



## Institute on Assets and Social Policy

Informing policies and practices that broaden wealth, reduce inequality,  
and improve the social and economic well-being of American households.

September 2009

*“Community Assets – Expanding Beyond Individual Asset Ownership”* Hannah Thomas and Thomas Shapiro

Chapter 18 in *“Building Healthy Communities: A Guide to Community Economic Development for Advocates, Lawyers, and Policymakers”* ed. Roger Clay, Jr. & Susan R. Jones. 2009. American Bar Association

In *“Community Assets – Expanding Beyond Individual Asset Ownership”* Hannah Thomas and Thomas Shapiro build a case for the asset field to look to not only individual forms of ownership, but also community forms of ownership that resonate with a place-based approach to community development.

Traditional asset-based approaches to community development focus on the individual. However the individual is at risk of moving up by moving out and taking away from the community the individual assets developed. By promoting both individual AND community assets, we have a way to develop incentives for individuals and families to stay in the community and improve it.

Using case studies to illustrate their conceptual framework, they propose looking at community assets from the perspective of people, land and institutions. Land is a critical asset of the community, and can be owned in a variety of ways. Community land trusts offer one way to hold land as a community rather than just following private models of ownership. People in the community are another critical resource often incentivized to leave a community in search of social and economic mobility. Institutions of a community offer ways to develop a variety of assets. Those institutions with ties to the community may be more likely to stay in the community.

[Buy the book from ABA](#)

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