



## Community Investment Plan 2023-2025

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### MISSION and PLAN OVERVIEW

Lawrence CommunityWorks (LCW) is a community development corporation that weaves together community planning, organizing, and asset-building efforts with high-quality affordable housing and commercial development to create vibrant neighborhoods and empowered residents. By facilitating conversations and action on community priorities, LCW engages partners and a network of youth and adult residents in opportunities to move themselves and the city of Lawrence forward. LCW is widely recognized as a highly effective CDC that is solidly grounded in the community of Lawrence. With a membership of over 5,000 residents and other stakeholders, and robust community participation in the Board of Directors, project and program committees, community campaigns, and planning processes, LCW has a well-deserved reputation for genuine resident investment and ownership.

Our most recent Strategic Planning process began in the summer of 2019 and was structured by a board/staff committee. In the early phases, over 170 internal and external stakeholders shared their perspectives on LCW and the environment through interviews, surveys, and member discussions. Progress achieved as measured against the prior strategic plan were reviewed and the findings from the feedback process was analyzed and presented in a comprehensive report to the organization in November 2019. On December 6, 2019, the full Board and Staff met for the day in a retreat setting to review the conclusions from the assessment and to begin to set priorities for the future. Draft goals were discussed in four key priority areas: housing, employment, education, and asset building. The group also began to set organizational goals for LCW with regard to internal systems, staff capacity and development, governance, resource development, and marketing and communication.

The Strategic Planning Committee met in early 2020 to plot a path forward. Subject-focused workgroups were formed to drill down into each goal area and develop more specific objectives, strategies, timeline, and measures of success. Each workgroup met several times in February and early March and an emerging draft document was prepared on March 16, 2020. The goal had been to complete the plan and have it approved at the June 2020 Board meeting. In March of 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic hit America and our world shut down. LCW pivoted sharply to develop and implement a rapid response to the emergency needs of our community, and put the strategic planning process on hold. The process was restarted in July 2020, albeit more slowly due to the ongoing demands of emergency response. The prevailing sentiment of the Committee was that considerable work had been done on the development of the plan prior to the pandemic that was still largely relevant and should be completed. But there was also a recognition that the pandemic combined with the growing calls for racial justice required a different orientation to the plan and a heightened prominence of LCW's system change work in the plan and in our work going forward.

Our 2021-2025 strategic plan lays out our priorities, **four pillars necessary to build a just and peaceful community and society: housing justice, economic justice, education justice, and social justice. Interwoven through all aspects is the call for racial justice.** While we understand that our work under each pillar is interconnected and overlapping, we have structured this plan under each area for focus, clarity, and ability to measure progress. All of this work requires a coordinated, integrated approach to program and project design and delivery that fosters economic mobility and community revitalization. We discovered during our strategic planning process that our current **theory of change** still resonates. We strive to achieve positive change in the **SYSTEMS** that impact our communities, with and for the **PEOPLE** who live in Lawrence, grounded in the **PLACE** itself. Therefore, our programmatic and policy work is described in these three realms. We also recognize that none of this is possible without a resilient and sustainable LCW, so we have added a fourth category for our plan: **STRONG ORGANIZATION**.

## CONSTITUENCY

LCW serves the city of Lawrence, a place that continues to embody many of the tough challenges and great strengths of urban centers nationwide, and that has seen great progress in the last decade. A former textile-manufacturing powerhouse, Lawrence underwent enormous demographic and economic shifts during the previous half-century. It is known as the most heavily Latinx city in New England, home to a large population of first, second, and third generation immigrants from a variety of Caribbean and Central and South American countries, with Dominicans predominating. After many decades of population decline, Lawrence has for the past 30 years shown a steady increase in population and is now majority-minority, counting 84% of its 88,000+ residents as Hispanic or Latino (2021 American Community Survey, US Census).

Lawrence's assets lie not only in its historic mill buildings and prime location at the intersection of interstates 93 and 495, but also and especially in its young and striving population, blessed with an entrepreneurial spirit and a strong ethic of community involvement and mutual support. The City had nearly 3,700 minority owned business in 2012 and new efforts by the Lawrence Partnership (a public-private economic development collaborative of which LCW is an Executive Board member) are providing working capital to these businesses to expand operation and employment. The City does remain one of the poorest in Massachusetts and the nation, with 21% of all residents living below the poverty line (2020 ACS). Just 31% of adult residents in Lawrence have a high school diploma and 12.5% of adults have a Bachelor's degree or higher; less than a third of all residents own their home; and nearly 40% of the city's population is under the age of 25. Lawrence residents face the additional challenges of cultural and linguistic isolation—40% of residents are foreign-born, of which 52% are not U.S. citizens, and 38% of the population does not speak English “very well” (2020 ACS).

Since its inception Lawrence has often been the engine that fuels the regional economy but rarely reaps the benefit. In the past, Lawrence's mills, fed by cheap immigrant labor, furnished the profits that built wealth in Boston and neighboring towns, while mill workers crammed into tenement houses and endured low wages and nasty working conditions in the City itself. Today many of Lawrence's immigrant and minority workers serve the low-wage, low-skill, downgraded and seasonal manufacturing and service jobs that are the underbelly of the regional economy; and in fact roughly 2/3 of the jobs *in* the City are filled by people who live *outside* the City. Although the City's unemployment rate skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the current 4.4% rate still remains one of the highest in the state as of September 2022.

