yet obtained data from the City regarding the quantity of complaints received by the DIS; citations issued by the DIS, Fire Department, and Police Department; fines levied by all departments; fines collected by all departments; number of waste disposal stickers sold by the DPW; or amount of waste disposal fees collected by the DPW. This data would be useful to have to evaluate some of the recommendations listed below. For this report, we did not attempt to collect extensive data to demonstrate the extent of the problem of illegal dumping in the Arlington neighborhood. Instead we performed two windshield surveys to get a sense of the issue (September 19 and November 22, 2011), and then carried out one survey of vacant lots in Arlington (November 4, 2011), recording the level of dumping we found on that day. **Appendix 5.10** includes a map that shows the results of the November 4th survey.

5.5 Findings

After considering the current conditions in Arlington and Lawrence as well as the conditions in nearby municipalities, we put together the following list of findings:

- The systems and plans for oversight of illegal dumping and waste management in the City of Lawrence appear to be clear and straightforward, and the roles of each department involved are mutually exclusive and well understood.
- The DIS and DPW appear to be employing as rigorous and thorough of enforcement options as is possible at their current levels of staffing and funding.
- The DIS and DPW have a good understanding of where the illegal dumping hot spots are.
- The DIS and DPW have plans ready to implement to increase enforcement (via surveillance cameras and additional staffing) if they can obtain sufficient funding.
- The process for Arlington residents to acquire banned waste stickers is complicated and onerous.
- It is very difficult to find accurate and non-contradictory information about waste management in Lawrence.
- There is no information on the City of Lawrence website about how to report dumping or what the fines are.
- It may be particularly difficult for people who don't read English to figure out the rules and options for banned waste and bulky trash disposal in the City of Lawrence.
- It may be difficult for low-income residents to afford legal waste disposal options, especially if disposing of several items at once while moving in or out of a residence.
- Fees and pick-up arrangements for banned and bulky waste in other towns seems cheaper and easier than in the City of Lawrence.

These constraints and challenges are addressed through our recommendations, below.

5.6 Recommendations

Communications Strategies

- Place more detailed information on DPW and DIS websites.
- Do more regular outreach with updated and detailed informational literature, including a waste guide, maps of disposal locations, and a list of fees for disposal at each location. (Appendix 5.11 includes sample outreach literature from MassDEP.)
- Produce all web and print communications in both English and Spanish.
- Work with Allied Waste to implement notification system for residents who unknowingly leave unacceptable banned waste items or bulky trash out with their curbside trash⁶⁸.
- Coordinate with other City departments to produce a quick list of neighborhood services FAQs and helpful hints, to post in every residence and give to new residents as they move in.
- Investigate possibilities to work with local schools to implement curriculum on waste management and littering (including, e.g., a school composting program and/or trip to local transfer station or waste-energy facility).

Apply for State Grants

- Apply for Sustainable Materials Recovery Program (SMRP) funds for a) innovative education and outreach materials, b) surveillance cameras, c) an enforcement coordinator, d) coordination with other municipalities, and/or e) other pilot programs.

Facilitate Easier Access to Disposal Stickers and/or the DPW Drop-Off Days

- Make disposal stickers available on some evenings and weekends.
- Make disposal stickers available by mail.
- Investigate possibility of allowing residents to purchase disposal stickers from the City using credit cards, over the phone or in person.
- Investigate possibility of residents paying Allied Waste for banned waste disposal directly, over the phone, as in Lowell.
- Expand the days, hours, and/or months of DPW yard drop-off periods.

Acquire and Install New Surveillance Cameras

- Apply for Sustainable Materials Recovery Program for funds.
- Continue pursuit of solar-powered cameras that don't rely on homeowners to operate.

Renegotiate Contract With Allied to Include More Free Bulky Trash Pick-up

- Restructure the contract with Allied to be more in line with their contracts with other municipalities, in which they pick up 1-4 items of bulky trash per household free each week.

⁶⁸ Not confirmed: does Allied do this already?

Investigate Possibility of Taking Over Curbside Waste Pick-up from Allied to Increase Accountability and Ownership by Lawrence for Lawrence

- Perform cost-benefit analysis to ascertain feasibility.
- Investigate case studies wherein municipalities reclaimed waste service to see likely outcomes.

