DEMOCRATIZING INFORMATION:

First Year Report of the National Neighborhood Indicators Project

MARCH 1996

THE URBAN INSTITUTE
Center for Public Finance and Housing

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report presents the work of the planning period of the National Neighborhood Indicators Project (NNIP). It documents the emergence of what we judge to be important new local capacities in the use of information in addressing the problems and opportunities of America's urban communities. The potential is there, but it is not likely to be taken advantage of automatically. We suggest an approach for enhancing current techniques and capabilities and for facilitating their application in a much broader array of cities.

Although the report itself was compiled by Urban Institute staff, primary credit should go to our partners in seven cities whose work forms the basis for our optimism about the role of neighborhood level information in advancing social change. Their past accomplishments, and their ideas about how this field might be best advanced, underlie our central conclusions and recommendations. They include: David S. Sawicki (Atlanta), Charlotte Kahn and Glenn Pierce (Boston), Malcolm Bush and Robert Goerge (Chicago), Claudia J. Coulton (Cleveland), Terri J. Bailey (Denver), Joaquin Herranz (Oakland), and Pat McGuigan and Jack Combs (Providence).

At the Urban Institute, James O. Gibson and G. Thomas Kingsley coordinated the compilation of the report. Kingsley was its primary author. Peter Tatian, with the assistance of Milda Saunders, contributed sections related to analysis of current NNIP partner information systems and proposals for a National Neighborhood Indicators Data System. Kara Hartnett, who also serves as the project's Administrative Coordinator, designed and conducted the survey of neighborhood information system interests and capabilities in other cities and authored the chapter on the results. Maris Mikelsons developed materials on the potentials of the American Housing Survey and other national data sets to add value to this project. Patrice Flynn and Susan Wiener contributed information on the characteristics of NNIP partner institutions and a preliminary review

of their data sets, based on their initial visits to the sites. Talton Ray, George C. Galster, Harry Hatry, and George E. Peterson all provided many helpful comments and valuable guidance as the work was underway. Tim Ware did an admirable job in report formatting and production.

Finally, we express our thanks to the representatives of funders, national interest groups, federal agencies, and local affiliates who participated in our planning committee meetings. The authors, of course, bear full responsibility for the findings and conclusions documented herein, but the ideas and suggestions of these participants have had important impacts on our thinking in virtually all phases of the work.

Representatives of our funders who participated include: Nick Bollman, Craig Howard and Dennis Collins of The James Irvine Foundation; George Knight, Esmael Baku, and Hubert Guest of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation; Lisa Linowes of the Surdna Foundation; Susan Motley of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; Joan Shigekawa and Mary Rubin of The Rockefeller Foundation; Janet Thompson of Citibank; James Wagele of the BankAmerica Foundation; and Garland Yates, Robert Zdnek, and Bill O'Hare of The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Attendees representing a national agencies and interest groups and local affiliates include: Don Chen and Jeff Allen, Surface Transportation Policy Project; Rick Cohen, Local Initiatives Support Corporation; Steve Costa, Oakland Sharing the Vision; Pat Costigan, Enterprise Foundation; Angela Duran, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Herbert L. Green, Jr., National League of Cities; Barbara Allen-Hagen and Joan Hurley, U.S. Department of Justice; Jim Haye, Oakland Community Partnership; Maureen Hellwig, Erie Neighborhood House; Betty Herrera, Westside Neighborhood Leadership Initiative, Denver; Kevin Kelly, National Congress for Community Economic Development; Joan Kennedy, City of Hampton, VA; Robert McNulty and Phil Walsh, Partners for Livable Communities; Andy Mott, Center for Community Change; Ron Prevost, U.S. Bureau of the Census; Barbara Puls, National Council of State Legislatures; Ronald Register, Cleveland Community-Building Initiative; Margery A. Turner and Paul Gatons, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; Chuck Wilson and Merrie Nichols-Dixon, U.S. General Accounting Office.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *National Neighborhood Indicators Project (NNIP)* is a multi-year initiative, designed to develop indicators of the changing social, physical, and economic conditions of neighborhoods in America's cities and to apply them in support of comprehensive community building. It is: (1) helping local institutions build sound information systems to enhance community building and city-wide strategic planning; (2) establishing a network among local systems managers so they can work together to strengthen their own capacities; and (3) creating a national neighborhood data system to enhance understanding of the dynamics of neighborhood change, and their implications for policy, at the national level.

The project is being implemented by the Urban Institute, working in partnership with the managers of seven of the nation's most advanced existing local neighborhood indicator systems; in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Oakland, and Providence.

This report contains the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the first year of work—the planning period—of NNIP. Planning began in early 1995 with joint support from the BankAmerica, Annie E. Casey, James Irvine, J.D. and C.T. Mac Arthur, Rockefeller, and Surdna Foundations, Citibank, and the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation. Representatives of these institutions, five federal agencies and eight national interest groups, served as the project's planning committee. A three year implementation period is anticipated.

CONTEXT

Devolution. While debate about the substance of national social and urban policy continues, one outcome seems most probable: more devolution. Substantial concerns remain about the current range of block-grant proposals, but there seems little disagreement about the appropriateness of giving more flexibility to State and, particularly, local officials. There is considerable bipartisan support for the idea that local stakeholders are in a better position than Federal or even State officials to plan and implement most local development and social service delivery strategies to address the particular problems of their own cities. Local actors should have strong incentives to perform, accompanied by the flexibility they need to make sensible design and allocation decisions.

New Institutions and Strategies. The responsibility for local initiative taking is no longer seen as resting solely with local government. Particularly since 1980, in part as a by-product of reduced government commitment, a host of local non-governmental institutions have emerged to spearhead urban social assistance and development initiatives. These range from new neighborhood-level improvement efforts (groups of residents aiming for "comprehensive community building") to metropolitan-wide leadership coalitions and networks (drawing participants from business groups, community foundations, and a variety of other public-interest oriented institutions). The idea is not that these groups should replace, or work independently of, local governments. To the contrary, most now believe they should work collaboratively with local agencies. But they recognize the need to play a strong and more direct role in policy formulation, planning, and implementation themselves. Instead of just encouraging public participation in government programs, the theme is more toward "government participation in citizen initiatives."

The new leadership coalitions in many cities—actors in and outside of government, at neighborhood and city-wide levels—are increasingly recognizing the need to develop comprehensive strategies for urban improvement that cut across, and set priorities among, traditionally separate functional specialties (e.g., different social services, crime prevention, education, job creation, housing)—indeed, the fragmentation of these specialties is now seen as one of the causes of the disappointing performance of many urban improvement efforts of the 1980s.[1]

The Need for Better Information. Local leaders are also recognizing an urgent need for a much improved information base to guide them in designing these strategies and carrying them

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[1]Probably the clearest Federal endorsements of this approach are in the process mandated for preparing applications for, and operating, the "Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community Program," and in the new "Consolidated Plan" concept being developed by HUD.

getting worse or better . . . have no clear basis for setting priorities." "Every dollar now has to be spent with maximum efficiency; we have to apply information intelligently." "One shot data collection doesn't work . . . you never get enough information on changing context to really understand what is happening . . . you need a recurring system." "Having everybody work off the same information base is key to collaborative strategies, building bridges." "With block grants and welfare reform, well informed local action will be much more urgent."

Almost all respondents felt they would benefit from the full implementation of the NNIP project. Experience from outside could help them not only in overcoming technical barriers but also in learning how to apply the data in ways that would be more useful and meaningful to local decision makers. Most who are interested in developing an indicators system felt that NNIP could do much to help them demonstrate to prospective funders that such systems can be locally cost-effective and self-sustaining.

3. Creating a National Neighborhood Indicators Data System (combining comparable information from partner-city systems and adding data from other cities in the future) could address a critical unmet need.

Whatever the form, it now seems likely that legislation will be enacted devolving responsibility for, and reducing federal funding for, America's social safety net. The impacts of these changes will not occur evenly across the nation's terrain. A large share of the poor are concentrated in a relatively small number of urban neighborhoods. Watching indicators at even the county or city levels could be quite misleading, telling us little about the real changes that are occurring in those communities.

The systems now operated by the seven NNIP partners will be among a very few sources of information available over the next few years to track the impacts of these changes in any meaningful way. Because those data are already available in an orderly automated form, it will not be expensive to assemble and maintain a core set of indicators from each of them, creating a central system that will be available for national research as well as use in the individual urban areas.

THE NATIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD INDICATORS PROJECT

The plan for the implementation of the National Neighborhood Indicators Project responds directly to these conclusions. ***Its primary purpose is to build local capacity to reliably assess neighborhood change as a basis for strengthening distressed communities in a large number of American cities.*** Accomplishing this will entail facilitating the development (and/or

But the way they have used their information may be more important. They are motivated by ***action agendas*** that will facilitate change, not by data or research for their own sake, and they use data as the basis for forming collaborations among stakeholders toward that end. Their operating philosophies are captured by the phrase ***democratizing information***. They see their role as getting useful and reliable information into the hands of relevant local actors (community residents and others who would support them) and helping those actors use it effectively.

At the same time, they are also characterized by their pragmatism. Technical advances have allowed them to dramatically reduce the costs of data assembly, analysis, and communication for these purposes. And they bring in income to cover part of their operating costs by providing information and analytic services to other users who are able to pay for it. Care costs are modest. While several received funding from national foundations to get started, all either are, or have definite potential to become, locally self-sustaining, through a mix of fee income and general support from local businesses and foundations.

Another feature is important in this regard. Because they are outside of government and sponsored by community foundations and/or other long term city-wide interests, they are not seen as being aligned to any short term political interests. This has put them in a position to earn the trust of the many agencies that recurrently provide them with data. They make extra efforts (careful checking and cleaning of data, maintaining strict protocols to protect confidentiality, guiding users to avoid misapplications and misinterpretation) to keep that trust. A basis for their work has been their ability to convince the data providers in their cities that all are better off by sharing data (through an unbiased intermediary) than by keeping it to themselves.

2. Across America's cities, there is now a growing recognition of the need to expand the provision of reliable neighborhood level information as the basis for more effective local program planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

In our survey (33 cities) we found that the notion of local social indicators systems is currently of substantial interest in urban America. Important institutions in 28 of them (85 percent) are either already operating indicators systems or are in the process of developing or planning them. Of these, 14 have already established indicator initiatives, mostly with city and county data, and most of these are interested in assistance that will help them extend their system to the neighborhood level. Another 6 have projects to develop neighborhood-level indicators systems underway and an additional 8 have the development of neighborhood indicators on their agendas but have not yet started the work.

Comments from these interviews underscore their recognition of the need. For example: "We spent a lot of money trying to help the poor in the 1980s—it didn't work and we still don't understand enough about how to focus initiatives for results." We don't know what conditions are

expansion) of local information systems, and the development of improved processes and methodologies to bring the information to bear on real issues being faced in local policy at the community and city-wide levels.

A premise underlying the project is that while local groups must play the leading role in developing their own capacity in this regard, the task is a difficult one everywhere, and national support could importantly facilitate the potential. The development of local neighborhood indicator systems in additional cities is now being held back because of concerns about high start-up costs and the lack of technical and procedural knowledge.

NNIP should be able to offer products and services that would help institutions in many other urban centers overcome these initial hurdles. It will do so by undertaking five ***development activities***. The first two will be dominant initially—implemented primarily by the NNIP partners in their own cities to leverage payoff from the capacities they have already established:

1. ***Develop and test model processes for asset-based comprehensive community building***: innovative efforts that use information as a driving force in collaborations to strengthen distressed communities—working within individual communities and with outside groups acting to further community building.

2. ***Enhance current local indicator systems to address policy priorities***: expanding NNIP partner systems in key areas and using the expanded systems to tackle priority issues: e.g., jobs, crime and drugs, health.

3. ***Develop national data systems support***: developing the new National Neighborhood Indicators Data System, and methods and software that will enable local groups to obtain information from other national data sources at lower cost and in a more directly useable form.

4. ***Prepare guides and training materials***: to support training in efficient techniques for both building local indicator systems and using them in policy analysis, monitoring, and evaluation. Direct training of community residents in using information will be emphasized.

5. ***Conduct developmental research***: preparing topical papers and monographs on: bases for establishing new indicators; new low-cost survey techniques; the dynamics of distressed urban neighborhoods; and methodological innovations. NNIP will prepare an overall monograph on *The State of America's Neighborhoods*.

Dissemination and capacity building, based on these products, will entail: developing a network of parties interested in building indicators systems in other cities; providing direct technical

assistance and training to information managers and community residents in a selected number of these cities; and implementing a national awareness program on the nature of neighborhood change in America and the importance of fact-based policy analysis in guiding that change.

All of this will be the foundation for achieving the project's ***second purpose: to provide national agencies, foundations, and interest groups with better understanding of neighborhood change and of how they can best facilitate local actors in the effective use of information to strengthen communities***. This will be accomplished through the close participation of representatives of national organizations in all phases of project activity.

out effectively. They are asking a host of relevant questions: How can we identify and assess the assets of our communities and neighborhoods so we can build on them in revitalization? How can we assess the comparative severity of various problems so we can set sensible priorities? How can we rapidly determine which conditions are getting worse and which are getting better (by how much, in what ways, and where) so we can reallocate resources responsively? How can we monitor program initiatives closely enough to learn quickly if things start to go wrong so we can take corrective actions in time? How can we better understand the underlying dynamics of community and neighborhood change, so that we have a better chance of designing initiatives that will work in the first-place?