Lawrence continues to be one of the few sources of affordable housing in the region, with increasing investment and momentum in the City's Mill District partly aided by zoning changes spearheaded by LCW 16 years ago (and carrying an affordability mandate). Over the past two decades since its rebirth, LCW has grown its portfolio fivefold, from 43 to 230 permanently affordable high-quality housing units. LCW itself has built or renovated over 400 total units of affordable housing units and 100,000 square feet of commercial space for the people of Lawrence. However, during this time period, housing demand in Lawrence has only intensified. A 2015 housing study commissioned by the City showed that during the past two decades not only has population grown more than 20% while housing production has grown only about 2%, but also that more than 40% of Lawrence households are severely cost burdened, spending more than half of their income on rent. This trend shows no signs of abating, as population and rents continue to rise, and Lawrence continues as a magnet for new immigrants. In addition, in a page out of LCW's book, the report noted that there is “no straight-forward supply-side solution to Lawrence's housing problems as building and improving more housing must be accompanied by significant improvements in residents' income, access to jobs and asset building.”

LCW has focused most of our real estate activities in the North Common Neighborhood – one of the poorest and most blighted when we started our work 23 years ago – and adjacent mill district, but also looks for appropriate development opportunities in other parts of the City, seeking to renovate dilapidated stock and increase the supply of decent affordable housing for families while also sparking resident engagement and neighborhood revitalization. LCW's 5,000+ members come from

throughout the city as a whole; our organizing work is city-wide, and our asset building and youth programs serve members across the City, reflecting a central understanding that economic opportunity and advancement in a City with Lawrence's high poverty rates and low levels of educational achievement is intimately tied to educational and asset development, and such development depends on access and preparation. While our constituents are mainly the low-income immigrant and Latino families citywide that are striving to learn English, build assets, and develop networks in this community, we have over the past decade developed a particular constituency among parents of children in the Lawrence Public Schools due to our extensive collaborative work with the schools on parent engagement and family economic success.

## **RESIDENT / STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

Network organizing is the heart of LCW, and the heart of network organizing is building relationships of value among and between residents and local stakeholders (businesses, public officials, community organizations). Our membership is composed of over 5,000 people who live or work in the City of Lawrence; roughly 1,000 of these are actively engaged in our work in a variety of ways each year – from classes to counseling to committees to volunteer projects to campaigns to leadership training. One of our core organizing strategies, NeighborCircles, is recognized both nationally and locally as a model for resident engagement and co-investment, and has been the model for our successful parent engagement strategy, Community Education Circles. All of our real estate projects—and the neighborhood or master planning processes from which they arise—are guided by resident committees and also provide ample opportunities, through one-on-one conversations, block meetings, NeighborCircles, design charrettes, and neighborhood summits, for even broader groups of residents to participate in their shaping. A 2013 neighborhood planning process involved over 430 residents in setting development priorities for the Union Crossing development and mill district neighborhood. Additional planning and design meetings throughout 2018-2021 for the DyeWorks commercial project and Island-Parkside affordable housing project have re-engaged another 150+ residents and LCW members to evolve and finalize a vision for the neighborhood. For our membership and Lawrence as a whole, this project represents an exciting new phase of community revitalization and a critical complement to the housing, infrastructure, and green space improvements happening all around it.

LCW also has a number of other resident engagement tools that we deploy in our work. One example is the Design Team, a group of 12-16 residents that engages in multiple meetings over a two to three month period to dig into a central project or question, through a combination of grassroots research, discussion, readings, and peer interviews. LCW has used this approach successfully since 2010 and gathered resident input to shape many past projects, such as the Lawrence Financial Stability Center, Community Education Circles, economic development in the City, and parent engagement strategies in the Lawrence Public Schools. Most recently, in 2017 and 2019, design teams of residents and stakeholders assessed the skills and barriers to advancement of Lawrence parents and directly contributed to the development of effective training programs with local employers. Another example is the LCW Marketplace, a monthly gathering of 20-50 residents to engage in mutual support, exchange items or services of value, and to initiate resident-driven conversations on hot topics such as immigration or education reform. LCW's Annual Meeting and membership summit each fall is leveraged as an opportunity to solicit member input on the organization's current and future strategic priorities. Summit topics over the years have focused on community safety, immigration, Lawrence's housing crisis, and other resonant community issues.

In addition, LCW has numerous avenues for engaging residents in the implementation and oversight of Strategic Plan activities. Our last in-person Annual Meeting in September 2019 prior to the onset of the pandemic centered on gathering member feedback on LCW's progress toward its external strategic goals as well as input on what issues to prioritize for our current 2020-2025 Strategic Plan's goals. Engagement in Neighborworks America's Community Impact Measures process during the summer of 2020 also provided a formal and structured opportunity to check in with neighborhood residents via a community survey and individual block assessments about the progress of physical development in the North Common. Monthly Marketplaces also provide a regular opportunity for members to weigh in about both current plan priorities and to surface other key resonant items of interest.

## PLAN GOALS

As mentioned above, our Strategic Plan underwent some modification and evolution through the latest strategic planning process in order to set forth our strategies to achieve greater justice for our community. It is important to articulate the underlying problems we seek to address and the rationale for these four areas of focus. Under each of the four pillars of justice we articulate goals as they relate to building strong systems, strong people, and a strong place. It is important to note that embedded throughout each section is the vital importance of partnerships in all our work, in recognition of the interconnectivity of both these issue areas (housing, education, the economy, social values) and change levers (people, place, systems), as well the fact that we must act together toward these common goals in order to have any hope of achieving them.

### Housing Justice

- **Strong Systems:** Advance equity in housing for all people in Lawrence through increased affordable housing resources and stronger tenant and affordability protections.
- **Strong People:** Every family has a stable, affordable, high quality home that can serve as a foundation for family success, and there are increased sustainable paths for resident homeownership.
- **Strong Place:** Expand the supply of high-quality, affordable homes that revitalize neighborhoods for all Lawrence residents, focusing on development without displacement.