Investigate Possibility of Sharing Facilities or Services With Nearby Municipalities

- Consider teaming with another municipality to alternate household hazardous waste days.
- Investigate options for sharing costs of developing and distributing educational materials.
- Work with other cities to coordinate enforcement of illegal dumping, modeling off best practices to ensure all cities are equally diligent in enforcement.

Subsidize Banned Waste Dumping Costs

- Find funds to fully or partially subsidize the stickers and other dumping fees for residents.

Target Specific Populations with Incentives or Penalties⁶⁹

- Implement a discount fee schedule for people who are moving out of their residences.
- Offer special pick-ups by the DPW for four or more objects, fees payable by cash to the DPW driver who picks up the items, for people who are moving out of their residences.
- Interview landlords in Arlington to determine what they would need as incentives to deal more responsibly with banned waste when cleaning out uninhabited apartments.
- Interview and/or survey building contractors in Lawrence and, if possible, in nearby municipalities to discover where they take their waste, whether legally or illegally.
- Work with local networks of building contractors to discover what they would need as incentives to deal more responsibly with banned waste and end illegal dumping.
- Put conditions on City of Lawrence building permits, requiring a waste management plan and/or a signature on a statement that the permittee will legally dispose of all waste materials.
- When delivering or signing a building permit, also disperse a flyer that lists the location, hours, and fee schedules for all transfer stations within an hour of Lawrence.

Look for Motivated Residents to Participate in Outreach Efforts

- Work with The Community Group to connect with Arlington residents who are interested in taking community leadership roles as the Arlington Community of Excellence Promise Neighborhood effort moves forward.

A selection of these recommendations are operationalized and presented in more detail in **Appendix 5.12**

⁶⁹ During our December 7, 2011, meeting with and presentation for the City of Lawrence, we speculated that there may be more deadlines remaining for the U.S. digital television conversion that would affect the disposal of TVs in the next year or two. That speculation was incorrect—the U.S. digital television conversion was completed on June 12, 2009.

5.7 Avenues for Further Exploration

As noted above, at time of print we do not have data from the City regarding the quantity of complaints received by the DIS; citations issued by the DIS, Fire Department, and Police Department; fines levied by all departments; fines collected by all departments; number of waste disposal stickers sold by the DPW; or amount of waste disposal fees collected by the DPW. Other data that we did not request but that the City may wish to collect include the number of TVs, tires, and other banned waste items that the DPW ends up collecting both at the DPW through drop-off days and (more importantly) as part of their clean-up of illegal dumping.

In order to more completely evaluate the feasibility and advisability of several of the aforementioned recommendations (including subsidizing banned waste disposal costs, renegotiating the contract with Allied Waste, or increasing enforcement measures), the City may wish to obtain these data from the DIS, DPW, Fire Department, and Police Department and try to estimate things such as: what percentage of complaints end up in citations, what percentage of complaints end up in collected fines, how much money the DPW spends disposing of TVs and other banned waste, and/or how many TVs or other banned waste items Allied collects compared to the DPW.

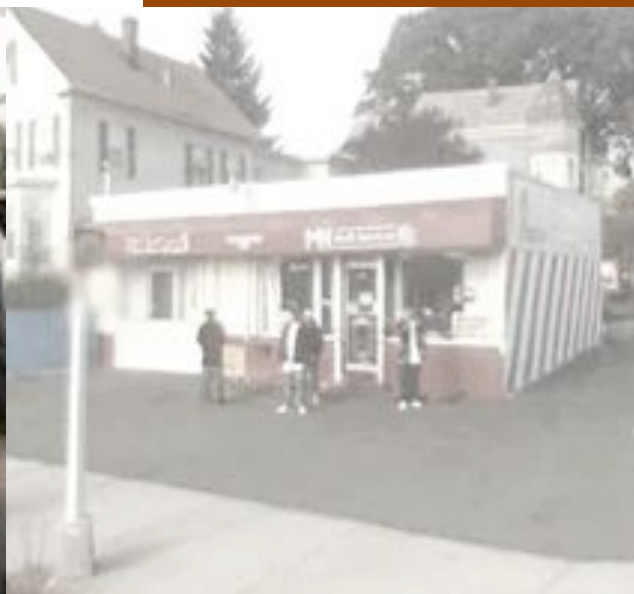
Several City employees mentioned the significance of the current proposed amendment to the ordinances for the City of Lawrence that is seeking the approval of a Home Rule Petition that would “provide for a program of enforcement against illegal dumping within the city limits and to establish fines and other penalties for illegal dumping and a method of collecting said fines and penalties”⁷⁰. We were only able to obtain limited information regarding this petition by the time of print, but an analysis of the potential of this petition to support various types of enforcement would likely be very helpful as the City moves forward with any of the aforementioned recommendations.