There is substantial awareness now, as well, that information at county and city levels alone is of negligible value in preparing strategies for individual communities and woefully inadequate even for city-wide planning. There are dramatic variations in conditions, problems, and opportunities across neighborhoods in all U.S. metropolitan areas. Strategies that work well in some types of neighborhoods can be largely inappropriate in others. Even single purpose agencies (e.g., the police, health service providers) need to understand neighborhood differences along a variety of dimensions to define their own strategies effectively. Furthermore, while data from the U.S. Census are an important base, they appear only once each decade—monitoring neighborhood change between censuses are seen as essential for credible strategic planning.

Frustration over the lack of adequate information to respond to these concerns is mounting. A major reason is that resources for urban and social programs are scarcer than they used to be, and they are likely to become even more scarce in the future. There is the feeling that every dollar now has to be spent with maximum efficiency, and that the only way to do that is to "work smarter"; to apply information intelligently in all phases of program development and operation. Yet, information systems that could begin to address these requirements (along with appropriate processes for using them) are now being initiated in only a handful of U.S. cities.

More than ever before, the future of America's cities rests in the hands of local decision makers. Whether they will have the information they need to make decisions wisely has become a question of fundamental national importance.

THE PLANNING PERIOD: CONCLUSIONS

The objectives of the planning period were: (1) to assess the validity and usefulness of the information-led approaches of the seven community-based partner institutions and their potential to serve as models for developing similar initiatives in other cities; (2) to assess the interest of other

cities in establishing neighborhood level information systems; and, assuming positive conclusions; (3) to develop plans for the full implementation of a National Neighborhood Indicators Project.

Activities included: site visits to the seven cities to conduct interviews and examine documentation; technical analysis of the comparability of data across sites; literature reviews on developments in the field of social indicators and their possible applicability in the community context; a series of planning meetings, with all seven partner institutions, at the Urban Institute; a survey of interest in, and readiness for, similar initiatives in other cities; and two major design meetings of the project's Planning Committee. The team reached three overriding conclusions:

1. Both because of the richness of the information they have assembled, and the way they have fostered its use by stakeholders to strengthen communities, the NNIP partners are well positioned to advance techniques in this field and to help other cities take advantage of them.

The seven NNIP partners are quite different from entities that have collected urban data in the past. They see addressing persistent poverty as central to their missions—particularly through comprehensive community building—and they have developed neighborhood level information systems because they believe doing so can make a critical contribution to informing and motivating action toward that goal. Unlike traditional planning and research agencies, they emphasize providing information directly to neighborhood residents, and helping them use that information, to develop asset-based empowerment-oriented strategies for community improvement.

Their technical capacity is substantial. They have taken advantage of dramatic improvements in computer and communications technology to assemble and apply statistical information about neighborhoods in ways that would have been virtually impossible a decade ago. They have been active analysts and disseminators of census data, but they have developed systems that provide a sizeable number of key measures of change on an annual basis as well. They do so by obtaining data from local administrative agencies and, through automated address-matching techniques, using it to recurrently calculate indicators at the neighborhood level.

None have all the measures they would like (or even those they consider most important), but all have used available information creatively to reliably portray important aspects of neighborhood change year-to-year.[2]

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[2]The majority regularly collect and display at the neighborhood level, data on: births, deaths, crime, school performance, public assistance, availability of facilities and services (e.g., child care, public housing), and land parcel characteristics (e.g., tax arrearage, vacant land). Some also maintain neighborhood level data on: businesses and employment, hospital admissions, immunization, home sales and mortgage lending, vehicle ownership, and the incidence of fires. All have the capacity to display this information in variety of formats (maps, charts, and tables, on-line and hardcopy) to suit the needs of different users.

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

As noted, this report contains the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the first year of work—the planning period—of the National Neighborhood Indicators Project (NNIP). This chapter begins by describing how and why the project was initiated and the work that has been conducted during the planning period. It then reviews the structure and contents of the remainder of the report. The final section sets the context for the materials to follow by briefly tracing the evolution of the concept of social indicators and showing how conditions have changed to set the stage for the emergence of neighborhood indicator systems at the local level.

INITIATION AND THE WORK OF THE PLANNING PERIOD

Concept and Initiation

Initiation. The idea for a National Neighborhood Indicators Project was first formulated by Talton Ray, a professional with many years of experience in community building as President of the Council for Community Based Development and in other capacities. Ray, who continues to serve as senior advisor for NNIP, was initially struck by the virtual nonexistence of objective measurement to characterize change in America's urban neighborhoods between decennial Censuses. He saw this as particularly important in the 1990s, when there were good reasons to believe the trend toward the concentration of poverty in inner-city communities was continuing, and that the outcomes for families in those communities, if documented and understood, would be of fundamental importance for national policy.

Ray heard that Claudia Coulton (our NNIP partner in Cleveland) had been doing innovative work to track changing conditions in Cleveland's neighborhoods on an annual basis by assembling and reconfiguring administrative data (i.e., records of events like births, deaths, and crimes maintained by local public agencies). His discussions with Coulton made him aware that similar initiatives were underway in other cities and that it would be important to review their background and potential with James O. Gibson of the Urban Institute who, as Director of the Equal Opportunity Program at the Rockefeller Foundation during the 1980s, had supported the development of several of these local research entities as dimensions of the Foundation's Community Planning and Action Projects (CPAP).

Ray talked with Gibson, held discussions with local researchers in other cities, and drafted a preliminary concept paper which was used as the basis for a series of meeting with foundations he knew to be interested in neighborhood development. The responses from both the local researchers and the foundations were positive.

In May 1994, a meeting was held at the Urban Institute to discuss the project with senior staff and to consider whether it should be further developed under the Institute's auspices. When affirmative agreement on that issue was reached, a proposal was developed calling for planning activities in 1995, followed by a three year implementation period, assuming the idea of a broader project was then judged to be both worthwhile and feasible.

By that time, Ray, Gibson, and others had a good sense of where neighborhood level data systems existed in many of America's large cities. They asked the seven they considered to have the most sophisticated capacities in this regard to participate as project partners: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Oakland, and Providence.

Proposal for the Planning Period. A central task of the planning period was to be an independent assessment of the quality and comparability of the data developed by the local initiatives to test the feasibility of assembling portions of it centrally to create a national neighborhood indicators system. Other tasks were to include: examining the institutional arrangements, costs, and data applications of the partner-city initiatives to assess the potential for replicating similar models in other cities; considering approaches to expanding and improving their existing data systems, and processes for applying them, to enhance their contribution to local community building; and making inquiries to determine the "market" for neighborhood indicator system development in other cities. Finally, based on the findings of these inquiries, the work was to yield a plan for implementing a full-scale National Neighborhood Indicators Project.

The project was to be based at, and managed by, the Urban Institute, because of its experience in information systems building, policy research related to the problems of U.S. cities, and managing large-scale multi-site research programs. It was proposed, however, that all of the

above activities be performed in a close working partnership with the professionals responsible for the seven local indicator systems being studied.

Discussions then proceeded with a number of potential funders. Ultimately, eight institutions supported the work of the planning period: the BankAmerica, Annie E. Casey, James Irvine, J.D. and C.T. Mac Arthur, Rockefeller, and Surdna Foundations, Citibank, and the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation.

Summary of Planning Period Activities

The project was established at the Urban Institute in early 1995, with James O. Gibson as Project Director. Patrice Flynn served as day-to-day Project Manager through July, and G. Thomas Kingsley has served in that capacity since then. Talton Ray has continued as Senior Advisor throughout.

Site Visits and the Initial Planning Meeting. Work began as planned, with visits by Urban Institute staff to each of the partner institutions during the first few months of the year. Information was collected about the structure of those institutions, their overall agendas and accomplishments, and in particular, the specifics of their processes for data assembly, use, and dissemination.

With this initial exposure behind us, the next step was to gain input from a sizeable number of interested parties on the potentials for NNIP and the patterns of emphasis that should be given to different tasks in the planning period. An NNIP Planning Committee was established, including: (1) all Urban Institute staff assigned to the project; (2) representatives from the seven partner institutions; (3) representatives from each of the eight funders; and (4) representatives from a number of national interest groups and federal agencies that concerned with urban and community issues.

In this latter category, those selected to serve on the Planning Committee included eight national interest groups (The Center for Community Change, the Enterprise Foundation, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the National Congress for Community Economic Development, the National Council of State Legislatures, the National League of Cities, Partners for Livable Communities, and the Surface Transportation Policy Project) and five federal agencies (the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Justice and General Accounting Office).

The first meetings of the Planning Committee were held on May 16 and 17, 1995. Discussions were wide ranging in relation to all elements of the NNIP agenda. They served to inform the participants about developments in state-of-the-art of indicator system capabilities and

they also yielded many insights as to the interests of different groups, specifically how NNIP objectives should be framed, and approaches to the work that influenced subsequent activities.

Changes in Process. Based on insights gained from the site visits, the May planning meetings, subsequent interchanges with our operating partners in the seven cities, and internal discussions with senior Institute researchers, several changes were made in the project's planning process and schedule. Most importantly, the experience of the May meeting convinced us that NNIP posed more complexity than could be fully addressed in the one remaining Planning Committee meeting that had been scheduled to that point. It became clear that Institute staff and our local partners needed more time than had been provided to work through issues regarding domain and indicator selection.

It was also becoming apparent that this project had considerable relevance to the capacity needed to identify and monitor the impacts of impending federal block grants and the devolution to state and local government of more decision-making about services and funding. These potentials also needed to be explored.

Activities Through October. In July, Urban Institute staff developed the first draft of a *Concept and Strategy* paper (clarifying project purposes and work elements based on inputs received in the May meetings), a draft work program for the remainder of the planning period, and a comparative analysis of data assembly and indicator systems now maintained in the partner cities. Partner city representatives worked on plans for project related initiatives in their own cities.

These topics served as the primary bases for discussion in project team meetings (Institute staff and partner cities) on August 17-18. The meetings focused on detailing work program tasks and assignments, but also included more complete reviews of indicator capability across cities and a preliminary scoping out of measures that could serve as the core of an indicators data system.

After these meetings, staff at the Institute and in the cities worked to firm up and further detail all elements of the work program. New emphasis was given to topics whose importance had been underscored as the interchanges between local partners and Institute staff deepened. In particular: examining deliberative processes and approaches to presentation that will assure more effective application of indicators in local action programs for urban communities; examining the potential for enhancing available national data sets for use at the local level; and implementing a survey of other cities to more systematically assess their needs, interests, and capacities regarding neighborhood indicators. However, work continued on defining a core set of meaningful and comparable neighborhood indicators that could realistically be implemented across sites in the near term and examining how those could be most efficiently integrated in a national data base.

During September and October, there was considerable interaction between project team members by phone, and another full meeting was held at the Urban Institute on October 11. The primary purpose of that meeting was to review conclusions and plans to be presented to the NNIP Planning Committee, but there was also considerable discussion of ways to expand existing local indicator systems to address emerging priority issues (e.g., improving employment prospects for residents of distressed neighborhoods, developing better measures of community assets) and to apply them in analysis of new policy interests (e.g., monitoring impacts of budget reductions for social programs, facilitating the implementation of Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community programs). The team adopted the theme of identifying the characteristics of a "healthy neighborhood" to shape directions for indicator selection.

The Second Planning Meeting and Report Preparation. The second meeting of the full Planning Committee was held on November 3. The project team first presented its findings, conclusions, and plans for Committee review and discussion. Comments by the Committee generally endorsed the directions being proposed, but offered a number of suggestions for amplification. A most valuable discussion refocused emphasis on what has always been the central motivation behind all of our partner city initiatives: providing data to assist local residents develop and implement more effective community building strategies.

The remainder of the planning period was devoted to documenting the work in this report, modifying and amplifying the materials already developed, and addressing comments and concerns by the Planning Committee and other reviewers.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is divided into two parts. Part I presents the findings and conclusions of the planning period. Part II presents our overall plans for full project implementation.

Part I—Findings and Conclusions of the Planning Period

The first three chapters of this Part examine the data initiatives of the seven NNIP partners. Chapter 2 describes the institutions involved and summarizes the story of their development. Chapter 3 reviews the data they now recurrently collect, and their data processing capacities. Chapter 4 looks more closely at the functions they perform, citing specific accomplishments (cases where the information they have provided have influenced policy). It draws inferences across sites to define what we judge to be the core capabilities and operating principles of successful local indicators systems in the 1990s. It also discusses their operating costs and potential to be financially self-sustaining.

Chapter 5 presents the views of the project team on principles for sound indicator systems and the contents of a more complete neighborhood indicators framework. It next discusses what considering that model in relation to the economics of data acquisition and emerging policy issues implies for priorities in expanding local systems under NNIP. Lastly, based on all of this, it suggests an approach for building and using a *national* neighborhood indicators system.

