

# Location Affordability Portal Vignettes

<http://locationaffordability.info/vignettes.aspx>



*Note: These fictional narratives illustrate how families and organizations can use the Location Affordability Portal to make more informed decisions about where to live, work, and invest.*



## 21st Century Tools Reverse 20th Century Decline (Maximizing the Benefit from Federal Funds)

Haley Lindstrom loves her hometown. Her family settled in Lakeshore in the late 1800s when the Midwestern city was booming and stayed after the boom ended in the 1960s. Unfortunately, for the past 50 years, Lakeshore has become known more for crumbling infrastructure and vacant storefronts than its tree-lined streets and Victorian houses. As Director of the Lakeshore Department of Community Development (LDCD), Haley is determined to bring her town back, one neighborhood at a time.

Haley and her colleagues at LDCD are optimistic about Lakeshore's future, and with good reason. The region's leading university and its prestigious teaching hospital are partnering to launch a new medical research hub, which is projected to produce a significant uptick in new jobs over the next few years. In anticipation of the coming job growth, there has already been an appreciable increase in start-up activity. Many of the new businesses have chosen to set up shop in University Park, the historic neighborhood surrounding the university and hospital campuses. Although it has decayed as a result of decades of disinvestment and neglect by both the city and the university, the neighborhood now looks ready to make a comeback.



Haley worries, though, that Lakeshore's most vulnerable families will be at risk of displacement. As she works with her department to develop the city's Consolidated Plan, Haley considers how they can invest Community Development Block Grant funds to promote much-needed economic growth while preserving affordable housing for low-income families.

One thing she'll be sure to do is look for ways to partner with the Metropolitan Housing Authority (MHA), which oversees the region's public housing system, providing homes directly to more than 8,000 families and aiding thousands more within rental assistance vouchers. Haley feels certain that there's some way CDBG funds could help MHA and protect the families who call the city's public housing home.

Using the Location Affordability Index (LAI), Haley's deputy develops a presentation for the City's Master Plan's public hearings. The presentation highlights combined housing and transportation cost burdens in target neighborhoods to demonstrate to the public and city leadership which communities might be best served by CDBG investments. Haley notes that the areas in close proximity to University Park have surprisingly low transportation costs, partly because of good connections between the university trolley and the regional bus systems. Housing is moderately priced, but with the changes coming to the University Park area, she's sure that won't last long.

The MHA Director attends one of the Consolidated Plan meetings and notes that many of MHA's properties are in transportation-rich areas, with several in the University Park neighborhood. He calls Haley with some ideas. She's intrigued by the idea of utilizing CDBG funds to rehabilitate and expand public housing in areas with low transportation costs, and University Park would be a great pilot site. It would also potentially help boost economic development by rehabbing and modernizing MHA's units.

Haley begins convening monthly meetings with representatives of Lakeshore's neighborhood-based Community Development Corporations (CDCs), most of which are well aware of the plight of the local public housing units. Haley listens to the CDC members' ideas about potential uses of available funding and is impressed with their depth of knowledge. The groups recognize that transportation access must be a key factor in identifying areas to target funding for public housing revitalization, especially if CDBG funds are going to be used in the effort.

Using data and maps from the LAI, Haley and the MHA Director present their public housing revitalization proposal at the City Master Plan public meetings and it receives resounding support from the local CDCs and community residents. Haley and John work with HUD to ensure that these are permitted activities and uses of funding and begin rehabbing units within six months.

## Using the LAI to Assess Community Housing and Transportation Costs

The LAI provides decision-makers housing and transportation costs, combined or separately and for different household types, in neighborhoods throughout their community. This information facilitates more informed assessments and better understanding of neighborhood levels of affordability.