Finally, we wish to point out that a few of the recommendations presented here would require drastic systemic change or a significant investment in terms of time or money, which of course may make them infeasible at this time. However, in the face of perennial dumping and littering issues in Arlington, it may be the case that a large up-front investment would be worth the pay-off in terms of a creating a place with newly gained sense of neighborhood pride. While this report does not provide sufficient evidence to strongly recommend implementation of any sweeping systemic changes, it may be that further analysis of the costs of the existing system (including the costs of externalities) and costs of proposed drastic changes would result in findings that a different system would be better for Arlington and the City of Lawrence as a whole.

⁷⁰ City of Lawrence Public Hearing Doc. 226/2011 In City, available online at <http://ma.mypublicnotices.com/PublicNotice.asp?Page=PublicNotice&AdId=2602554>.

Focus on Arlington:

**A Local Operating
Manual**



**Healthy Food
Access**

**Margarita Angeles
Miriam Solis**

6.0. The Report on Healthy Food Access

6.1. Context

Promise Neighborhood's "cradle-to-college-to-career" framework suggests that a pipeline of educational programs and family and community supports will improve outcomes for children in distressed communities. That is why the Arlington Community of Excellence (ACE) is using family and community supports indicators, in addition to education-based indicators, to measure and track its progress. That "students have good exercise and nutrition habits" is among the family and community supports measures⁷¹.

The lack of access to nutritious foods has far-reaching consequences for children. It affects their physical and cognitive development⁷². It also increases their susceptibility to other diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and obesity⁷³. Research suggests that the intake of nutritious food among children can improve if the availability of such food increases. Increasing healthy food options can thus facilitate the realization of health-related goals.

Data suggests that health is a cause for concern in Arlington and in Lawrence more generally. In the 2011, the ACE and the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute conducted a community needs assessment to create a targeted plan for the programming needs of children in Arlington⁷⁴. The report indicates that there are some positive trends—for example, 80% of families in the neighborhood have an appropriate place to go when they are sick. Other indicators paint a bleaker picture. Essential School System data show that only 52% of all Lawrence Public School students had a body mass index measurement that reflects healthy weight, compared to 64% for all students in Massachusetts. A survey administered by the ACE and taken by 234 families representing 502 children showed:

- Only 21% of the ACE neighborhood children regularly participate in sufficient exercise and consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily.
- An additional 15% have good exercise habits but not nutritional habits.
- 45% neither regularly participate in sufficient exercise nor typically consume enough fruits or vegetables.

The numbers indicate that too many children may be lacking the nutrition habits that will enable them to perform to their full potential.

⁷¹ The Community Group. "Promise Neighborhoods Implementation Application," 2011.

⁷² For an extensive list of resources on how this happens, see the USDA's "Role of Nutrition in Learning and Behavior: A Resource List for Professionals," available online at <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/pubs/learning.pdf>.

⁷³ Find resources and updated reports in, "Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity", available online at <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/>.

⁷⁴ UMass Donahue Institute and Research & Evaluation Group, Arlington Community of Excellence (ACE) Community Survey Results (Second Draft), prepared for The Community Group, June 1, 2011

In Lawrence, concerned residents, the City, and community organizations are responding to this challenge. In 2003, then-Mayor of Lawrence Michael Sullivan formed the Mayor's Health Task Force (Task Force), a collaborative of health and social services providers, environmental groups, academic institutions, local businesses, and the City, whose mission is to develop policies focused on health to improve the quality of life of Lawrence residents. Today the Task Force is comprised of 81 member organizations that serve on nine committees. In 2010, Vilma Lora, a member of the Task Force since its inception, began to lead the Task Force. In this role, she has worked to create a Task Force infrastructure that is more focused on health inequities and community engagement, a shift from the Task Force's previous focus on policy. She noted, "We are working to build a Task Force infrastructure that gets the community more engaged and organizations to work more collaboratively."

