

Implementation

The preceding sections have outlined a plan for a Neighborhood Indicator System for Detroit. This section seeks to outline a schedule for implementing the plan. The system should be developed in three phases: setup/development, construction, and refinement/expansion. This phased approach will help build support for the system among users and data providers while allowing the technical part of system development to proceed at a pace that works for the system developer and users. There are not hard lines between each phase, but rough benchmarks have been provided to indicate when it would be reasonable to move on to the next phase.

Phase I – Setup/Development

Initial development of the Detroit Neighborhood Indicator System focuses on system elements that provide the physical and informational infrastructure that allows the system to operate.

- **Partner Identification/Installation:** As discussed in the data warehouse and Community Empowerment System sections, the city of Detroit and its community partners will identify an appropriate host or data intermediary for a citywide Neighborhood Indicators System. The establishment of a permanent residence for the NIS paves the way for almost every other system functionality. The system host will not only function as a technical developer for the data warehouse, its responsibilities will also include building and maintaining the Early Detection System, and providing access to warehoused data through the CES.
- **Funding/Application:** The city of Detroit and its partners will work with the system host to secure public and private funding for NIS implementation. Most neighborhood indicators systems fund their operations with money from foundations, federal grants, or user fees.⁸³
- **Data Collection/Organization:** Once a system host has been identified, that entity will begin the ongoing process of data collection and organization. For Early Detection System purposes, the recommendations of this report—supplemented by EDS user input—will guide the initial data collection process. With respect to the Community Empowerment System, the system host will use existing data on Detroit’s neighborhoods while seeking input from

⁸³ 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>. Accessed March 28, 2004.

community partners on what additional data to include. The system host will also contact other potential source agencies regarding possible data provision.

Completion Benchmarks

- Establishment of NIS system host
- Funding sources for system operation identified and secured
- Initial data assembly and organization

Phase II – Construction

Designing user interfaces for the EDS and CES follows the establishment of basic system infrastructure. Promoting awareness of the CES within the city accompanies the development of its user interface.

- **Community Empowerment Interface:** Initially, an emphasis on maximizing the understanding and use of currently available data will guide the development of Detroit’s CES. The concurrent process of soliciting input from potential users will inform the collection and organization of existing neighborhood information. As data are organized by scale, an initial set of summary reports for a variety of geographic areas will be made available to anyone online.
- **Early Detection System:** As data are collected and organized, the system host will test appropriate indicators for inclusion into an initial EDS. Relying primarily on existing data, the EDS will incorporate suitable key indicators following the process outlined in the EDS section.
- **Expanded Outreach Efforts:** During CES construction, community outreach—in the form of technical training sessions and awareness-raising—will include local input into the CES development process. Likewise, input from EDS users will continue to inform EDS development.

A phased approach will help build support for the system among users and data providers while allowing the technical portion of system development to proceed at a pace that works for the system developer and users.

Completion Benchmarks

- Construction and use of EDS and CES interfaces
- Collection and incorporation of initial user comments
- CES summary report generation
- EDS neighborhood typology generation

Phase III – Refinement/Expansion

An established, effective Neighborhood Indicator System relies on feedback from CES and EDS users to inform refinements to

the system. Outreach efforts specifically designed to elicit user commentary and understand users' needs supplement online feedback mechanisms to maximize diversity of user input. Over time, this process is itself subjected to refinement according to user needs.

- **Uploading Capability:** As long-term relationships with system users and data providers become established, the ability for users to upload information in a standardized format will enhance the community orientation of the CES. Because data needs will change and become more varied over time, this functionality increases in importance along with the growth of the size and complexity of the data warehouse.
- **Institutionalized Outreach:** Along with feedback mechanisms built into the CES, a tradition of community involvement for the purposes of targeting potential user groups and expanding CES usership will help increase the value and utility of neighborhood-level information. Promoting cooperation among system users and publicizing local success stories will also help insure the political safety of the CES.
- **System Refinement:** In the long term, user input will ultimately guide both EDS and CES development. A virtuous cycle of iterative system refinement will continue to insure the relevance and usability of a NIS in Detroit.

Completion Benchmarks

- Institution of ongoing and meaningful community involvement
- Incorporation of uploaded information, where feasible, into Data Warehouse
- Formation of iterative refinement process to inform future system design