In Chapter 6, we address the question of the interest of other cities in developing neighborhood indicators systems and their readiness to do so. This work is based predominantly on the survey of 33 non-NNIP cities undertaken in the last quarter of 1995.

Finally, Chapter 7 examines a new opportunity identified during the planning period: finding ways to more effectively facilitate the local use of valuable national data files (such as the American Housing Survey) that are seldom applied in action-oriented planning in individual metropolitan areas.

Part II—Plans for Project Implementation

The program of work proposed for the full implementation of NNIP is outlined in Chapter 8. In this chapter, we first offer an overview of the approach. The tasks and schedule proposed for the development phase are then defined, followed by a discussion of the work proposed in dissemination and capacity building. Finally, we define the structure and process by which the work will be managed, and discuss the ongoing role of the Advisory Committee (a continuation of the broad Planning Committee utilized during the planning period).

SOCIAL INDICATORS: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

American governments have been collecting data on changing social conditions for more than a century.[1] President Hoover gave the idea more stature when he established a "President's Research Committee on Social Trends" in 1929,[2] but the most intense period of scholarly and policy interest in *social indicators* occurred in the 1960s. By the middle of the following decade, the fervor had waned substantially but, in the 1990s, there are signs that interest is coming back again, at least at the local level.

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[1]One of the first was a systematic study of slum conditions in Baltimore, Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia in the 1890s by the U.S. Bureau of Labor (1894).

[2]This committee assembled information from prior surveys on a sizeable range of social conditions and is the first major national study to do so in an attempt to present a comprehensive picture of social change in the country (Research Committee on Social Trends, 1933).

A brief review of this more recent history should help in understanding the potential for indicators initiatives like those developed by the NNIP partners. As we read it, a number of important conditions have emerged over the past decade—conditions that did not exist in the 1960s—that now make it much more likely that multi-dimensional local social indicators systems will become a feature of the policy environment in many American cities.

1960-75: An Idea That Came too Early

Bauer (1996) defines social indicators as " . . . statistics, statistical series, and all other forms of evidence . . . that enable us to assess where we stand and are going with respect to our values and goals, and to evaluate specific programs and determine their impact." The idea of developing a national system of social indicators gained considerable momentum in the mid-1960s.

A prominent argument for them was based on the acceptance and success of the system of national income and product accounts; if national monitoring of economic conditions was working, why not keep track of social conditions in a similar manner? Recurring monitoring via a system of social accounts should present a sounder basis for setting program priorities, help in establishing clearer social goals and policies, and much simplify the task of program evaluation.

Several works were published to promote the concept and explore its potential: see, for example, Bauer (1966), Cohen (1968), Bell (1969), and U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1969). In February 1967, then Senator Walter Mondale and ten other senators introduced "The Full Opportunity and Social Accounting Act of 1967" (S.843, 1967) which called for the preparation of an annual Social Report of the President and the establishment of a Council of Social Advisors to help the President prepare the report and conduct related research.[3]

Another factor supporting the idea at that time was the considerable improvement in computer capacity that had occurred over the preceding decade. It was possible for the first time to conceive of storing and manipulating vast amounts of data much more efficiently than had been possible in the past.

This stimulated a considerable amount of work with data at the local level as well. Prominent here were a series of major studies mounted to serve as the basis for metropolitan wide transportation planning; e.g., the Chicago Area Transportation Study and the Penn-Jersey Transportation Study. Typically, these studies entailed collecting a substantial amount of information on conditions at the neighborhood level and using the data in models to forecast future

[3]A more complete discussion of national activities related to social indicators in this period is provided in Land and Spilerman, eds. (1975).

land-use change and, thereby, travel volumes. It was hoped by some that this sort of data collection would be the leading edge for ongoing social indicator systems in the cities and that these would convey advantages locally similar to those claimed for them nation-wide.

These themes had generated a great deal of excitement initially, but by the mid-1970s they were no longer being pursued very actively either nationally or in individual urban areas.

1975-90: Waning Interest

We have not attempted a thorough assessment of the reasons the social indicators movement faded in the 1970s, but we note two factors that certainly had an effect.

First, at least some of the initial efforts to promote social indicators had seemed to promise too much. Social scientists recognized that even an elaborate system of indicators would never replace the need for additional "customized" data collection, and new thinking about social processes, in individual policy analyses and program evaluations. Given our inadequate understanding of many aspects of social dynamics and the limitations of available measures, there was little hope of capturing enough of what you needed to know in any single system of numbers. It was felt that more effort should be spent on focused studies related to individual priority issues.

Second, the costs of collecting and manipulating the data were still substantial. The large data bases assembled for the metropolitan transportation studies, for example, were hardly ever updated because of the expense implied. Although computer capacity had increased, the cost of running the models associated with those studies was still enormous. The analysts did not have the funds to experiment with the models adequately, and their forecasting power typically proved to be weak. At least one researcher proclaimed that the era of large scale urban models was simply over (Lee, 1973) and for almost two decades it appeared he was right.

A 1978 review of "urban indicators" concluded that, even though a number of studies had been undertaken in the 1960s and 1970s, the topic is "of low priority in most cities" (Flax, 1978). There is little to suggest the need to revise that assessment through the end of the 1980s.

The 1990s: A More Promising Environment

While momentum toward a national system of social indicators has not reemerged with force in Washington,[4] there are a number of signs of renewed interest in indicators systems at the state and local levels in the early 1990s. One example, is the involvement of many urban areas in the *Healthy Cities* movement promoted by the National Civic League, which stresses the

[4]Although some continue to promote the idea. See, for example, Barton, 1991.

recurrent monitoring of social local conditions.[5] Another is the effort devoted to indicator development in the State of Oregon which has received considerable national recognition (Oregon Progress Board, 1992). A third is the work of the NNIP partners which will be documented in the next three chapters of this report.

Advances in Computer Technology. One of the most important trends enabling renewed interest in indicator systems, of course, has been the remarkable improvement in computer and telecommunications technology that has occurred of late. The costs of storing and manipulating large data sets are now a tiny fraction of what they were even in the 1960s. The land-use and transportation forecasting models that proved impossibly expensive to work with on the mainframe computers of old can now be handled easily on desk-top computers, and adaptations of them are now coming back into regular use (Klosterman, 1994, Tayman, 1996).

Even more critical for systems like those of the NNIP partners, has been the computerization of public agency administrative records coupled with the new feasibility of *address-matching*.

The latter became possible because of the efforts of the U.S. Bureau of the Census in building its *TIGER* (Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing) system during the 1980s. Working with the U.S. Geological Survey, Census staff digitized the pattern of streets and other geographic features nation-wide. Street names and address ranges for block on each street are also an integrated part of the data base. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1985).

This means that anyone with a copy of the relevant TIGER files and a personal computer that is large enough, can print out an accurate map of any city, showing the street pattern, the boundaries of census block groups and tracts, and other physical features (e.g., shorelines). If you input the address of a particular building, the computer can locate it on the map (the computer searches first for the street name and then looks along that street until it finds the block with the address range in which the requested address fits). If you input a larger data file with all of the addresses at which some event occurred over the past year (e.g., births or burglaries) the computer can quickly locate them all and print out totals for each block group or census tract. The costs are remarkably low. The Census Bureau sells the TIGER files for the entire United States for around $300.

Simultaneously, over the past decade or so, most local public agencies automated their administrative records. In the past, adding up totals by census tract from hand-written logs was

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[5]The National Civic League's *Healthy Communities Handbook* (1993) describes an approach to the development of local indicators and notes implementation in cities that have implemented the approach. One that is highlighted is the work of the Jacksonville Community Council (1994).

a remarkably arduous clerical task—so expensive in terms of staff time that it was seldom performed. Today, an agency's data tape with an entire year's record of events can be address-matched and tabulated by computer for any defined set of geographic sub-areas of a city in a matter of hours, if not minutes.

Other Improvements in the Environment. While the changes just discussed have dramatically improved the feasibility of neighborhood information systems, a number of other changes have enhanced demand for them. We identify four that we believe are playing an important role.

First, is the broad bi-partisan recognition that the social programs designed to alleviate poverty over the past few decades have not been working effectively. This has stimulated more emphasis on data systems, and research using those systems, to better understand what went wrong and to support a creative search for more promising alternatives. The urgency of these tasks has been heightened at the local level by the expectation of more devolution (local actors will bear yet more of the responsibility for implementing programs that work) and the evident constraints on funding that imply the need for more careful planning for results ahead of time (and more careful planning, in turn, relies on better information).

Second, the new programmatic approaches gaining prominence today are all more information intensive. A common critique of the programs of the past is that the fragmentation of separate functional specialties (e.g., different social services, crime prevention, education, job creation, housing) was an important cause of the disappointing performance of the 1980s. Needed instead—at both the community- and city-wide levels—are *comprehensive* strategies that cut across and set priorities among these specialities and integrate them in more coherent delivery. This theme is emphasized in both the new movement supporting comprehensive community building and the approach taken in the federal Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community program, which will be discussed later in this report. To develop such approaches one needs a substantial amount information to look more carefully at the dynamics of current social forces in relation to the effects of a broad array of public interventions and their interrelationships.

Third, there is now a much broader range of institutions involved in urban improvement efforts and, therefore, a broader range of actors expressing the need for better information to guide their own planning. These include the many nonprofit development groups and social service providers that emerged in the 1980s, but they also include city- and metropolitan-wide intermediaries, leadership coalitions, and networks (drawing participants from business groups, community foundations, and a variety of other public-interest oriented institutions).

Fourth, the 1990s is seeing greater acceptance of the need for collaboration among governments and the many new nongovernmental entities trying to address the problems and

opportunities of American cities. The 1960s and 1970s were often characterized by confrontation between city hall and neighborhood groups. Confrontation and mistrust have by no means vanished, but today one is more likely to find the parties meeting with each other regularly in the effort to develop collaborative strategies for urban change. And as will be stressed later in this report, injections of well organized and up to date information on urban realities are often forming the foundations for the fresh points of view around which such collaborations can be built.

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PART I

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE PLANNING PERIOD

Chapter 2
PARTNER-CITY INSTITUTIONS

This chapter introduces the seven NNIP partner institutions. It briefly explains the kinds of institutions they are, how they have been funded, and the way they see their missions, and notes some key accomplishments.

The Atlanta Project

Institutional Setting. The Atlanta Project (TAP) began in the fall of 1992 as an initiative of former President Jimmy Carter and it continues to operate out of the Carter Collaboration Center. TAP is a multidimensional effort designed to break the cycle of poverty in Atlanta, and to provide a model for application in other cities. The TAP project area contains about one-half million people living with some of the poorest housing, health, and employment conditions in the U.S. TAP is funded by private sources including foundations and a sizeable number of major corporations with headquarters or major installations in the Atlanta area. And, the corporate sponsors play a direct and active part in project activities.

The three major tenets underlying TAP are empowerment, volunteerism, and project innovation. When the project began, the area was divided into twenty clusters. TAP provided a "cluster coordinator" for each—someone who lived in the cluster and was to work to encourage a true "bottom-up" approach to problem solving. Each cluster also had a corporate partner responsible for helping the residents prepare a strategy that reflected the community's priorities and built on its assets (each corporation loaned an executive committed to working with the cluster coordinator and the neighborhood steering committee for a five year period). The project generally saw the corporate partners as strategic implementers who can take vaguely defined community

aspirations and translate them into a feasible work program (Peterson and Sundblad, 1994). TAP is continuing, although its approach may be revised on the basis of a mid-course assessment.

Data and Policy Analysis Group. Data and Policy Analysis (DAPA) was established as a part of TAP to provide policy relevant information to support work in the TAP clusters. It is funded totally by TAP at this point. DAPA is directed by David Sawicki, a professor of Planning and Public Policy at Georgia Tech who has also serves as its representative in NNIP. As best we can tell, it was Sawicki who coined the term *democratizing information* to characterize his activities: "providing factual information directly for use by poor people and poor communities who have historically been denied access to the data they need to plan for their own futures effectively."

DAPA has four primary functions: (1) support for operations, which includes preparing data (tables and maps) to respond to specific well-defined information requests from users; (2) support for planning and community building (turning over electronic data bases attached to digitized parcel maps directly to cluster coordinators and community groups so they can perform a variety of types of analysis themselves); (3) conducting policy analysis regarding a proposed project or piece of legislation; and (4) conducting broader research on issues related to poverty, community change, and urban policy that have a geographic component.

The Boston Foundation, Persistent Poverty Project

Institutional Setting. In 1985, The Boston Foundation, one of the nation's oldest community foundations, shifted substantial resources and programmatic emphasis to create a new initiative to address the challenges of the city's poor: the Poverty Impact Program. In 1988, building on its commitment to the issue of poverty, it received an additional grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to function as one of its Community Planning and Action Projects, including the mandate to generate a body of locally-based information to help refocus and mobilize community attention to urban poverty. The Project has operated since then as an arm of the Foundation. Its purpose has been to "transform the ways we think about intergenerational urban poverty and those who live in poverty," and "to engage each member in our community in an effort to end those conditions which are unnecessary, destructive of the best in all of us, and, finally, unacceptable."

