**Balancing Downtown Development and Neighborhood Investment**

**Summary**

**Speakers**

Kathryn Madden, Visiting Lecturer on International Development, Community and Environment Department at Clark University (Moderator)

Theresa Park, Planning Director, City of Lawrence [Presentation]

Jim McKeag, TDI Fellow MassDevelopment

Luis Edgardo Cotto, Executive Director, Egleston Square Main Street

Lisa Wong, former Fitchburg Mayor

**Take-aways**

* It's not just a question of resource allocation (zero sum); municipalities can have significant impact on their neighborhoods through policies, programs, partnerships, and organizing to empower others.
* Blurring the boundaries between downtown and the neighborhoods could help all involved, especially as downtowns become more residential; this might also involve targeted reinvestment in the transition areas between downtown and neighborhoods (parking garages, surface parking lots, underutilized industrial facilities, etc.) to break down barriers.
* Strategic investments in connections can knit downtown and neighborhoods together (street improvements, transit, bike lanes, etc.).
* Sometimes it is important to map where actual investment is going and make sure it is balanced and distributed across the neighborhoods.
* Organizing local residents and communities to take on neighborhood projects and programs (arts, parks, placemaking, etc.) can build neighborhood identity and relationships.  Decision-makers respond when there is a more unified voice.
* Cities have limited staff but can extend their effectiveness by funding non-profit organizations in the neighborhoods (Main Streets, community development corporations, BIDS, etc.).  These neighborhood leaders often represent many others (residents and businesses) who do not have time or ability to show up or stay engaged on day to day basis.
* The role of downtown is evolving and varies:  some are mostly social services and transportation hubs; others are historic/cultural centers; some are jobs centers for suburbs.   We need to think of downtown as non-contested space that welcomes all.
* In Gateway Cities, jobs might follow new residential development; special effort is required to engage residents in new multifamily housing, who might be younger and more transient.
* Organizing, coalitions, and leadership are essential ingredients at every level; the best leadership empowers others.