Proposal

The development of affordable housing is a nation-wide problem, and should undoubtedly be made a priority across the states. A strong indicator of this affordable housing crisis is income level. Roughly 33,899,812 people received incomes below the poverty level in 1999, this staggering figure being true, it can be assumed that these same people encountered challenges when it came to the issue of housing. This nation-wide problem is also a devastating reality in the Anacostia community of the District of Columbia. Although comparatively the numbers are much smaller, according to the 1999 census data, tract 76.01 (the Anacostia community) had about 955 out of its 4540 total residents receiving an income under the poverty level. Again this figure may seem insignificant, however when considered in the context of that specific community, this is a little over twenty-one percent of that particular community’s population. This is an alarming statistic. With the knowledge of the below-poverty income level of over twenty percent of the Anacostia community, the need for affordable housing is clearly evident. This need for affordable housing is just one of many social issues plaguing the community; however, a solution to this problem will contribute to the eventual improvement of the various other social concerns within the area. Please see Appendix A for a complete layout of the previously stated census data.
The ultimate goal of the project, more specifically Faithworks Inc., is to develop affordable housing units (the long-term goal is to develop multiple units) not only in the Anacostia community, but also throughout the entire Ward 8 area. The first phase goal of the project is to establish low-income housing in the Anacostia community. The goal of my research is to determine potential challenges that are faced when trying to establish affordable housing in a low-income community, and to offer solutions for these challenges, or methods to avoid these potential problems—which will be obtained through my experience throughout the project. It is commonly known that the Anacostia community is an extremely marginalized community within the District, in establishing affordable housing in this area, we are hoping to not only fulfill the housing needs of the residents, but to also enrich the quality of living of the community in general.

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

As previously mentioned, there are long-term and short-term goals for this particular project and as for my research, the following questions apply to both scenarios:

- What are the potential challenges, or perhaps benefits, of trying to develop affordable/low income housing in the Anacostia Community of the District, in conjunction with local area churches (and possibly a network organization)?
- When working with these churches (and/or a network organization), what internal (issues within each church) or external (potential issues with outside entities, i.e. the government) challenges will be met when trying to organize such development?
• What difficulties may we encounter when trying to organize a collective effort (partnership between Faithworks Inc., one or more community churches, and possibly WIN) to fulfill our goal of establishing affordable housing?

• Will the possibility of varying interests among the different churches pose as an asset or a challenge in trying to achieve our goal?

These questions attempt to unveil any problems that arise during a project of this type. In addition to addressing any potential challenges, the assets of the community, or more specifically, the churches, will also surface when trying to answer these questions. Obviously, the project can be considered a success in the end if quality affordable housing is developed in the Anacostia community, and ultimately the entire Ward 8 area and other communities in need in the District. As far as my research is concerned, if solutions can be developed to any challenges or problems that occur throughout this collective development process, then I will have succeeded. These solutions or suggestions will aid in the development process in other communities, and will hopefully facilitate the entire process for the collaborating parties. It is necessary to determine potential problems that may arise, because preparation also contributes to expediting the process of the project. Here a few hypothetical setbacks that we may encounter in the affordable housing development process:

• There may be conflicts with government owned land, or perhaps intense competition with outside development agencies trying to move into this community that has so much potential. The latter is a major issue of concern in regards to my project, because the Anacostia community is a hot commodity, and there is an existing interest in the area to build high-income townhouses among
developers. When specifically dealing with churches, there may be a situation where a church is already working with a network organization (external challenge), thereby eliminating any interest to work with Faithworks, or this existing partnership could work as an asset for our project, because there is already an established relationship between this church and network organization, which would dispel any feelings of hesitancy due to mistrust.

- Again, dealing with outside entities, whether they are churches, WIN, East of the River CPCP, DC World Vision, the government etc. The fact is, it is not easy to A) bring several individual groups together and B) fully establish that we (Faithworks along with its Georgetown researchers, or any network organization) are trustworthy. One of the first questions that will more than likely be asked, specific to the churches, is what do we (Faithworks) get out of this project? More specific to the sub-question—an existing concern of Faithworks’ is that we do not have what it takes to organize the many churches that may potentially jump on board this project. One possible solution to this is bringing in WIN, which specializes in organizing groups to work on one project.

- The issue of varying interests could become a problem if the central focus of each of these interests is not the advancement of the community. That is, if we do work with multiple churches and each has its own agenda, with only its interests in mind, then this clearly would not help us achieve our goal in the most efficient manner. However, if we can get the many participants on a similar (not even
necessarily the same) page, then these varying interests could somehow help our project.