The Boston Persistent Poverty Project began with an analysis of the status of poverty in Boston (1989) based on an extensive survey, *in the midst of plenty*. The next step was to collect information directly from residents of the city's various neighborhoods through community roundtables and focus groups, and to convene the Strategy Development Group (a body of 43 community activists, business leaders, academics, and civic, religious, and labor leaders) who then spent two years in dialogue with one another and with people from across the city to rethink Boston's approach to chronic poverty.

These community soundings resulted in a set of "Guiding Principles for a New Social Contract" to inform policies and practice at all levels. They are: (1) incorporate those directly affected by policies at the heart of the dialogue and community building; (2) value racial and cultural diversity as the foundation for wholeness; (3) promote active citizenship and political empowerment; (4) build on community strengths and assets; (5) ensure access to fundamental opportunities and remove obstacles to equal opportunity; (6) support and enhance the well-being of children and their families; and (7) foster sustained commitment, coordination, and collaboration based on a shared vision of mutual respect. These principles have been implemented in a new framework at the Boston Foundation and are being adopted or adopted by many other foundations, public agencies, and community-based initiatives.

The Boston Children and Families Database (BCFD). The Project's Director, Charlotte Kahn (also its primary representative in NNIP) managed a sizeable collaborative process to develop a database that would support the Project's broader agenda: the BCFD. The process began in 1991 by convening of a diverse group (project staff with representatives of community-based organizations, nonprofit service providers, and data providing agencies) to assess the value of such a undertaking. In 1993-94, groups met to select a set of specific indicators. They started with a complete list of variables available from the census and a number of administrative data files. They then broke up into smaller groups, according to interests and expertise, leading to the selection of a subset of about 800 variables to be incorporated into the system.

The full data files were collected from the respective contributing agencies by the staff of the Center for Applied Social Research at Northeastern University, which has handled the technical side of BCFD development and operation (the Center's Director, Glenn Pierce, is also a member of the NNIP team). The administrative files were then cleaned and stripped of excess variables (i.e., those not required to construct the selected indicators), census variables were also abstracted, and all data were put into compatible formats as a part of the system. These data are now being made available to the public at the census tract and block group levels in a package of six diskettes (although most data are available and analyzed by Northeastern, at the block-group level). A complete *User's Guide* (Sagara, 1995) has also been prepared. Administrative data are being updated annually.

Center for Urban Poverty and Social Change,
Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland

Institutional Setting. The Center for Urban Poverty and Social Change (CUPSC) is the only NNIP partner that is solely university-based, however, it is based in a unique university context. It is a part of the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University which strongly emphasizes direct work with local city-wide and community institutions to address the opportunities and problems of poor neighborhoods. The CUPSC mission is, "to

create, communicate, and apply knowledge of value to a broad range of audiences and constituents concerned with the ultimate goal of reducing urban poverty and its consequences . . . The Center serves as a pathway between the university, and the community, linking social science to social change."

CUPSC was founded in 1988 with grants from the Cleveland and the Rockefeller Foundations (it was one of the latter's Community Planning and Action Projects). Its funders have broadened more recently to include other foundations and agencies, some of whom purchase research products and data services on a contract basis.

The Center's mission statement notes several features: "The special focus of all studies undertaken by the Center's multidisciplinary team is the *neighborhood*—the fundamental interface between the large-scale social forces that create poverty and the individuals and families who are poor. Center researchers have mounted many collaborative projects incorporating approaches from other disciplines and professions . . . To ensure that its research has immediate relevance for its constituents, the Center undertakes projects only with community involvement."

Cleveland Area Network for Data Organizing (CAN DO). CUPSC Director Claudia Coulton (also its NNIP representative) began assembling neighborhood level data soon after the Center was founded. In 1990, the Center issued a full report on trends in Cleveland's neighborhoods over the preceding two decades—a report used as the primary basis for the formation of the Cleveland Poverty Commission. As this and other reports were more widely disseminated, the Center began to receive more requests for data assistance. In response to this demand, the staff developed the Cleveland Area Network for Data Organizing (CAN DO) system.

In its current form, CAN DO contains neighborhood level information from the 1990 census and from a variety of administrative data files (information, for the most part, for every year since 1980). Administrative data series are now updated annually. System data are made available through a user-friendly, menu-driven, on-line data base network. The data can be accessed via the Internet through the University's GATEWAY data access system. Community groups can thus access and use the data base directly. Center staff provide training and technical assistance to help them use it effectively in planning and program development.

The Piton Foundation, Denver

Institutional Setting. A *piton* is "a steel spike used by mountain climbers to secure their lifeline—an essential support as they ascend difficult terrain." This image characterizes the purpose of the Piton Foundation, a private operating foundation providing opportunities to help children and adults move from poverty and dependence to self-reliance. Founded in 1976, its

mission is to address the causes and consequences of poverty in Denver by fostering opportunities for low-income children and families to live healthy and productive lives.

Piton develops and manages a variety of programs addressing five interrelated areas affecting Denver's low-income families and neighborhoods: (1) improving public education; (2) revitalizing neighborhoods; (3) promoting economic opportunities; (4) strengthening families; and (5) promoting effective citizen involvement.

The Piton Foundation operates as the philanthropic investment division of the Gary-Williams Energy Corporation. The foundation is primarily supported by the company and its principals. In addition, because of Piton's experience in investing funds and human resources in community-based projects, other foundations, government entities and nonprofits fund the foundation to manage projects related to Piton's mission.

The Data Initiative. Terri J. Bailey, is the Director of Piton's Data Initiative, and has been its representative in the NNIP team. Started in 1991, the initiative was founded on Piton's belief that philanthropic and community-building efforts are durable only if they are based on reliable and objective information. Through the data initiative, the foundation gathers and organizes baseline information, conducts its own research, and compiles its findings into analyses that it shares with the public.

Piton maintains an inventory of information on factors affecting the quality of life in Denver. They include up-to-date statistics on population, demographics, income, employment, crime, child care, welfare, child support, housing, health, and education. The data initiative works closely with program providers, researchers, policy-makers, the media, and other foundations to provide accurate and timely data, as well as to develop the skills of other community stakeholders in the use of data analysis to effect beneficial change. The foundation also has developed a comprehensive communications strategy to expand the impact of its program investments and contribute to informed debates.

Piton's Data Initiative was also supported initially by the Rockefeller Foundation as a Community Planning and Action Project. It has now become largely self supporting through income received from users for data provision and special analyses.

The Providence Plan

Institutional Setting. The Providence Plan was established jointly by Providence Mayor Cianci and Rhode Island Governor Sundlan in April 1992 to become a central force in revitalizing Rhode Island's capital city. It is a nonprofit corporation, chartered to build partnerships among government agencies, civic groups, and concerned residents in pursuit of six primary goals: "(1)

to put people to work; (2) to retain the city's middle class; (3) to make our neighborhoods safe and livable; (4) to improve the quality of the public schools; (5) to provide decent and affordable housing; and (6) to increase jobs and taxes in downtown Providence."

Its mission is to serve as "keeper of the vision," through efforts to direct a community-based strategic planning process that will translate ambitious city goals into specific program initiatives. The focus, however, is on distressed neighborhoods: "a holistic approach to community rebuilding has begun, focusing on the interrelated sources of urban poverty and decay."

The Providence Plan is funded by ongoing grants from the state and the city along with cash and in-kind contributions from other private funders. It is obligated to raise at least one-third of its annual costs from sources other than the state and the city.

In addition to the provision of much improved information on the city's neighborhoods (see below), the Providence Plan has initiated a number of action projects to achieve its objectives. These have included working with the school system to improve school performance and partnering with citizen groups in neighborhood development efforts. Its broadest initiative has been its leadership role in the preparation of an overall strategy for the improvement of the city which formed the basis for Providence's application for the Federal Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community Program. This entailed close collaboration with the City's Department of Planning and Development in analysis and a process of convening hundreds of residents in examining options for the city's future (State of Rhode Island and City of Providence, 1994).

The Indicators Initiative. The Director of the Providence Plan, Pat McGuigan, is its principal representative in NNIP. He (and his predecessor, Michael Rich) have given strong emphasis to the use of neighborhood level information as the foundation for many of their initiatives. They have accomplished this through a close collaboration with the Taubman Center for Public Policy at Brown University, which maintains the data system. The Center had begun developing an automated data base on the City's neighborhoods even before the Providence Plan was initiated. Its Director of Research, Jack Combs (also a part of the NNIP team), is responsible for the Center's state-of-the-art computer facilities and many relevant data files. Extensive data files from a number of administrative agencies have been assembled, and most are being updated at least annually.

One of the most important products of this collaboration to date has been *The Providence Neighborhood Fact Book* (Providence Plan, 1994), which contains a host of information (tables and maps) at the block group and neighborhood level, characterizing and comparing the city's communities. It was widely disseminated and now forms the basis for much of the community planning now underway in the city. The Providence Plan/Taubman collaboration has also laid the groundwork for a parcel-based GIS system for Providence and maps for a substantial portion of

the city have been digitized. Also, most of the system's neighborhood data have been installed in a World-Wide-Web site, that can be accessed via Internet.

The Urban Strategies Council, Oakland

Institutional Setting. The Urban Strategies Council (USC) is a private nonprofit organization, founded in 1987 to work with key sectors in Oakland in comprehensive initiatives aimed at reducing persistent poverty. It was also supported initially by the Rockefeller Foundation as one of its Community Planning and Action Projects. Ongoing funding comes primarily from several local and national foundations, but income is also gained through contracts for the provision of data services.

USC builds community-wide coalitions that collaborate to bring about change in local systems such as health, social services, and the public schools with a focus on improving the outcomes for children and families. Its collaborations with agencies grow out of its advocacy of two principles: (1) that agencies shift from narrowly defined categorical services to comprehensive approaches that take aim at root causes of poverty, and (2) that agencies be held accountable not merely for "serving the poor," but for actually improving outcomes for the children and families they serve.

The USC Data Group. From the outset, the Urban Strategies Council has used information as a central vehicle for achieving its objectives. Soon after it was founded, it prepared an influential report, *A Chance for Every Child*, which chronicled the conditions and challenges facing children in poverty in Oakland (USC published a similar report with more complete and updated information, in 1995). The Data Group now regularly assembles a sizeable number of data files based on administrative records, and combines them with census data, for use in city-wide reporting and specific customized analyses and maps for community groups and other individual users. One of the reasons agencies are willing to share their administrative records with USC is to take advantage of the strong capacity it has built in data mapping. All products grow out of interactions with the users, and are purposefully tailored to meet their needs. Joaquin Herranz, is the Director of USC's Data Group, and also its representative in NNIP.

The Woodstock Institute and the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago

Institutional Setting. The two Chicago institutions participating in NNIP are noted last because, unlike the other six, they have not established themselves as an entity that recurrently provides comprehensive neighborhood level data to support community and city-wide anti-poverty strategies. Rather, they represent a new partnership that is exploring whether and how they might

support such a direction in Chicago in the future. Both, however, have substantial analytic capacity and maintain large data bases that could be expanded and integrated for these purposes.

The Woodstock Institute is nonprofit organization established in 1973 to explore and promote forms of reinvestment in low- and moderate-income communities in Chicago. Its primary work includes the design, implementation, and evaluation of reinvestment programs, most of which is carried out in partnership with local community-based groups. Program development is supported by an extensive applied research and policy development agenda. Woodstock's accomplishments include the $150 million Neighborhood Lending Program of three downtown Chicago banks, the Cook County Tax Reactivation Program, and successful technical assistance to community-based organizations and other institutions concerned with community reinvestment nationally.

The Chapin Hall Center for Children was established at the University of Chicago in 1985. It is a policy research center "dedicated to bringing sound information, rigorous analysis, innovative ideas, and an independent perspective to the ongoing public debate about the needs of children and the ways in which those needs can best be met" (Chapin Hall, 1995). The Center has devoted "special attention to children facing special risks or challenges, such as poverty, abuse and neglect, and mental and physical illness. . . The contexts in which children are supported—primarily their families and communities—are an area of particular interest." It has completed many research projects since it was founded, generally falling in two major substantive areas. The first includes studies of childrens problems in relation to the services designed to address them; e.g., child welfare, mental health, and the juvenile court. The second examines childrens issues in the context of their local communities, with a special emphasis of late on the potential of Comprehensive Community Initiatives. The Center's work has also included program evaluations; such as its monitoring and assessment of the Ford Foundation's Neighborhood and Family Initiative.

Data Initiatives. The Woodstock Institute has performed numerous studies and assembled considerable data related to community reinvestment. Its staff are skilled analysts of neighborhood information (including Home Mortgage Disclosure Act—HMDA—data files) and it has performed studies of lending patterns in several cities (e.g., Pogge et al, 1986, Shlay, 1985). It is one of the few institutions nationally that has focused research on changing economic conditions at the neighborhood level (see Immergluck, 1994). Also, it does recurrently provide data on community reinvestment to Chicago area organizations, including the annual publication of a *Community Lending Fact Book*, although it does not maintain a recurrently updated multi-topic neighborhood data system as such. Woodstock's President, Malcolm Bush, has served as its representative in the NNIP team.