As part of its new focus, the Task Force recently applied for and received a grant of \$25,000 from the Boston Public Health Commission. The grant will enable the Task Force to learn more about Lawrence's health problems through the use of the Center for Disease Control's CHANGE Tool⁷⁵. The following areas will be studied: nutrition, chronic disease management, demographics, physical activity, and tobacco. The Task Force will use this information to create a plan on how to respond to challenges revealed by the data.

The Task Force's initiative is one of several long-standing and nascent efforts that address health inequities. Groundwork Lawrence, for example, runs several fresh food programs. This includes the operation of two farmers markets and a partnership with a nearby farm to sell fruits and vegetables directly to customers. The Community Group (TCG) also recently launched a nutrition project that will engage families to build awareness about the importance of healthy living.

The long-standing and nascent efforts indicate that this is an opportune moment to transform Arlington's food environment. To support the Task Force's efforts, MIT@Lawrence used existing U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) data and conducted a walk-through survey to paint a better picture of Arlington's food environment. We used this information, along with knowledge of healthy food interventions in other cities, to make recommendations that will help the Task Force achieve its goals.

6.2. Findings

Food Deserts

The USDA has designated two census tracts that comprise nearly half of the Arlington neighborhood as "food deserts" (**Figure 6.1**)⁷⁶. Food deserts are census tracts that are "low-income" (i.e., a poverty rate of 20% or higher or a median family income at or below 80% of the area's median income) and where 500 people and/or 33% of the tract's population live more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store⁷⁷. The remaining portions of the tracts extend east of the Arlington. Note Lawrence has a third tract that is a federally classified food desert and does not comprise the Arlington neighborhood.

⁷⁵ US Center for Disease Control, CHANGE Tool, <http://www.cdc.gov/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/change.htm>.

⁷⁶ USDA, Food Desert Locator, available online at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/fooddesert/>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.



Figure 6.1. Arlington Neighborhood Food Desert

The USDA's food desert classification system also provides information on each tract's characteristics (**Table 6.1**). Nearly ten thousand people live in the two tracts, more than 30% of whom are children ages 0-17. At least one fifth of the housing units without local access also lack a vehicle. This is an important number, because the lack of transportation can limit residents' ability to consume healthy food. See, for example, the CDC's resources on "Transportation and Food Access"⁷⁸ and Occidental College's policy brief on how these issues are linked⁷⁹.

	Tract 1	Tract 2
Number of people	5,109	4,732
Percentage of total population that is low-income and has low-access	20	24.4
Percentage of children age 0-17 with low access	32.1	35.1
Percentage of housing units without a vehicle with low access	21.9	24.2

Table 6.1. Food desert demographics and access⁸⁰

Food Resources

The food desert classification is helpful insofar as it points to a potentially grave problem in the Arlington neighborhood, as well as in adjacent neighborhoods. CDD staff, however, indicated that there are food options in Arlington and noted that corner stores are an example of that⁸¹. The question thus became, "what food options *do* exist in Arlington?" MIT@Lawrence conducted a walkthrough of the neighborhood to answer this question.

Our team found that there are at least 24 corner stores in or adjacent to the Arlington neighborhood. The corner stores, also known as bodegas or convenience stores, are concentrated along Broadway and Lawrence Streets; they are also scattered between the two streets. Arlington has at least 14 restaurants.

The map also shows the location of the garden operated by Groundwork Lawrence. The map does not include several bakeries, a donut shop, or liquor stores, all of which sell food or snack items. The prevalence of corner stores is important because studies show that they can play a key role in improving healthy food access in low-income neighborhoods⁸². Corner stores are often the only recourse for food in neighborhoods without supermarkets, which is a problem when they contain limited and/or unhealthy food options⁸³. Children who are corner store customers tend to purchase unhealthy food items⁸⁴.

⁷⁸ A resource library is available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/healthtopics/healthyfood/transportation.htm>.

⁷⁹ Vallianatos, Mark, Amanda Shaffer and Robert Gottlieb. 2002, "Transportation and Food: The Importance of Access," 2002. Policy Brief. http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfj/publications/transportation_and_food.pdf

⁸⁰ USDA, Food Desert Locator, available online at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/fooddesert/>.

