

People and Place:

Individual Development Accounts, Technology & Community Revitalization in Lawrence, MA

MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning with Lawrence CommunityWorks | Spring 2004



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We worked with fabulous people this semester and we thank you all for a wonderful experience!



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the final report of the Spring 2004 MIT class, “Information and Communication Technologies in Community Development.” The class is part of an ongoing relationship between the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT and Lawrence CommunityWorks.

Our class was given the task of investigating the possible expansion of the Individual Development Account (IDA) program at CommunityWorks. The IDA program is designed to encourage asset building through individual saving matched by grants and federal funds. It focuses on financial literacy and future planning, allowing participants to save for starting a small business, paying for higher education, or purchasing a home. The organization would like to expand the program to many more residents of Lawrence, focusing on homeownership as a strategy of neighborhood revitalization.

We conducted a wide array of activities to gather information and create relationships with the many people who participate in CommunityWorks programs. In order to better understand the housing stock in Lawrence, we worked with youth in the Young Architects and Young Professionals classes. We used handheld computers to gather data about every parcel in the North Common neighborhood of Lawrence, which we then input into a Geographic Information System (GIS) project.

We also conducted participatory workshops with IDA participants in order to gather information about the program and the participants’ goals for the future. We learned a great deal about the needs of the IDA participants and also helped them learn more about housing options in Lawrence. Finally, we conducted interviews with CommunityWorks staff and key stakeholders. These interviews allowed us to learn more about program administration and better understand the housing market in Lawrence.



Our recommendations stem from a vision of an expanded and enhanced IDA program that impacts participants’ lives as well as the City of Lawrence. This report presents a flexible process in three stages: today, near future, and future. Throughout these stages, we recommend a continued focus on three principles: 1) an emphasis on living in Lawrence, 2) peer support and social networks, and 3) youth development.

Our recommendations are directed not solely at the IDA program, but at each department within CommunityWorks. We recommend that CommunityWorks continue the housing data collection process as an integral part of the youth programs. We also recommend continuing participatory workshops, across groups, as part of the expanding IDA program.

PREFACE

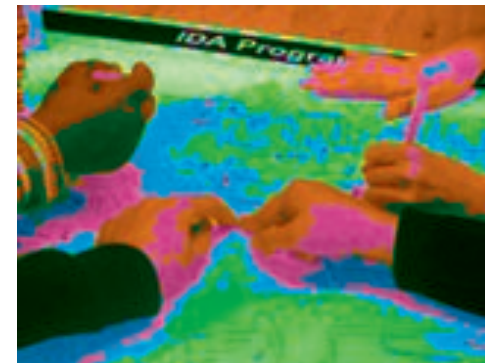
This report is the final output of the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP) class, “Information and Communication Technologies in Community Development,” offered in Spring 2004. This class is part of an ongoing partnership of DUSP and Lawrence CommunityWorks from 2003 to 2008. A brief description of this partnership (from the partnership agreement) follows.

The three main partners in this project are CommunityWorks, DUSP/MIT, and the City of Lawrence. CommunityWorks and MIT conceived this project together based on needs arising from CommunityWorks’ organizing and planning work with neighborhood residents and stakeholders, and following ten years of various student and then alumni involvement in the City. The development of CityNet is part of a five-year commitment by MIT to CommunityWorks, in which CommunityWorks will become the client for an ongoing series of core DUSP practica classes centered around technology as a tool for revitalization. To the process of project development MIT has brought strong technical expertise and knowledge of best practices in the field, while CommunityWorks has brought a clear and deep understanding of local and resident needs. This understanding is based on extensive and central neighborhood organizing work and experience in dozens of community planning meetings with residents as they worked to design housing projects, parks and playgrounds, community gardens, educational facilities, and youth and family programs. The City of Lawrence is providing access to their parcel-level GIS database of the entire City, Departmental information, and time from their GIS staff person.

As defined on its website:

“Lawrence CommunityWorks (LCW) is a community development corporation dedicated to the sustained economic and physical revitalization of the City of Lawrence. LCW had its beginnings in the early 1980s struggle to build affordable housing in North Lawrence, and has built or renovated nearly 200 units of affordable housing for the people of Lawrence. Our mission is rooted in a commitment to:

- fostering individual and neighborhood empowerment and leadership through organizing residents to develop economically, politically, and socially,
- producing and preserving safe, decent, and affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families, and
- creating programs and facilities that help meet the educational and economic development needs of neighborhood young people, adults, and families.”



INTRODUCTION

In Spring 2004, a class from the Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) undertook the task of investigating how to expand the Individual Development Account (IDA) program at Lawrence CommunityWorks. CommunityWorks has a goal of significantly increasing the size of its IDA program and encouraging program participants to use their savings to purchase a home in Lawrence. This would serve two goals: improve the lives of participants by enabling them to own a home, and improve Lawrence by having a set of residents who own their homes and are strongly committed to their neighborhoods. Our class set about figuring out a way to accomplish both of these goals. Our team focused on the following four areas:

Homeownership

While we recognize that homeownership is just one asset type that participants may select, we were asked to focus on homeownership.

Process for Scale

We were asked to evaluate the process of creating a large scale IDA program and its impact on Lawrence. We have narrowed our efforts to creating a process by which CommunityWorks can achieve an IDA program of significant scale.

Organizational

Instead of solely looking at the IDA program, the process we developed addresses CommunityWorks as a whole.

Neighborhood: North Common

We focused on the North Common neighborhood and on developing a model that can be replicated for other parts of the city.

Our Approach: People and Place

Our work is split into two main areas of focus: people and place. “People” refers to current and future IDA participants who want to purchase a home in Lawrence. “Place” refers to the housing options in Lawrence, which are currently too expensive for most participants to afford. The goal of this project was to figure out a way to bring people and place together. In order to do this we designed a process to gather more information and inform the activities of many different parts of CommunityWorks.

The ‘Landscape of Opportunity’ is really in the people. CommunityWorks recognizes this and successfully invests in its members. The next step is ensuring that those members are equipped with the resources they need to make Lawrence a great place.



INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNTS: NATIONAL TRENDS

What is an Individual Development Account?

An Individual Development Account (IDA) is a financial and economic development tool designed help low-income families save and accumulate assets. Sponsoring organizations match the savings of participants, thereby encouraging residents with low-incomes to save more than they normally would. In order to receive the matching funds, residents must purchase an asset – typically a home, education, or capital for a small business. These assets help to close wealth inequality, which is more disparate than income inequality in the United States. IDAs are designed to provide assets to leverage additional wealth and engage low-income households in long-term financial planning.

History

IDAs represent an ideological shift from traditional welfare income maintenance policies to a focus on asset building and financial independence. In 1997, the American Dream Demonstration (ADD) project initiated and evaluated 13 IDA programs across the country. In 1999, the federal Assets for Independence Act (AFIA) was passed, which provided \$125 million dollars of funding for IDA programs to be matched by local sources. AFIA established IDAs as a primary asset building tool for local organizations. Currently, there are 554 IDA programs in the United States with over 20,000 participants. The vast majority focus on adults and provide some matching funds. IDA savings are most often spent on education, small business and home ownership, with homeownership being the most popular option. Refer to the Resources section for more nationwide IDA data.



Funding

The primary source of Individual Development Account funding comes from AFIA. Thus far, congress has appropriated more than \$95 million in AFIA funding for IDA programs across the country. While federal funding has been available, the challenge for many IDA programs has been acquiring local match sources that are necessary to access AFIA money. Applicant organizations typically seek money from state government, foundations, and banks with varying levels of success. Additionally, many local funders, particularly foundations, specify that grants should go directly to match savings. As a result, little money is left for the operation and management of the program itself.

Policy

The need for greater support at the local level has driven many state policy initiatives. Collaborations of IDA organizations have proposed state legislation which provides state funding for IDA programs and sometimes administrative support for managing large quantities of IDA accounts. State support is critical for IDA programs, as it begins to solve the problem of a lack of local support to match AFIA funding. As a result, IDA program collaborations lobby state legislators and state administrators to create funding streams and administrative support for IDAs. In many states, these collaborations have been quite successful, as 21 states have IDA legislation, and 7 states have administratively created IDA support.

Massachusetts

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts does not provide support to IDA programs through funding or administrative assistance. IDA legislation was proposed, which died in 2001. No new legislation has been introduced since that time. However, Massachusetts does have IDA-like programs which encourage savings and asset accumulation for low-income families. One is a savings program for public housing residents, and another is a subsidized education account program. Where the state has not been particularly supportive of IDAs, funding and technical support have come from local private and non-profit sources. Funding support has primarily come from foundations and banks. Technical support has come from a collaboration of Massachusetts community-based organizations that operate IDA programs, called Massachusetts IDA Solutions (MIDAS). MIDAS is also working towards IDA legislation at the state level.

Alternative Funding Strategy: New Hampshire

By the time New Hampshire's five-year statewide IDA program has been implemented, it will have served 500 families, making it one of the largest IDA programs in the country. In 2000, the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund (NHCLF) was approached by Concord Area Trust for Community Housing (CATCH) to develop a statewide IDA program. After a small pilot, NHCLF launched its five-year statewide effort funded by \$2.2 million in match funds from AFIA, foundations, banks, and state TANF money. The program is run in collaboration with 17 community-based organizations and the University of New Hampshire's Cooperative Extension program, which provides the financial literacy training. NHCLF role is to coordinate with the community collaborators, manage the process, and raise and manage the matching funds.



COMMUNITYWORKS IDA PROGRAM

Program Design

The Lawrence Community Works IDA program is unique. The elements of the CommunityWorks IDA program that distinguish it from many other national programs are:

- **Place-based**

CommunityWorks seeks to use *individual* accounts to build a stronger *community* in Lawrence. While the impact of IDA programs on individuals is well documented and studied, the impact of IDA programs on place is not well understood by researchers.

- **Women Only**

Second, the program, as it currently exists, is solely for women, who are one of the most economically disenfranchised groups in Lawrence.

- **Support, Social Networks**

Third, the LCW program is not only a savings mechanism, but also a support and educational network for IDA participants. Women are able to share their struggles and triumphs in life and saving, which attaches participants to the program and builds social networks and trust amongst Lawrence residents. Thus, the IDA program is about more than just savings, it is about building community and relationships in Lawrence.

Residents with household incomes that are below 200% of the poverty line are eligible for the IDA program. Women apply to the program, CommunityWorks nominates eligible candidates, and a lottery is then held for the final list of participants. There are a total of 36 IDA participants, broken up into three groups of 12. Group One already graduated from the program, Group Two is in its second year, and Group Three is in its initial year. Each group meets at least twice a month for two years.

During the two years, IDA participants attend training sessions covering skills such as organizing personal finances and buying a home. They also attend more social sessions where participants get to know each other and provide support through events like spaghetti dinners. They also meet personally with the IDA manager about life, savings, and their trajectory in the IDA program. When the participant purchases their asset, every dollar that each participant saved is matched with three dollars of matching money. The asset must be acquired in the Merrimack Valley area, which can be inside of, or outside of Lawrence. Currently, the source of the match money is AFIA and local foundations and banks.

Administration

The administration of the IDA program is connected to the community, which, in many ways, defines the program. As mentioned above, there are several social support sessions throughout the year, and the IDA manager meets with each participant personally at least once a year. The manager knows the names of participants' children and problems women are having with their spouses that prevent them from saving. Additionally, many of the participants were brought into the program through the program manager, who is personally connected to the community in many ways. She makes radio announcements about the program in Spanish. She also uses her extensive social networks in the community to attract eligible participants into the program. Thus, the integration of the community in these ways has improved social support and marketing of the program.

IDA accounts are held with a local bank, and IDA managers are required to keep track of deposits through a database using the Management Information System for IDAs (MISIDA). The MISIDA and the bank systems are not connected, and MISIDA is not automatically updated when bank deposits are made. Therefore, each deposit has to be updated every month into the MISIDA system, which is a frustrating and time-consuming process. Updating the MISIDA requires one full day of an administrator's time. Maintaining both the social supports for the IDA program and the accounts is a Herculean task for any one IDA manager.

What We Did – Interviews

In addition to background research on the LCW program, we interviewed Julia McNabb, the youth IDA manager, and Annery Brea, the adult IDA manager. The interviews allowed us to ask specific questions about the program related to CommunityWorks' goals of scaling up the IDA program in Lawrence. The managers suggested how a larger IDA program might work in the future. However, they also expressed concerns about how the IDA program could improve to better serve participants today.

We also conducted several interviews to understand more about other IDA programs. Margaret Miley of Massachusetts IDAs (MIDAS) was very helpful in identifying trends and challenges at the state level. Ben Managan is executive director of San Francisco Earned Asset Resource Network, an organization that manages 350 IDA accounts. This interview clarified how this particular organization approached the issue of scale. Stephanie Bodie of the Center for Social Development at Washington University in St. Louis was helpful in understanding both the workings of an urban IDA program, but also what is happening at a policy level.

PEOPLE



To obtain information about the housing needs and preferences of IDA clients, we conducted two workshops on April 9 and 16. Although the workshops were a vehicle for collecting information, they were also a venue for facilitating dialogue among IDA clients and between IDA clients and CommunityWorks staff. In what follows we first summarize the primary objectives of the workshops. Next, we briefly describe the workshop design and planning process. Third, we indicate the number of people who attended the workshops as well as the members of the facilitators and support team. Fourth, a summary of the main activities and findings of the workshops is provided. Finally, we outline some of the comments that participants made regarding their experiences during the workshops.

Workshop Objectives

- Promote dialogue among participants (and between participants and CommunityWorks staff) about key issues related to the program and their individual goals;
- Strengthen social ties among group participants;
- Generate interest and commitment to living in and improving the city of Lawrence;
- Promote dialogue and learning among participants about homeownership, including the benefits and drawbacks of different housing types and forms of ownership; and
- Collect information from participants to assess their demand for housing in Lawrence and the barriers to homeownership that they are experiencing.

Designing the Workshops

The design and planning process took approximately five weeks. We met more than fifteen times for a total of approximately 35 hours during the semester to plan the various activities of the workshop. We also met with CommunityWorks staff three times to obtain feedback and suggestions on the types of activities to include in the workshops.

Although many of our ideas were adapted from previous personal experiences with participatory workshops in the United States and abroad, most of our ideas were developed through brainstorming as a group. The focus of our efforts throughout the entire design phase was not to develop methods for collecting information but rather to create processes that would promote dialogue and learning among IDA participants as well as between IDA participants and CommunityWorks staff. This dialogue and learning are necessary to realize CommunityWorks' vision of bringing people and place together. For this reason, we believe that these workshops are not just one-time events for use during a semester to collect information. They are tools that CommunityWorks staff can use on an annual basis to ensure that people are discussing and reflecting on issues central to the convergence of people and place.

In addition to developing formal activities for the workshops, we designed informal social activities for creating a relaxed and friendly environment that would foster bonding not only between workshop participants, but also between the participants and the facilitators. Examples of these informal activities are an ice-breaker game that enabled people to quickly become acquainted with each other's names, a raffle with multiple prizes, salsa dancing and music, and a live guitar concert at the end of the second workshop.

Participants and Facilitator/Support Team

Each workshop was held after business hours on a Friday for approximately two and a half hours. Sixteen IDA clients attended the first workshop. Two were from Group 1, five from Group 2 and nine from Group 3. In addition, one of the members of the Young Architects group, Rebecca Camargo, who participated in the GIS data collection process, also attended the workshop in order to learn more about the project and participatory techniques. The second workshop consisted of twelve participants, two of whom were in Group 1, seven in Group 2 and three in Group 3.

The workshop facilitators and support team consisted of nine MIT students and three CommunityWorks staff members during the first workshop, and six MIT students, one MIT professor and two CommunityWorks staff during the second workshop. Appendices 1 and 2 provide the names of the workshop participants and members of the facilitators and support team, respectively.



Workshop Activities and Findings

The activities and findings of the workshops can be grouped into three main categories: **(1) About the IDA program, (2) About Lawrence, and (3) About Homeownership.**

About the IDA program.

This section of the workshop was designed to enable IDA clients to share how they heard about the program, why they joined and what benefits and challenges they have experienced so far as a result of being part of the program. We also asked them to think about how the benefits and challenges of the program would change if the program were expanded to include 35 people per class instead of the current 12, and if men were invited to take part in the program.

a. How did you hear about the program?

People heard about the program through a variety of means. Some women expressed learning about the program through Annery Brea, the IDA program manager, because they were either friends with her or they had had an informal encounter with her in and around Lawrence. Two women learned about the program because they had their children enrolled in after-school activities at CommunityWorks. Others said they learned about it through word of mouth in their neighborhoods or through flyers. The story that best exemplifies the word of mouth phenomenon observed in Lawrence relates to a daughter who, upon hearing two strangers talk about CommunityWorks and the IDA program in the street, rushed home to tell her mother about it. These differing methods of learning about the IDA program are indicative of how deeply embedded CommunityWorks is in the community of Lawrence.

b. Why did you join the program?

Although one woman said that she joined the program to establish a business, all other women mentioned that they were there because they wanted to save money for purposes of buying a house. One of these women expressed that she wants to buy a home because she wants to accumulate equity that she can use in the future to pay for her children's education.

c. What benefits and challenges have you experienced since you joined the program?

Participants were asked to write on index cards the answer to two questions:

1. What are the main benefits of being in the IDA program?
2. What are the biggest challenges of being in the program?

The index cards were grouped by facilitators and discussed later in the workshop (see part f below).

d. If the program were expanded to include 35 people per class instead of the current 12, how do you think the benefits and challenges of the program would change?

Initially, women were concerned about the potential negative impact of a program expansion on the close friendships and support mechanisms that characterize the program at its current scale. However, after some discussion, the women concluded that a program expansion would be desirable because it would enable more women to benefit from the program. Hence, a brief discussion followed that focused on how expansion could occur without jeopardizing the benefits of a small program.

Participants agreed that the highest number of people per class should be 35. It was also mentioned that IDA program coordinators could promote interaction and solidarity among IDA clients by compiling class lists with addresses and telephone numbers, which people could then use for coordinating carpooling or other types of activities.

Also, women thought about new benefits that a program expansion could generate. First, IDA program-related classes could be offered in multiple locations throughout the city rather than in just one location. This would reduce travel time for participants and make the program more visible in the neighborhoods. Second, the more women that graduate from the program, the bigger impact they can make in Lawrence if they work collectively.

e. If the program were expanded to include men, how do you think the benefits and challenges of the program would change?

Initially, the idea of including men in the program triggered significant negative reactions from the women. The women did not want men to be part of the program because they felt that the presence of men would prevent them from expressing themselves. The women also said that one of the best things of the IDA program is that it provides them with the opportunity to set aside time for themselves away from their hectic lives, and that bringing men into the program would take that time away from them. They also felt that the difference between men's and women's outlooks on life would act as a communication barrier between the two groups.

Upon reflection, however, a married woman said that she thought that it would be good for her husband to learn how to save and buy a home, but that he should learn separately from her. Another woman mentioned that she thought that the differences in perspective between men and women could improve her experience in the program. Hence, the women agreed that if men were included in the program, they could be part of certain skills-building classes with women, but that peer support group meetings for women should be held separately from men.



f. Discussion of index cards created in part c: benefits and challenges.

The facilitators then collected and grouped the cards into categories, which were listed on flip charts for purposes of guiding a detailed discussion about the benefits and challenges of the program.

Through these discussions, we learned that participants were extremely positive in general about the program, and contributed many more answers to the “benefits” question than to the “challenges” question. Comments ranged from learning about savings and financial management to enjoying the social and support aspects of the program. Participants wrote about learning the importance of “paying bills on time,” looking for bank “hidden fees,” and “planning for the future.”



The program’s value as a support network and place to create meaningful friendships was mentioned by many of the women. A number of participants simply wrote “friendship” or “support” on their index cards. Another spoke of how the program let her reduce stress and realize there is “a way to get ahead.”

Many women also commented that the IDA program gave them the opportunity to buy their first home. One participant wrote, “It’s the only way I’m going to be able to save for a house.”

The comments about challenges people faced while in the IDA program covered topics both about the program itself and difficulties faced outside CommunityWorks. Participants acknowledged that it was often difficult to attend the meetings – because of and family commitments. One participant complained of not being able to attend because she was sick, and another said that her baby is sometimes sick. Participants expressed frustrations related to the large number of meetings required for the program, or the fact that the meetings are sometimes scheduled during inopportune times. People also expressed concern about the meetings consistently starting late. Others said they wanted more education/skills building workshops to be incorporated into the program. Finally, disagreement among workshop participants about the duration of the program was identified. While a few Group 3 participants considered a two-year duration to be too long, Group 1 participants, possibly reflecting nostalgia for the program, said two years was too short.

About Lawrence

Next, discussion and community mapping techniques were used to initiate a dialogue among the women about their perceptions of the city and their preferred locations for buying a home. The following sections provide a summary of these discussions and mapping exercises

Years of Residence in Lawrence

“How long have you lived in Lawrence?” facilitators asked. Table 3 (below) shows that the majority of women in the workshop have lived in Lawrence more than 10 but less than 20 years.

Table 3: Years of Residence in Lawrence

Number of Years	Number of People
1 to 4 Years	2
5 to 10 Years	2
11 to 19 Years	10
20 or More Years	1

Community Mapping

Facilitators then conducted a series of community mapping exercises to encourage people to consider their social networks and the spatial aspects of their daily activities when deciding where to live in Lawrence.

Facilitators divided workshop participants into three small groups of three to four people. Each group gathered around a mapping workstation with two or more facilitators. Mapping workstations consisted of one large 30”X30” map of the city of Lawrence, a legend indicating the symbols for the information requested from participants, and stickers and markers of various colors for participants to use based on the legend.

The information that participants were asked to map were:

- Where do you live in Lawrence?
- Where do your friends and family live?
- What areas do you perceive to be unsafe?
- Where are the best schools in Lawrence?
- Where do your children play?
- Where do your children go to for after-school activities?
- Where do you go to church?

All groups then reconvened as a large group for a more in depth discussion about the information that had been mapped as well as people’s perceptions about Lawrence.

IDA Client Perceptions of Lawrence

“What do you like the most about Lawrence, or why do you want to stay?” the facilitator asked? Women provided many reasons for why they like Lawrence. Some said that they consider Lawrence to be a safe place, especially compared to their home countries. They described Lawrence as a town with warmth (“*un pueblito que tiene calor*”), a familiar atmosphere where one can share more with others, and a good place to raise children and get old in. “People know me in Lawrence,” one woman said.

Then the facilitator asked what people liked least about Lawrence, or why they would want to leave. The problems that people reported were poor quality schools, the absence of nice parks for children, and the lack of affordable summer activity programs for children under age 12. Although some women reported vandalism and stolen cars to be a problem, all agreed that those problems had been substantially reduced since the new sheriff came to Lawrence approximately four years earlier. One

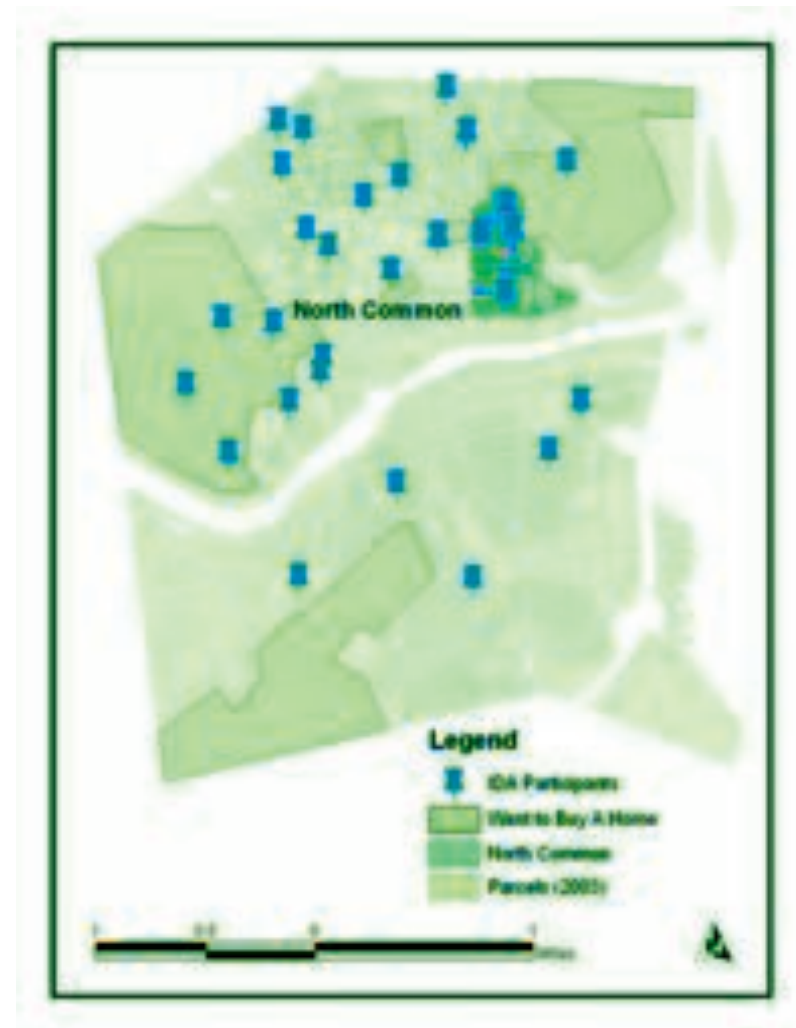
woman, who has lived in Lawrence for 18 years, spoke of old Lawrence with nostalgia: “A new wave of immigrants came who were primarily on welfare and they increased crime tremendously as a result.” Approximately half of the women expressed that they wanted to leave Lawrence.

Amenities

“Why do you live where you live now?” the facilitator then asked. The main amenities that women mentioned were proximity to school, church, park, post office, bus stop and hospital.

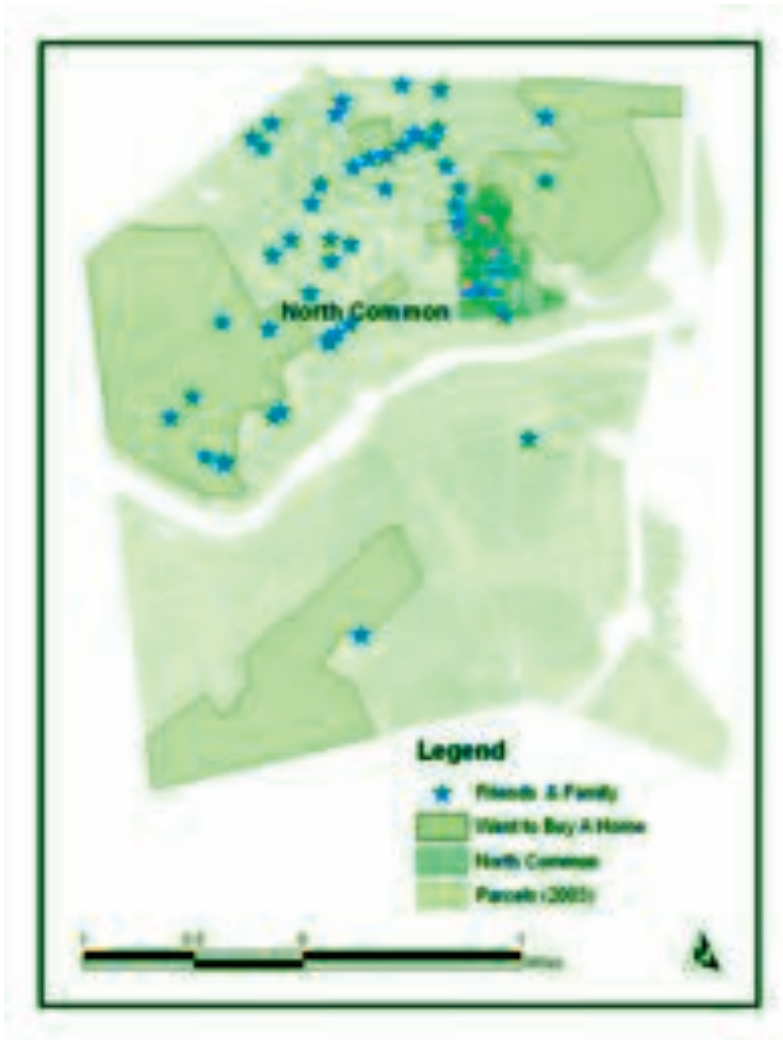
Location of Where People Want to Buy a Home

Following this conversation, facilitators distributed an 11X17 map of Lawrence to each participant and asked the participants to indicate on the map the area(s) of the city in which they would want to buy a home. Maps 1 through 5 below show these areas along with some of the spatial information that was collected during the mapping exercises described above .



Map 1: Location of IDA Clients' Current Homes

As can be seen in the map above, four of the IDA clients currently live in areas where IDA clients have indicated they would want to buy a home. Also, although IDA clients live in areas throughout the city, they seem to be mostly concentrated north of the Merrimack River which roughly divides the city in half.



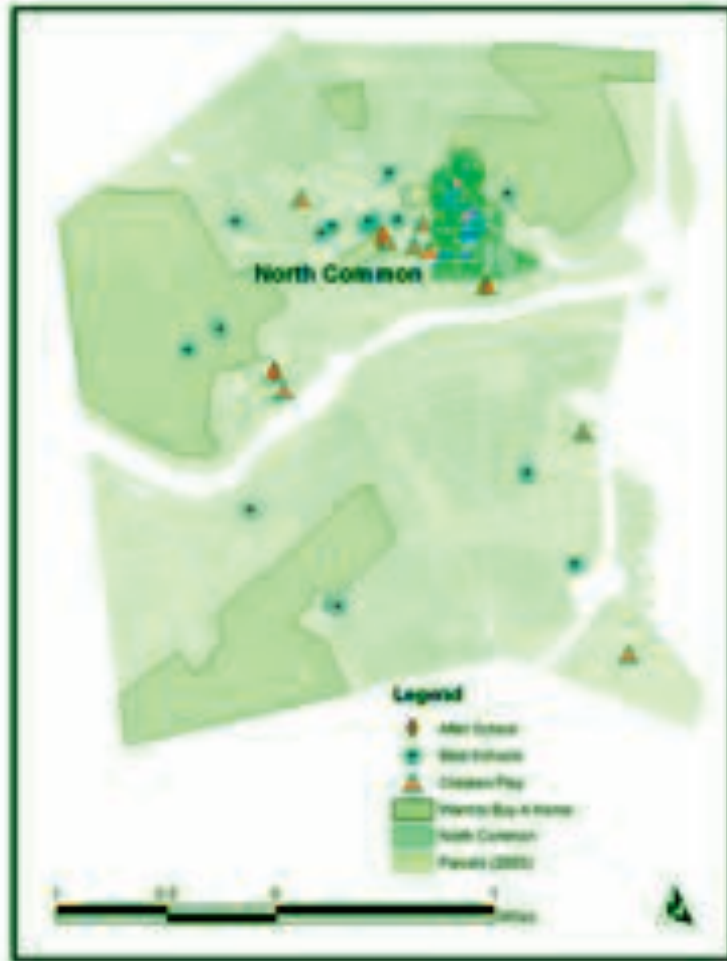
Map 2: Location of Friends and Family

The above map shows that despite the fact that most of the families and friends of IDA clients are distributed throughout north Lawrence, there are some people who would like to buy a house in south Lawrence.



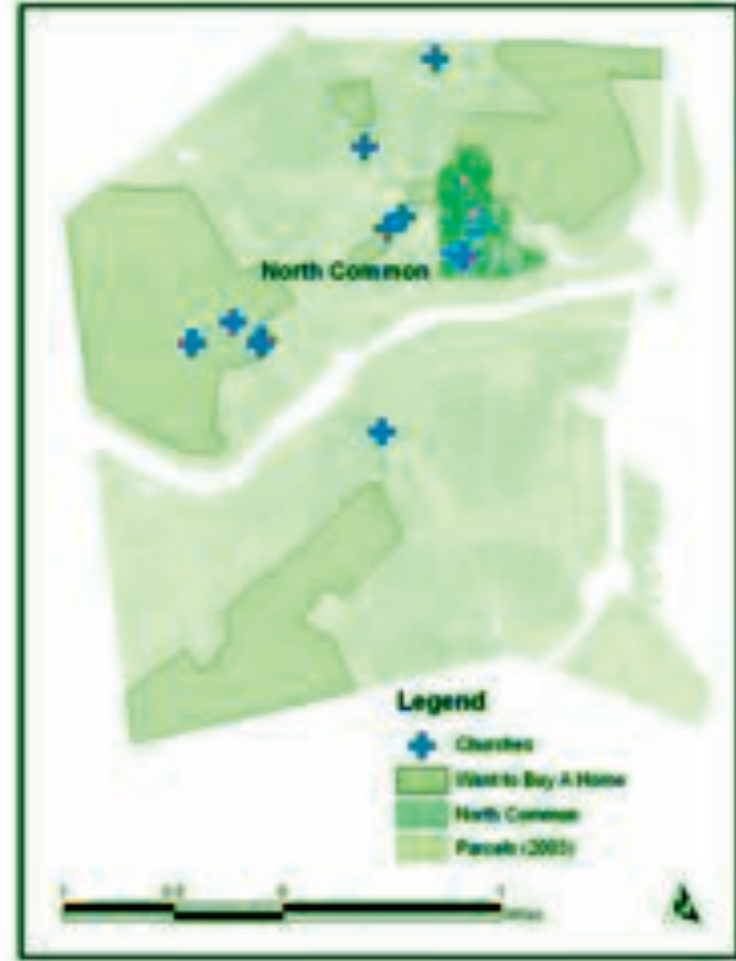
Map 3: Areas Perceived to be Unsafe

The above map shows that most people avoid areas that they perceive to be unsafe when deciding where they want to buy their home.



Map 4: Location of Best Schools, Where Children Play and After School Activities

The above map shows that there is no clear relationship between the location of where people want to buy a home and the location of the best schools, where children play and after-school activities. Nevertheless, proximity to schools and parks was one of the desired amenities that IDA participants mentioned when discussing why they live where they currently live.



Map 5: Location of Where People go to Church

The above map shows that there is no clear relationship between the location of where people want to buy a home and the location of the churches that IDA clients visit. Nevertheless, proximity to churches was one of the desired amenities that people mentioned when discussing why they live where they currently live.

About Homeownership

The final section of the workshop focused on homeownership, specifically assessing women's preferences with regards to housing types and ownership forms.

Housing Type Preferences

We prepared four large 30"X30" posters, one for each type of housing discussed in the workshop: single-family house, 2-4 family house, multi-family building and mill building. Each poster contained photos of the exterior and/or interior of the housing structures it represented.

After briefly describing the four types of housing structures, facilitators distributed three stickers to each participant. Participants were then asked to indicate their preferences by placing their stickers on the correct housing type posters. For example, if a woman had one preference, she could place all three stickers under the poster that represented her top choice. If a woman had two top choices, she could distribute her stickers among these two choices by pasting two stickers on her top choice and one on her second choice.

Following this exercise, the cost associated with each housing structure was introduced: \$1,700 to \$2,200 per month for single family homes, and \$1,300 to \$1,600 for a condo in the three other housing types. Facilitators described these costs and showed how they differed based on housing type. They then distributed three more stickers to the women and asked them to vote one more time based on the new cost information.

The introduction of costs resulted in the expected shift in preferences. As shown in Table 4 below, the group's *a priori* preferred housing types in order of highest number of votes to lowest were single-family house, 2-4 family house, mill building

and then the multi-family building. After costs were revealed, this order changed to include 2-4 family house first, followed by the single-family house and then by the mill and multi-family buildings.

Table 4: Housing Preferences Before and After Costs Were Revealed

Housing Type	Total Number of Votes	
	Before Costs	After Costs
Single-family	22	10
2-4 Family	5	16
Multi-family	1	2
Mill	4	4

When the facilitators asked why people preferred single-family homes over other housing types, women responded by saying that they considered them to be more stable investments. They also preferred the higher degree of privacy, greater amount of indoor space and the yard that single-family homes usually offer. Lastly, they found single-family homes to be safer than apartments in large buildings.

Those who voted for the 2-4 family house said that they did so because it was the closest option to the single-family house in terms of privacy, safety and space. Those who voted for the mill building said that the mill buildings looked beautiful and spacious, but that they had to see the interior in real life to confirm their votes. A lot of women said that they did not vote for the multi-family building because they did not look nice and they seemed too crowded.

When facilitators asked why people did not want to live in the other types of housing structures, several interesting facts about the shortcomings of this workshop activity were revealed. First, some people did not vote for non-single family housing options because they thought that they had to buy the whole building rather than just an apartment within the building, and they were afraid about how they would maintain such a building. Others thought that their investment was less stable than in a single-family home. “It is not something that is mine,” various women said.

We also learned that most women did not know that while owners of single family homes need to be sufficiently self-disciplined to save for future maintenance costs on their own, the owners of condo in multi-family or mill buildings benefit from the presence of a management company that charges them monthly fees and then sets money aside for future building maintenance costs. Others had not thought about the risks that an owner of a condo in a 2-4 family faces if large maintenance expenses arise and no one else in the building is willing to pitch in to cover the costs.

The above mentioned comments show that the women had never seriously looked into buying anything other than a single-family house, and that substantial additional technical information needed to be provided to them if they were to make informed decisions about their housing type preferences. Nevertheless, the exercise was useful in informing workshop participants and CommunityWorks staff of the importance of organizing future courses on the advantages and disadvantages of different housing types.

Forms of Homeownership

Due to the rising home prices in Lawrence, it is becoming increasingly difficult for IDA graduates to qualify for home mortgages. Hence, we wanted to introduce IDA clients to the benefits and drawbacks of collective buying and see what their thoughts on the subject were.

To introduce the concept of collective buying, the facilitator asked five women to stand in the front of the room. The facilitator then asked one of the women to represent individual ownership by standing on her own. Next, she instructed the next two women to represent the concept of informal collective purchasing by standing together and holding hands. Lastly, the facilitator assigned the remaining two women to represent the concept of formal collective purchasing. She did this by placing a chair between the two women and asking each of them to hold one side of the chair. The chair was described as the shared parts of the building – the lobby, laundry room, etc.



The facilitator then explained the benefits and drawbacks of each scenario. The main points that were made for the individual purchasing scenario were that although the ownership form provides financial autonomy, independence and control, it is also high risk because the owner is solely responsible for maintenance and insurance costs, as well as mortgage payments. If the owner cannot make the full payments, no one else is there with whom to split the costs.

The facilitator described the informal collective ownership scenario as an option that offers cost savings for maintenance costs, insurance, yard work, etc. since they are shared among the various homeowners. However, drawbacks exist due to the difficulties associated with having to understand the complex legal structures associated with collective ownership. In addition, having an investment partner limits a person's autonomy and increases financial and social risk.

Finally, the formal collective ownership scenario was described as a case where two or more people get together to buy a building and then convert it into individual condos. The benefits of this endeavor are similar to the informal purchasing scenario in that there are substantial cost savings due to sharing of maintenance costs, insurance, etc. Furthermore, owners of condos experience financial autonomy, control and independence much like the owners who purchase individually. Some of the main drawbacks, however, are the high costs required to convert the units into condos as well as the need for the homeowners to understand the complex legal structures of collective ownership. The women were very intrigued by these three types of ownership forms and expressed a desire to learn more about them. Andre Leroux from CommunityWorks suggested that additional workshops could be held to cover the basics with regards to housing types and ownership options, and the IDA participants unanimously supported his suggestion.

Debriefing

At the end of the second workshop, the facilitator asked the participants to share their thoughts on their experiences during the workshops.