Under the leadership of its Research Director, Robert Goerge (also its representative in NNIP), Chapin Hall has developed a unique computer database, documenting public services rendered to children in Illinois and yielding a composite of the children's contact with public agencies state-wide. The database contains the experiences of the entire population of children who have had contact with the child welfare, juvenile justice, Medicaid, special education, welfare, and mental health systems over the course of more than a decade (Goerge, 1994). Started in the mid-1980s, the project grew out of an effort to create a longitudinal data system on foster care experiences—data from other administrative agencies were added, and linked, over time. The Chapin Hall staff have used this database in several studies to analyze changing conditions in neighborhoods and other geographic areas.

Common Features

As explained in Chapter 1, the seven NNIP partners were chosen to participate in this project primarily because they were judged to have the most sophisticated ongoing neighborhood level data systems that existed in America's cities. The descriptions in this chapter make it clear, however, that they also have other features in common. Below, we identify seven characteristics that characterize them. All of them:

1. ***Maintain automated data systems with regularly updated neighborhood level data from multiple sources***. These are the features that led to their selection to participate in NNIP.

2. ***Emphasize the application of data in action programs (not interested in data for its own sake)***. None is a pure research institute; i.e., they are not primarily motivated by data assembly and research for their own sake. Each of the data initiatives was established as an instrument to serve the broader missions of the institutions of which they are a part.

3. ***Exist primarily to support community building and address persistent poverty***. In all cases, those institutional missions focus around the development of action programs to address the problems of persistent poverty, particularly as poverty may be understood and dealt with in the context of residential neighborhoods.

4. ***Serve as a one-stop-shop for a variety of data users in the public interest***. Even with their focus on communities, there are many other institutions that use their data to serve legitimate public purposes.

5. ***Emphasize democratizing information—facilitating data use by actual stakeholders—rather than using it themselves***. Perhaps their most unique characteristics compared to research and planning organizations of the past.

6. Use information as a bridge to encourage collaboration among stakeholders. In conjunction with the above, they are able to act as a comparatively neutral convenor whose primary asset is objective information. This allows them to bring stakeholders to the table solely because of their relevance to the policy issue at hand, and this often implies assembling parties who have seldom, if ever, worked collaboratively in the past.

7. Have developed a reputation as impartial providers of reliable information, not beholden to any short term interests. All of the NNIP partners make extra efforts (through data cleaning, adherence to confidentiality agreements, etc.) to provide accurate and reliable data for use in public discourse without bias. None represents an agency or branch of government or work exclusively for any one faction in their communities. Although some now receive funds from governments for data work they perform under contract, all received their core funding from a mix of national foundations, local foundations, and private businesses that represent longer-term community interests.

Together these seven characteristics add up to a significant new force in, and approach to, local public policy. The importance of these commonalities will be examined further in Chapter 4 after we describe the contents of the NNIP partners' data systems in the chapter which follows.

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Chapter 3
NNIP PARTNERS' CURRENT DATA SYSTEMS

The main purposes of this chapter are to note approaches the NNIP partners have taken to acquiring data, to review the data they have regularly assembled and used, and to describe their data processing and mapping capabilities. Before addressing those topics, however, it is important to provide definitions of several terms and approaches related to these systems that will be used throughout the remainder of this report.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACHES: INDICATORS, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND GIS SYSTEMS

At this point, it should be helpful to clarify some of the key concepts that are among the foundations for this project. We discuss: the meaning we give to the term "indicators;" why the NNIP partners have chosen to work with neighborhood level data and how they define the term "neighborhood" in practice; and the meaning of the term "GIS" (Geographic Information System).

Indicators and Benchmarking

There is a vast array of data that can be used to describe conditions in a society, but all data are not indicators. Indicators are distinguished in at least two respects. First, they are measures purposefully selected for tracking because they relate to important societal values and goals. Second, indicators must be expressed in a consistent form that permits comparison over time, and normally, between places. To achieve the latter purpose, indicators are usually expressed as rates or percentages rather than as absolute values; e.g., if you know only that there

have been 100 new tuberculosis cases in one neighborhood over the past year and 200 in another you cannot tell which has a the more serious problem in this regard—you can make that assessment, however, if you know the number of such cases *per 1,000 population*.

Many people think of the term "social indicators" primarily in reference to outcomes; i.e., as measures of societal well-being (measures that tell you how well social goals are being achieved). That definition, however, is too restrictive for policy analysis and evaluation. One scheme (by Land, 1975) identifies five types of indicators for application in social system models.

1. ***Policy instrument indicators***: variables exogenous to the system that are manipulable by social policy.

2. ***Nonmanipulative descriptive indicators***: other exogenous variables that influence outcomes but are not manipulable by social policy.

3. ***Outcome or end product indicators***: endogenous variables that define the social condition of concern and are consequences of the social processes embodied in the model.[6]

4. ***Side-effect indicators***: endogenous variables which influence or are influenced by, but do not define, the social conditions and processes under consideration.

5. ***Analytic indicators***: parameters of the social processes specified in the model that play some role in influencing change but do not meet any of the other definitions.

The real world applications by the NNIP partners that will be noted in Chapter 4 make it clear that they recurrently use indicators in all of these other senses of the term. Sound planning as well as evaluation requires consideration of measures of most of these types. One wants to quantify outcomes, but one also wants measures of the factors (policy and non-policy) that may have interacted to cause those outcomes, and measures of important side effects that may have been produced as well.

The principles to be advocated here are: (1) in any specific use, it is important to be clear about the roles different measures are expected to play; but (2) it is important to recognize that the appropriate role for any one indicator may change depending on the use at hand. To illustrate the latter point, the crime rate is clearly and important societal outcome in its own right. But changes

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[6]In selecting these, The National Civic League's *Healthy Communities Handbook* (1994) recommends asking, "If the indicator moves, would a diverse group of people agree on how the movement affects the quality of life—positively or negatively?"

in the crime rate may also be instruments in producing other outcomes; e.g. level of reinvestment in the neighborhood and, ultimately, housing quality.

Another term related to indicators that is in high currency today is *benchmarking*. Hatry (1995) notes:

> "The term benchmark has come to have many meanings. In recent years, the business sector has used the term to refer to a business firm comparing its own results to those of the best in the country (or world). Benchmarks are usually defined by dictionary as being a reference point or criterion against which to judge one's own performance. I believe this broader definition is more useful for public sector programs. A public agency can have many other reference points or benchmarks. These include the performance in past time periods, the performance of the best organizational unit within programs, and comparisons with the best (or average) outcomes of various demographic groups."

Thus many indicators can serve as benchmarks when they are explicitly selected to perform that role. They include not only outcome measures in Land's classification, but also measures of the performance of policy instruments intended to influence outcomes.

The Importance of Neighborhood Data

Assembling data and creating indicators at the neighborhood level is obviously more troublesome and costly than collecting information for cities or counties as a whole. Why have the NNIP partners uniformly built neighborhood based data systems? The answer is fairly obvious, but it is worth noting explicitly because many agencies and researchers continue to use city-wide averages in a manner that can be quite deceptive as a guide to policy.

City-wide averages are valuable where the conditions under study are fairly uniform across communities; i.e., city averages are reasonably characteristic of the conditions that exist in most neighborhoods. But, we know that with respect to many important conditions in U.S. cities, such uniformity is rare.

This is particularly true with respect to poverty (and its attendant effects). In most cities, poverty is typically concentrated in a limited number of neighborhoods, and this concentration has been increasing over the past two decades. Mincy and Wiener (1993) found, for example, that only 5.6 percent of the nation's census tracts had poverty rates in excess of 40 percent in 1990, but such tracts accounted for 15.1 percent of the total population in poverty (up from 11.4 percent in 1970). Furthermore, research by Coulton (1990) found that, in Cleveland, there were significant policy relevant differences in conditions even among tracts in this most concentrated category (i.e., poverty rates of 40 percent or more). This is certain to be the case in most other cities as well.

Where such contrasts exist, data at the city level alone can be misleading. Consider a city, for example, where student test scores are going up substantially in most communities, but dropping precipitously in a significant minority. The city average would show a modest improvement—a trend that is descriptive of neither reality.

Neighborhood level information is increasingly being recognized as vital for planning and operating most city-wide services. Community policing is a good example. Police departments need to know a great deal about the characteristics of individual neighborhoods—social, economic, and physical circumstances as well as trends in crime—to deploy resources effectively. It is self-evident that knowledge of characteristics of neighborhoods and their populations is also critical to the deployment—at least the cost-effective deployment—of many other city-wide programs: e.g., health services, code-enforcement, fire prevention.

And knowledge of neighborhood level conditions is even more obviously essential for developing effective strategies for improving individual communities. From the descriptions above, it is clear that such work in distressed inner city neighborhoods has been the primary motivator in the missions of all seven NNIP partners. All of them share the same philosophy as to how that task should be approached: i.e., through *comprehensive community building.*

As articulated by the National Community Building Network[7] (1994) the operating principles of comprehensive community building are: (1) integrate community development and human service strategies; (2) forge partnerships through collaboration; (3) build on community assets; (4) start from local conditions; (4) foster broad community participation; (5) require racial equity; (6) value cultural strengths; and (7) support families and children.

Chapter 4 will present several examples of how neighborhood level data from the NNIP partners' systems have been used to establish and help implement various policies and programs. In all of these cases, either the task at hand could not have been accomplished, or serious policy mistakes would likely have been made, if data at the neighborhood level had not been available.

A Pragmatic Approach to Defining Neighborhoods

Traditional Views. Most people think of a neighborhood as: (1) a small residential area (size not exceeding the bounds of easy walking distance), where there is (2) considerable social interaction between neighbors, and probably (3) some degree of social homogeneity (as defined by class, ethnicity, and or other social characteristics). Residents have common interests because they share the same physical space, and are likely to have other common interests as well.

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[7]Institutions in six of the seven partner cities are members of NCBN and the only one that is not a member, Providence, endorses the same principles.

City planners most often adopt a neighborhood concept in planning new residential areas. Probably the most prominent explicit definition was by Clarence Perry in 1929 (Gallion, 1950). Perry saw a neighborhood as the area served by one elementary school (enrollment of 1,000 to 1,200 pupils). The total population would be in the range of 5,000 to 6,000. Assuming a density of 10 families per acre, the neighborhood would occupy about 160 acres which, if in a circular form, would have a radius of about one quarter of a mile. America's urban areas have generally been developed at much lower densities since then, but other than that, Perry's basic concept is still the driving approach for much of today's planning of new residential areas.

Operational Problems With Any Single Definition. Looking at an existing city, however, the task of defining a consistent set of neighborhood boundaries, satisfying to all people for all purposes, has proved to be impossible.[8] There is considerable disagreement among social scientists as to "the degree to which the term implies homogeneity, social interaction, and place identity on the part of the residents" (Coulton 1995, White 1987). It is widely known that the extent of social cohesion and organization can vary widely across neighborhoods.

Undoubtedly, there is consensus that the neighborhood is a "social/spatial unit of organization . . . larger than a household and smaller than a city" (Hunter, 1979:270). But here is where consensus ends because it has been difficult to link the social organizational structure of space to any particular spatial boundaries. The seminal linkage has been provided by Suttles (1972: ch. 3), who argued that the social and spatial aspects of neighborhoods are intrinsically interrelated, and that particular social functions are associated with different spatial levels of neighborhood. Suttles' most elemental unit was the "block face," the area over which children could play without supervision. The second level was labeled the "defended neighborhood:" the smallest area possessing a corporate identity as defined by mutual opposition to another area. The third level, the "community of limited liability," typically consisted of an administrative district in which individuals social participation was selective and voluntary. The highest geographic level of neighborhood, the "expanded community of limited liability," was viewed as an entire sector of the city. Surveys conducted by Hunter (1974) and Birch et al. (1979) have found support for this hierarchical view of neighborhood.

A number of studies (e.g., Lynch 1960) have shown that residents of the same area often see the boundaries of their neighborhood differently and, for some, the concept has little clarity. Galster (1986) has pointed out that even individuals may define their own neighborhoods differently for different purposes. Even where there is a fairly solid consensus among neighborhood residents about boundaries, that consensus may change over time.

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[8]This conclusion was reached and explained by Peter Rossi a quarter century ago—See Rossi, 1970.

Based on analysis of a variety of factors and often with citizen input, some cities have defined reasonably consistent sets of neighborhood boundaries that they have found useful for planning and other purposes over a considerable period of time (e.g., Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Philadelphia).[9] However, it must be recognized that these are at best approximations, and they are not likely to suit all valid uses. For example, there may be legitimate reasons for different agencies and service providers to define service districts differently.

Approach Taken by NNIP Partners. This boundary problem is one of the primary factors that confounded the development of neighborhood data systems historically. To talk sensibly about the mix of conditions that differentiate neighborhoods from a policy perspective (e.g., housing quality, social conditions, crime rates) it is necessary to have uniform boundaries; i.e., to be talking about the same place. Yet different agencies often tabulate their own data for geographic subareas of the city that do not match.