### Economic Justice

- **Strong Systems:** Reduce the income gap by increasing employment and promoting a broad culture of local hiring, expand opportunities for low-income people to build wealth, and advocate with partners for progressive taxation and worker supports.
- **Strong People:** Reduce the income and the wealth gaps through financial empowerment, access to quality jobs, and effective skills training.
- **Strong Place:** Catalyze vibrant neighborhoods in which local businesses and services add to quality of life and local employment.

### Education Justice

- **Strong Systems:** With multi-sector partners, shift the culture at Lawrence Public Schools to value and invest in authentic parent engagement, increase educator representation to drive student achievement, and cultivate a two-generation, whole-family approach to education.
- **Strong People:** Strengthen parent and youth leadership, engagement, and achievement in the K-12 educational system in Lawrence.
- **Strong Place:** Support neighborhood school renovations and expansions, and target new affordable housing development to neighborhoods with a high density of families with children.

### Social Justice

- **Strong Systems:** More of Lawrence's public institutions are responsive and reflective of the voice and priorities of the community due to an activated and engaged community working collectively to advance systems change.
- **Strong People:** Build a robust, intergenerational network of connected, empowered residents who can create common ground, rely on each other for practical and emotional support, engage civically, and mobilize to advance systemic change and/or collective goals.
- **Strong Place:** Through an integrated real estate development strategy, create vibrant and safe neighborhoods where residents enjoy an enhanced quality of life and access to opportunities, while forestalling gentrification and displacement for those who are most vulnerable.

## ACTIVITIES

We must change the underlying systems that dictate how and where people live and work, and how their children are educated, in order to achieve lasting social change in Lawrence in the four realms of justice: Housing, Economic, Education, and Social Justice. We understand that we need to organize our work for the greatest effectiveness; therefore, we have identified priority goals and investments, where and how we will form alliances with others, and topics that warrant further exploration:

EXTERNAL/COMMUNITY-BASED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS		
1. GOAL: <b>STRONG SYSTEMS</b>		
<b>Housing Justice: Advance equity in housing for all people in Lawrence through increased affordable housing resources and stronger tenant and affordability protections.</b>		
Priority Goals	In Alliance	Exploratory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generate more local funds to support housing that is more affordable for the community, and that helps redress the imbalance between the supply and demand for affordable housing.</li> <li>Increase housing stability for tenants through legislation and regulatory changes that protect tenants and increase their access to resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for increased affordable housing production resources at the state and federal level.</li> <li>Explore a Community Preservation Act campaign locally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the potential for instituting rent control at the statewide level through first understanding the state landscape, national models, and potential partners/allies.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Justice: Reduce the income gap by increasing employment and promoting a broad culture of local hiring, expand opportunities for low-income people to build wealth, and advocate with partners for progressive taxation and worker supports.</b>		
Priority Goals	In Alliance	Exploratory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More local employers hire more local residents for quality, well-paying jobs.</li> <li>Expand resources for financial empowerment and homeownership programs to serve Lawrence residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support local employers to adapt practices that increase cultural/ linguistic competency, enabling more local people to be hired and promoted.</li> <li>Advocate for emergency paid sick time (state bill) and align LCW with Raise Up priorities to support workers and generate progressive revenue for education/ infrastructure investments.</li> <li>Movement City youth advocate for youth employment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify advocacy strategies to mitigate/erase the “Cliff Effect” that disincentivizes advancement by those receiving public benefits.</li> <li>Explore how to support funding for the Children’s Savings Account program.</li> </ul>
<b>Education Justice: With multi-sector partners, shift the culture at Lawrence Public Schools to value and invest in authentic parent engagement, increase educator representation to drive student achievement, and cultivate a two-generation, whole-family approach to education.</b>		
Priority Goals	In Alliance	Exploratory

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase LPS adoption of and investment in successful parent and family engagement strategies across multiple schools.</li> <li>• Change the face of the LPS workforce to improve student achievement.</li> <li>• Continue to develop parents as leaders empowered to use their voices effectively and advocate for student and family needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With Raise Up partners, advocate for the Fair Share tax (% goes towards education).</li> <li>• Support the ability of the school system to return to local control.</li> </ul>	
<b>Social Justice: More of Lawrence's public institutions are responsive and reflective of the voice and priorities of the community due to an activated and engaged community working collectively to advance systems change.</b>		
Priority Goals	In Alliance	Exploratory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase civic engagement and the voice of the youth and adults in public affairs.</li> <li>• Secure enactment of policies and resource allocations that reflect the voice of the community.</li> <li>• Support member activism around immigrant rights and other resonant issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate our members and support campaigns focused on emerging issues of resonance.</li> <li>• Stand up for immigrant rights and immigrant justice such as drivers' license campaigns, DACA normalization, family re-unification.</li> <li>• Increase citizenship access and pathways through partnerships.</li> <li>• Build on the base of relationships activated through 2018 and 2020 emergency response efforts to collectively address underlying issues through increased advocacy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand representation of leadership reflective of the community in the health, education and nonprofit sectors.</li> </ul>

## 2. GOAL: STRONG PEOPLE

**Housing Justice: Every family has a stable, affordable, high quality home that can serve as a foundation for family success, and there are increased sustainable paths for resident homeownership.**

Priority Goals	In Alliance	Exploratory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of all tenants able to stabilize and maintain tenancy in quality, affordable housing.</li> <li>• Continue to grow homeownership resources and opportunities for local families.</li> <li>• Increase the skills and knowledge base of Lawrence landlords to support stable tenancies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work closely with Northeast Legal Aid and other partners to support tenant rights, mediate between landlords and tenants, and access and expand resources for rental support.</li> <li>• Partner with the City, financial institutions, and other housing/service providers to promote homebuyer, homeowner, and landlord education.</li> </ul>	
<b>Economic Justice: Reduce the income and the wealth gap through financial empowerment, access to quality jobs, and effective skills training.</b>		
Priority Goals	In Alliance	Exploratory



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase financial skills and knowledge, and improve financial position (defined as: increase income, reduce debt, increase assets, improve credit score).</li> <li>• Increase preparation for and placement and retention in well-paying career ladder jobs.</li> <li>• Increase access to youth employment through training and internships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and expand employer partnerships to improve job placement and expand internship opportunities.</li> <li>• Work with complementary provider partners (e.g Adult Learning Center, The Community Group, Northern Essex) to create and fund effective collaborative training programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research emerging employment trends and employer needs to inform continued program development</li> </ul>
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**Education Justice: Strengthen parent and youth leadership, engagement, and achievement in the educational K-12 system in Lawrence.**

Priority Goals	In Alliance	Exploratory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase parent skills for leadership and advocacy.</li> <li>• Increase the number of parents who assume leadership roles and heighten engagement in school decision-making, to improve the school system and impact student achievement.</li> <li>• Increase youth who are prepared for academic achievement and empowered for leadership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with statewide groups like MEEP and MAC to access peer support, learn from other communities, and advance policy goals in this area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore our role in increasing pipeline of engaged, committed, prepared parents ready to run for School Committee through expansion of the parent's PODER curriculum and experience</li> </ul>

**Social Justice: Build a robust, intergenerational network of connected, empowered residents who can create common ground, rely on each other for practical and emotional support, engage civically, and mobilize to advance systemic change and/or collective goals.**

Priority Goals	In Alliance	Exploratory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase resident (adults and youth) leadership skills, self-confidence, and capacities.</li> <li>• Increase civic engagement in government, education, and nonprofit organizations (including voter mobilization, participating in nonprofit and municipal governance).</li> <li>• Build an interconnected network and robust membership able to engage in collective action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain active relationships with other Lawrence youth-serving organizations to collaborate on programming and events, share challenges, get peer support, learn, and advocate collectively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore scaling up PODER to graduate 100 social justice warriors per year.</li> </ul>

### 3. GOAL: STRONG PLACE

**Housing Justice: Expand the supply of high-quality affordable homes that revitalize neighborhoods for Lawrence residents, focusing on development without displacement.**

Priority Goals	In Alliance	Exploratory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the supply of affordable rental housing.</li> <li>• Increase the supply of affordable homeownership development.</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link housing development to related investments in infrastructure, parks, and services that improve quality of life.</li> </ul>		
<b>Economic Justice: Catalyze vibrant neighborhoods in which local businesses and services add to quality of life and local employment.</b>		
<b>Priority Goals</b>	<b>In Alliance</b>	<b>Exploratory</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase commercial and local business development to increase supply of high quality and affordable space for local businesses and organizations to start, grow, and serve local residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect businesses to network of peers and services, resources that help them thrive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn to how utilize city specific economic development indicators to measure the impact of our work.</li> </ul>
<b>Education Justice: Support neighborhood school renovations/ expansions, and target new affordable housing to neighborhoods with a high density of families with children.</b>		
<b>Priority Goals</b>	<b>In Alliance</b>	<b>Exploratory</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue new acquisitions and development opportunities that address issues of blight, vacancy, and abandonment in neighborhood school vicinities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners and LPS staff to build public will and support for school renovations and expansions to accommodate youth and family population increases and complement local housing development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work towards the expansion of the Lawrence Working Families Initiative beyond the employment focus to address issues of housing and homelessness among Lawrence Public School families.</li> </ul>
<b>Social Justice: Through an integrated real estate development strategy, Lawrence neighborhoods are vibrant, safe, and affordable, and residents enjoy an enhanced quality of life and access to opportunities, while forestalling gentrification and displacement for those most vulnerable.</b>		
<b>Priority Goals</b>	<b>In Alliance</b>	<b>Exploratory</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the quality of neighborhoods by increasing the number of neighbors working together.</li> <li>• Improve neighborhood infrastructure through greater municipal responsiveness.</li> <li>• Use real estate projects to promote and implement holistic development that builds on, and synergizes with, partners' efforts, in order to weave together housing, services, open/green space, healthy food access, job access, and education/ recreation opportunities.</li> <li>• Invest directly in lower income communities with under-utilized/recognized assets to improve the quality of life for the people who live here.</li> <li>• Pursue an aggressive acquisitions strategy to ensure development projects that safeguard more units as permanently affordable across the city.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with Groundwork Lawrence on greenspace and neighborhood revitalization in coordination with housing planning.</li> <li>• Collaborate with the Health Center on DyeWorks and other projects.</li> <li>• Work closely with the City of Lawrence as a key partner to build healthy relationships between residents and public departments such as community development, fire, and police.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore health and housing connections and future work with hospitals.</li> <li>• Participate on the Rental Cost Task Force to address larger issues around housing equity.</li> </ul>



## EVALUATION

The importance of evaluation was a clear theme emerging from our last strategic planning process, and continues to resonate as we look back on previously set internal goals such as Data Management & Evaluation methods. Staff, board and members feel strongly that, per our Strategic Plan, “LCW should create a discipline of evaluation, planning, and improvement. Through regular evaluation, LCW will be able to define impact, evaluate a project’s feasibility, follow through on activities, evaluate results, and refine its work.” This theme is incorporated into the Internal Goals of the organization and internally we have made significant progress in documenting and evaluating our work.

### **Evaluation Process and Role of Participants**

For more than a decade, LCW staff have participated in an ongoing cross-departmental “Data Work Group” that has helped us to pinpoint what data to collect in our programs and *why*, understand the difference between data, information, and knowledge, learn how to build (excel-based) reporting systems that turn raw data into information, develop outcomes and benchmarks to measure data against, map the process and resources necessary for consistent data collection, streamline and improve our internal quarterly reporting system, and institutionalize a process of using these reports to question and inform program development and share information and knowledge with each other and our members. This process fed the development of our NonProfit Easy database system, which has now been fully customized and continues to be used throughout the organization to track participants, program outcomes, as well as fundraising efforts.

