

Leveraging Publicly Owned Lands for Affordable Housing
Lyubov Kodreanu, Inanna Pickering, Zachary Ryan
Habitat for Humanity Greater Boston

The Problem

There is significant lack of affordable housing opportunities in the Greater Boston area. As the population continues to grow, so does the need for affordable housing development. Sustainable housing policies and increased development is necessary to address this conflict.

Background

Since 1987, Habitat for Humanity Greater Boston (HFHGB) has worked to increase affordable housing opportunities through homeownership, emphasizing lasting partnerships and financial independence for low-income families. HFHGB is looking to expand their mission by:

- Analyzing current municipally owned parcels for potential affordable housing development.
- Determining the feasibility of this approach, as well as its efficiency in acquiring these parcels.
- Developing a list of recommended parcels that are available, suitable, and without barriers to acquisition.

Methodology

Our group is working with Habitat for Humanity Greater Boston (HFHGB) to determine the feasibility of and assess barriers to access for expanding affordable housing opportunities by utilizing municipally owned properties. As a final product, our group will produce a final report, RFP template, and a list of recommended parcels for affordable housing development. A mixed-methods approach was utilized to collect and analyze the data presented.

Research Question
Are municipally owned parcels an efficient use of resources for RFP presentation and affordable housing development?



1. Recommended List of Parcels.
2. RFP Template.
3. Outreach to municipal officials/employees.
4. Assess feasibility of the proposal approach.

Recommendations and Limitations

Based on our literature review, analysis of available parcels, and information from municipal officials, we have developed the follow recommendations:

Recommendations:

- Apply to develop on the parcels identified.
- Maintain outreach to municipalities to build rapport.
- Access potential barriers to access such as conservation efforts and zoning.
- Continue to develop list of parcels based on criteria provided.
- Continue to build on this project with a Spring 2022 Capstone Team.

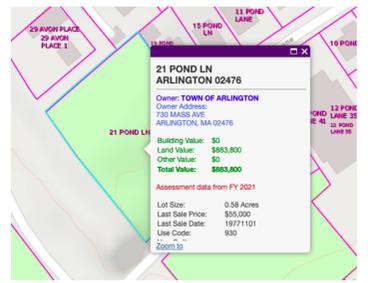
Limitations:

- Suitability and availability of parcels identified.
- Barriers to acquisition including willingness to participate and exclusionary zoning practices.
- Impact of COVID-19 pandemic concerning increased cost of parcels and materials.



Discussion

Below is an example of one of the recommended parcels for HFHGB consideration in Arlington, MA:



Source: MassGIS | Commonwealth of Massachusetts Bureau of Geographic Information (MassGIS)

Future Work

There is potential for HFHGB to use the information and recommendations we provided to accomplish their mission of utilizing municipal land for affordable housing development. However, we would still like to see the organization apply our recommendations and proposals by potentially working with another School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs Capstone Team in the Spring 2022 term.