With the contribution of the Tiger files and address-matching (as discussed in Chapter 1), however, this situation no longer needs to be a problem. These technological advances make possible an alternative approach, and this is the approach that has been accepted by the NNIP partners:

> *Do not adopt a single definition of neighborhoods. Rather, store all data on a small area basis (e.g., address, block, block group) so you can add it up at different levels to serve varying needs of users.*

It is important to use a definition appropriate for the purpose at hand, and to use it consistently for that purpose. In particular, for any use, boundaries must remain constant over time to calculate trends reliably. However, this principle now permits considerable flexibility. For example:

- Community groups can define whatever boundaries they want for their own initiatives.
- Service agencies can obtain all data for their own service districts (e.g., police beat).
- City planners use can use comprehensive data for any standard set of neighborhoods they have defined.

It is also worth noting that planners and researchers often use census tracts to examine spatial variations in characteristics within cities. Census tracts have an average population of

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[9]It should be pointed out that in most of these schemes, the "neighborhoods" have been made up of aggregates of several census tracts. Since tracts have an average population of about 4,000, such aggregates are often much larger than would seem appropriate given the traditional sense scale implied by the term.

around 4,000, thus they approximate the size of a neighborhood as traditionally defined. Also, in designing tracts, the Census Bureau has tried to be sensitive to what cities have regarded as important physical and socio-economic boundaries. However, tracts cannot be expected to represent neighborhoods the way local residents would define them. Nonetheless, analysis of spatial patterns and trends using census tracts can be extremely valuable, if this point is kept in mind. Similarly, analysis based on census block groups can be useful for finer grained analysis (there are typically 4 to 10 block groups per tract). Since they are smaller, they are likely to be comparatively more homogeneous.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

In a GIS, all data are referenced to specific locations on the surface of the globe. The computer records on housing code inspections, for example, include not only information on the number and types of violations discovered, but also the addresses of the building involved which, via the TIGER files discussed in Chapter 1 (or other similar interfaces), can be translated into definite locations in space, specified by latitude-longitude coordinates.

The boundaries of geographic subareas (e.g., census tracts, service districts, other defined neighborhoods) can also be specified in computer files, normally as a string of linked line segments with end points fixed by coordinates. Boundaries and other features can be entered into the GIS quite simply now by "digitizing:" tracing over the lines on a map with a mouse connected to the computer. When these data are in place, the computer can very quickly add up any spatially identified variables (e.g., the number code violations by type) occurring within any specified subarea, and relate them to other data in the system (i.e., calculate the number of code violation per 100 buildings for all census tracts).

The past decade has witnessed a phenomenal advance in the accessibility of this technology. Versions of GIS software today can be operated on desk-top computers. The capacities of mapping software and printers have also much increased as their costs have been substantially reduced. Assuming the data are in the GIS, desk-top installations can now easily create and print out accurate and attractive maps showing, say, the dot location of every building that has a code violation (on a street pattern base map), or census tract boundaries with different shades indicating different ranges of code violation rates.

GIS technology also makes it possible to calculate spatial measures that are more meaningful for policy analysis than those available from tabular data alone. For example, knowing how many food stores or day care centers there are located within a 2 mile radius of the center of

a neighborhood is often likely to be more useful than knowing how many of each are located within the neighborhood's own boundaries.[10]

There are important differences between types of GIS systems, however. Much of the publicity about GIS in municipal circles of late relates to *parcel-based* GIS; systems that incorporate highly accurate specifications of the boundaries of each lot in the city, and other features like the locations of water supply mains, for detailed engineering and land-planning applications. These systems are still very expensive; it takes an enormous amount of work to digitize all of the lot lines and substantial computer memory to store all of those data points.

Two of the NNIP partners (Atlanta and Providence) work with parcel-based systems, but most of their operations, and all of those of the other sites, work at a higher level of generality. The greatest level of detail they have to store is data on the street pattern and address ranges for blocks (as is contained in the TIGER files). GIS at this level is much less data intensive and much less expensive; affordable to many nonprofits as well as city governments.

CURRENT SYSTEMS: DEVELOPMENT AND CONTENT

This section presents a comparative description of the neighborhood level data maintained by the seven NNIP partners. It first discusses the approaches they have taken to data assembly and use, and then presents listings of the data they maintain and the form in which it is stored.

Data Selection and System Building

None of the NNIP partners built their systems on the basis of any "grand design," listing all data that might be theoretically desirable beforehand. They were guided by theory and their experience with the real-world utility of various measures in making their selections. But, they proceeded pragmatically, first reviewing data that could be acquired at a reasonable cost and then relying on their knowledge and experience to select measures they considered of value that could be derived from those sources. In all cases, their staffs conferred with outside sources in data selection. This ranged from a series of individual interviews with various data users and providers in their localities in some cases to the broad process mounted in Boston (noted in the preceding chapter) involving a number of group meetings and a wide range of participants.

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[10]Useful information on GIS technology can be found Antenucci et al (1991), Huxhold (1991), Public Technology, Inc. (1995), and the monthly publication, *GIS World*. Texts describing analytic techniques available to GIS users include Fischer and Nijkamp (1993) and Anselin (1992).

The system managers have assembled data from three types of sources: (1) the U.S. Censuses of 1980 and 1990; (2) administrative records regularly maintained and updated by local public agencies; and (3) special surveys and inventories.

Of these, their use of administrative data has required the most innovation. The agencies provide the data to systems managers in one of two forms: (1) tables prepared by the agency with selected data already totaled for geographic subareas (e.g., block groups or census tracts) or, more commonly, (2) a copy of the complete administrative data file which the system managers can manipulate themselves.

The latter form is potentially much more valuable. For example, instead of obtaining tables showing the total number of births in each neighborhood, with a limited number of characteristics, the complete file on births gives the NNIP partner access to a much richer array of information (the full vital statistics files normally contain data on the age, race, marital status, and other characteristics of both the mother and father, as well as information on the baby's weight and condition at birth and the nature of the prenatal care the mother has received).

However, using copies of the complete original file also has its costs. First, the NNIP partner must be prepared to manipulate the file itself, which always entails address-matching (to assign an exact sub-area identifier to each record), but most often also entails designing routines for checking and cleaning the data and stripping from the file sizeable amounts of information that are not relevant for the purposes of the indicator system.

Second, since using the entire file gives the NNIP partners access to a considerable amount of confidential information about each family for which records exist, steps must be taken to assure that confidentiality is protected. The Boston Foundation, for example, signs a legally binding agreement with each of its data providers assuring that it will safeguard information about individual families. It then takes a number of precautions to implement those agreements, including (1) prohibiting access to the original file to anyone except the computer operators at Northeastern University, (2) making public only data that are aggregated at the block group level or higher, and (3) suppressing even block-group data from public releases where they are based on fewer than five observations. All other NNIP partners employ similar arrangements.

Since they were established, all of the NNIP partners have added to their data bases incrementally over time, acquiring information from new sources when there was an acceptable match between the local policy interest in new indicators and the cost of acquiring them.

With regard to updating their administrative data, two different approaches have been followed. Six of the initiatives (Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Oakland, and Providence) have defined a core set of administrative data which they update regularly (normally once per

year), acquiring the most recent administrative files or tabular summaries from the source agencies as required. It is important to note, however, that these sites retain considerably more data than they make available to the public. First, there is the "not-regularly-used" portion of the data in the administrative files they archive (for example, their files on vital statistics contain many individual and household characteristics that are not used in constructing their current set of indicators). Second, all have incrementally acquired data files on new topics which they are still examining and which have not yet yielded indicators to be added to their core system.

The other partner (Atlanta's DAPA) also maintains some time series, but it has more often added to, or updated, its system only when new requests from outside users, or new applications motivated internally, required it to do so. However, after DAPA uses a data file for one project it retains it because of its potential for utility for other projects later. Over, time DAPA has acquired data on most of the same topics covered by the six partners who do regular updates more consistently. It has less historic data available, but in many cases they could go back to the sources to obtain the history fairly easily.

In the paragraphs below, we summarize the types of neighborhood level information the partners now have in their systems under each of the three basic types of sources identified. These data can, of course, be aggregated to form city and county level measures as well. (All of them maintain a number of other indicators that are available at city- or county-wide levels only—because of our focus on neighborhoods, we do not review them in this report.)

Data from the Decennial U.S. Census

All NNIP partners use 1990 U.S. Census data as a foundation for their indicator systems, and most use some comparable information from the 1980 Census as well.

The Bureau of the Census has made the 1990 data available in the form of automated files which have been quite easy for all of our partners to access and manipulate. Two primary census products have been used, both of which provide all data at both block-group and census tract levels: (1) the STF-1A file (contains data from the full count enumeration, with counts and basic descriptors of the population—e.g., age, sex, race—, households, and housing units); and (2) the STF-3A file (contains data from the census sample covering a broader range of topics such as social and economic characteristics of households and more detailed physical and economic characteristics of the housing stock).

Bureau of the Census documentation (1991 and 1992) lists all of the variables on these files. The NNIP partners have relied on most of them in recurrent reports, mapping projects, and special studies. There is no need to list them all here since they are, by definition, comparable

across sites and systems managers can access the full range as needed. Variables incorporated most frequently in regular indicator reports, however, are identified in Table 3.1.

Administrative Data Sources

As noted, the most innovative work of the NNIP partners to date has been in assembling and using information from administrative data sources. Table 3.2 shows the data files that have been incorporated into the systems in each city by source. The table also shows whether data from each particular source, if available, has been obtained from the providing agency in a tabular form (open circle), or whether the partner system obtains data on individual cases linked to geography by address (solid circle).[11]

Vital Statistics. All of the seven maintain data on births and all but two maintain data on deaths. Four out of the seven obtain data that is address based.

Police/Crime Data. Six of the sites maintain data from police crime reports (address based in four cases), and several have other related indicators that do not appear on those records; i.e., on juvenile arrests, child abuse/neglect, and police calls (911 system).

Public Assistance. All but two of the sites have considerable information on the local participants in public assistance programs (AFDC, Food Stamps, General Assistance, Medicaid, WIC and Subsidized Child Care) at the neighborhood level. In almost all cases, where such data is available, it is address based (indicating that the site also has a considerable amount of information about each participating household).

School Data. Five of the sites have some data on student school performance. Four of them can provide indicators both for schools and for neighborhoods in which the students reside. Three maintain data on special education programs.

Hospitals and Health. Only two have assembled data on general hospital admissions. One each have information on mental hospital admissions and immunization.

Tax Assessor/Auditor Data on Land Parcels. All of the sites but one maintain some data in these categories. Tax records normally contain data on assessed values, tax status, area, and whether the parcel is or is not vacant. Other information (e.g., zoning) can sometimes also be derived from these records.

[11]Responses for Chicago in this table represent information from the Chapin Hall data system.

Table 3.1
CENSUS DATA COMMONLY USED BY NNIP PARTNERS

Basic Descriptors

No. of people, households
Population/household composition
- Household types
- Age structure
- Race/ethnicity

Social and Economic Characteristics

Adults by years/type of education
Household income
Poverty rate
Labor Force
Employment (by type, occupation, and industry)
Self employment rate
Unemployment rates
Households receiving public assistance

Housing

No. of housing units
Housing units by type
- Type of structure
- Size of unit
- Tenure (renter or owner)

Rate of overcrowding
Housing physical quality measures
Housing affordability (ratio housing expense to income)
Value and rent levels
Vacancy rate

Mobility

Households moved, past 5 years

Building or Planning Departments. Only two sites currently maintain data from these departments in their records (building permits and code violations) although several others suggest that such data could be easily added to their systems.

Table 3.2
ADMINISTRATIVE DATA MAINTAINED BY NNIP PARTNERS

SOURCE	ATL	BOS	CHI	CLE	DEN	OAK	PROV
VITAL STATISTICS							
Births	●	●	●	●	○	○	●
Deaths	●	–	–	●	○	○	●
POLICE DEPARTMENTS							
Crimes, Arrests	●	●	–	●	○	○	●
Crime, Juvenile	●	–	●	●	–	○	●
Child Abuse/Neglect	–	–	●	–	●	–	●
Police Calls	–	●	–	–	–	○	●
PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AGENCIES							
AFDC	–	–	●	●	●	●	●
Food Stamps	–	–	–	●	●	●	●
General Assistance	–	○	–	●	–	●	●
Medicaid	–	–	●	●	●	●	●
WIC	–	–	–	–	–	●	●
Subsidized Child Care	–	–	–	●	●	●	●
SCHOOL SYSTEM							
Student Performance	●	●	–	–	○	●	●
Special Education	–	●	●	–	○	–	●
HOSPITALS, HEALTH AGENCIES							
Hospital Admissions	–	●	–	–	○	–	–
Hospital Admissions (Mental)	–	–	●	–	–	–	–
Immunization	●	–	–	–	–	–	–
TAX ASSESSOR/AUDITOR							
Parcel Characteristics	●	●	–	●	–	●	●
Tax.Delinq.Parcels	●	–	–	●	–	–	●
Vacant Parcels	●	●	–	●	○	●	●
Home mortgages	–	○	–	●	–	–	–
BUILDING/PLANNING DEPARTMENTS							
Code Violations	○	–	–	–	–	–	–
Building Permits	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITIES							
Public Housing Units	●	–	–	●	○	●	●
DEVELOPMENT/BUDGET DEPT.							
CDBG Expenditures	–	●	–	●	–	–	●

●=Address based, ○=Tabular

Public Housing Authorities. Five of the sites have data on the location of public housing projects, with some information on characteristics; e.g., number and types of housing units. In all but one case, the data are address-based.

Development Department. Three sites maintain data on Community Development Block Grant expenditures by neighborhood.

The sources of these data, and the time periods for which NNIP partners have data from each source (through mid-1995), are shown in Table 3.3. As noted earlier, the partners differ on the degree to which they maintain historical data in their systems. All maintain some annual time-series data, most often beginning in the late 1980s. Cleveland has built the most consistent set of historical records, with annual data for almost all variables going back to 1980. Denver and Providence also have extensive historical series for a sizeable number of indicators.

Table 3.3 also shows the geographic coverage of their data bases. These are not uniform in any site; i.e., most administrative data is typically available for the central city only, but some indicators are often available for larger areas, such as the county or the metropolis. Cleveland's system has the most complete data for a higher level of geography. Except for police data, all of its information is available for all parts of Cuyahoga County (which includes the City of Cleveland and many smaller surrounding jurisdictions).

Three comments about these listings seem relevant at this point. First, all of the sites have been able to obtain an impressive array of information from a sizeable number of agencies—particularly impressive given the difficulties we have noted, ranging from securing the willingness of agencies to provide access to their confidential files to the sophisticated processing work entailed in building it all into a common system.

Second, while there are some notable differences, a surprisingly large share of this information is comparable across sites (at least as to topic and type of source—further discussion of the comparability of the precise measures available will be provided in Chapter 5).

Third, the patterns shown in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 help explain the comparability that has been attained. Data are most likely to be available where: (1) the operating jurisdiction of the providing agency is large (i.e., state, county, or city-wide), and (2) legal requirements and/or professional traditions mandate comparable data collection and reporting. For example, records on births and deaths have to be maintained by counties and states and basic reporting conventions are comparable nationally. The same is true for crime data (although nationally-comparable FBI reporting standards do not apply for all types of crimes—see discussion in Chapter 5).

Table 3.3
ADMINISTRATIVE DATA: SOURCES AND TIME PERIODS

Data/Site	Source	Period	Area
Births			
Atlanta	GA Dept. of Human Services	1989-94	Metro
Boston	MA Dept. of Public Health	1991, 1992-93	City
Chicago	IL Dept. of Public Health	1982-93	State
Cleveland	OH Dept. of Health	1980-92	County
Denver	CO Dept. of Health	1980, 1990-93	City
Oakland	Alemeda Co. Health Services	1988-94	City
Providence	RI Dept. of Health	1985-92	City
Deaths			
Atlanta	Fulton Co. Health Dept.	1989-94	Metro
Cleveland	OH Dept. of Health	1980-92	County
Denver	CO Dept. of Health	1980, 1990-93	City
Oakland	Alemeda Co. Health Services	1988-94	City
Providence	RI Dept. of Health	1985-92	City
Crimes			
Atlanta	Atlanta Police Dept.	1989-94	City
Boston	Boston Police Dept.	1990, 1993	City
Cleveland	Cleveland Police Dept.	1980-93	City
Denver	Denver Police Dept.	1983-95,1989-94	County
Oakland	Oakland Police Dept.	1990-94	City
Providence	Providence Police Dept.	72, 75, 79, 85, 89, 91-94	City
Public Assistance			
Chicago	IL Dept. of Public Aid	1981-91	State
Cleveland	OH Dept. of Human Services	1980-90	County
Denver	CO Dept. of Social Services	1992-94	County
Oakland	Alemeda Co. Soc. Svcs. Agency	1989-94	City
Providence	RI Dept. of Human Services	1992-94	City
Schools			
Atlanta	Atlanta Public Schools	1994	City
Boston	Boston Public Schools	1991, 1993	City
Denver	County Dept. Education	1988-95	County
Oakland	Oakland Unified School Dist.	1992-3, 1994-5	City
Providence	Providence School Dept.	1992-94	City

Table 3.3 (continued)
ADMINISTRATIVE DATA: SOURCES AND TIME PERIODS

Data/Site	Source	Period	Area
Hospitals/Health Agencies			
Atlanta	Fulton Co. Health Dept.	1992	City
Boston	MA Rate Setting Commission	1990, 1993, 1994	City
Denver	Denver Dept. Health and Hospital	1990-94	County
Tax Assessor			
Atlanta	Fulton Co. Tax Assessor	1993-4	County
Boston	Boston Tax Assessor	1992	City
Cleveland	Cuyahoga Co. Auditors Office	1989-92	County
Oakland	Alemeda Co. Tax Assessor	1993	City
Providence	Providence Assessors Office	1993-94	City
Building/Planning Departments			
Atlanta	City of Atlanta PLANFILE	1994	City
Cleveland	Cleveland City Planning Commission	1980-92	City
Public Housing Authorities			
Atlanta	US Dept. Housing and Urban Devel.	1995	City
Cleveland	Cuyahoga Metro. Housing Authority	1990	County
Denver	Denver Housing Authority	1988, 1992	County
Oakland	Oakland Housing Authority	1988, 1991	City
Providence	Providence Housing Authority	1993	City
Development Departments			
Boston	Boston Budget Office	1994	City
Cleveland	Cleveland Dept. Community Devel.	1989	City
Providence	Providence Dept. Community Devel.	1994	City

Data are less likely to be available where these conditions do not exist. Information on school and student performance, for example, is likely to be more obtainable in some urban areas (where the local school district encompasses the whole city or county) than others (where there are many small school districts within the city). Similar factors affect the availability of data on hospital admissions—local indicator systems are not likely to be able to afford to collect this information where doing so would require them working out agreements with every individual hospital in the city. They are likely to have it only where an agency with a larger jurisdiction has already taken on the job of assembling it in a comparable form.

Surveys and Inventories

Table 3.4 displays the types of data from surveys and inventories the NNIP partners have so far installed as a part of their systems. In all cases, these data identify the existence and location (by address) of some type of facility or service provider. Where such data are available, the systems generally contain very little additional descriptive information (e.g., size, performance characteristics) about these entities.

The first cluster on the table relates to the locations of various public facilities. To date, government agencies in only a few cities maintain fully automated geo-coded inventories of such properties, although with the rapid development of parcel-based GIS systems, it is likely that many more will be able to make such data available at low cost in the future.

The second cluster includes the location of churches, community institutions, and various service providers. Almost all of these are nongovernmental entities, thus there no one governmental agency will ever have the same responsibility for maintaining records on them that they do for properties they themselves own or rent. In virtually all American cities today, if such information is to be obtained, it will have to be obtained via special survey procedures.

The final cluster relates to the locations of various types of private businesses. Local governments virtually never maintain and update data on business locations, but several commercial vendors are now producing and recurrently updating such data, in effect by "automating the yellow pages."

As evidenced by the table, the various NNIP partners have taken different approaches to data in these categories. Four of them have seen such information as a high priority in relation to their own purposes and made substantial efforts to obtain it, at least in some categories. Given the momentum at the time of its founding, a number of public agencies collaborated with the Providence Plan to create a locational data base covering many of these categories. The same was essentially the case for The Atlanta Project, although data so far incorporated there are less comprehensive. The Urban Strategies Council in Oakland, has made the most impressive headway in assembling data in the most difficult category: nonprofit service providers. Cleveland also has extensive information in these areas and much it is available County-wide.[12]

[12]Since data on facility locations are not "indicators" as such, Cleveland's CUPSC does not make such data available as a part of its CAN DO system.

Table 3.4
NNIP PARTNER DATA FROM SURVEYS AND INVENTORIES

	ATL	BOS	CHI	CLE	DEN	OAK	PROV
Schools	●	–	–	●	●	●	●
Recreation Centers	–	–	–	–	–	●	●
Fire Stations	–	–	–	–	–	–	
Community Police	–	–	–	–	–	–	●
Churches	●	–	–	●	●	●	●
Child Care	●	●	–	●	●	●	–
Neigh./Commun.Orgs	–	–	–	●	●	●	●
Drug.Rehab.Svcs.	–	–	–	–	–	●	●
Family Plan.Svcs.	–	–	–	–	–	●	●
Drug Stores	●	●	–	–	–	–	●
Convenience Stores/Markets	●	●	–	–	–	–	●
Banks	●	●	–	–	–	–	●
Other Businesses	–	●	–	–	–	–	–

●=Address based, o=Tabular

The Boston Persistent Poverty Project has not yet attempted to assemble information on public facilities and nonprofits, but it is the only site that make use of one of the commercial surveys of business locations: the Coles Business Directory. It recognizes the need to be cautious about accuracy with some variables from this source, but notes that the data have been very beneficial in offering some basic understanding of differences between neighborhood economies.

Of the remaining sites, Chapin Hall's mission (Chicago) does not require it to collect data of this type. Denver has experimented with the some of the locational data listed in Table 3.4, and plans to expand its data bases in these areas, but it has not integrated such information into its recurrent system as yet.

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Chapter 4

PARTNER-CITY APPLICATIONS, FUNCTIONS, AND COSTS

Having described the data systems that are maintained by the NNIP partners, this chapter focuses on what they have done with them—how they have used their data and what their applications have accomplished. We begin by reviewing the way their applications evolved in the context of their unifying operating characteristics introduced at the end of Chapter 2. We then classify their applications in a framework that exemplifies what we consider to be the appropriate core functions of an effective local neighborhood indicators data facility. A number of example applications (in Boxes) are provided to make this discussion more concrete. Finally, we discuss the operating costs of the NNIP partners' data initiatives to roughly assess the range of costs that would be required to establish similar capabilities in other cities.

The observations offered in this chapter are based on interviews with users in all seven cities—e.g., city officials, nonprofit program managers, community leaders—as well as on documents of, and stories told by, the NNIP partners themselves.

A NEW PHILOSOPHY: INFORMATION-LED COLLABORATIVE URBAN STRATEGIES

In Chapter 2 we noted seven features that characterize operating styles of the NNIP partners. The first—assembling neighborhood level data—is the baseline necessity. But these entities are clearly not ivory tower research institutions. It is how they have used their data—the combination of the first with the other six—that distinguishes them.

1. ***Maintain automated data systems with regularly updated neighborhood level data from multiple sources.***

2. ***Emphasize the application of data in action programs.***

3. ***Exist primarily to support community building and address persistent poverty.***

4. ***But serve as a one-stop-shop for a variety of data users in the public interest.***

5. ***Emphasize democratizing information—facilitating data use by actual stakeholders—rather than using it themselves.***

6. ***Use information as a bridge to encourage collaboration among stakeholders.***

7. ***Have developed a reputation as impartial providers of reliable information, not beholden to any short term interests.***

As they began to develop their information systems, none adopted a first-come-first-served approach to selecting users and applications. They all chose uses carefully to assure that their data would be legitimately applied in action programs (Characteristic 2) and, specifically, in programs and policies that supported community building and addressed the problems of poor communities (Characteristic 3).

Early on, most prepared city-wide multi-dimensional analyses of neighborhood change to heighten awareness of key policy issues and demonstrate the value of a neighborhood focus for dealing with many of them; e.g., Boston's *In the Midst of Plenty*, Cleveland's *Analysis of Poverty and Related Conditions in Cleveland Area Neighborhoods*, Denver's *Poverty in Denver—Facing the Facts*, Oakland's *Chance for Every Child*, Providence's *Neighborhood Fact Book*. These, and a number of other early applications, soon proved their worth and all have since had more requests for information—from a wide variety of possible users—than they can handle.

The partners have differed to some extent in the way they have charted their own course of action but, as noted, the similarities have been more important than the differences. Their remaining "unifying characteristics" warrant more explanation.

Democratizing Information

As noted earlier, all of the NNIP partners see their role primarily as facilitating the direct use of data by the stakeholders in the issue at hand (e.g., community groups, nongovernmental leadership groups, relevant government officials) rather than themselves serving as the primary actors in policy analysis and plan making. This approach (Characteristic 5), may be the feature that most distinguishes them from most of the professional research and planning organizations that have traditionally been the heaviest users of data about America's cities.

Generally accepted techniques for analyzing and otherwise manipulating statistical information for policy analysis have been derived largely from the social sciences, which in turn have adapted methods from physical science. Models of behaviour are based on university research where the driving purpose is to tell the "truth" about something. University researchers, and professional policy analysts, spend a great deal of time at school learning how to assess the accuracy of data bases, techniques for manipulating them properly, and precautions so they will avoid drawing inappropriate inferences.[13] Given their purpose and backgrounds, it is not surprising that many social scientists become nervous about extensive data use by people who do not have such training.