Staff members have also developed Indicators attached to the Outcomes that we have identified, practicing the discipline of understanding how we might measure the results we wish to see. These Outcomes and Indicators were used as the basis of developing the priority activities included in this document. Departments meet quarterly to review progress against these benchmarks, discuss discrepancies, and strategize about program evolution accordingly. We see our members as partners with us in this evaluation process. As program participants, members of course provide us with the valuable raw data to inform the evaluation process through surveys, focus groups, and instructor evaluations of progress. However, beyond this, we have always involved members in decision-making regarding program direction and format through more informal reporting back to committees on our learning and analysis, through use of the Design Teams and iterative rounds of design charrettes and other planning meetings with residents, through our Member Summit, and through participation (as a NeighborWorks affiliate) in efforts such as Community Impact Measures (in which we train youth and adult participants to assist with data collection on resident satisfaction and local property conditions).

### **Tools and Methodologies to Measure Impact**

Our NonProfitEasy database system is fully operational and all staff are trained and using the system with the support of our full-time Data Manager, who troubleshoots operations, implement changes/improvements, and serves as a liaison to NonProfitEasy support staff. NonProfitEasy is used to generate much of the data that tracks our activities, outputs, and outcomes, and integrates with other relevant data tools and methodologies that include:

- **CounselorMax Database**: comprehensive tracking of adult asset-building client demographic information, participation, and outcomes; main reporting tool for LCW as a NeighborWorks America affiliate.
- **Salesforce** reporting tool used to track financial capability outcomes and demographic information required by the United Way of MA Bay & Merrimack Valley
- **Pre- and Post-Program Participant Evaluation Surveys**: in use by Network Organizing, Movement City and Asset Building Departments; in continuous refinement as we work to align with Fundly fields; administered at beginning and end of each semester to track participant progress over a number of quantitative (test scores, SPL levels, grades) and qualitative indicators (self-reporting of self-esteem, perception of efficacy, increased friendships/relationships).
- **Quarterly Reporting System**: internal compilation of program results used by managers and staff to evaluate program effectiveness; includes budget-to-actual reporting from Finance Department; used for regular internal evaluation discussions.

- Committees and Member Focus Groups, Design Teams, and Summit: convened regularly or as needed to reflect on program direction and elements, plan new programs, and design new initiatives.

## **COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS**

Collaboration is a central strategy for LCW, especially as it pertains to our third goal of systems change. The following list outlines some of our most important collaborative efforts, as well as other key partners with whom we undertake specific or multiple projects.

- Lawrence Working Families Initiative: LWFI is a cross-sector partnership, of which LCW is the lead agent, that involves nearly 20 local employers, a dozen local nonprofit agencies, a number of public sector partners (including the Lawrence Public Schools, Northern Essex Community College, and the MassHire Career Center). LWFI makes employment and family engagement the cornerstones of its comprehensive strategy to increase family economic success, support the Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) Turnaround goals, and increase quality of life for Lawrence families. Together we are working to transform the educational and workforce development systems in the City.
- The Lawrence Partnership: LCW is a founding member of this public-private economic development partnership which is focused on “Lawrence jobs for Lawrence people” through better alignment and design of workforce training programs, significant employer engagement, and small business development and capitalization. LCW’s Executive Director, Jessica Andors, sits on the Partnership’s Executive Committee and Venture Loan Fund Committee. Partners include a dozen local/regional banks and credit unions, local Latino-owned businesses, major institutions such as Lawrence General Hospital, The Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, and Northern Essex Community College, large local employers, and public officials. This collaboration is key to our systems change goals.
- Lawrence Financial Stability Center: Forged in 2013, this collaborative effort with the United Way of Massachusetts Bay & Merrimack Valley brings a “bundled” services approach to family economic advancement focused on the Lawrence population, a core piece of investing in people.
- The North Canal Coalition: Led jointly by LCW and Groundwork Lawrence, this coalition of North Canal/Mill District property owners and stakeholders works to solve common problems around district infrastructure and physical conditions, and promotes joint marketing and public events. Key to investing in place.
- Early Childhood Education Project: A collaborative effort of LCW and The Community Group to train and place Lawrence residents in ECE internships and permanent jobs. Key to investing in people.
- Physical and Financial Health Working Group: Collaboration between LCW, Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, and the Mayor’s Health Task Force seeking to improve the socioeconomic position and health of low income GLFHC patients in Lawrence, MA through integration of financial and health services. Key to systems change.

## **Other Core Partners**

- City of Lawrence: LCW works especially closely with the Departments of Community Development (affordable housing planning and development), Planning (neighborhood planning, data/GIS support), Police (community safety meetings, neighborhood planning) and Public Works (neighborhood clean-ups, events, planning).
- Groundwork Lawrence: Open space developer; partner on neighborhood park and playground development, community gardens on vacant lots, streetscape improvements and tree planting, North Canal planning process, educational workshops, youth programming; long history of successful joint funding applications. GWL is a key partner in coordinated place-based investments that create a greater whole, and systems change efforts.
- Lawrence Public Schools: Primary and critical LCW partner in the Lawrence Working Families Initiative’s projects; includes Office of Family, Community, and Student Engagement, and dozens of schools.

