Community Empowerment System

> Schematic, authoritarian solutions to production and social order inevitably fail when they exclude the fund of valuable knowledge embodied in local practices … Formal schemes of order are untenable without some elements of the practical knowledge they tend to dismiss.
>
> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*

Neighborhoods are complex areas with a variety of strengths and weaknesses that require appropriate attention. The proposed Community Empowerment System, or CES, is designed to identify and understand topics of concern or causes for celebration in neighborhoods through community participation. By developing and promoting a deeper, more intimate knowledge of local conditions, the CES helps drive the community development process as well. As such, it forms an integral part of the construction and function of a Detroit Neighborhood Indicator System. In other cities with established indicator systems, community empowerment systems provide information about neighborhood conditions to a wide variety of users. Different systems achieve this basic goal in different ways, depending on the mission of the data intermediary, the goals of the user groups, resource availability, and other considerations.

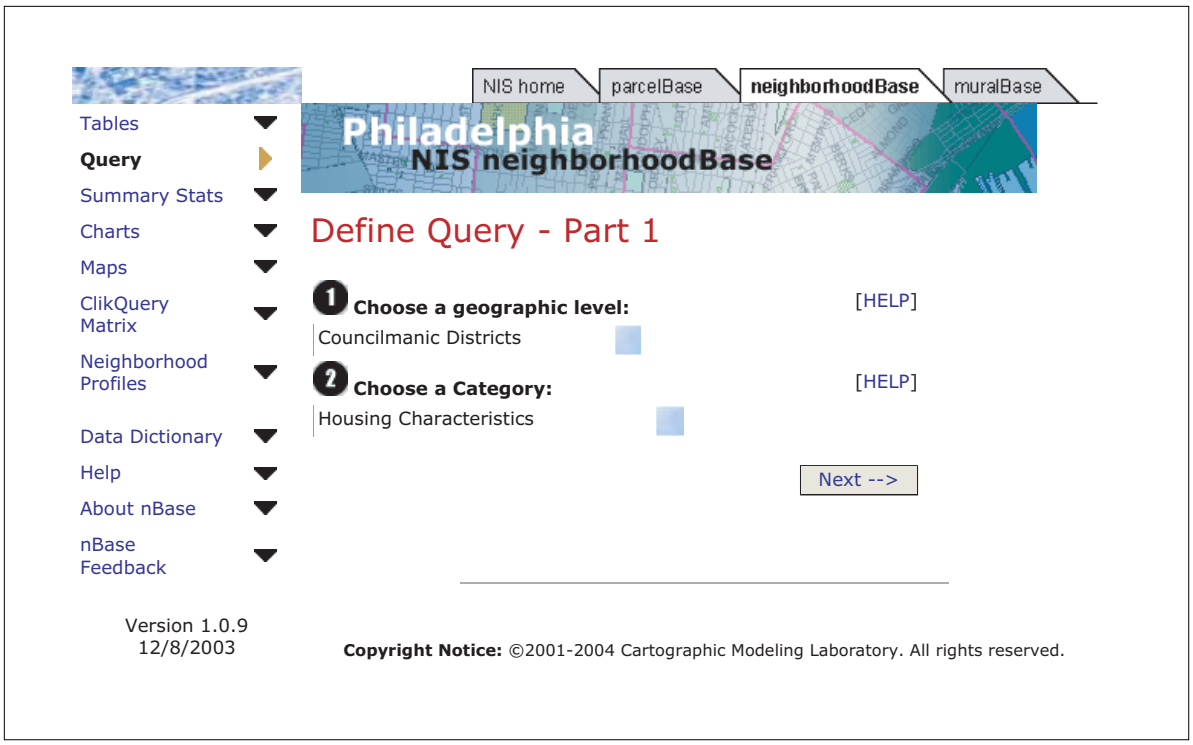
As advancing communications technology makes the collection and distribution of neighborhood-level data more feasible, the benefits of widespread information exchange are being realized in a growing number of America's cities.[31] Local governments are increasingly searching for ways to monitor small-scale changes within cities for the purposes of more efficient public service distribution. Many aspects of the grass-roots community development process- from applying for public and foundation grant funding to encouraging economic development- require the collection of neighborhood-level data from a variety of sources. By making information more accessible and by training organizations on how to use information, a CES will help build stronger Detroit neighborhoods.

This section describes a CES to suit Detroit's needs and provides recommended steps for developing a CES. The needs addressed by a CES are described and relevant case study examples are

[31] Kingsley, G. Thomas. 1998. *Indicators: Taking Advantage of the New Potential.* National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership – The Urban Institute.

Figure 4

Philadelphia: CES Interface Showing Various Geographic Units



Source: Phildelphia Neighborhood Information System[32]

Figure 4: Illustration of the Phildelphia system's ability to report at multiple geographic levels.

given to demonstrate the roles a CES plays in various cities. Based on these case studies and an analysis of CES functions, recommendations were developed for a Detroit system.

Key Dimensions for a Detroit CES

Research for the proposed plan focused on common practices among a wide variety of community-based information systems, as well as system components and capabilities unique to Detroit's needs. Combining this assessment of numerous systems throughout the country with a survey of information resources in Detroit, the following six considerations emerged as fundamental to the development of a CES:

1. Reporting

The primary function of a CES is to produce reports on the health of neighborhoods. In order to meet the needs of most component users, neighborhood reports should accommodate a wide disparity in financial capacity and technical ability. Embracing both pre-generated and custom reports maximizes the variety of system outputs, and

[32] Cartographic Modeling Lab. *Philadelphia NIS Neighborhoodbase: Query.* http://cml.upenn.edu/nbase/nbQueryRequest.asp. Accessed April 19, 2004.

responds most efficiently to variation in user sophistication. The Boston Foundation uses neighborhood indicators to produce a biennial Boston Indicators Report that goes to considerable length to insure data accuracy. Explanations of data collection techniques and potential policy implications supplement statistics from public and private agencies to maximize the user's ability to use data effectively.[33] On the other hand, the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance allows users considerable flexibility in assembling the types of information they specifically require.[34] An evaluation of different reporting strategies follows.

- **Fixed Reports**
  Data templates exist for each geographic unit of analysis (e.g., census tract, cluster). Reports that users access for a particular geographic unit include the same categories of information across the city. Figure 4 illustrates an example interface from the Philadelphia NIS, highlighting the availability of reports at various units of geographic analysis.These fixed-format reports are often available as printed pieces as well as in electronic forms like Adobe Acrobat. By providing reports in print, users who may not have access to Internet technology can still acquire needed information. Figure 5 (on the following page) is an example of a fixed Neighborhood Summary Report for the Allendale Neighborhood of Baltimore.

  Pro:
  - Standardized reports are quick and easy to develop.
  - Using common fields allows for comparisons across different areas of the city.
  - Fixed reports can be more easily used by those with limited technical skills.

  Con:
  - Fixed reports may miss unique community assets (e.g., even if Southwest Detroit residents consider murals an important feature of local maps, they may be rare enough throughout the city that standard neighborhood reports might not include mural information).

- **Customizable Reports**
  These outputs provide a list of all available data and geographic resolution levels. The user is able to choose specific data and compile reports based on the chosen data. These reports are typically available in electronic format only.