⁸¹ In-person meeting between MIT@Lawrence and CDD staff, October 13, 2011. Lawrence, MA.

⁸² Song, Hee-Jung. "A corner store intervention in a low-income urban community is associated with increased availability and sales of some healthy foods." 2009. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3043106/>.

⁸³ PolicyLink. http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5137405/k.6042/Healthy_Food_Retailing.htm

⁸⁴ Borradaile, KE, et al "Snacking in children: the role of urban corner stores," 2009. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19822591>.

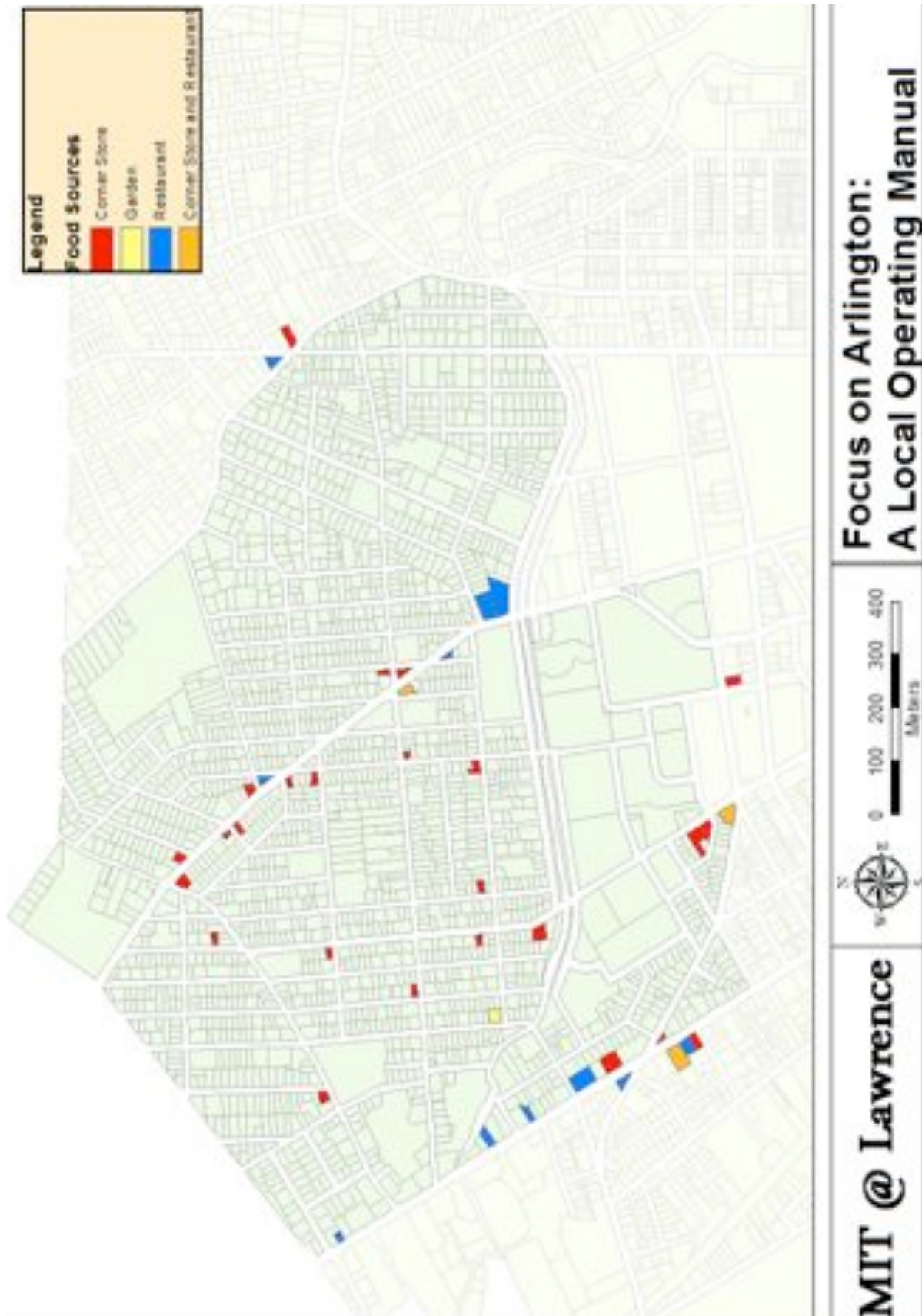


Figure 6.2. Arlington Neighborhood Food sources

It is important to note that the map gives no indication of what is sold in the corner stores. MIT@Lawrence observed that corner stores tend to differ in the extent to which they sell fruits and vegetables but we did not document this variance. Moreover, other food items qualify as “nutritious,” including low-fat lactose products and low-sodium and reduced-sugar canned goods. Differences in these food items were also not observed.

The map of food sources in Arlington reveals that, even though there are many corner stores and restaurants in Arlington, most are located outside of the “food desert” areas within Arlington. This may indicate that the lack to healthy food access may be a particular challenge for residents in this part of the Arlington neighborhood. Further inquiry into the food options and choices made by residents in this part of Arlington will help determine whether alternative strategies are needed there.

6.3. Other Community Innovators

Because the Mayor’s Health Task Force is entering a new and exciting phase, it can look to other cities to learn from what has been tried to improve its own food landscape. The cities of Baltimore and Providence are among the cities undertaking cutting-edge efforts to improve their food environments.

Baltimore Food Policy Initiative

The Baltimore Food Policy Initiative⁸⁵ (BFPI), an intergovernmental municipal effort, aims to improve the City of Baltimore’s access to healthy food. The BFPI is implementing ten recommendations made by the City of Baltimore’s Food Policy Council, which is comprised of 55 food system stakeholders. The recommendations are diverse in nature—they range from supporting urban agriculture to supporting street vending of healthy foods. The BFPI also includes a partnership between the City of Baltimore and John Hopkins University’s Center for a Livable Future to increase the availability of data on Baltimore’s food environment and with a focus on the City of Baltimore’s food deserts (as much as 18% of Baltimore is considered a food desert). A full-time Food Policy Director coordinates the BFPI. The BFPI sponsors three foundations. Three important takeaways from the BFPI are:

- There are many different and complementary ways to increase access to healthy foods.
- Partnerships with local universities can be an important source of ongoing support.
- Philanthropic organizations can fund local efforts.

⁸⁵ Background and contact information, as well as public information campaign material, available online <http://www.baltimorecity.gov/Government/AgenciesDepartments/Planning/BaltimoreFoodPolicyInitiative.aspx>.

Providence Healthy Corner Store Initiative

The Providence Healthy Corner Store Initiative is a community campaign started by Providence's Environmental Justice Coalition and Brown University's Community Environmental College. As part of the initiative, corner stores undergo "market makeovers" to increase the availability and marketing of healthy foods in the stores⁸⁶. The Providence Healthy Corner Store Initiative was implemented in three phases, broadly categorized as: (1) information-gathering and dissemination, (2) the creation of makeover plans and materials, and (3) evaluation. Children, youth, and their parents have been actively involved since its first phase; other local organizations have also become involved. Seven stores are formally a part of its program, while four others are considered "allies", meaning they are not formally in the program but fresh produce can be found there. Several of the participating stores are considered ethnic markets and are minority-owned.

Three important takeaways from Providence Health Corner Store Initiative are:

- Food initiatives are opportunities to build and strengthen coalitions with youth, environmental organizations, and other groups.
- There are different ways for corner store owners to be involved—some may formally be a part of the program while others are "allies".
- Celebrating the cultural contributions of corner stores can make store owners and residents feel more engaged.

6.4. Recommendations

The Mayor's Health Task Force has made great headway in bringing together stakeholders from across Lawrence to address the City's health disparities. Its renewed focus on community engagement and equity means that it has a critical role to play in initiating and enhancing existing initiatives that aim to improve Arlington's food landscape. Given the Task Force's prominent role, we encourage the City to use it as a vehicle to undertake the three following efforts: (1) gather more information, (2) apply for state and federal grants, and (3) launch a corner store initiative.

More Information

There is still a lot the Task Force does not know about the food landscape. New information and the coordination of existing information will enable the City to disseminate findings more efficiently and avoid duplication. Through this, the City will also be able to make decisions that are more informed. It may show, for example, which sub-neighborhood areas to focus on or reveal barriers to food access that have not previously been considered.

⁸⁶ For more information, visit the sites <http://ejlri.wordpress.com/our-work/healthy-corner-store-initiative/> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVpNOLiFMWA>.

The Task Force’s Research Initiative Working Group should strengthen its role as the coordinator of these information-gathering and tracking efforts. Across the City, Task Force committee members have individually collected a lot of data. The Greater Lawrence Community Health Center, for example, has collected data through the services it provides. The community needs assessment conducted for the ACE is another example of a recent and exhaustive research effort. The Research Initiative Working Group has already started building an infrastructure to carry out its goals—it has identified why more research is needed, as well as a guiding philosophy of collaboration to reach these goals. All of this is laid out in its guiding documents⁸⁷. The work of the Research Initiative Working Group has never been so important, because of existing and nascent health initiatives as well as everyone’s vested interest in tracking progress.

Here are several steps the Research Initiative Working Group can take to ramp up its efforts.

Next Steps	
Existing Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take stock of existing data by polling Task Force members. • Create an annotated list of the types of data available or research efforts currently underway. • Distribute list to Task Force members to promote information-sharing.
New data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use list of existing data and poll Task Force members to identify data needs. • Consider gathering data on the following three indicators related to healthy food access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food prices. Healthy food access is both about availability and affordability. More information on the cost of food may help the Task Force identify areas where residents have an especially difficult time purchasing healthy food • Day-to-day choices of neighborhood residents. The prevalence of restaurants and corner stores does not give any indication of the extent to which their food items constitute residents’ diet. It is possible that residents equally rely upon supermarkets or other venues outside of the vicinity • Transportation. The lack of a vehicle can greatly contribute to the limited food choices, because residents are forced to rely on nearby corner stores or restaurants • Engage Task Force members in the creation of a plan for new data efforts.

⁸⁷ Mayor’s Health Task Force Website, available online at <http://lawrencemhtf.org/groups/research/>.

Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify which Task Force staff will support the Research Initiative Working Group's efforts. • Revisit guiding documents; define if and how they are still applicable. • Inform Task Members of continued applicability or updated role of guiding documents.
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Access More Sources of Funding

The “food desert” classification, CHANGE tool findings, and existing data will open doors for new sources of funding. The Task Force can gear up to apply for these new opportunities to support its local initiatives.

Next Steps	
Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a list of grant sources, considering state, federal⁸⁸, and philanthropic and private sources; include deadlines and contacts. • Involve all committees in the creation of the list. • Continuously update the list.
Create boilerplate language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the application submitted to the Boston Public Health Commission to create a new boilerplate for future grant applications. • Coordinate with the Research Initiative Working Group to update boilerplate with new data.
Applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify which Task Force staff and committee members will be responsible for each application. • Circulate application and solicit feedback on ways to make it stronger. • Include line items for additional full-time Task Force staff.

⁸⁸ Consider USDA's Farmers Market Promotion Program and DHHS' Community Economic Development Program.

Launch a Corner Store Initiative

The large number of corner stores makes them sites of opportunity. The Task Force should collaborate with corner stores owners to increase the availability and marketing of healthy foods. They are also an opportunity to engage and enhance the corner store owners' roles as community stakeholders.

Next Steps	
Learn from other cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the resources page of the following organizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PolicyLink's Corner Store Initiative⁸⁹ Healthy Corner Stores Network⁹⁰ - Reach out to the Massachusetts-based participants to learn from neighbors ("Participant Profiles" tab) The Food Trust's Healthy Corner Store Initiative⁹¹ Create a list of tips that may come in handy, as well as potential challenges and how other cities are responding to those challenges. Reach out to nearby cities with similar demographics to find out if and how they are collaborating with corner store owners.
Assess local context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the CHANGE Tool assessment to make any necessary editorial changes to the map and learn more about the corner stores (e.g. what they sell, food costs). Calculate the corner store-population ratio to compare the ratio with that of other cities.
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify who on the Task Force staff is going to coordinate the corner store initiative, as well as the committee members who are going to be involved. Consider involving the Youth Network⁹². Identify the toolkits provided by one of the organizations listed under "Learn from others", such as the St. Louis Healthy Corner Store Guide⁹³. Choose the toolkit that seems most helpful. Using the list of tips and challenges, create a Lawrence-specific action plan. Identify all necessary stakeholders and create an accompanying timeline. Determine how the corner store initiative can be undertaken in conjunction with other "tools"⁹⁴ to increase access to healthy food.

⁸⁹ PolicyLink, available online at

http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.7677069/k.9E44/Corner_Stores/apps/nl/newsletter2.asp

⁹⁰ Healthy Corner Stores Network, available online at <http://healthycornerstores.org/>

⁹¹ The Food Trust, available online at <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/php/programs/corner.store.campaign.php>

⁹² Market Makeovers, available online at <http://www.marketmakeovers.org/>

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⁹³ St. Louis Healthy Corner Store Resource Book
http://extension.missouri.edu/stlouis/healthycornerstore/HCS_Resource_Guidebook

⁹⁴ PolicyLink Health and Place Tools,
http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5136713/k.8AB6/Health_and_Place

7.0 Conclusions

MIT@Lawrence identified three broad, tightly knit areas of concern in the Arlington neighborhood: health and safety; community engagement and pride of place; and communication and coordination of services. These areas lead us to our topics. With guidance from Lawrence's Community Development Department (CDD) and community partners, we thought boldly about the concrete next steps the City can take to build upon existing momentum in Arlington. Our recommendations are only steps in the right direction; but from these recommendations emerge three themes that can serve as guiding principles in how to think about any and all actions that aim to contribute to neighborhood transformation.

COLLABORATION. Our recommendations involve collaboration—between City departments, as well as among the City, community organizations, and residents. Community gardens, for example, involve coordination with other government agencies and, potentially, the sponsorship of community organizations. Improved conditions for dumping will require coordination between several City departments. A strong, collaborative, information-sharing network will also help the City and community identify and solve healthy food access problems among Arlington children and youth.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. The success of current and future community development efforts in Arlington will hinge on the extent to which the local community is engaged in the process. Our recommendations involve building for and with Arlington residents. Pocket parks will provide recreational space. Strategically choosing sites and designing them in ways that are inviting to residents will maximize their use. The City can curb illegal dumping by improving how it communicates with community residents through its outreach practices. A corner store initiative will engage stores owners to promote healthy food options.

VISION. Building on our conversations with CDD and community partners, our recommendations aim to contribute to an emerging vision that sees Arlington for what it could be—a strong, healthy neighborhood where residents are engaged and have a sense of pride. That is why much of our focus approaches “problem areas” as sites of opportunity. Green space, streets clear of waste, and healthy food options will contribute to building a sense of pride in the neighborhood. This visionary thinking can serve as a point of reference to inspire other forward-thinking, actionable solutions.

Enhanced collaboration, community engagement and a visionary approach can move the city closer toward realizing its goals in the Arlington neighborhood. The sustained dedication of resources, both financial and human, can create within the neighborhood an ecosystem in which residents, community groups, and non-profits come together to engender the change that they desire. Our recommendations in this report are not just about providing technical solutions to problems. Rather, they support a paradigm shift that consists of policymakers and

community members challenging the status quo by thinking differently about neighborhood transformation. We believe that the Arlington is closer to achieving this transformation, and look forward to seeing the City build on this momentum.

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Appendices

7.0. List of Appendices

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Appendix 5.1: Fact Sheet on Banned Wastes in Massachusetts

Appendix 5.2: Excerpts from the Spring 2010 MIT@Lawrence Practicum Report

Appendix 5.3: City of Lawrence Citation Form for Illegal Dumping, DIS Call Record, and CRT Sticker

Appendix 5.4: Lawrence Municipal Code Chapter 8.08: Garbage Collection and Disposal

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Appendix 5.6: Waste Management and Recycling Facilities Near Lawrence

Appendix 5.7: Current Text of Websites for Lawrence Department of Public Works and Department of Inspectional Services

Appendix 5.8: City of Lawrence Hand-outs on Waste Management

Appendix 5.9: Nearby Municipalities' Waste Management Program Components

**Appendix 5.10: Dumping Identified on Vacant Lots in the Arlington Neighborhood
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Appendix 5.11: Sample Literature on Waste Management

Appendix 5.12: Operational Actions for Recommendations