In thinking about these potential problems early on, we will be able to anticipate certain roadblocks that we may stumble upon, and deal with them in a more efficient manner due to our anticipation and preparation.

**The Anacostia Community**

The Anacostia community is one in need of drastic revitalization efforts. This is a fact that is not only being recognized by Faithworks Inc., but also other development and organizational agencies, as well as the federal and district governments. Mayor Williams recognized this need for improvement in March of 2000, when he introduced the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative. The objective of this particular initiative is to transform what is presently a physical racial and status rift (the Anacostia River) into a completely revitalized area that will not only unite the alienated areas, but also bring life to a community that is gradually losing touch with its historic roots.

The current physical state of the Anacostia community is enough to support the fact that this is an area in need of assistance, but the actual statistics more clearly demonstrate this need, especially when it comes to the issue of housing. The graph below displays the actual figures behind the poverty plague on a national, municipal, and specific community level.

**Comparison of Tract 76.01 (Anacostia) with the District of Columbia and the U.S.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Anacostia</th>
<th>DC</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>[Data]</td>
<td>[Data]</td>
<td>[Data]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the graph shows, the income poverty level of the Anacostia community almost doubles the percentage of the U.S. This poses the question, how are residents of this community supposed to support themselves (this includes the basic necessity of housing), when over one-fifth of that particular population is receiving an income below the poverty line? Adequate housing that lies in a price range that is affordable to these residents is a must. Without the development of these low-income housing units, displacement of these same residents is undoubtedly a reality in the future.

**Literature Review**

*What constitutes a social problem?*

A social problem is defined as “a situation that threatens an established social value and that is believed capable of amelioration by appropriate social action” (Merrill p.2). Merrill goes on to state that a social problem also “comprises three primary elements: a social situation on a comparatively large scale, a social value that is threatened, and a belief that the situation may be eliminated by organized social action.” The focus of my project is to develop affordable housing in an area of much need, the low-income community of Anacostia. The current state of this community can undoubtedly be considered a major social problem. This notion is true because the
residents’ civil rights to equal (which would encompasses affordability) housing opportunities are being threatened, and there is the possibility of amelioration, which is what we are trying to achieve in my project. Merrill’s last element is directly related to my project. It is this firm belief in the ability of social action, more specifically, organized social action that is the driving force of this project to ignite change within this particular community of Anacostia, starting with the development of low-income housing. Although my primary focus throughout this project is geared toward the process of this development, I feel it is necessary to point out the importance and necessity of this project in the Anacostia community. This is in fact, as Merrill points out, a social problem. To relate this to what I am researching—using Merrill’s terminology, I am looking at the process of correcting a social problem, or as he so eloquently states it, “ameliorating” a social problem—unavailability of affordable housing in Anacostia. Another implied theme of Merrill’s work is that the responsibility of community enhancement does not rest solely in the hands of the members of that community; rather, it is also the responsibility of neighboring communities to step-in and assist in this improvement. This is where Faithworks Inc., along with a potential networking organization’s help, comes in to “bridge the gap” (Rinder). This phrase, “bridge the gap” has a couple of meanings, but in the case of my project, it is best defined as connecting the community with resources or assets that it may not have the capacity to attain on its own. These churches that we are looking to approach may have the desire to improve their community, but they may not have the means to do so. (The capacity of the churches will be determined after analysis of interview responses) This fact, the churches’ inability to act on any aspiration to improve the quality of life for its
community residents, again reiterates the idea that the problems of the Anacostia community are social problems.

*Challenges of a Collective Effort*

Before I delve into the challenges of working in conjunction with other groups or organizations, it is necessary to point out that challenges can be broken into two categories, internal and external challenges. Although this categorization is not clearly stated by Bennis, his work does suggest this notion of the existence of two types of challenges. Bennis’ work is directly related to what I am trying to determine in my research. One of his first points is that more often than not, when working as a team in social research, an issue of “lack of effective interdisciplinary cooperation” arises (Bennis p. 222). “Interdisciplinary” is defined as team ‘research’. That being stated, Bennis is implying that it is often difficult, at least initially, to get the many components of the project team to work efficiently together, despite possibly having the same or similar goals. The actual organization or bringing together of the various groups is probably going to be the first challenge of this project, but this issue of “effective cooperation” will surely arise (Bennis p.222). There is also the potential problem of time restraints, or “time pressures” (Bennis p.224). This may not be a challenge for those organizations such as Faithworks Inc., the involved Anacostia churches, and whichever networking organization gets on board, but this is unquestionably an issue for my project, due to the fact that my time on this project is limited to the academic year. Another “external demand” that may interfere with the production of this project, is the potential conflict with the government in regards to land ownership (Bennis p.225). Although we are hoping that this potential problem will be avoided because of our ability to preview such
data as land ownership through asset mapping, this could still pose as a problem down the road, in the event of a mistake on our part. A final potential concern that Bennis addresses is “the problem of accepting the new man”, which he suggests has the makings to “have a disabling effect” on the project (Bennis p.229). In application to my project specifically, “the new man” can be interpreted as an outside entity—Faithworks Inc. (and its Georgetown University researchers) and possibly its partnered networking organization. Understandably, the churches of this marginalized community may have their qualms, or concerns about motives, about working with someone outside of the Anacostia community. Bennis labels this as “ambivalence towards interdisciplinary cooperation” (Bennis p. 226).

