THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
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From Poverty, Opportunity:

Putting the Market to Work for Lower Income Families in Indianapolis

Public and private leaders in Indianapolis have a substantial, and widely overlooked, opportunity today to help lower income families get ahead by bringing down the inflated prices they pay for basic necessities, such as food and housing. This brief summarizes the evidence of this opportunity, which was collected for the 2006 Brookings report titled **From Poverty Opportunity: Putting the Market to Work for Lower Income Families**, available on-line at www.brookings.edu/metro.

Key findings for Indianapolis include:

Lower income families tend to pay high prices to cash checks and buy short-term loans.
In the metropolitan area, high-priced check cashers and alternative loan providers are very densely concentrated in poor areas. In 2005, there was about one of these establishments in a lower income neighborhood for every 4,357 residents of these neighborhoods, compared to one establishment in all other neighborhoods for every 20,434 residents of the highest income neighborhoods.

Most lower income tax filers pay to have their taxes prepared for them.
In the metro area, about 52% of low-income tax filers paid for tax preparation services in 2003.

Lower income tax filers buy high-priced refund anticipation loans.
In 2003, 19% of low-income filers bought high-priced refund anticipation loans in the Indianapolis metro.

Lower income families tend to pay higher than average prices for auto loans.
No data specific to Indianapolis is available, but a 2004 Federal Reserve survey indicates that lower income households pay an average APR of 9.2%, compared to 7.4% paid by all other households.

Lower income families tend to live in the most expensive neighborhoods to insure cars in.
In a sample of quotes obtained from three insurance companies, drivers in lower income neighborhoods in the metropolitan area paid an average, annual premium of $458, while drivers in the highest income neighborhoods paid an average of $366.

Lower income families are more likely than other households to buy high-priced mortgages.
In 2004, about 25% of the mortgages originated to lower income households in the Indianapolis metro are defined by the Federal Reserve as high-cost mortgages, compared to 9% of the mortgages originated to the highest income households.

Home insurance is not necessarily more expensive in low-income neighborhoods.
In a sample of quotes obtained from one insurance company, homeowners in lower income neighborhoods in the metropolitan area paid an average, annual premium of $694, while homeowners in the highest income neighborhoods paid an average of $720.

High-priced rent-to-own stores are densely concentrated in Indianapolis's lower income neighborhoods.
In 2005, there was about one rent-to-own establishment in a lower income neighborhood for every 17,912 residents of these neighborhoods, compared to one establishment in the highest income neighborhoods for every 326,950 residents of those neighborhoods.

Higher priced, small grocery stores are concentrated in Indianapolis's lower income neighborhoods.
In 2005, the average grocery store size in a low-income neighborhood is 7,646 sq. ft., compared to an average store size of 27,237 sq. ft. in a non-low-income neighborhood.

To lower these prices, public and private leaders must reduce the higher business costs that drive up prices for poor families, pass new laws and more rigorously enforce existing laws that curb market abuses, and third, and most importantly, invest in giving lower income consumers the know-how to avoid bad deals and find the lowest possible prices. Together, these strategies will give lower income families a powerful tool to lift themselves out of poverty.

Metropolitan Policy Program
http://www.brookings.edu/metro

For more information, contact: Matt Fellowes, Fellow
E-mail: mfellowes@brookings.edu ; Phone: (202) 797-6140