[33] Boston Foundation, *The Boston Indicators Report 2002.* http: //www.tbf.org/indicators/summary/ index.asp. Accessed January 24, 2004.

[34] Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance. "BNIA Mapping System" http:/ /www.bnia.org/about/workgroups.html. Accessed March 30, 2004.

Figure 5

Baltimore: Example of a Fixed Report

Source: Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance [35]

Figure 5: Sample fixed report for the Allendale Neighborhood in Baltimore.

Figure 6 shows an example of a custom report built on NKLA, focusing on building code violations in one census tract in Los Angeles.

Pro:

- Flexibility allows users to look into areas of interest to them and exclude irrelevant data from the report.

Con:

- Developing a custom reporting function takes more time and money than a more basic system designed to produce fixed reports only.

[35] Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance. *Neighborhood Resources: Community Associations – Allendale.* http://www.livebaltimore.com/neighbor/allndale.html. Accessed April 19, 2004.

Analysis: Both fixed reports and customizable reports are crucial for a strong CES for Detroit. In order to support the needs of users with varying levels of sophistication, both reporting formats are necessary.

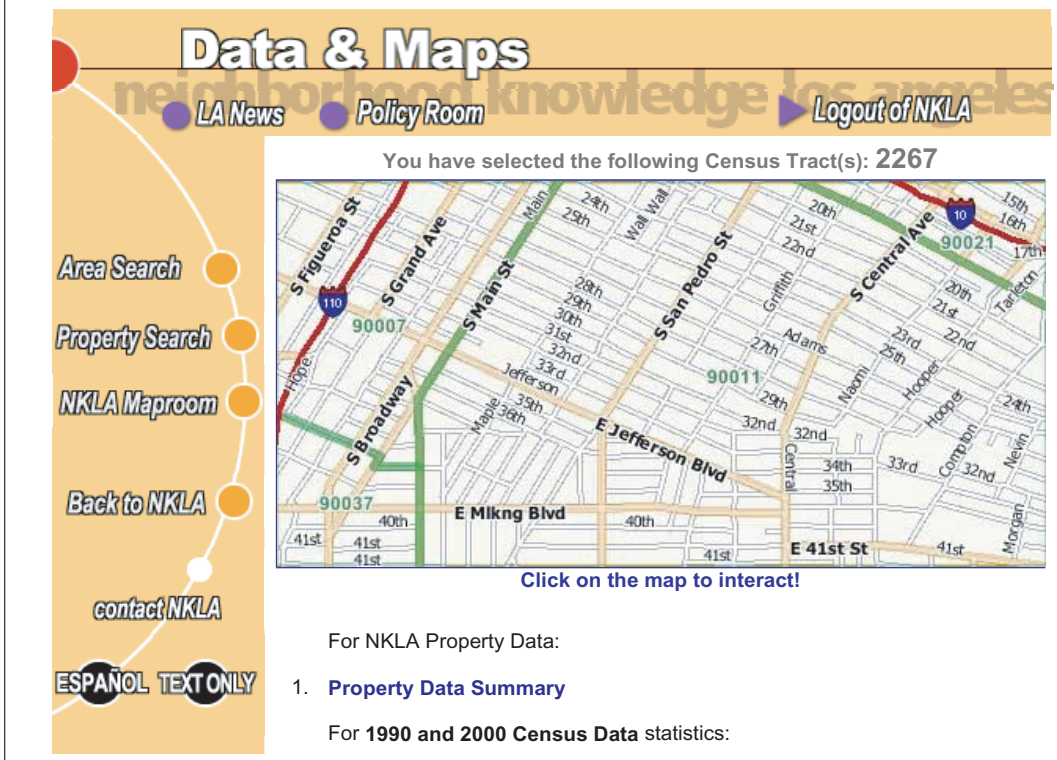
2. User Registration

Many CES require users to register in order to access or upload data. Some place no restrictions on the availability of local information.

[36] Neighborhood Knowledge Los Angeles. *Data and Maps*. http://nkla.sppsr.ucla.edu/DataMaps/LANews/Master.cfm?Page=AreaMenu.cfm&Type=Tract&CFID=115857&CFTOKEN=46764908. Accessed April 26, 2004.

Figure 6

Neighborhood Knowledge Los Angeles: Data Available for Custom Reports



Source: Neighborhood Knowledge Los Angeles [36]

Figure 6: Summary of Available Data for Customizable Report on Census Tract 2267 in Los Angeles.

- **Required Registration**
  Access to, or ability to contribute, neighborhood data is moderated by a registration process that supplies system administrators with user information and/or locally-generated data.

  Pro:

  - This is an effective mechanism for capturing user and use information. The collection of user and use information can improve the system over time when these data are used to make future structural decisions. The case of the Cleveland Area Network on Data and Organizing (CAN DO) is a particularly useful example. The CAN DO program tracked system use as a method of proving the effectiveness of outreach efforts targeted at users with little or no technical training.[37]

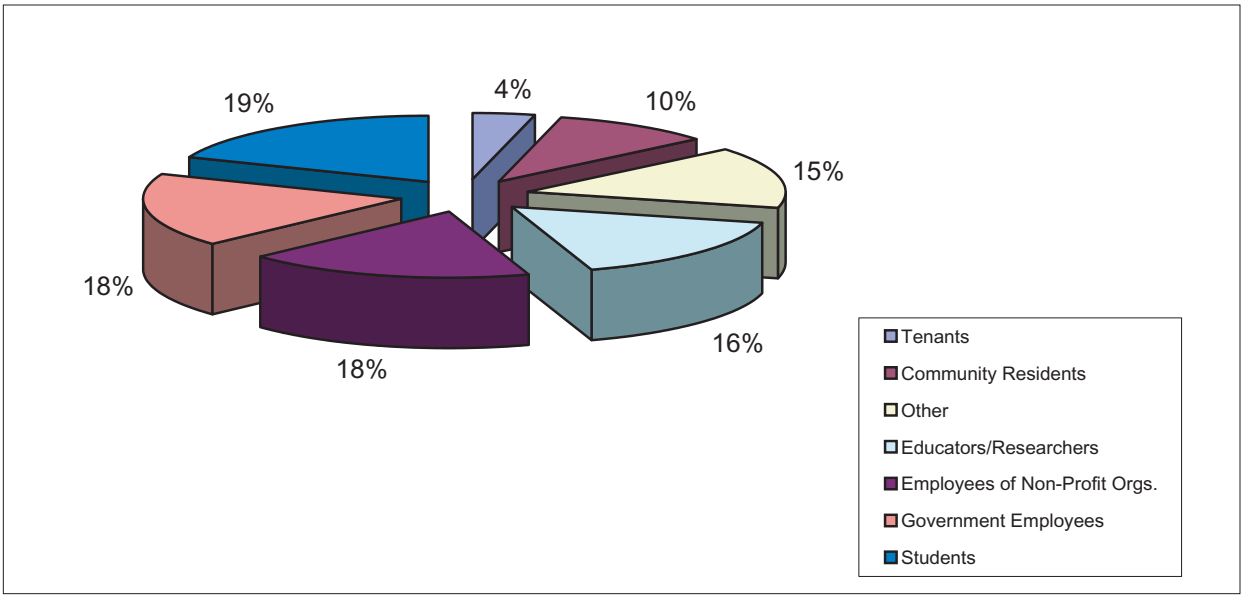
    Figure 7 displays the various types of users of the Neighborhood Knowledge Los Angeles (NKLA) system. Here, the system's registration process allows the system administrator to understand who is using the system and if a particular group dominates. One major benefit of a CES is that new uses for the system will develop in the most unlikely

[37] Bailey, Terri J. 2000. *Building Community Capacity to Use Information: Four Training Options From the Experience of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership*. National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership. http://www.urban.org/nnip/pdf/bailey2.pdf. p. 9. Accessed March 30, 2004.

[38] Neighborhood Knowledge Los Angeles. NKLA Administrators. Electronic Correspondence. March 19, 2004.

Figure 7

Neighborhood Knowledge Los Angeles Breakdown of Registered Users



Source: Neighborhood Knowledge Los Angeles [38]

Figure 7: Chart illustrating the diverse types of users for Los Angeles system.

of places. For example, 18% of NKLA's users are governmental departments who should already be sharing data among one another. The ability to evaluate different user needs and determine what types of trainings are needed is a significant benefit of user registration.

- Registration provides partial accountability for uploaded data by recording who provided the data in question, which allows for a method to check and enforce accuracy in data provision. This helps to provide information on neighborhoods which is current and correctly portrays the area.

Con:

- Registration might discourage the participation of citizens who desire access to neighborhood-level data but are unwilling to share information about themselves or their organization.

- **No Registration Required**
  The ability to download or upload information is not qualified or restricted in any way, and anyone with internet access may access the data.

  Pro:

  - Allows for less restrictive distribution of information.

  Con:

  - Does not provide user and use information, nor does it provide a method of verifying information accuracy if users are allowed to upload data.

Conclusion:
Having the fixed reports portion of the CES available without requiring registration will maximize user access. However, for more sophisticated users who want to use custom reporting functions or want to upload new data, a registration process allows the system administrator to track data sources and uses of the system. Having both choices allows new users to access the CES and gain an understanding of what purpose it can serve, while more advanced users can register in order to produce their desired outputs.

3. Data Acquisition and Management

The system designer must decide whether or not to allow for data uploading by partners.

- **Do not allow for data uploading**
  In this case, system administrators have complete control over information provision and make all decisions about data acquisition and format.
  Pro:
  - This approach minimizes development costs and is typical of most CES.
  - Develop data templates to ensure that neighborhood organizations administer similar surveys and fill in the same fields so that data can be entered into a database.
  - It also excludes potentially unreliable data from the CES.

  Con:
  - Any closed system will need to add new data over time. A greater burden falls upon the data intermediary to gather data when users are prevented from uploading it.

- **Allow for uploading (with or without filtering)**
  In this case partners can upload local data. Some system administrators check and filter data before they enter the data warehouse, but others allow any partner to upload any data.
  Pro:
  - Allowed uploading indicates that the CES is an open system, encouraging more partners to participate.
  - Local and specific information may be captured, especially data that are not collected at a city-wide level.

  Con:
  - Initial software development costs are higher.
  - Non-standard data across the city can be confusing to some users.
  - Poorly collected data that sit on a server next to systematically collected data can be seen as "valid" (though this can largely be mitigated if the data host filters data once it is uploaded).

Conclusion:
In the initial implementation of the system, data uploading should not be included as the system development will be complicated enough without this functionality. Over time, as the user base grows and matures, uploading will be demanded by users and become more necessary to implement. This function can be added once sufficient demand and a substantial user base has been achieved.

Allowing for community input on the accuracy of existing data as they are cleaned and organized for the users creates a checks-and-balances system which leads to more precise data. This communication between community-based organizations and the agency in charge of the system needs to be constant to provide a current description of the city's neighborhoods. Through conversation problems can be identified and solved and uploading information can remain part of the CES.

A user can fill out a standard online form, as they do in Minneapolis, and describe the incorrect information and how it can be fixed. Templates for locally generated data can also be provided by the CES so that different neighborhood organization groups can use similar survey questions when inventorying retail and commercial establishments or provide exact address locations so that community assets may be geocoded and mapped. Much of the value that comes from being able to detail and describe neighborhood conditions will be the ability to communicate to city officials and other administrative agencies the resources that are available and the impacts that have resulted from investment and funding. Oftentimes follow-up questionnaires, reports on trends and maps generated can only be produced from data that the neighborhood organizations themselves provide.

4. Feedback, Outreach, and Collaboration

Successful administrators conduct outreach and facilitate collaboration through multiple channels in order to build support for their community empowerment systems. This improves the effectiveness of existing systems, expands use and leads to coordinated programs for community improvement.

For example, the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicator Alliance (BNIA) has an established "Work Group."[39] City agencies, community organizations, and universities participate in one of four groups (Coordination Committee; Vital Signs Steering Committee; Technical Assistance and Training Work Group; Data Providers and Access Points) to help create and support BNIA projects. These groups are listed on BNIA's website, which provides links to local city, non-profit, and university websites and allows users to see who is working on the project. BNIA also lists neighborhood resources within Baltimore and provides links that list the location of the neighborhood, a description of the area, and a contact person for the

[39] Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance. About BNIA: Workgroups. http://www.bnia.org/about/workgroups.html. Accessed March 30, 2004.

[40] Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance. *Neighborhood Resources: Community Associations* http://www.bnia.org/resources/community.html. Accessed March 30, 2004.

neighborhood organization.[40] The goals with respect to feedback, outreach and collaboration functions are:

- Add new data providers: By conducting outreach educational meetings with potential data providers, for example, fire and police departments, the staff for the system can explain what desired data might be needed and offer personal assurances about reasonable concerns on the part of the provider. A human touch can build trust between institutions.

- Provide a forum for CES users to discuss data and other issues: In reaching out to users, data hosts like the Northeast Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) hold periodic group meetings with community-based organizations and other user groups as well as data providers in order to work together to define system goals and objectives. According to Greg Sanders of NIPC, these meetings help participants make connections that lead to other discussions through which organizations identify complementary goals or skills.[41]

  The National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP) cites an example of collaboration among several Boston-based community organizations focused on health issues concerning children and families.[42] The Boston Children and Families Database (BCFD) was created to house information that many universities, public agencies, and community organizations needed to understand the health issues affecting the city's neighborhoods. The groups worked together to obtain information and meet obstacles. Technology concerns were a focal point for this group, specifically as they related to providing information in an inexpensive and widely available manner. Members were able to develop creative solutions due to the varied expertise across groups.[43] This collaboration allows groups to tailor data to their specific projects. Participants also gained a collective understanding of new technology useful in data analysis.

- Add new users and improve system awareness: In order to realize the system's capacity to help the citizens of Detroit, a strong outreach function is essential for a CES.

Different systems employ different methods of

[41] Sanders, Greg. Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission. Personal Interview. February 25, 2004.

[42] Bailey, Terri J. *Building Community Capacity to Use Information: Four Training Options From the Experience of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership*. National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership. December 1, 2000. http://www.urban.org/nnip/pdf/bailey2.pdf. Accessed March 30, 2004.

[43] Bailey, Terri J. *Building Community Capacity to Use Information: Four Training Options From the Experience of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership*. National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership. December 1, 2000 http://www.urban.org/nnip/pdf/bailey2.pdf. p. 9. Accessed March 30, 2004.

Goals related to feedback, outreach, and collaboration are: add new data providers; provide a forum for discussion; add new users and improve awareness of the system.

generating and soliciting input from system users and the larger community. None of these methods are mutually exclusive. Commonly used methods are as follows:

- **Email comments from users**
  Pro:
  - Low-cost method for capturing user feedback.
  - Specific technical issues receive attention as they are encountered.

  Con:
  - Feedback is limited to particular comments. This format cannot easily capture fundamental issues of system design or direction. Likewise, lack of context can impede an administrator's ability to respond to comments.

- **Traffic Monitoring**
  Some systems track web site activity to evaluate use patterns. By tracking which web pages and types of data users access most frequently, the intermediary can begin to understand areas where users would likely want to see the system expand.
  Pro:
  - Another inexpensive way to tune the system to user needs.
  - Gives a verifiable measure of what areas of the system are most often used.

  Con:
  - Fails to capture information from people who do not use the site.
  - Simply tracking what types of data appear most often in reports does not necessarily indicate which data are most valuable.

- **Partner Meetings**
  Some systems feature regular meetings among stakeholder groups including data sources, potential users or current system users (many organizations are both data providers and system users). Holding these types of meetings can build support for the system among current and potential users and data providers and helps capture feedback from users about desirable future directions for the system to take.
  Pro:
  - Holding such meetings shows that the system host cares about the users and their needs. Such meetings can also help draw data out of hesitant organizations by constructing broad-

based arguments for why data would be useful if made public. These interactions can lead to unforeseen collaboration benefits among partners.

Con:

- Often community-based organizations have finite resources and cannot dedicate staff to such meetings. Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (NIPC) overcame this issue in part by offering nominal annual grants to groups that participated actively in system development meetings.[44]

Conclusion:
All three methods of generating feedback and outreach are valuable. A simple email function ensures a continuous ability to send input to the system administrator. By tracking use, a system host can get a more objective view of what areas of the system experience the most use (and are therefore worthy of more energy, new data). Conversely, identifying an area of the system as underutilized could lead to additional training and outreach efforts about that area or, if interest remains low, the abandonment of that section of the system. This would allow finite resources to be directed to more useful areas.

5. User Training

Successful systems conduct user training to build support for a CES and expand the utility of the system for existing users. One of the major benefits of a CES is that it can put large amounts of data into the hands of organizations with limited resources. Yet some of these organizations lack the technical skills needed to access and effectively use CES data. If CES administrators want to utilize community groups as data collectors, training must be conducted to help those partners collect surveys and other information effectively. The goals for CES user training are:

- Expand system user base through system marketing/ outreach. In order to expand the user base, the system administrator markets the CES through outreach meetings and training. By reaching out to potential users, especially those with limited technical experience, a CES will develop a broad base of support. This can help free up data from hesitant sources and build credibility for the system.
- Help existing users get more from the CES.
- Help all users function more effectively as data collectors.

[44] Sanders, Greg. Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission. Personal Interview. February 25, 2004.

Different training methods can be used depending on the particular goal.

- **Online Tutorials**
  Some systems, like NKLA, in Los Angeles have an online tutorial function built into the web site. This allows users to learn about additional functions within the site and helps them use NKLA more effectively.
  Pro:
  - Cost-effective way to expand the utility of the system.
  - Continuous and constant availability

  Con:
  - Does not reach out to the least skilled users.
  - Can be expensive to develop.

- **Training Sessions**
  Many indicator systems conduct training sessions for current and potential users to reach out to those with limited experience using internet databases and mapping software. The goal is to help those organizations that are the least trained to use a CES to understand how and why a system can be used to help in their areas of interest. These sessions can also help community-based organizations learn about data collection and uploading into the CES. For instance, NKLA holds training sessions where Web basics are reviewed to bring users up to speed with the necessary technology to use the system. These trainings are usually geared to groups working on specific projects, not as a service to the community in general.[45]
  Pro:
  - Can expand the system's user base, especially among those groups with the least technical skills. It can also expand the types of data in the system while improving the quality of data collected.

  Con:
  - This type of outreach is time consuming and expensive to conduct.

Conclusion:
Despite the time and money costs, a strong training program cannot begin and end with an online tutorial. While these tutorials can be useful for more technically proficient users, they fail to help those who need more fundamental training to understand and use a CES effectively. Initially, a CES should expend nearly all training energies on person-to-person training.

[45] Neighborhood Knowledge Los Angeles. *How-To-Kit*. http://nkla.sppsr.ucla.edu/Master.cfm?Page=HowToKit/main.cfm&Page2=Political.cfm#2. Accessed April 19, 2004.

6. Role in Change

Existing systems vary in how active a role they take in trying to affect community change. Table 2, adapted from the NNIP Handbook, provides an example of some of the different organizations that use the CES in Denver to support policy change and/or illuminate and substantiate neighborhood-level challenges. CES users can take information from the system and put it directly to work as Mercy Housing does to target their organization's efforts to areas in the greatest need. Alternatively, stories in the Denver Post do not directly alter policy but can change the way voters and politicians perceive an issue and thereby alter policy direction.[46] These systems may be sorted into the following categories:

- **Passive Outputs**
  This is the philosophy behind the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership. They feel the role of an indicator system is to provide information on as many key indicator areas as possible in an unbiased fashion. "NNIP partners operate very differently from traditional planners and researchers.

[46] Richman, Neal and Yoh Kawano. 2000. *Neighborhood Information is NOT Just for the Experts.* National Housing Institute. http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/113/richman.html. Accessed March 3, 2004.

[47] Kingsley, G. Thomas (ed.). 1999. *Building and Operating Neighborhood Indicator Systems: A Guidebook.* National Neighborhood Indicators Project – The Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/nnip/pdf/guidebk.pdf. p. 62-66. Accessed March 28, 2004.

Table 2

The Piton Data Initiative: Users and Purposes

User	Data	Purpose
Boys and Girls Clubs of Denver	Indicators of high-risk youth (e.g., teen pregnancy, poverty, single parenting, juvenile arrests) geographically mapped	Select site for expansion clubs
Mercy Housing	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood	Target housing support strategies
Knapp Elementary School	Indicators of population, income, labor force, and educational attainment	Plans for involving parents and for community in school neighborhoods served by school
Denver Parks and Recreation	Violent crime and violent death data by neighborhood	Program development and geographic targeting
Colorado Department of Health	Labor force and disability data	Program development
Denver Post	Teen pregnancy; labor and employment; income and poverty; juvenile crime	Various news stories
Safe City Summit	Neighborhood crime and poverty data	Planning for grant distribution of city violence prevention money

Source: National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership [47]

Table 2: Illustrates the diverse users and uses of the Denver system.

Their theme is democratizing information. They concentrate on facilitating the direct practical use of data by city and community leaders, rather than preparing independent research reports on their own."[48]

Pro:

- This "agnostic" approach offends virtually no one and may allow the system administrators to obtain data from the most sources.

Con:

- This approach relies more heavily on partner initiative to accomplish change, and may draw criticism for appearing unwilling to engage in community improvement.

- **Quasi-Activist**

These systems seek to serve the needs of underserved communities while gathering and sharing data for the entire city. Detroit institutions and coalitions such as SEMCOG might adapt a program like Portland's Multnomah Progress Board, which tracks various benchmarks at the county level (e.g. per capita income, average annual wages, jobs, unemployment, export activity of business, air traffic).[49]

A basic function of the CES involves improving the profile of existing efforts to measure health of neighborhoods. The Success Measures Project (SMP), coordinated nationally by the Boston-based Development Leadership Network currently tracks community-based organiztion (CBO) performance as well as public perception of that performance within urban areas. Since the audiences for both CES information and SMP data overlap to a certain extent, potential for integration exists between the SMP and a CES.

Pro:

- These systems have the potential to help identify the needs of under-served communities and empower them to achieve positive change.
- Allows an area to recognize change over time rather than base evaluations on abstract goals.
- Allows for an ideal vehicle for the publication of SMP results through an on-line CES, supplemented by community outreach efforts.
- Provides the CES with a ready-made functionality: a reason for users to upload data in a standardized format, a community-

[48] National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership. *The NNIP Concept.* http://www.urban.org/nnip/concept.html. Accessed April 19, 2004.

[49] City of Portland, Oregon. *Auditor's Office: Benchmarks about the Economy.* http://www.portlandonline.com/auditor/index.cfm?c=27359. Accessed February 10, 2004.

generated collection of neighborhood information, and a forum for public display of local knowledge.[50]
- CES helps promote these initiatives through partnering with established community development initiatives, and also experienced users obtain benefits of their own as this coordination takes place.

Con:
- This approach is resource-intensive as the time investment necessary to establish relationships with community leaders, build trust, identify issues, and then move to address the existing problems is significant.

- **Activist**
  The West Oakland system is an example of an activist approach. The system has a narrow geographic and thematic focus. Their goal is explicitly to right a wrong (environmental injustice) perpetrated on a poorer community.

  Pro:
  - These systems have a narrow focus, and therefore can have a bigger impact within their service area.

  Con:
  - Narrow focus can limit funding sources and supporters.
  - These systems can be under-funded and seen as tools of a single view/agenda.

Conclusion:
An Activist approach to neighborhood change can be seen as too radical and might make some data providers less willing to share data. The Passive approach ignores the substantial challenges faced by some Detroit neighborhoods and at best is hard to achieve and at worst does not fully describe neighborhood situations.

Recommendations for a Detroit CES

A Community Empowerment System engineered to empower Detroit's communities should emphasize the functions described below. These functions emerged from the above list of considerations and conversations with the project partners. Figure 8 demonstrates the flow of a CES and the various options this plan recommends.

[50] Community Development Advocates of Detroit. *Development: Platform 2001-2002*. http://www.cdadonline.org/ace/index.asp?id=194. Accessed April 15, 2004.

Reporting

Detroit's system should provide both fixed and flexible reports and make them available both on paper and via the Internet. By providing reports in multiple formats and in multiple media, the CES will be usable by a range of users from the beginner to the advanced. Figure 9 displays an example of a fixed report from a demonstration Detroit CES using the Springwells neighborhood.

Figure 8

A User's Guide to the Model Detroit CES

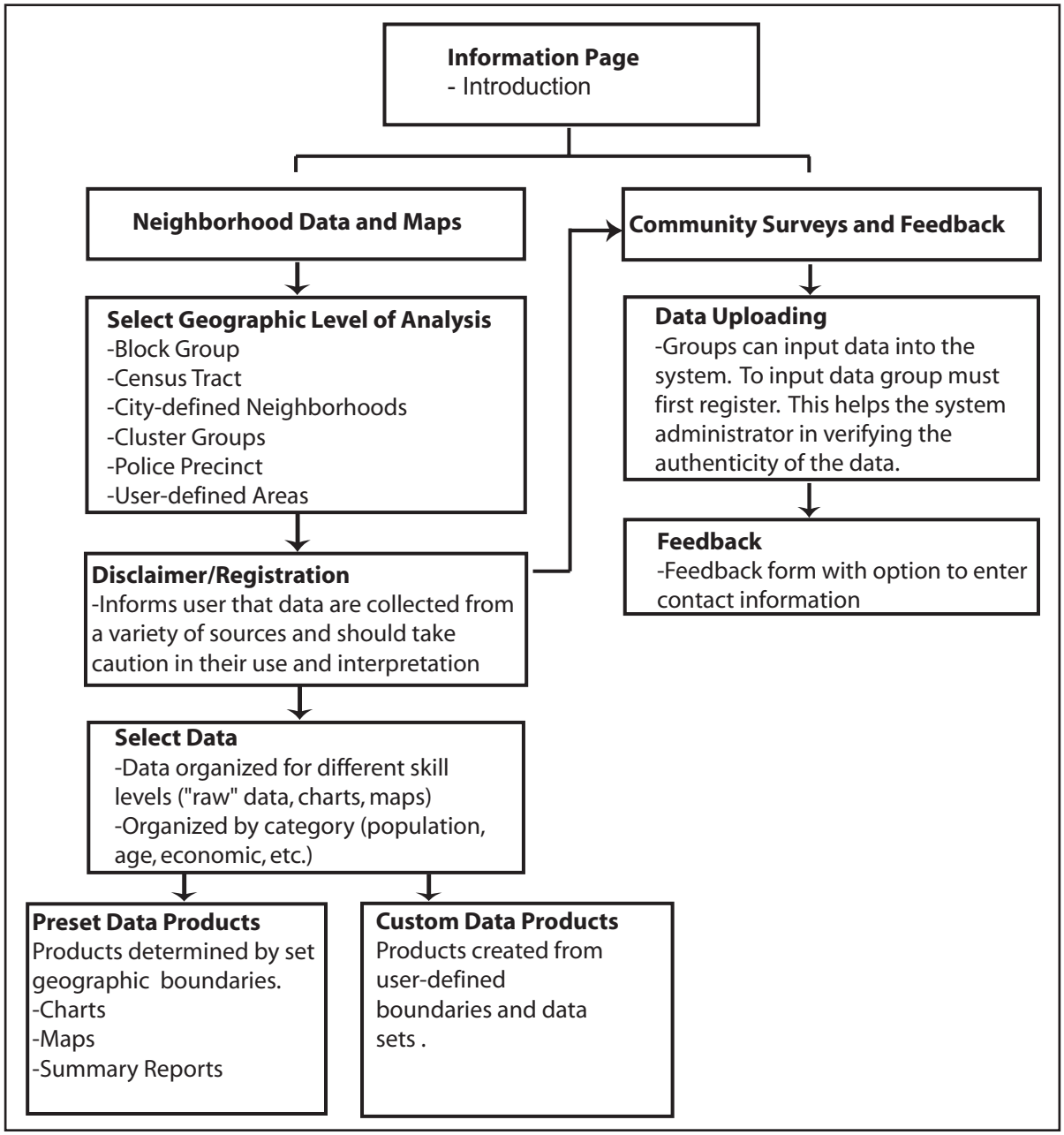


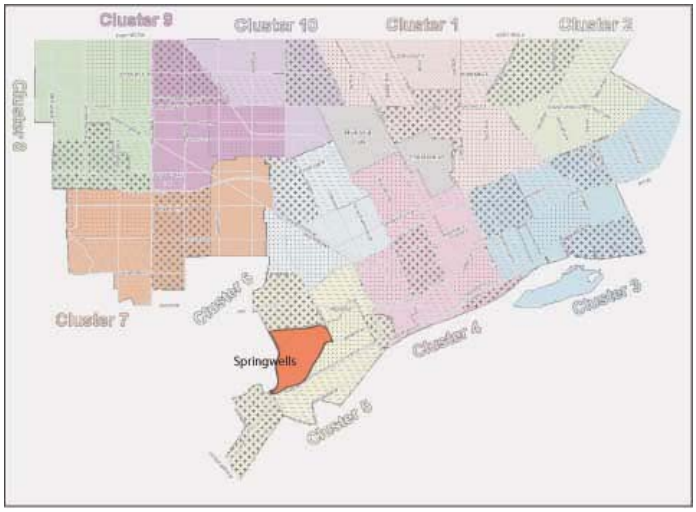
Figure 8: Flowchart illustrating the structure and functions of a Community Empowerment System.

Figure 9

Sample Detroit CES Neighborhood Profile (Fixed Report)

Springwells Neighborhood

(Cluster 5; Census Tracts 5240, 5241, 5242, 5243)



Population

A Growing Community

17,307 people in 2000

7.6% growth in population since 1990

Age Profile

As of 2000, 32.8% of the population is under 18 years old . This is a growing age group having increased 7.3% since 1990.

As of 2000, 6.9% of the population is 65 and over. This population has decreased significantly losing 32.9% since 1990

Race and Ethnicity

Approximately 57% of the population is Hispanic.

33% of the population is White

4% of the population is Black

1% of the population is American Indian

8% of the population is multiracial

Employment

In 2000, the unemployment rate was 12% unemployment. Down from 1990 rate of 23%.

Education

54.3% of those aged 25+ have a high school diploma. Higher than the city of Detroit 30%

Only 5.1% of those 25+ have a college degree. Lower than Detroit 11%

Income and Poverty in 2000

Average Median Household Income $24,324

31.1% in families below poverty status

Households in 2000

Total number of households- 5,501

Average of 3.12 people per household

24% of households are married with children

17% of households are single parent families

Housing and Land Use

Year 2000 total housing units- 6,040 which is down from 6499 in 1990

Owner occupied 2493 down from 2709

8.3% of housing units are vacant, same as 1990 figures

5,275 total parcels. 8.2% of parcels are vacant land. Primary land use residential 84.5%

Map Source: City of Detroit Planning & Development [51]

Figure 9: Sample fixed report for the Springwells neighborhood in Detroit.

[51] City of Detroit Planning & Development Department. *Neighborhood Area Map by Cluster.* http://www.ci.detroit.mi.us/plandevl/advplanning/cinfo/inter/Census/NeighAreaMap.htm. Accessed April 26, 2004.

Figure 10

Excerpt from a Sample Detroit CES Flexible Report

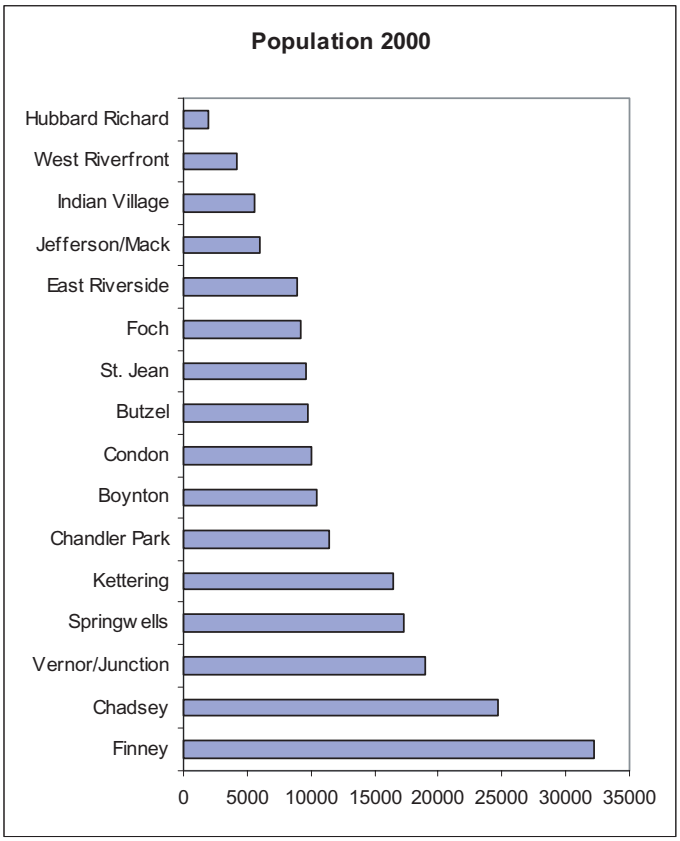
Population and Age Comparisons

Census Data **Charts** **Maps**

P1. TOTAL POPULATION [1] - Universe: Total population
Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File 1

P12. SEX BY AGE [49] - Universe: Total population
Data Set: Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data

	Census Tract 5240	Census Tract 5241	Census Tract 5242	Census Tract 5243	Total
Total:	3,457	4,827	5,787	3,236	17,307
Male:	1,794	2,598	3,054	1,671	9,117



Data Source: U.S. Census 2000 [52]

Figure 10: Sample flexible report comparing population across Detroit neighborhoods.

[52] U.S. Census Bureau. *Summary File 1.* http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2001/sumfile1.html. Accessed April 26, 2004.

Figure 10 displays an example of a flexible report using population data and highlighting the Springwells neighborhood.

User Registration

The proposed CES component assumes a registration process to collect information on who is using the system and for what purposes. Requiring CES users seeking customized information to register with the CES authority serves two principal purposes:

1. Efficiently provide user and use information to system administration.
2. Ensure that users agree to a data use agreement.

A straightforward registration process is more likely to have users willing to register, especially new users. A clear description of what the registration process is, why it exists, and a person to contact in case of questions or problems is essential.

The rationale for a data use agreement is informed by state law. Section 3 of Michigan's Enhanced Access to Public Records Act[53] requires that an organization adopt an "enhanced access policy" in compliance with the Act before allowing members of the general public to access public records. The provisions of this enhanced access policy that have legal implications for the user can be made explicit as a part of user registration.

Data Acquisition and Management

The selection and acquisition of data when assembling a neighborhood indicator system rely initially on what data are available. City agencies have existing databases that contain pertinent information for a CES; these databases can be uploaded to the CES through the system administrator who will then proceed to share the data with the community through the CES website.

As Detroit starts a CES, the focus should begin with crime data, Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data, Detroit Finance Department - Assessments Division data, and census data. With these data, a CES can be established and expanded as new data sources become available. Priorities also need to be set about what data are most important so that an expansion plan exists and can be implemented as data become available. If, for example, a priority is to obtain public health information but none is available, other data sources could be pursued while still working with public health data sources. This enables the CES to build on available data while keeping in mind that other specific sources will need following up.

[53] Enhanced Access to Public Records Act. Michigan Legislature. Act 462 of 1996, § 3 (5) (MCL 15.443). http://beta.mileg.org/mileg.asp?page=getObject&objName=mcl-Act-462-of-1996. Accessed March 15, 2004.

Table 3

Data Providers from Case Study Analyses[54]

Types of Data	Cities that have provided information
Housing conditions -Housing code violations -Demolitions -Vacant and abandoned buildings -Building inspections	Minneapolis; Milwaukee Philadelphia; Miami-Dade County Baltimore; Los Angeles Chicago; Cleveland
Property tax status -Delinquent taxes -Accessed value	Minneapolis; Milwaukee Philadelphia; Los Angeles Chicago; Cleveland
Crime statistics Violent and property crime information	Baltimore; Denver Minneapolis; Milwaukee Cleveland; Portland (city-wide, not local) Miami-Dade; Washington, D.C.
Health statistics -Asthma rates -Blood lead levels for children -Birth rates	Baltimore; West Oakland Boston; Washington, D.C. Cleveland; Milwaukee Denver
Publicly subsidized housing -HUD info -Section 8 -Affordable housing	Cleveland; West Oakland Denver Los Angeles Washington, D.C.
Permits information	Minneapolis; Los Angeles Cleveland; Milwaukee
Public school data -Test scores -Enrollment -Dropout rates -Free school lunch	Baltimore Cleveland Denver Portland
Complaints/requests for city services -Illegal dumping -Abandoned vehicles -Parks maintenance -Rats -Street lights -City services performance	Baltimore (Citistat) Portland (audit services) West Oakland
Utilities Gas/water/electricity shut-offs	Philadelphia Los Angeles
Maps—city-wide parcel layer (GIS)	Philadelphia;Milwaukee Minneapolis

Table 3: A list of commonly-used data in CES across the country.

Many neighborhood indicator systems have worked with city agencies and shared data in order to develop a strong CES. Table 3 lists the most frequently used data sources from our case study cities which can serve as a guide for Detroit in the initial stages of data acquisition. (See also Appendix 1, Part III)

Many potentially interesting and valuable data sources exist already for the neighborhoods of Detroit. The system host should seek out these sources first as the data are likely to be

[54] For a full discussion of these systems and references, see Appendix 1, Part II.

forthcoming and, pursuing data with these sources will also function as outreach. Some examples of existing, relevant data sources are:

- **University of Michigan School of Public Health research and Detroit Health Department**
  Both the city and the University currently track public health issues in Detroit. Sample data are: asthma cases, diesel particulates, and buildings with lead paint. Example use: The diesel particulates data could support neighborhood organizations lobbying efforts against the Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal.

- **Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) data**
  SEMCOG gathers a great deal of data about transportation within the region. Sample data are: accident locations, traffic volumes, and aerial photographs of the region. Example use: By placing data about traffic volumes on a CES, users would have concrete numbers to use in efforts to lure retail development.

- **Success Measures Project**
  Community Development Advocates of Detroit (CDAD) helps selected CBO construct surveys of citizens within CBO service areas. An example of data collected might include neighborhood perception of CBO effectiveness. Especially if many CBOs use a common survey template, the data from these surveys could be used to gather, share, and compare information about the results of community development efforts across the city.

- **City of Detroit workflow data**
  Many services provided by the city take several steps from start to finish as they proceed from the initial citations to different city departments to the city council. This includes information taken in through the 311 system and other processes like demolition of dangerous structures, issuing of building code violations, sales of tax delinquent property, and street light repair Example use: By making that information available through the CES, the city would field fewer service calls on the same issue and community groups could take steps to work with city departments to improve neighborhoods.

- **Community Reinvestment Strategy**
  In 1997, community-based organizations across Detroit conducted surveys ranking condition of block faces in

commercial districts. Example use: With access to these data and the ability to upload new results, CBOs could periodically track the status of commercial district change.

- **Student Research Projects**
  University students from Wayne State University, the University of Michigan, and Michigan State University in Urban and Regional Planning, Social Work, Business, Law, Public Policy and other fields generate many reports on Detroit neighborhoods each year that involve data acquistion and the development of data collection tools. A CES would allow these reports and the data behind them to be easily accessed and used over time.

Data Uploading

A CES should allow Detroit community members to upload data to help improve the statistical picture of their neighborhoods.

In addition to making currently available data more accessible, a CES should allow Detroit community members to upload data. Uploading information serves an outreach function by inviting community members to help improve the statistical picture of their neighborhood. Filtering the flow of this information through a registration process helps the data intermediary establish relationships with community data providers and establish accountability for the data. Users should be able to submit data from a template to create a more unified data source by following a similar process as when data are uploaded by the system administrator into the data warehouse.

System administrators can provide these templates to facilitate data uploading. The templates might be made available online for the kinds of data collection that community-based organizations often undertake, including: forms and instructions for collecting data on housing conditions; vacant lot conditions; conditions of buildings in commercial districts; conditions of blocks in commercial districts; and, conditions facing pedestrians in commercial districts. The administrators can develop and add new forms and instructions as new needs arise. If numerous community organizations use the same collection methods, the data will be more comparable and therefore more useful.

Such efforts have been helpful in the past. In the late 1990s, the Detroit Community Outreach Partnership Center, a partnership of University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Wayne State University with community-based organizations across the city, began to establish standard forms for their students to use in collecting data on housing conditions in different neighborhoods. This resulted in comparable data in several parts of the city. Also, in their 2002 plan, the Gateway

Collaborative adopted a common system for housing conditions assessment that numerous nonprofit organizations distributed to volunteers who collected the information. The result was a map of housing conditions across a large area of Southwest Detroit.[55]

Between existing data and system resources, Detroit has numerous assets with which a system host could acquire and maintain CES data effectively. Along with building a good set of data, strong outreach and feedback efforts must be undertaken as well.

Feedback, Outreach and Collaboration

A significant role of the system administrator is to facilitate conversation among users (both potential and current), data providers, students, and researchers in order to establish lines of communication and collaboration. The Detroit CES administrator could start by holding information sessions and monthly meetings with potential users and data providers. This would help identify who is interested in the neighborhood indicator system and what needs are to be met for each organization. This is also an excellent time to address issues of concern regarding data sharing for data providers.

In order to be widely accepted by users and to ensure a broad user base, the Detroit CES must be as open as possible to a variety of feedback mechanisms. In addition, an effective outreach process will start off system development on a strong foundation and will ensure that the CES stays relevant over time. Because web feedback, traffic monitoring and person-to-person meetings all serve different functions for the CES, all are recommended for Detroit. Several organizations in Detroit could support system development and revision.

- **Community Development Advocates of Detroit (CDAD)**
  By reaching out to CDAD, a Detroit CES system host can quickly tap into a strong network of community-based organizations. By getting CDAD members to support the CES, a system host will have more power to pull data from reluctant sources.

- **City Connect Detroit**
  This organization seeks to "improve collaboration among members of the public sector" and "increase access to federal and national funding resources."[56]

- **Community-based data checking**
  Ensuring that public information is easily accessible

[55] SmithGroup JJR, Inc. 2002. *Gateway Communities Development Collaborative: Land Use and Transportation Plan.* Ann Arbor, MI.

[56] City Connect. *About Us*.http://www.cityconnectdetroit.org/About.aspx. Accessed April 22, 2004.

and providing mechanisms to accept user feedback will allow neighborhood data sources to quickly, easily and systematically identify data inaccuracies and correct them.

Again, the CES will enhance Detroit's existing outreach activities and community involvement to expand the use of the CES and improve the quality of the data within the system.

User Training

This is a crucial aspect of system development in Detroit. If a CES is to be useful for a broad range of users, user training will be a central part of the CES. By ramping up users, the system host will make valuable data accessible to the least savvy users. In addition, even higher end users will be able to get more out of the CES as a result of periodic training sessions. Two organizations that currently provide training for CBOs could provide the CES training function. They are:

User training will be a central part of the Detroit CES.

- **Community Advocates of Detroit**
  CDAD seeks to build capacity within Detroit CBOs by offering training. For example, recently CDAD "offer(ed) training to member organizations and others in the development field (including) organizational development training and follow-up technical assistance in the areas of Legal Issues, Financial Management, and Business Planning."[57] CDAD has the systems in place to train potential users on how to use a CES.

- **Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)**
  Among other things, LISC Detroit seeks to provide "education for the young and old" of the city.[58]

A system host would need to work with either CDAD, LISC, or both to design and plan a training system, but either of them could provide significant expertise to speed up the development process.

Role in Community Change

The role of any CES in community change varies depending on the level of activism that a system embraces. Detroit will be well served by adopting the quasi-activist philosophy. Through this recommendation, Detroit should establish a benchmarking program where goals are set based on existing neighborhood conditions. Systems initially identify community assets and weaknesses in order to identify issues to address through the benchmark system.

[57] Community Advocates of Detroit – CDAD. *About Us.* http://www.cdadonline.org/ace/index.asp?id=192. Accessed April 22, 2004.

[58] LISC Detroit. *About Us.* http://www.liscnet.org/detroit/about_us/index.shtml. Accessed April 22, 2004.

Assets:

An example of an asset that could be captured is block clubs. These groups can function as social and community hubs of information and resource sharing. They are not tracked by any administrative agency (they have no business license or legal status). However, they might be useful for a CBO to track because their presence identifies local groups who contribute to the local community. A survey of local citizens might identify these groups and then post those data to the CES where the data could be used by voter registration activists or senior citizen activist groups, for example.

Deficits:

Administrative data cannot track certain community assets. They may also fail to demonstrate some community deficits due to either the nature of the problem or resource limitations of administrative agencies that are tasked with tracking such deficits. For example, illegal dumping is a problem in Southwest Detroit. It degrades the physical appearance of the area and can cause health risks. The City of Detroit Department of Public Works is officially tasked with clean-up of illegal dumping sites. However, due to funding and staffing limitations, they cannot keep track of or clean up all dumping in the city. A CES would allow neighborhood activists to map all of the illegal dumping sites within their area of interest. Once posted to the CES, the local problem will attract attention that would potentially spur a timely and efficient response from the city. Public and media pressure from organized groups like SDBA should use CES data to ensure corrective action. In order for responses to have an impact on the prevention of illegal dumping, community leaders and organizations need to be aware of this aspect of the CES and apply it to their goals and actions. Again, outreach and training are necessary for the CES to serve the community.

Phasing the Development of a Detroit CES

The CES is a living system, and its managers will need to engage users and data providers to keep information updated and outputs from the system fresh. The timing of system development can be considered in three phases. The time required to move from one phase to the next in Detroit will vary depending on resource availability and support the system receives from users.

Near Term

- **User-Oriented:** The process of developing an effective CES with widespread user support and constructing a truly community-based system originates in meetings with various stakeholder groups. Initially, meetings should engage representatives from several of these anticipated constituencies: community-based organizations, administrative data sources, and governmental department.

  The first meeting would introduce the CES, perhaps using a system from another city as a demonstration of the power of such a system. Here, some discussion of success stories from other cities would also be useful to build excitement and support for the CES. In the case of the Chicago Area Housing system, this phase was running concurrently with system development and data collection for over one year.[59] Engaging users and data providers early in the system development process helps insure broad support from the outset. Moreover, as various entities come together around one table to work on the CES, other opportunities for collaboration may present themselves and could be capitalized upon.

- **Data-Oriented:** Regarding the assembly and organization of the initial database to which the CES provides access, immediate efforts should concentrate on organizing data gathered for EDS purposes and coordinating current information resources. With respect to the former priority, an ongoing procedure of cleaning datasets gathered for the EDS model—which includes the provision of appropriate metadata—should be instituted to maximize their utility for system users.

  Coordination of existing information resources can take place in multiple ways, depending on the function of each resource. Projects such as the "Taking Stock of Neighborhoods" initiative at Wayne State University[60] and City Connect Detroit[61] already collect and organize a substantial amount of information about Detroit's neighborhoods. For function-specific systems such as City Connect Detroit, a Detroit CES could at the very least act as another access point (i.e. users can link to existing databases from the CES).

Middle Term

- **User-Oriented:** Once an initial CES provides access

[59] Sanders, Greg. Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission. Personal Interview. February 25, 2004.

[60] Urban Safety Program, College of Urban, Labor and Metropolitan Affairs, Wayne State University; http://maps.culma.wayne.edu. Accessed April 13, 2004.

[61] CityConnect. *About CityConnect.* http://www.cityconnectdetroit.com. Accessed April 12, 2004.

to information in the data warehouse, the outreach component of system development becomes even more important. For many users, the initial implementation of a Detroit system will reveal its possibilities and weaknesses. For this reason, system managers should respond quickly to user input. Their support will validate the existence of the CES. For example, Gasworks (a quasi-public utilities company) provided data to the Philadelphia NIS in 1999, and then refused to provide the data in subsequent years. The system has since become more successful and is receiving positive attention throughout the city, and Gasworks is now reconsidering providing data.[62] In the same way, a full-scale system will change the goals of the outreach effort and types of feedback received. As users react to the system, outreach shifts from a marketing function to a response to specific concerns.

- **Data-Oriented:** At this phase of the system, include the data uploading functionality of the system if demanded by users. The system will include a broader set of data by this time, based on feedback from users and increasing levels of participation from data sources.

Long Term

- **User-Oriented:** Despite best outreach efforts, there will always be a user who needs training or outreach to get more out of the system. The outreach component of the CES must remain a central function even after many organizations have begun using it.

- **Data-Oriented:** This area would continue to expand as demand for data among users is effectively infinite. Here too, a system must continue to add information as long as users request it.

A phased approach allows the system to anticipate and respond to changing conditions, user demand. The system can only grow as fast as more money becomes available, more users and data providers engage with the system and technical capacity can support the growth.

A CES can serve to provide a deeper understanding of assets or deficits in neighborhoods, especially when they are indicated by an Early Detection System.

Conclusion

A CES can serve two major functions if developed properly. It can make data about Detroit available to many users with a focus on the community level. In doing so, it can facilitate data collection, aid in the identification of areas of concern or

[62] Breuer, Bradley. Philadelphia Cartographic Modeling Lab. Phone interview. February 12, 2004.

opportunity in Detroit neighborhoods and track trends. Secondly, the CES can facilitate cooperation among various entities which will produce other benefits that are difficult to predict. The key to realizing both of these benefits is strong engagement by the system intermediary with current and potential users. If those users feel vested in a CES, they will provide input and underlying data that will make the system strong and provide better information on communities. As a bonus, the stronger the participation, the more other entities will want to participate. In this way, the CES has the potential to foster ongoing collaboration among users.

Backed by a data warehouse, the Community Empowerment System encompasses all activities that involve bridging gaps between "raw" neighborhood information and community members. It can serve to provide a deeper understand of assets or deficits in neighborhoods, especially when they are indicated by an Early Detection System. The section that follows explains considerations for establishing the final piece of the Detroit Neighborhood Indicator System, the EDS.