People said that the workshops were fun and informative at the same time. "I liked them because they helped me see the truth," one woman said. A number of women agreed that it was very helpful to see both the risks and benefits of collective buying as well as the differences among housing types. Another woman said that the workshop had opened her eyes to the possibility of buying a home other than a single-family home. "I had not even considered the other options," she said. The women also said that they enjoyed reflecting on Lawrence, and learning about what their other classmates think about the city of Lawrence.

Finally, the women said that the workshops were well-facilitated. They were especially happy that the workshops were held in Spanish, allowing those without strong English skills the ability to fully participate.

PLACE

Sophisticated information technologies are emerging as a tool for community building efforts of planners and Community Development Corporations (CDCs). Websites, Geographic Information System (GIS), and other visualization methods are now available to assist in place-based revitalization efforts. These tools facilitate better visioning, concept illustration, community planning & data collection efforts. GIS is perhaps the most important technological tool available to LCW in its efforts to understand and expand the IDA program, because it allows for a *place-based* analysis of community-building efforts not available through other tools.

One of the key questions we needed to answer for this project was how to create a GIS project that would be both useful and usable by CommunityWorks. Literature on successful use of GIS technology shows that useful systems focus on simplicity and small trials (Innes, 1993). Systems which effectively communicate their benefit to all stakeholders will encourage future use. Small trials allow users and creators the ability to change systems as needs evolve and also build effectiveness over time. A key concern for the sustainability of a project is the capacity of the organization to maintain and improve the GIS system (Kellogg, 1999). An important consideration for CommunityWorks is creating a core group of users who are comfortable with GIS software and can instruct others. Finally, any system must be accessible to community members both as a tool and as an expressive device, a helpful way to communicate needs and desires (Talen, 2000).

The process we designed to create the GIS project is based on strong participation from the various youth programs at CommunityWorks. We worked closely with the Young Architects and Young Professionals programs to collect data for entry into the project and also conducted training on the GIS software. The youth program participants will continue to be users, administrators and advocates for GIS use across the CommunityWorks organization.



Data Collection

Our team facilitated collection of two important types of information related to the IDA program:

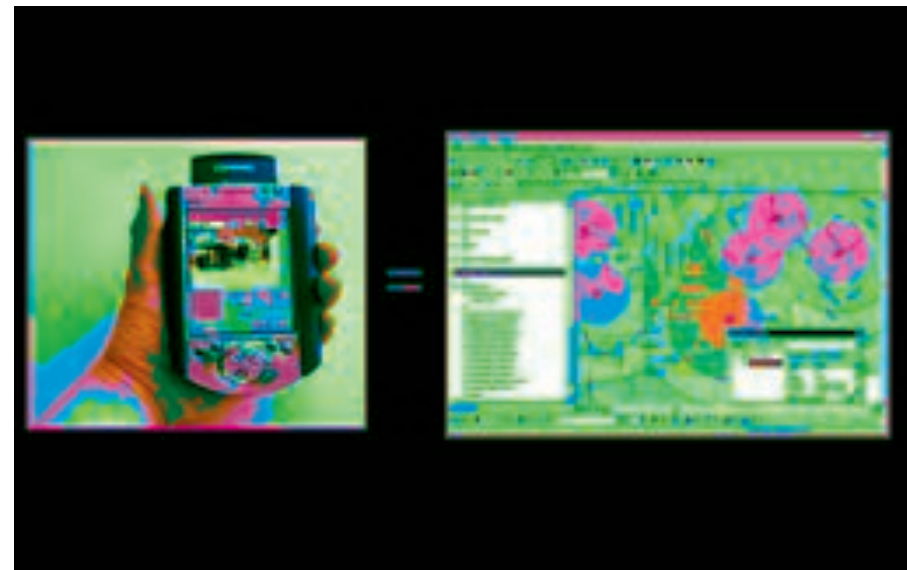
1. Information collected on housing supply in Lawrence's North Common Neighborhood
2. Information provided by existing IDA Program Participants

The first category of information is intended to assist CommunityWorks in encouraging IDA participants to purchase homes in the North Common neighborhood, an area of particular concern to CommunityWorks. The second category is intended to help CommunityWorks better understand the needs and desires of existing IDA participants. The ability to visualize and analyze these two types of information (on people and place) will help CommunityWorks to join the housing needs of the IDA participants with the available supply within the community. Future data collection will allow CommunityWorks to expand its understanding of the community, and to increase the efficiency of its place-based revitalization efforts.



PocketPCs and Geographical Information System

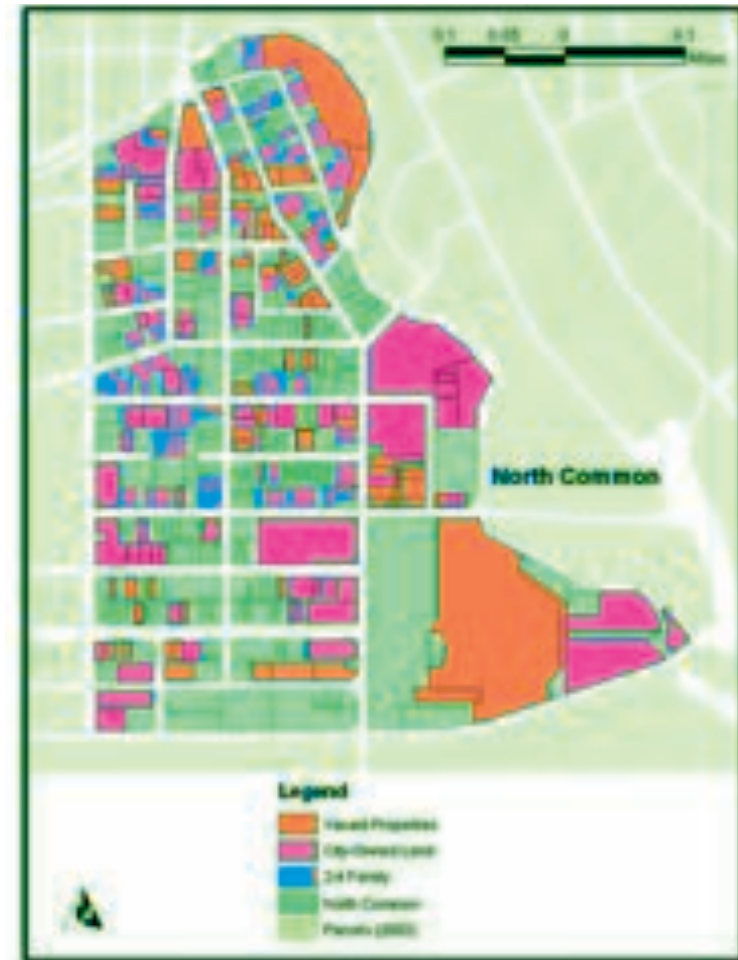
Talented youth from CommunityWorks joined graduate students from MIT to walk the North Common neighborhood and collect physical information on the 485 properties therein. A series of workshops was conducted with IDA participants to collect information on their needs and desires with regard to home-buying. For further information on specific maps and data tables refer to Appendix B.



Comprehensive Binder

Distributed separately from this report is a comprehensive binder entitled “Lawrence Community Works: North Common ArcGIS Project & Data Collection Manual.” The binder contains all information collected during this project related to the supply of housing in the North Common Neighborhood, as well as information collected at the IDA Participatory Workshops, and general information about the City of Lawrence. (Additional information is included on the use and programming of Pocket PCs for data collection, use of ArcPad, ArcGIS, ArcExplorer, and ArcPad Application Builder.) This wealth of geographic and database information will assist Lawrence Community Works into the future with the installation of its first comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS) later this month. MIT secured two licenses for ESRI’s state-of-the-art ArcView GIS software, and will assist with installation and setup of the necessary data and map layers. The five-year collaboration between MIT and LCW will benefit greatly from this platform of information, as well as the establishment of a process by which new information can be gathered and added to the system.

Property Distribution in North Common



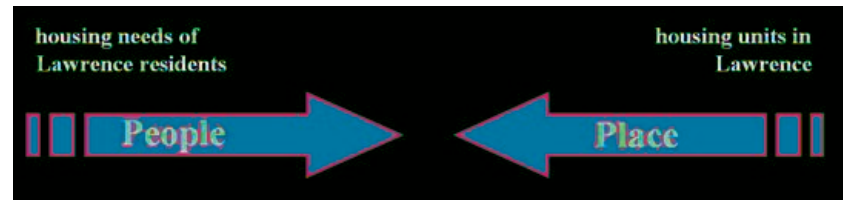
SYNTHESIS: BRINGING TOGETHER PEOPLE & PLACE

Having conducted a wide array of information gathering and community building activities, we next considered how to bring people and place together in Lawrence. This synthesis of the information we gathered was aided greatly by a focus group discussion conducted at CommunityWorks and organized by Armand Hyatt, staff lawyer and Board member. The focus group consisted of two real estate attorneys, two local realtors and two real estate lending officers from local banks. The discussion focused on IDA participants, their purchasing power, local housing stock, and opportunities for moving IDA members into homeownership. This discussion was useful both as an information gathering tool and as a way for these real estate professionals to meet and discuss ongoing difficulties and new possibilities.

Along with conducting various activities to better understand both people and place in Lawrence, we spent time trying to understand the barriers that kept these two apart. The primary barrier is easy to identify: the high cost of housing in Lawrence. Even small condominiums in poor condition cost at least \$100,000 to purchase. The average IDA participant can afford the monthly payments on a home that costs about \$65,000. A more adequate home that fills the needs of most program participants will cost around \$175,000-\$200,000. Homes in the surrounding areas are even more expensive. This gap between the purchasing power of the program participants and the market price of the available housing stock is the primary impediment to increased homeownership by IDA participants. There are other barriers that keep people out of the home buying market, including an aging housing stock and individual preferences.

In order to understand the dynamics of the real estate market, we analyzed recent sales data as well as Multiple Listing Service (MLS) listings, a service showing homes currently for sale. This data helped us to identify market levels for Lawrence, and can also be applied at the neighborhood level to understand the submarkets. This process of reviewing sales and the available for sale market is an ongoing activity that should be repeated by the CommunityWorks real estate department as part of its basic operations.

We also analyzed the purchasing power of the IDA participants, based on income levels and approximate down payments. The maximum income of IDA participants is set at 200% of the federal poverty level. In 2004 this means that in order to participate in the program an IDA member needs to earn less than \$30,000 per year. The average participant probably earns between \$20,000-\$25,000 per year. Based on tax and insurance levels, this means that the average participant can afford a home worth between \$60,000-\$80,000 (see Appendix A for detailed calculations). This analysis can be repeated and improved upon with information about “soft-second” mortgages and other mortgage subsidy programs, which may be utilized to increase purchasing power.



Our discussion with local real estate brokers, lawyers and bankers also revealed some of the difficulties in moving low and moderate income residents into homeownership. The available affordable options have many problems associated with them. Owning a multi-family home and renting out apartments is a good way to lower housing costs, but it involves being a landlord and dealing with tenants. This is a very difficult thing for new homeowners to do, with little financial backing to handle a few late rent payments or vacant units. In addition, the maintenance costs of 2-4 family homes are quite high and these homes can be difficult to maintain if funds are not properly budgeted by the owner.

Purchasing a home with another participant (informal collective purchasing) is also a way to reduce home costs, but it is a very risky proposition for most families. This process involves jointly purchasing a home, making each individual responsible for making monthly payments. It is a useful option for some, especially single mothers who can use assistance with child care and chores. But leaving such an arrangement is difficult as it normally involves selling the home, which each owner may want to do at a different time. This arrangement requires a great deal of trust and communication between owners and is therefore only recommended for close friends and family members who have a clear exit strategy and understanding of the balancing act required to make it work.

Finally, owning a portion of a larger building may be the best option for many low and moderate income residents. The purchase price of a condominium is generally lower than for a single-family home because the size of condos is lower and certain features (entrances, utilities, etc.) must be shared with

other owners. One possibility for IDA participants is to purchase a three family home and then “condominiumize” it, splitting it into three separate units which would then be owned by the individual families. The primary problem with doing this is that it requires significant upfront costs for engineers and attorneys who are needed to draw up legal documents and structural arrangements for the condominium association. These costs may push the cost of this option out of the range of IDA participants.

There are also difficulties in matching the housing desires of IDA participants and the housing options in Lawrence. Our workshops with IDA participants revealed that many of them did not necessarily want to purchase a home in Lawrence, and almost all wanted to own a single family home. Much of the housing stock in Lawrence is of the multi-family variety, especially in the core neighborhoods that CommunityWorks will focus on into the foreseeable future.



BARRIERS

The focus groups, workshops and basic financial analysis we conducted revealed a set of barriers that CommunityWorks will need to overcome if the IDA program can be successful in helping program participants purchase their homes. We have grouped these into three major themes of homeownership, program administration and institutional partnerships.

Homeownership

- **Housing preferences Amongst Participants**

Many program participants expressed a desire to leave Lawrence for various reasons, including crime, schools and poor housing. If participants do not want to live in Lawrence, the program goal of people helping transform the place cannot succeed.

Program participants also expressed a desire to live in the parts of Lawrence which are already in good condition, namely Prospect Hill and South Lawrence. These neighborhoods do not need as much improvement as the CommunityWorks expanded service area, which is one of the places that the IDA program can help transform. IDA members need to want to participate in the improvement of a neighborhood, not just move to already high quality areas.

The disconnect between the desire of program participants to live in a single family home and the available housing stock in Lawrence must be addressed by CommunityWorks. If IDA members do not want to purchase the types of homes that are available in Lawrence, they cannot help to transform the city.

- **Timing**

The five-year time limit on AFIA funds presents a barrier for moving participants into homes. This is especially true for those in Groups 2 & 3 since they face the same deadline as those in Group 1.

Program Administration

- **Maintaining Intimacy**

There is a basic contradiction between the most important strength of the IDA program, its intimacy and support structure, and the future goal of dramatically increasing the program size. As the IDA program expands it needs to maintain that intimacy and peer support if it is to be successful.

- **Integrating entire families into the IDA process**

As the program expands it will need to include a broader range of people, integrating men and other family members into the IDA process. Integrating these new people into the program will require a delicate balancing process in order to expand the program and maintain its high quality.

- **Focusing on one area of Lawrence could lead to gentrification**

As CommunityWorks picks concentration areas to help program members move into, they hope these neighborhoods will improve. The classic problem with improving neighborhoods is gentrification, the process of middle class outsiders moving in, improving homes and increasing housing prices. If the concentration areas improve, it will attract middle class residents who have been priced out of other parts of the Boston area. A way of dealing with this possibility should be part of the CommunityWorks strategy.

Institutional Partnerships

- Reviviendo Gateway Initiative (RGI)

The progress made by RGI, and the role that CommunityWorks has played in that effort, is commendable. The 11,642 new residents that RGI predicts will be drawn to Lawrence will have a significant impact on the housing market, and therefore the success of the IDA program. RGI's work should take into account CommunityWorks' efforts and vice versa.

- City of Lawrence

Efforts to align *people* with *place*, make change on a large scale, and support youth development, are all hampered by the politics of City government. It has been demonstrated that successful IDAs have strong partnerships with City and local administration. To date, the City's lack of support has been a frustration. In moving the IDA program to scale, having the support of the City of Lawrence will be critical.

- State of Massachusetts

While the Massachusetts IDA Solutions (MIDAS) collaborative is making significant progress towards raising the profile of asset-building programs at a state level, Massachusetts still has no legislation on IDAs. This barrier leaves only federal, foundation, and private funding options for the IDA program. Other states have passed legislation, for example, making accrued interest tax-exempt, allowing TANF money to be used towards IDAs, and allocating tax credits for organizations to provide matching funds. This lack of state support in Massachusetts represents a tangible barrier to going to scale.



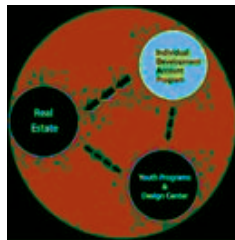
- Other organizations

As the IDA and other FAB programs expand, coordination with other organizations – churches, schools, social service agencies, etc. – will be more and more critical. In terms of marketing, funding, facilities, etc., CommunityWorks will need to collaborate with other organizations in Lawrence and the region.

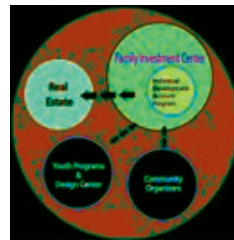
RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended Phases

TODAY



NEAR FUTURE



FUTURE



Given the mission of envisioning a large-scale IDA program, we designed a process with direct recommendations for certain departments that is also flexible enough to be adapted and applicable to a long-term vision. The process does not outline a specific number of participants at each stage because the goal is for CommunityWorks to evaluate progress and define scale for itself. The following recommendations are based on what we imagine to be the challenges at several stages of scaling up the IDA program at Lawrence CommunityWorks. It is also a combination of what we observed at CommunityWorks and what we have investigated nationally.

There are three principles that should continue to be strong themes in all the work that goes on at Lawrence CommunityWorks:

- 1) Focus and emphasis on the importance of staying in Lawrence
- 2) Peer support and social networks are at the core of all efforts
- 3) Encouraging youth development as integral to the sustainability and vitality of Lawrence.

The process is outlined with several time periods that indicate the immediacy of the next steps necessary for each department. Note that although these suggestions are listed chronologically and by department, all parts are equally important in informing current decisions. Each department should understand the long-term vision and how other departments are integral to that vision. Ideally, there is an individual (or a committee) who could guide and assess the process as a whole. This entity should also be responsible for implementing a regular and thorough evaluation process of each department and the organization. Seeking participant feedback is a valuable part of this process.

TODAY

This phase addresses the challenges we identified within the current program that hinder the success of going to scale. Our greatest concern at this stage is impressing upon residents that there are opportunities to own a home in Lawrence. Making this work with current participants is imperative to any steps to follow. **TODAY focus on the Individual Development Account Program as it exists with the goal of promoting a commitment to homeownership in Lawrence.**

Individual Development Account Program

Account Administration:

- Establish the Family Investment Center
- Ensure that all account statements are updated monthly and distributed to participants.
- Establish a direct deposit system. This helps with insuring that people are indeed using their work income. Without a direct deposit system, the updating the accounts in MISIDA often falls behind. The problem with this is that AFIA requires that an accurate record of accounts be maintained to withdraw match monies. If accounts are not in order, federal match money will not be available when IDA participants are ready to purchase their assets. Without up-to-date statements, the federal government may take several months to deliver a check. When a participant is ready to purchase a home, she may not be able to acquire it because of her inability to move quickly enough. Additionally, there is a small window of opportunity for many accounts to be placed in order. The deadline for purchasing an asset with AFIA money for the group of IDA participants that has already graduated is less than two years. These graduates will soon be scrambling to acquire their assets, and their account information should be updated well beforehand.
- Considering the approaching five-year time limit, emphasis should be placed on assisting Group One participants to purchase their asset.

LESSONS LEARNED

LWorkshop: The housing type discussion during the second was enlightening but incomplete. A more complete description of different housing types along with costs and benefits should be part of future discussions.

Workshop/Curriculum/Marketing Administration:

- Outreach to first time homebuyers and savings club members
- The summer barbeque that brings together all the participants can also be a celebration and acknowledgement of the graduates of the program. Holding biannual celebrations for alumni would be encouraging for participants.
- Encourage IDA participants to attend RGI meetings, especially sessions like the charettes that were held in April and May 2004.
- Continue participatory workshops. Many aspects of the participatory workshops that we conducted will be very useful to the IDA program. Housing type preference discussions and some mapping exercises uncovered interesting trends and were very educational for program participants. These discussions should continue in some form, either as separate workshops or as part of the IDA program already in place.
- Conduct exit surveys of each participant. An example from Central Vermont Community Action Council is listed on the CFED IDANetwork website.



Family Investment Center (FIC)

We imagine that the FIC will be able to address asset building holistically as an umbrella group that oversees all savings, homebuyer education, financial literacy, and adult and youth IDA programs.

Instead of a collection of stand-alone programs, FIC will be a place where CommunityWorks members can be connected to the continuum of programs and services available. The Center will also coordinate partnerships with collaborators such as banks, realtors, and universities.