- Mill Cities Community Investments: CDFI co-sponsored by LCW and Lowell's CBA; LCW's Executive Director on Board; cross-referral of clients for financing and counseling; partner on Lending Circles and linking credit establishment, savings, and financial education; partner with Lawrence Partnership on Venture Loan Fund, strong track record of joint funding applications.
- The Community Group: Highly regarded local nonprofit operator of family childcare education and training network as well as four local charter schools; partner in LWFI and initiatives to link parents to financial coaching and asset-building.
- Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board/MassHIRE: Active partner in connecting our members to local employers and integrating financial coaching with career coaching and job preparation; collaborator on Lawrence Working Families Initiative and Urban Agenda projects focused on local employer cultivation and implementation of internship program.
- Project Citizenship: LCW provides space and staff support to regular on-site citizenship workshops and clinics.
- Northeast Legal Aid: In 2018, LCW's Homeownership Center entered a housing stabilization pilot with NLA and other community stakeholders to coordinate access to resources and stabilize tenancies of individuals and families in Lawrence before an eviction case is started. This coordinated intervention before an eviction is started helps to prevent landlords from incurring legal expenses, a tenant is named in a court eviction, and before a landlord and tenant see each other as legal adversaries.

#### Intermediaries & Resource Partners

- Housing and Development Intermediaries: LCW works closely with MHIC, MHP, MassHousing, and MassDevelopment, as well as CEDAC and Life Initiative, on local housing and commercial development; they provide critical pre-development and permanent financing to support physical development efforts.
- Financial Institutions: including TD Bank, Metro Credit Union, Santander Bank, Citizens Bank, Merrimack Valley Federal Credit Union, Bank of America, The Savings Bank, Jeanne D'Arc Credit Union, Enterprise Bank, People's United Bank, RTN Federal Credit Union, Reading Cooperative Bank, and Eastern Bank; partnerships range from pure funding support to workshop guest speakers, curriculum support, special product development, and savings incentives.
- Great Neighborhoods Initiative: project of the MA Smart Growth Alliance to promote smart growth of existing and revitalizing urban centers; brings technical assistance for mill district planning and redevelopment.
- Local Realtors, Lawyers, and Inspectors: all provide pro-bono teaching support to the LCW Homeownership Center's workshops.
- MACDC: trade association; partner on housing policy development, community development advocacy.
- MA Department of Housing and Community Development: key source of subsidy funding, guidance, and support for neighborhood revitalization and pilot program development.
- MIDAS Collaborative: statewide asset-building collaborative and financial education resource; LCW on Board; partner on IDA programs, financial education training, advocacy, fundraising.
- UnidosUS (formerly National Council de la Raza): affiliate and member of National Homeownership Network; key funder for workforce programs; LCW's Deputy Director is a national trainer for them.
- NeighborWorks America: national community development intermediary; LCW designated an "Exemplary" NW affiliate; member of Community Building & Organizing and Multi-Family initiatives; technical assistance provider to other NWOs on NeighborCircles.
- United Way: LCW is a Venture Affiliate and Financial Stability Center.

## INTEGRATION OF ACTIVITIES

LCW prizes both internal integration, uniting Departments in common goals of investing in people, place, and systems change, and external integration with key strategic partners (as the previous section demonstrates). We see ourselves as not just synergizing with but also shaping and driving the larger vision and strategy for the whole community, and promoting resident engagement and co-investment as a central practice for all as that vision evolves.

### Plan Consistency with Other Existing Neighborhood, Community, and Regional Plans

The City of Lawrence's FY2021-2025 Consolidated Plan identifies five goals to respond to high-priority community needs: Economic Development, Affordable Housing, Tenant Based Rental Assistance, Public Facilities/Infrastructure/Parks, and Public Services. Moreover, the Con Plan cites *cost burden* as the most significant housing problem facing Lawrence families, "which primarily and disproportionately impacts low income of residents who are paying more than 50% of their income on housing." The city's growing housing instability has been further exacerbated by persistent unemployment, evictions, and foreclosures during the COVID-19 pandemic – leading to an immediate need for rental subsidies to keep families housed. During FY2020-21, LCW successfully administered \$340,000 in CDBG-CV3 emergency rental assistance from the City of Lawrence to low-income Lawrence households.

LCW is specifically called out as an asset to this area; in addition, Movement City and LCW ESOL classes have previously received Community Development Block Grant funding support, and the Con Plan identifies LWFI as a "a prime example of strong cross-collaborations at work to make employment and family engagement the cornerstones of a comprehensive strategy to increase family economic success." In the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council's 2018 Community Needs Assessment, four of the most urgent needs of Lawrence residents were identified: Immigration Services, Safe and Affordable Housing, Adult Education, and Job Opportunities. In 2019, Lawrence General Hospital also conducted a Community Needs Assessment, which collected survey responses from 1,100 individuals with the highest percentage of responses coming from Lawrence. This CHNA identified housing (as well as education, employment, poverty and income) as one of the top barriers to patient health with numerous participants mentioning housing as a community concern. Participants described high housing costs and rising rates of homelessness. Lack of safe, stable, and affordable housing was mentioned as a substantial challenge in the community and an issue that, according to one participant, has not been prioritized by community leaders promoting community economic development.

Finally, the Lawrence Redevelopment Authority's Urban Renewal Plan benefited from public participation by multiple adult and youth LCW members, and LCW staff representation on the Citizen's Advisory Committee. The Plan's key relevant goals of the Plan include to "Incentivize/accelerate development of large vacant parcels for light manufacturing, health care, education, and mixed-use development... Preserve, protect and enhance the city's historic buildings and infrastructure through adaptive re-use... Support the expansion of small businesses that generate jobs and build local wealth... [and] Encourage sustainable development through renewable energy production, energy efficiency, and Low-Impact Development." All of these goals synergize with LCW activities around mill redevelopment, historic preservation, small business support through our IDA program and participation in the Lawrence Partnership Venture Loan Fund, and commitment to green development practices.

## FINANCING STRATEGY

LCW strives for a healthy mix of funding sources: to generate an average of 25% of our revenue from developer fees and overhead, cash from property distributions, program fees, and other sources of "self-generation"; an average of 10% from local, state, and federal government sources, and approximately 65% from private funding including corporate, foundation, and individual giving. We do recognize that foundations in particular can be mercurial friends (which is why we are always cultivating new ones), but feel that the substance of their investment is worth the effort. Individual donors in particular have become a growing part of our portfolio, in large part because of the CITC opportunity, but also because unlike foundations they tend to be loyal to an organization once a healthy relationship is developed.