Robert Janes presents a similar framework in his piece, offering five key factors of action programs. I have chosen to focus on three of these five factors, the first of which, in my opinion, is a direct indication of whether or not a project will be successful and that is “community involvement” (Janes p.53-4). I have stated that a social problem is not only the responsibility of that community that is being threatened by the problem, but also the responsibility of surrounding communities, but I firmly believe that the targeted community’s involvement is a chief contributor in the ultimate improvement of that community. Janes hypothesizes that “it is the [action] program itself which accounts primarily for the success of the project” (Janes p.54). I disagree with this statement, and I will support my point simply by using the long-standing phrase ‘you cannot help someone who does not want to be helped’. Although I am a firm believer in an outside force’s ability to motivate, I also strongly believe that the, in this case, deprived community must first be self-motivated and want to be involved in order to achieve
success. One point that Janes includes, and that I do agree with, in this hypothesis is that he believes that any community can have a successful outcome; it is not merely limited to higher-class communities and/or predominantly white communities. In his work he refers to a case of community improvement actions taken in Hyde Park, Illinois, an urban area within Chicago, in which they succeeded in improving the overall state of the community, and a case in Bloomington, Illinois (not an urban community) in which an attempt at improvement resulted in failure. “Divisive community structure combined with an inadequate program” is also another factor to be considered, which could contribute to failure (Janes p.54). This presents a problem of not only an inadequate program (which we are hoping to combat inadequacy by teaming up with a networking organization, since we [Faithworks] specialize in development, not organizing), but also the potential problem of having several churches involved, but with dissimilar or self-interested goals.

A preliminary concern of Faithworks is to whom do we approach in the Anacostia community to ignite change? James McKee points out that there is a certain “power structure of the community”, or in other words an “inner-core” (McKee p.197). Before we can get the ball rolling on our interviews, we must determine the “inner-core” of the community. This is someone or a group that is very influential within the given community, and therefore would facilitate the process of our project. An example of a potential “inner-core” within the Anacostia community is the Reverend Willie Wilson of Union Temple Baptist Church. This is an individual who is not only a widely recognized figure within the community, but also regionally and possibly even nationally.

Summary
The overall theme of the literature appears to support the idea of a collective research project, or as we at Georgetown like to call it, community based research. The literature does present certain conflicts that arise when conducting a research project in such a manner; however, these challenges do not seem to outweigh the strength or influence of a collective effort. As with any project, problems—both internal and external, will arise, but it is not easy for a deprived community single-handedly spark change. There will be issues of mistrust, but throughout the process we must bear in mind that the Anacostia community is not solely responsible for its present condition and its future, we too (along with other neighboring communities) must assume a good deal of this responsibility and contribute to its improvement.

**DATA AND METHODS**

Once again, the primary goal of this project led by Faithworks Inc. is to establish affordable housing in the Anacostia community. This development will hopefully lead to the creation of other benefits for the community as a whole. In phase one of this project (Spring of 2005), quantitative data was collected through asset mapping of the Anacostia community. This data includes, the number of churches in the community, any land owned by these community churches, the amount of land owned, and the value of this property. Using this information, we derived a list of optimal partner churches, based primarily on these physical assets. For phase two of the project, we have devised interview questions to determine if there are any churches that are interested in working in conjunction with Faithworks Inc., what the needs of the community are from the perspective of each church, and if there are any conflict issues when it comes to working in a collaborative effort.
Research Methodology (this section is not entirely completed, because we are still in the process of tweaking our questions, and testing them on a few “practice agents”)

This portion of the study will make use of the interview method, because most of what we are trying to determine (the interest of the churches in a collaborative effort to establish low-income housing, and the community needs in addition to housing [in the long-run], is qualitative.

Research Participants (still to be determined…potentially will be one or more churches of the Anacostia community, these churches will be determined after cold calls are made, and interested churches are ascertained…)

Data Analysis…

Initial Findings…

Liabilities…
Appendix A: