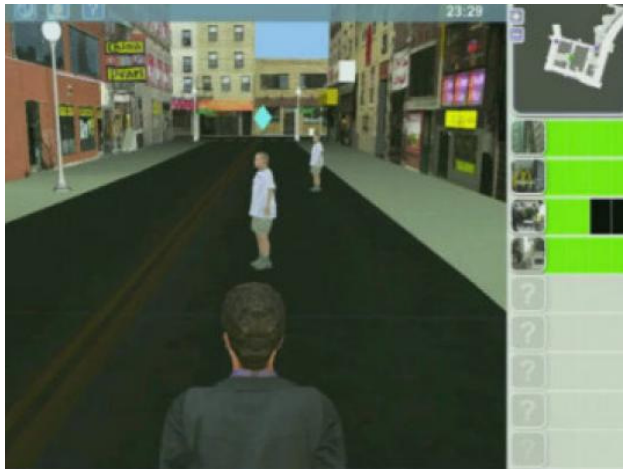


# Game aims to draw in North Quincy

## Game's goal is to increase Asian community involvement

By [Jessica Bartlett](#) Globe Correspondent / November 14, 2010

The Boston Globe



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Imagine walking past the Wollaston T station in Quincy and going up Newport Avenue, looking at shops on the street, speaking to the locals, and commenting on the neighborhood.

Now imagine that this is a video game.

At least, that's the idea.

"It's social networking meets location-based gaming," said Tim Reardon, a planner at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

Along with the Asian Community Development Corp., the council hopes to design an interactive gaming platform set in the North Quincy/Wollaston area, in hopes that the program will promote community interest and participation in regional development.

Mainly geared toward the Asian community, the program will provide a virtual world that allows people to explore the area, complete with a series of questions and structured dialogue to gain insight into how residents feel about their neighborhoods.

For North Quincy and Wollaston, "the objective is to develop a planning framework for development in [the area, to] have a sustained public planning process that uses this tool," Reardon said. "It's not just a pilot activity; it's a real planning project."

Currently in the planning stages for the game, the \$250,000 platform, created by Community PlanIT and funded by the Knight Foundation, will be an online interactive tool for use in the months and weeks leading up to a public meeting. All in all, the program hopes to create a dialogue within the community about development, receive feedback on neighborhoods, and involve a larger demographic — in age and race — in city meetings. "The city has its own planning efforts, but this would help to augment and expand the breadth of civic participation in those efforts," Reardon said.

The program will be available in a variety of languages, something that Janelle Chan, the acting executive director for the ACDC, hopes will bridge the communication gap in predominantly Asian neighborhoods.

“Something ACDC is involved with is getting people who don’t speak English to be a part of this process. That’s part of the reason we have youth engaged in this process — they are often the bridge culturally, linguistically,” Chan said.

“At the same time, [it’s] getting them to recognize that they have their own voice in these planning processes, they are also a participant.”

According to Dean Rizzo, co-director of Quincy Chamber of Commerce, diversity of community involvement “certainly needs to change. It has increased, but the level of participation does not reflect the percentage of the overall population in the city of Quincy.”

A program like the one being designed would do just that, he said. The ACDC has pioneered this type of platform before, and with positive results.

After implementing a gaming program called Participatory Chinatown (which can be found at [www.participatorychinatown.org](http://www.participatorychinatown.org)), in which users select an avatar to explore, comment on, and learn from a 3D model of Boston’s Chinatown, attendance exceeded the venue’s capacity for two public meetings.

“More important than the number of people there was the demographic,” Reardon said. “We were getting a much [more] diverse cross section of the Chinatown community.”

But because the rendering of Chinatown in 3D took months, MAPC will have Community PlanIt design a program that will accomplish the same goal at a lower cost.

Although ACDC is excited to expand its work to Quincy, the decision to bring this type of program to the city was not a choice, but a necessity, Chan said. “Quincy’s Asian population is over 20 percent. We no longer consider it a burgeoning community. It’s an organization within the community that we need to focus our attention on,” she said.

The fact that these communities are also near areas of public transportation fits nicely into the group’s program.

“The neighborhoods in North Quincy [and Wollaston] have a lot of Asians around the T stop. And a lot of these [projects] focus on transit-oriented-developments,” Chan said.

Marc Draisen, executive director for MAPC, plans to work closely with the city administration to implement the project and use the information and feedback it provides.

To help implement it, the planning council will use some of its recent \$4 million grant for livable and sustainable communities, part of a program called MetroFuture. “MAPC is an organization of municipal government, so we’ll be working closely with the City of Quincy, as well as neighborhood organizations, to initiate this planning process and see if we can bring elements of the MetroFuture plan to the City of Quincy,” he said.

Draisen is excited the program’s implementation will coincide with the revitalization of Quincy Center, something he said demonstrates the city’s commitment to smart growth planning. “They’ve already indicated that they strongly support that type of planning, which is focused on concentrating jobs and homes in areas where infrastructure already exists and preserving green space and natural resources elsewhere,” Draisen said.

Overall, he said, the program will be a joint effort that the planning council and the city will work on together step by step, one pixel, one city block, one region, at a time.

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