Although we have always been entrepreneurial fundraisers and rarely enter any given year with more than half our revenue already raised or committed, our annual base of funders includes nearly 200 different sources (not counting all individual donors and event sponsors) and includes both faithful supporters and a rotating mix of one-time or alternating funders. Following is a description of our plans and strategies in regard to each of the revenue sectors:

**Real Estate Development:** It is our goal to have this be a consistent source of revenue for the organization (especially given the need for quality housing in the city), with an average of two projects in the pipeline and one under development at any given point in time. Our objectives here remain: to cultivate the necessary relationships to maintain an adequate supply of both flexible acquisition capital and patient pre-development funding; to design real estate projects that meet both the mission and financial goals of the organization; and to bring projects to completion on time and on budget to preserve the full benefit of overhead and fee for operating purposes and future investments. We have strong relationships with a number of pre-development and acquisition funders who have supported our burgeoning neighborhood acquisitions, including the Life Initiative, CEDAC, Community Housing Capital, NeighborWorks America, NeighborWorks Capital, and LISC. In addition, we have a strong record working with MHIC and Bluehub Capital as tax credit syndicators and benefit from a solid relationship with TD Bank, which has been an investor on numerous projects as well as a philanthropic supporter of the organization. We have also enjoyed strong support from the City of Lawrence, which has invested a great proportion of its scarce HOME funds in LCW projects.

**Distributions from Portfolio:** In addition to real estate development, LCW continues to analyze the management of our portfolio as a whole, in order to strengthen the assets we own, elevate their quality and efficiency, and put them to use on behalf of the larger mission. We continue to work to add units, improve asset management practices, tweak deal structure, and improve cash flow from properties as they become more seasoned. With the Island-Parkside affordable housing project currently in construction, we will add 80 units of high-quality, family housing to the Mill District neighborhood by the end of 2023. Simultaneously, we have reached the halfway point of our \$4M philanthropic campaign for the DyeWorks capital project, which is slated to be completed by the end of 2025. The DyeWorks project will transform 35,000 square feet of an abandoned mill building into a vibrant neighborhood hub for healthy, community living. When completed, DyeWorks will house a full-service, Latinx-owned grocery store (in a current food desert); a satellite pharmacy and primary care site for the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center; an expanded/improved home for LCW's effective Movement City youth program; free Wi-Fi access, indoors and out, in a low-access City; and flexible community space. The project will complement the adjacent, recent and new investments by LCW and partners in highly affordable energy-efficient housing, generate entry-level and career-track jobs for residents, and foster connections to and use of the existing Ellen Swallow Richards Park in the neighborhood. Community planning and design efforts are currently underway for a number of other projects in the pipeline, including:

- The Marriner building, a 450,000+ square foot mill in the western mill district. Its development will complement and build on adjacent efforts at adaptive re-use while maintaining affordability. LCW purchased the building in May 2018, and has implemented basic improvements to support interim commercial tenancy while we plan the building's future. We sold 25% of the building to Trinity Financial to develop as 90 units of 100% affordable housing, and will develop the remaining three quarters of the building in partnership with The Community Builders as 150 units of deeply affordable housing as well as 50,000 square feet of commercial space for local businesses and services. Community planning with nearly 100 residents, for unit design, amenities, and commercial occupancy, has already begun.
- The Newbury Street Corridor project will be a scattered-site infill development of 15-20 units on 5-7 vacant lots and one abandoned building in the North Common neighborhood, the original heart of our place-based work. This project will nearly eliminate the vacancy and blight in a neighborhood that was 30% vacant/abandoned when LCW first began work here, and provides open opportunities for use of innovative construction materials, creative building design, and a mix of ownership structures. We seek to continue this highly mission-driven infill development.

### **Foundation Fundraising**

Foundation fundraising has been a strength of the organization and remains a core part of our ongoing fundraising activities. We have several large multi-year investors including the Eastern Bank Foundation, the Clowes Fund, and Essex County Community Foundation but continue to cast our nets wider and deeper in searching for new foundation funding. Our innovative organizing, asset building, youth development, and collaborative work continues to attract diverse support. Our strategies and targets for our fundraising in this sector include:

- Outreach to and cultivation of large regional and national foundations
- Revisit with past funders for new introductions/possible trustee connections
- Medium and large grant writing
- Continued cultivation of smaller, local family foundations and connectors to Boston

### **Contract/Public Sector Development**

State and local public sector funding has improved for LCW (especially through the state's appreciated emphasis on Gateway Cities). We have worked to position ourselves as partners and leaders on state grants with some success. Strategies and targets here include:

- Continue to pursue CHDO operating support and accomplish deliverables
- Maintain relationship with MA DPH for Youth Violence Prevention funding
- Maintain relationship with MA Division of Banks for asset-building/homeownership education support

### **CITC: Individual and Corporate Donor Development**

The CITC program has helped us to cultivate and expand an individual donor base that can stay with us long term. Over the past seven years we have consistently utilized 95% or more of our allocation by each year's end, working through a combination of our own networks and philanthropic intermediaries. We have successfully increased donations from current individual donors, attracted and retained new donors, and doubled our support from selected corporate partners. As part of this process we have also gotten much better at regular communication and relationship-building with these donors in order to build on their investment, and eventually hope to use the CITC donor base as a platform for a planned-giving initiative to enhance long-term organizational viability.

### **HISTORY, TRACK RECORD, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

LCW had its beginnings in the early 1980s struggle to build affordable housing in North Lawrence, and has built or renovated over 400 units of affordable housing for the people of Lawrence. Since an organizational rebirth in 1999, we have become a powerful vehicle for community revitalization, attracting over \$120 million dollars in local, regional, and national public and private investment and catalyzing collaborative, community-wide revitalization efforts. In the past 20+ years, LCW has:

- Grown our membership base from 0 to over 5,000 residents and stakeholders.
- Successfully completed 215 new units of affordable homeownership and rental housing for low-income families on formerly vacant, abandoned, tax-title, historic, and brownfields properties, with 200+ in the pipeline
- Created, with partner Groundwork Lawrence, four new neighborhood parks/playgrounds on formerly abandoned or contaminated sites.
- Completed Our House, an innovative neighborhood educational and community center in the former St. Laurence O'Toole school building.
- Created Asset Building programs for over 1,000 adults annually, offering matched savings, credit building, financial education and coaching, homeownership education, foreclosure intervention, rental counseling, and other financial empowerment workshops. IDA graduates have collectively saved over \$1.6M and AB graduates in total have leveraged over \$100 million in local asset purchases and investments.



- Spun off our Workforce Development programming into its own department, effectively rolling out a spectrum of successful job training programs in the financial services, early childhood education, and customer services sectors. Two proficiency levels of ESOL classes graduate a waiting list of English learners each year. During the COVID-19 pandemic, LCW developed and began implementing basic (TechConnect “bootcamp”) and intermediate digital literacy training (Digital Skills for Business) courses and workshops to address the growing digital divide in Lawrence while adding skilled employees to the growing remote workforce.
- Implemented Movement City, our evolved STEAM and creative expression-focused after-school program serving 150 youth annually. A yearly average of 95% of program graduates continue to college; program staff and instructors draw strongly from alumni ranks.
- Engaged over 1,500 families in NeighborCircles and over 10000 families in Community Education Circles, which are national models for resident and parent engagement, and spreading throughout the Lawrence Public Schools.
- Won awards from CHAPA and the Governor’s Office for our Reviviendo Gateway Initiative, a smart and equitable growth strategy for revitalizing the City’s Mill District, downtown, and adjacent residential areas, driven by a broad coalition of residents, businesses, and public officials. RGI laid the foundation for thriving and emerging adaptive mill re-use projects in the City.
- Launched the Lawrence Financial Stability Center in partnership with the United Way and local nonprofit and public partners to create a one-stop shop for financial coaching, income support, educational advancement, workforce development, and peer support.
- Won first place in the FRBB Working Cities Challenge competition to support the Lawrence Public Schools Turn-Around and the economic advancement of Lawrence families; have since placed over 350 parents in jobs and connected 850 more to training and educational opportunities, while attracting follow-on funding and catalyzing systems-wide changes in local public education and workforce development institutions.

#### **LCW CIP Consistency with MA Sustainable Development Principles**

- 1. Concentrate Development and Mix Uses:** LCW focus areas for revitalization include the adaptive re-use of existing historic mill buildings in the City’s central mill district, and the infill development of vacant and abandoned properties in the North Common neighborhood immediately adjacent to the downtown and mill district (center of the City), for a mix of housing, commercial, and community uses. This development is by nature compact, putting neighborhood land back into productive use, protecting and adapting historic resources, and promoting a healthy mix of residential and commercial development. We work with the City and open space developer nonprofit partner Groundwork Lawrence to plan and implement this development in a way that integrates parks, and promotes and develops the pedestrian and bike-path Spicket River Greenway encircling this area.
- 2. Advance Equity:** Please see Resident Engagement section above; LCW has a core commitment and track record of involving residents in robust planning processes and redeveloping Lawrence for Lawrence residents. The Our House Community Center and the Lawrence Working Families Initiative are two shining examples of this commitment, as is the affordability mandate in the Reviviendo Gateway Zoning Overlay and our work shaping the strategic priorities of the Lawrence Partnership and the City’s Urban Renewal planning process.
- 3. Make Efficient Decisions:** We spearheaded the aforementioned mill district zoning reform that streamlined regulatory and permitting processes for development and included an affordability mandate for housing development, and are currently working to promote smart growth and environmental stewardship through our North Canal Coalition participation and by modeling the development we believe is best.
- 4. Protect Land and Ecosystems:** Our partnership with Groundwork Lawrence and commitment to environmentalism means that every project we develop includes energy efficient – and more recently, renewable energy components (e.g., rooftop solar) – as well as incorporating low-impact development design techniques, Passive House certification, upgrades of storm water management systems, green space, and use of natural habitat vegetation.
- 5. Use Natural Resources Wisely:** See above.

- 6. Expand Housing Opportunities:** Our housing provides homes for people at a range of income levels and family sizes in Lawrence, and supports both tenancy and homeownership. We pay special attention to restoration of historic structures and design infill construction to integrate with the existing streetscape, shaped by substantial resident input in design.
- 7. Provide Transportation Choice:** All LCW developments within a 1-15 minute walk from bus lines and transportation centers, and close to downtown.
- 8. Increase Job and Business Opportunities:** Our recent development has been focused on mixed-use TOD real estate projects so that we can support the commercial revitalization of the City and create places for local businesses to start or expand. In addition, our asset building work provides numerous opportunities for residents to gain career skills, access higher education, and – through a Business IDA cohort – develop as entrepreneurs. Our growing workforce focus connects residents to training and job opportunities locally.
- 9. Promote Clean Energy:** Recent housing developments have included low-VOC materials and supplies, integration of solar energy systems, highly efficient appliances, and special attention to building insulation.
- 10. Plan Regionally:** While LCW is focused on Lawrence, we recognize its interconnection with the region and participate in regional economic development forums; moreover, given the demands the City currently makes on state and regional resources, an improvement in the quality of life and tax base here will have positive regional effects. We participate in regional economic development forums.