For example...

Possible Participant Pathway

- 1) It is April 2005, and a Lawrence resident, “Solana,” needs help on her taxes. A friend mentions that CommunityWorks provides tax preparation services.
- 2) She visits the Family Investment Center where she receives help from Carla to complete her tax forms.
- 3) Carla refers her to Enrique, a representative from Lawrence Savings Bank, who helps her open a new savings account that day.
- 4) Solana is then invited to join CommunityWorks as a member and learns about the other programs and services available.
- 5) Next month, Solana joins the Savings Club, meeting other single mothers in her neighborhood. Her two kids join the Young Professionals program.
- 6) In 6 months, after making progress in repairing her credit and building some savings, Solana reaches a benchmark so that she now qualifies for the IDA program.
- 7) At the same time, she is identified as a potential neighborhood leader, and starts a NeighborCircle.
- 8) One day, Solana picks up a flyer from the real estate department featuring a new three family building with units for sale. She meets with Patricia in the real estate department to discuss the options of purchasing the home.
- 9) In 2 years, after graduating and purchasing her first home, Solana is trained and certified, through a partnership with Cambridge College, to become an Alumni IDA Instructor.

National Examples:

Extra-Credit Savings program

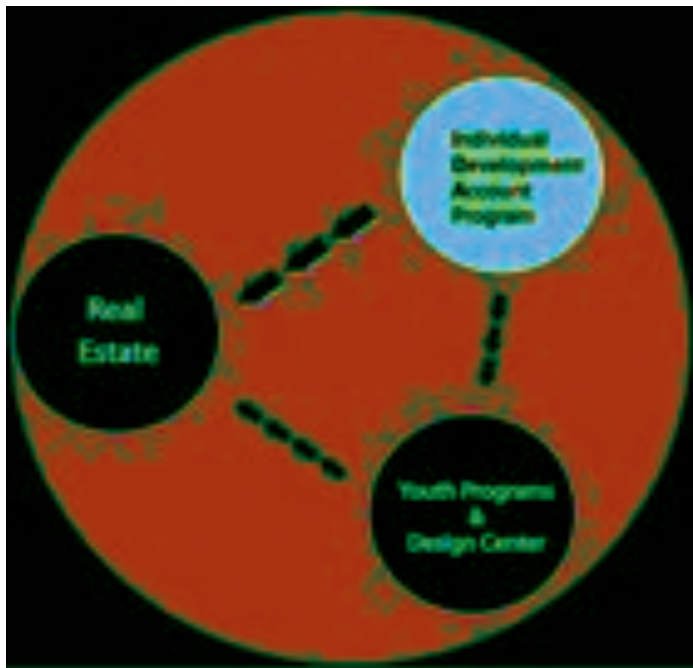
“The Extra Credit Savings Program is a partnership between two organizations that have an interest in building the financial strength of families and communities. ShoreBank got involved because it wanted to encourage saving, asset building and wealth creation in the mostly African-American communities that are its Chicago base. The Center for Law & Human Services welcomed the bank’s interest because each year, the center must find convenient, secure locations for its tax preparation centers. ShoreBank offered attractive and well located spaces – free of charge – for the evening and weekend tax preparation sessions, while providing the extra service of opening bank accounts for direct deposit of refunds.” -[MONEY IN THE BANK: The Extra Credit Savings Program How Federal Tax Refunds and Credits Help Households Become Bank Users](#)

“Get Checking” Program, Asset Building Coalition

“In this model, certain functions, such as case management or financial education, are conducted by other complementary organizations. The Milwaukee site, for example, refers IDA participants who need intensive financial literacy training to the citywide “Get Checking” program. This program is part of the citywide Asset Building Coalition, a partnership of thirteen local financial institutions and other organizations that promote financial education and asset building among the city’s unbanked households. Those who are not eligible for checking accounts are able to enroll in a four-session financial literacy course taught by several providers. Those who complete the program and who have resolved their debt problems are presented with a certificate that allows them to open a checking account at a participating bank or credit union. In turn, IDAs are valuable asset-building tools for the citywide initiative as well.” –Abt Associates, 2002, [Assets for Independence Act Evaluation: Second Annual Site Visit Report](#)

LESSONS LEARNED

Workshop: Mapping exercises are difficult and time consuming. Adequate time should be set aside in order for people to orient themselves and feel comfortable. Special care should be taken to ensure accurate data and full participation by everyone.



Design Center & Youth Programs

- After getting the GIS software, consider the possibility of starting another program. The success of this program is contingent upon a demonstrated interest and long-term, focused project that is integrated into other current programs and departments.
 - For example: integrate GIS with the work of the Young/Junior Architects class.
 - Use GIS project to inform the work of the Reviviendo Gateway Initiative, gathering data and producing maps and data reports.
 - Continue housing data collection in areas designated in conjunction with real estate department.

Real Estate

- Continue to meet with real estate agents, lawyers and bankers that understand the Lawrence housing market. These same representatives can help with informing both the real estate department and the individual development account program about opportunities within the Lawrence market.
- Investigate the realities of condominiums and cohousing: advantages and disadvantages.

Assessment & Evaluation

Periodically assess progress of the departments and organization to attain short and long-term goals. Frequent evaluations to participants provides valuable feedback on how best to fit their needs.

We imagine that at this point the character of the program is shifting because the number of participants requires more administration and the cost of the program is considerable. In the **NEAR FUTURE continue to generate commitment in North Common and designated expanded area by focusing on Lawrence CommunityWorks integration and tightening the expanding network.**

NEAR FUTURE

Family Investment Center: Individual Development Account Program

Account Administration:

- Work with MIDAS to figure out a collective accounting system.

Workshop/Curriculum/Support Administration:

- Begin integrating alumni into workshop facilitation: qualify them as “financial fitness” instructors through local universities or agencies that certify instructors.
- Consider services that can be contracted out and those that need to stay in house.
- Consider how to address differing low-income populations. “Advance market segmentation; IDA initiatives need to develop more expertise in market segmentation. Not all IDA participants need extensive support services. Some may need just the opportunity to open an IDA or asset-specific training. Not all participants need the same support and instruction and tailoring the program to needs could be more cost effective.” (Zednek 10) The San Francisco Earned Assets Resource Network (SF EARN) is an umbrella organization for several others in the area and also holds its own accounts. They serve a large immigrant population and use an approach that considers its members in three different phases of financial independence. Those who are the “established working poor” usually need the least amount of case management, the recent transition immigrants, and the immigrant working poor usually need the most case management.

- Consider how to increase the number of participants and meeting places. Work with the community organizers to develop alternative satellite sites that are local to pockets of current IDA participants and NeighborCircles.
- Outline a strategy for ensuring that the quality of participation amongst IDA members remains high. Possibly implement higher qualifications for enrolling in the IDA program. For example, a Pittsburgh site has adopted a “triage system that gives everyone the opportunity to work toward IDA participation, but allows it only for those who are within 12 months of being mortgage-ready. Individuals who work hard to become mortgage-ready are allowed the opportunity to enroll in the IDA project.”-Abt Associates
- Establishing a continuum of services (from member to saver to IDA participant) can also help shorten the wait list for IDAs and get people saving as soon as possible.

LESSONS LEARNED

LWorkshop: All activities took much longer than originally planned. Care should be taken to allocate enough time for workshop activities, even if certain parts need to be sacrificed or taken up in the future. Time should also be allocated for evaluation of activities.

Design Center

- Continue data collection in target neighborhoods
- Work with IDA program, helping workshops with mapping exercises
- Conduct “visioning” sessions with RGI and other planning programs

LESSONS LEARNED

LData Collection: The simplicity of the forms on the PocketPCs was very useful in making the data collection move smoothly. Care should be taken not to complicate the process with too many data fields or too many subjective judgments.



Real Estate

- Investigate ways to preserve funding and protect affordable housing. Concepts like community land trusts, limited-equity cooperatives, and mutual housing associations can help address issues of affordability for individuals, community development and sustainability of funding. Resident Ownership Mechanisms (ROMs) will be critical to stabilizing prices and preserving affordability. See “Sharing the Wealth: Resident Ownership Mechanisms” by PolicyLink, 2001.

Community Organizers

- The Community Organizing department can play a critical role in the success of the IDA program. NeighborCircles already represents a promising outreach process within LCW that the IDA program should utilize. Through NeighborCircles the Community Organizing Department can advertise and identify strong candidates for the IDA program. Additionally, NeighborCircles can also serve as a geographic framework for future IDA groups. IDA groups could meet at the block level, which would create stronger ties between individual development and place. IDA group discussion could not only focus on social support and financial planning, but also could focus on how groups of neighbors can upgrade their own block through buying locally. Thus, Community Organizing can provide marketing assistance and a geographical framework for future IDA groups.

At this point, near future plans have been fully implemented. All departments in CommunityWorks actively play a role in the IDA program, from recruitment to training to information resources. The IDA program is a well-oiled machine, with many different players helping it work well. **For the FUTURE phase, focus on integrating CommunityWorks with the City of Lawrence, RGI and other partners. Advocate on a state and regional level for IDAs and affordable housing.**

FUTURE

As the program increases in size and impact, the focus of the organization should shift to external institutions. The RGI committee, the City of Lawrence, and state and federal governments are among the institutions that are needed to help the IDA program operate to its fullest capacity. These institutions are important because they will enable increased funding and legislative support for the IDA program and assist with the real estate activities of IDA participants.

We also imagine that coordinating at the state level with other IDA programs would be advantageous for funding and policy-level work. On the national level, many are currently advocating for IDA tax credits, and CommunityWorks should be in a position to advocate and take advantage of this resource. This would provide funding much like current affordable housing tax credits. This is an example of the type of outreach and creative thinking that is necessary to expand the IDA program and ensure its sustainability.

There are few specific recommendations for the far future. We do not presume to be able to predict exactly how CommunityWorks and the IDA program will evolve over the next few years, so it is difficult to predict what will be necessary at that point. More useful is a look at important issues for CommunityWorks to consider as the program expands and improves.



Family Investment Center: Individual Development Account Program

Workshop/Curriculum/Support Administration:

“Provide online financial education and asset-specific training. IDA participants should have the option of taking financial education and asset specific training in a classroom setting or online. The online setting allows participants to learn at different paces and reinforces the lessons through exercises and other interactive learning techniques. Online financial education and asset specific training should be available in languages other than English. Key stakeholders are practitioners and national networks” (Zednek 11).

Real Estate

- Analyze the impact of IDAs on the housing market. See example of Atlanta work. LCW could take a similar approach towards measuring the effects of the IDA program on place. Data was collected in the workshop about which areas of Lawrence are unsafe. Three years from now, after there is a critical mass of IDA graduates in homes, data could again be collected about which areas are unsafe in 2007. Areas that have changed from “unsafe” to “safe” could be spatially related to IDA home purchase locations to show the IDA program’s neighborhood impact.

LESSONS LEARNED

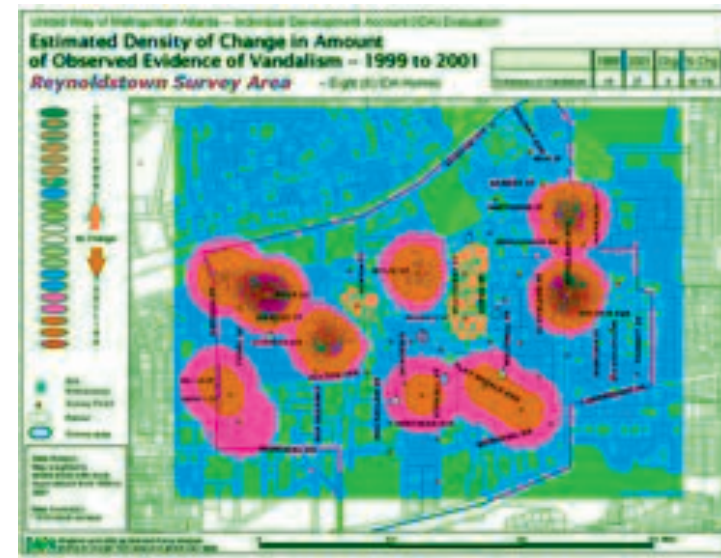
LData Collection: Certain details, such as how to assess vacant lots and building types, need to be figured out before going into the field to gather data. This is necessary to insure consistency of the data in the GIS project.

Georgia Tech Data and Policy Analysis Group

The primary think tank for IDAs in the country, the Center for Social Enterprise Development (CSD) acknowledges that limited research exists on how IDAs have place effects in neighborhoods. This question is critically important for community-based IDA programs and community development foundations, as they are not only interested in how IDAs can improve individual’s lives, but also how IDAs can improve neighborhoods. As a result, CSD funded a study to be executed by Georgia State and the Georgia Tech Data and Policy Analysis group (DAPA) in Atlanta that would fill this research gap.

DAPA found that spatial analysis using GIS was essential to understand the impact of IDA programs. They evaluated three Atlanta intown neighborhoods over two years, and used GIS to relate the location of IDA home purchases to neighborhood indicators, such as building code violations, trash, vandalism, home sales amount, and vacant lots. Thus, IDA sponsor organizations could begin to answer questions, such as:

- Does vandalism decrease near areas where IDA participants purchased homes?
- Do property values increase in areas where IDA participants purchased homes?
- Is there less trash in the streets close to where IDA participants purchased homes?



RESOURCES

Research and Policy

www.cfed.org ® “The Center for Enterprise Development (CFED) fosters widely shared and sustainable economic well-being. CFED promotes asset-building and economic opportunity strategies, primarily in low-income and distressed communities, that bring together community practice, public policy, and private markets in new and effective ways.” They also host a site called the “IDAnetwork” (www.idanetwork.org) that has several publications on everything from IDA program design, to funding, to accounting practices.

Center for Social Development at Washington University in St. Louis

http://gwbweb.wustl.edu/csd/Areas_Work/Asset_building/IDAs/Adminstration.htm

Zdenek, Robert and Beverly Stein. Recommendations from the Field: Individual Development Accounts as Part of a Universal Asset-Building System. Center for Social Development, Washington University in St. Louis, 2003.

Using GIS for Community Development

Talen, Emily. Bottom Up GIS: A New Tool for Individual and Group Expression in Participatory Planning. American Planning Association Journal, Summer 2000, Vol. 66, No. 3.

Innes, Judith and Simpson, David. Implementing GIS for Planning. American Planning Association Journal, Spring 1993, Vol. 59, No. 2.

Kellogg, Wendy. From The Field: Observations On Using GIS To Develop A Neighborhood Environmental Information System For Community-Based Organizations. URISA Journal, Spring 1999, Vol. 11, No. 1.

Best Practices/Case Studies

Abt Associates' Assets for Independence Act Evaluation
http://www.abtassociates.com/reports/AFIA_2nd_annual.pdf

Administration

Baggett, Walter. INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNTS: AN ACCOUNTING AND AUDITING GUIDE

Sharing the Wealth: Resident Ownership Mechanisms, Policy Link Report, 2001. Highlights include pages 94-101. This outlines mechanisms for preserving affordability for individuals and the community.

Money in the Bank: The Extra Credit Savings Program - <http://www.shorebankadvisory.com/resources/moneyinthebank.pdf>

How-to guide for outreach on tax credits

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities CBPP offers a free, detailed how-to guide to develop and implement outreach strategies around the Earned Income Tax Credit. It includes guidelines and ideas on staffing, timing, promotion and technical considerations. The materials can be viewed at www.cbpp.org or ordered by mail from Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 820 First St., NE, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20002; telephone 202-408-1080.

Outreach to promote the Earned Income Tax Credit City of Chicago Mayor's Office of Workforce Development

The city of Chicago has aggressively promoted the benefits of the Earned Income Tax Credit to help bring more federal dollars back into the local economy. Intensive outreach through employers, community organizations, newsletters and grocery-bag advertisements helped attract households to free tax-preparation services, where they claimed an estimated \$16 million in EITC refunds. A booklet and Web site describe the outreach strategies. Contact Julie Rubins Wilen at 312-744-WORK or visit www.chicago-eitc.org

APPENDIX A

IDA Participants in Workshops 1 and 2

Participants April 9, 2004

First Name	Last Name
Inez	Perez
Teofila	Richardson
Ana	Heredia
Gloria	Hernandez
Juana	Jimenez
Monica	Ohoa
Antonia	Payano
Valerie	Aponte
Ana	Fuertes
Luz	Mirabel
Mary	Moquete
Mayra	Paulino
Yvette	Romen
Mercedes	Solano
Maria	Tejada
Altagracia	Valdez

Participants April 16, 2004

First Name	Last Name
Florencia	Otero
Teofila	Richardson
Reyna	Burges
Trina	De Jesus
Petronilia	De la Rosa
Gloria	Hernandez
Juana	Jimenez
Monica	Ochoa
Antonia	Payano
Ana	Fuertes
Mary	Moquete
Rose	Pierre

Workshop 2: Friday, April 16

MIT

James Alexander
Claudia Canepa
Lorlene Hoyt
Alberto Ortega
Ed Pauls
Michael Weisner
Valentina Zuin

LCW staff

Nelson Butten
Andre Leroux

MIT and CommunityWorks Staff in Workshops 1 and 2

Workshop 1: Friday, April 9

MIT

James Alexander
Claudia Canepa
Shannon McKay
Alberto Ortega
Andy Port
Solana Rice
Monica Romis
Melody Tulier
Valentina Zuin

LCW staff

Annery Brea
Nelson Butten
Andre Leroux

Youth

Rebecca Camargo

Data Collected on Housing Supply in the North Common

1. Land Vacancies

- ✓ Yes (Skips to # 6 below?)
- ✓ No

2. Building Occupancy (Appears to be):

- Occupied
- Vacant

3. Current Use Type (Pull-down):

- Single Family
- 2-4 Family
- Multi-Family Buildings (5 or more)
- Mixed Use
- Commercial
- Industrial

4. Estimated Number of Existing Housing Units (Pull-down):

- (1,2,3,4, 5,6, More than 6)

5. Building Material:

- ✓ Brick
- ✓ Vinyl
- ✓ Wood Siding
- ✓ Shingles
- ✓ Other

6. General Condition of Structure:

- Excellent
- Good
- Moderate
- Poor

7. General Condition of Land:

- Excellent
- Good
- Moderate
- Poor

8. Photographs ID # (Type) or N/A

9. Comments Field (Story/History/Additional Comments)

Parcel Ownership in North Common



2-4 Family Homes in North Common



Map of Amenities in North Common



Additional Data Available in ArcGIS Project Created by MIT (partial listing)

- ✓ City Parcels & Assessors Data (2004)
- ✓ Assessors Tiles
- ✓ North Common Neighborhood
- ✓ B&W Aerial Photos
- ✓ Schools Locations
- ✓ Municipal Parks
- ✓ Flood Zones (100/500 Year) & Upland Areas
- ✓ Spicket Watershed
- ✓ Topography
- ✓ Waterways & Waterbodies
- ✓ Roads (Tiger & City with Street Names)
- ✓ Wards & Precincts
- ✓ Zoning Layers & Existing Land Use
- ✓ MA Cities & Towns
- ✓ Regional Planning Agency Areas
- ✓ Schools Locations
- ✓ Municipal Parks
- ✓ High-Quality Color Orthophotos
- ✓ MHD Roads & Centerlines
- ✓ Commuter-Rail & MVRTA Routes
- ✓ Census Block Groups
- ✓ Protected & Recreational Open Space
- ✓ State Register of Historic Places
- ✓ Neighborhood Boundaries
- ✓ Historic Districts

Data Collected on Housing Demand by IDA Participants			
No.	Layer Title Concept	File Name (3 files each)	Type (Point/Line/Polygon)
1	Where are the bad places?	badplaces	Polygon
2	Where would you buy a home?	buyhome	Polygon
3	Where do your friends and family live?	friendfamily	Point
4	Where are the best schools?	bestschool	Point (“snap to” existing school points)
5	Best places where your children play?	childplay	Polygon
6	Where do your children go to for after school activities?	afterschool	Point
7	Where do you go for church?	church	Point