Indeed, all of the NNIP partner institutions are staffed by professionals well trained, and highly credentialed, in these techniques, but they see their missions as mandating a different approach. Three points are relevant:

First, the stakeholders concerned with an issue may not be as strongly motivated to follow up on an analysis unless they have gone through it—step by step—themselves and internalized it. They need to feel that they created, and therefore "own," the findings and conclusions. And they may well come up with different, and better, answers than an independent professional who does a study for them. Unlike the independent analyst, the stakeholders understand nuances related to purposes, values, and unquantifiable aspects of the situation, that can guide them in adjusting an analytic sequence in process to better achieve their own ends.

Second, the purpose is different. After examining some factor relevant to policy, it is quite acceptable for an academic researcher to conclude "we still do not know enough to say for sure" and leave it at that. Local stakeholders in community planning do not have that option. They have to act, and any action implies some assumption (explicit or implicit) about the factor in question. They have to make the best guesses they can, and if it is done properly, there is a good chance

[13]A useful guide to the potential dangers involved in developing social measures was provided by Etzioni and Lehman, 1967. A summary of their ideas is provided in Sawicki and Flynn, 1996.

that taking a look at some imperfect data will lead them to make a better guesses than if they do not look at any data at all. The techniques of strategic planning for businesses that have been developed over the past two decades are more applicable here—techniques that assist in using incomplete or imperfect information more reliably and assessing the risks associated with bad guesses due to those imperfections.

Third, the fact that local stakeholders have not had formal training in quantitative methods, does not mean they do not have a good sense for numbers. Even in poor neighborhoods, families and workers have to make decisions based on comparing numbers (e.g., prices) every day and they are often quite shrewd in doing so. NNIP partners point out many cases where community residents have had insights about the meaning of data and ways to use it that professional analysts from the outside would surely have missed.

NNIP partners do have the requisite technical training. They, in turn, can train local stakeholders, at least in the main points to be considered in using data carefully and reliably. If they facilitate the planning process, they can also make suggestions and point out potential pitfalls as the analysis proceeds. They have become skilled at doing this without taking the sense of ownership or momentum away from the analysis from those who will be taking the risks of acting on it.

Information-Led Collaboration

This point (Characteristic 6) weaves together two themes. The first is the growing recognition in local policy making of the importance of collaboration. Not too long ago, it was generally assumed to be the job of the city government (and power-brokers behind it) to fix the problems of its jurisdiction. As we noted in Chapter 1, that top-down assumption is now seen as one of the factors that frustrated urban revitalization through the 1970s. Today, the by-words are collaboration and inclusiveness. Collaborations of public and private sector leaders are springing up to address local policy issues in many metropolitan areas (Wallis, 1994), and they are being advocated within cities as well. With regard to solving inner-city problems, the National League of Cities states, for example:

> *"Such efforts will require shared power and responsibility among all sectors—community-based organizations, the philanthropic community, the private sector, and local government. Success will depend to a great extent on the willingness of each sector to form new relationships. Local elected and appointed officials can play pivotal roles . . . They can convene and inspire people . . . No single sector—public, private, or nonprofit—has the skills or the financial resources to win the war on urban poverty alone . . . A key to designing more effective programs is inclusiveness. Decision making processes need to*

be opened up so that all stakeholders are able to come to the table together . . ." (Furdell, 1995)

But how is such collaboration to be pursued. If the parties come to the table only to assert their old views and policy prescriptions at each other the chances for success would appear dim. But suppose they come, leaving their old versions of the conventional wisdom behind, willing to gain a new and deeper understanding of the urban reality around which they can then work together to build a new strategy.

The purpose of the initial meetings is to shake up old ways of looking at things and the institutional role playing that accompanied them. And the most promising means for doing that is likely to be *new information*. This is the second theme in this connection and it is why the role of the NNIP partners has become so important in their communities. They have played this role—with a clear understanding of this way of looking at it—in many of their activities, several of which will be reviewed later in this chapter. Particularly illustrative in this regard is the Oakland Urban Strategy Council's initiative to integrate social services around schools (see Box 4.1).

Entrepreneurial Impartiality

In connection with the characteristics of the NNIP partners just discussed, it is this one (Characteristic 7) that may be the most distinctive. It requires walking what is often a very fine line. On one hand, they are all entrepreneurial. They do spend a great deal of their time servicing requests from users as they come in (to be discussed more below), but they do not only sit back and wait for assignments to come to them. They work to bring important issues to the attention of key decision makers, they seek funding for analyses of those issues, and they take other steps to encourage stakeholders to develop strategies to address them. In this sense, they do have an agenda. And it is focussed around heightening the attention being paid to their central concerns: the search for realistic means of improving conditions for poor people and poor neighborhoods.

On the other hand, once an issue is being considered by the stakeholders, they try to remain impartial. They work to develop reliable information that is relevant to the issue and to present it in a full and balanced manner, without bias. In conjunction with the theme of democratizing information, they encourage the stakeholders to form new positions based on the data, but they avoid being up-front as advocates of particular institutional or programmatic approaches themselves.

In this sense, they are not agenda driven. They recognize that if they were to be seen as "taking sides" on particular issues, they would quickly lose the core of their identity as institutions all players can trust to provide a useful and reliable factual base to assist in the assessment of alternatives, in the implementation of courses of action that have been selected, and in the

monitoring and evaluation of progress. They also avoid using the data to "make headlines" about performance problems in government agencies. The agencies that provide information to them have come to feel confident that the NNIP partners will use data from which performance related inferences could be drawn in a responsible manner.

Their institutional settings also have an effect on how they are viewed. All are the creatures of nonprofit institutions whose missions are locked around the long term public interest in their localities and who characteristically avoid becoming aligned with any short term factions or interests in the politics of the day.

We have noted that none of the NNIP partners is a part of any local government. It is not inconceivable that a neighborhood indicators data initiative with the characteristics we have been discussing could function effectively in a government agency, assuming it were highly professional and appropriately insulated from short term political influence. The U.S. Bureau of the Census, for example, is certainly a branch of government, yet it has earned a reputation for the rigorous and unbiased development of factual information and it works hard to maintain that reputation. It is worth observing only that it would probably be at least somewhat more difficult to create an unbiased data initiative like those of the NNIP partners inside of government than outside of it. And it is interesting to note that none of the fully operational neighborhood indicators initiatives we have identified in NNIP to date is managed by a government agency.

The Efficiency of the One-Stop Shop

We noted above that since the NNIP partners' data systems have been assembled there has been tremendous demand for their services and, while they shape their own agenda in critical ways in response to their underlying missions, they all spend a considerable amount of time responding to the requests for data they receive, many of which are not precisely aligned with their highest priority policy concerns.

That such a large number of users ask them for data is explained by a number of factors:

1. They work hard to check, clean, and document the data they receive from source agencies; i.e., they provide data you can trust.

2. All of them are "customer oriented." Systems staff spend time talking over needs with users to be sure they specify data requests that will meet those needs effectively. Then, they pride themselves on filling these requests as rapidly as they can.

3. For some types of users (i.e., community organizations in low-income neighborhoods), they provide the data free of charge, and for others the prices they charge are reasonable.

4. They have become a one-stop-shop. A user can now go to them and obtain virtually all reliable data that exists at the neighborhood level for their city (combined in a compatible format), rather than having to call several different agencies to piece together information as had been required in the past.

This last point deserves emphasis because it implies important efficiencies. Traditionally, it has been difficult enough for someone outside to obtain neighborhood level data even from one city operating agency. Sometimes this has been because of a cumbersome process for approving the release or simply due to bureaucratic inefficiency. But the underlying problem is that most government agencies (consider the police department for example) are not, and probably should not be, set up to be efficient providers of information to serve a broad array of users.

The existence of a trustworthy NNIP partner in a city saves money for everyone. The police department can give their full data file to the NNIP system (a low cost transfer under accepted protocols regarding release to others) and from then on, simply refer all requests for police data to the NNIP system. Even other city agencies should find it more efficient to obtain police data from the NNIP partner than the police department directly. The savings are compounded for anyone who needs neighborhood data from multiple sources. In the past, the cost (time as well as money) of obtaining such data for any individual study has frequently been prohibitive.[14]

In short, the economies of having a one-stop data shop like those operated by the NNIP partners in a city are substantial. And this is an important part of the explanation of the substantial demand for their services.

The NNIP partners respond to the needs of users in several ways. The easiest, for both parties, is when the user can simply access and manipulate the data base directly (as is possible with the Boston, Cleveland, and Providence systems). In these cases, the job gets done without any additional time being spent on it by the systems staff. At the next level, a request comes in for tables and/or maps that the user does not have the capacity to prepare itself. Meeting these requests is generally fairly straightforward for the staff, given the equipment they now have available. At a yet higher level, the user wants not only a print-out of information in the existing

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[14]Would it be more efficient to set up a multiple-source data provider in city government? The problem is that the types of data that are relevant to understanding neighborhood change come from separate local governments: counties and special agencies as well as the city itself (see Table 3.4). In interviews, several local officials told us they would much rather obtain the neighborhood data they need from a broadly accountable entity like the NNIP partners than have to rely on an agency in a sister government.

Table 4.1
The Piton Foundation Data Initiative
DATA 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
Regional staff of HHS	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood	General information
Community members and CSBG applicants	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood	Select priority issues and areas for targeting CSBG funds
Sloan Lake Neighborhood Association	Neighborhood characteristics associated with increase in poverty (neighborhood classified as "at-risk for poverty")	Decide neighborhood actions to combat increase in poverty and negotiate with city for support and resources
Brothers Redevelopment Corporation	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood; housing statistics by neighborhood	Board of directors planning retreat
Goodwill Industries	Poverty and associated characteristics	Board retreat; community meeting
Denver Public Schools: elementary school principals	At risk profile of children by school attendance area (e.g., single parenting, free school lunch participation, English proficiency)	General information and data support to school collaborative decision making teams
Fifty for Housing	Poverty and associated characteristics	presentation to housing membership organization
Mile High United Way senior management and program staff	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood	Develop neighborhood-based grant-making strategy
Denver City Council	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood	General information
Metropolitan Organization for People	Child poverty, juvenile justice statistics, educational attainment by neighborhood	Planning committee developing proposals for community organizing strategy
Denver Urban Ministries	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood	Ministers designing poverty alleviation strategy
Northeast Denver Neighbors Connecting for a Healthy Community	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood	Neighborhood scanning for Healthy Communities Initiative

Table 4.1 (continued)
The Piton Foundation Data Initiative
DATA USERS AND PURPOSES

User	Data	Purpose
Mercy Housing	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood	Target housing support strategies
St. Anthony Hospital Central Community Outreach Team	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood	Develop outreach strategy for meeting needs of community residents
Planned Parenthood Board of Directors	At risk characteristics (e.g., poverty, single parenting, low-birthweight) of children by neighborhood	Program development and geographic targeting
Denver City Club	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood	General information
National Civilian Community Corps	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood	Educate community service volunteers working in Denver's poor neighborhoods
Westside Neighborhood Leadership Initiative (class of 1993, 1994, 1995)	Assorted neighborhood data by request of leadership class participants (e.g., education, crime and violence, arts and culture, recreation)	Participants and graduates use for varied individual projects
Arapahoe County Employment and Training Division	Indicators of high-risk youth (e.g., poverty, single parenting, violence, juvenile arrests) for Aurora and east Denver	In support of proposal to place 100 high-risk youth in work in energy conservation field (proposal awarded)
Chamber of Commerce	Wage and employment data by neighborhood	Development of Chamber's job development strategies
Jerusalem Church	Neighborhood characteristics associated with at risk children (e.g., poverty, teen birth rate, drop-out rate) for 5 NE Denver neighborhoods	Program development activities
Family Resource School	Location and breakdown of Denver's Asian Pacific Islander population	Target culturally appropriate program development activities
Colorado Coalition for the Homeless	Housing and income characteristics by census tract for tracts located in or near Lowry Air force Base	Develop plan for services for homeless populations on closing military base
Denver Office of Child Welfare Services	Profile of risk factors for children by neighborhood (e.g., poverty, mobility)	Geographic targeting of community-based child welfare reform effort

Table 4.1 (continued)
The Piton Foundation Data Initiative
DATA USERS AND PURPOSES

User	Data	Purpose
Mi Casa Family Resource Center	Characteristics of high-risk youth for 10 Westside neighborhoods	Program development activities for youth on Denver's Westside
Hunt Alternatives Fund	Teen birth rates and associated indicators by neighborhood	Inform foundation teen pregnancy initiative
Mile High United Way	Household characteristics of elderly by neighborhood	Geographic targeting of funding decisions for programs/agencies serving the elderly
Knapp Elementary School	Indicators of population, income, labor force and educational attainment for neighborhoods served by school	Plans for involving parents and community in school
Clayton Trust	1. Demographic data 2. Birth data	1. Program development 2. Fund raising
Cheesman Neighborhood Association	Crime data	Neighborhood planning
Archdiocese of Denver, Justice and Peace Office	Juveniles as victims and perpetrators of crime	Advocacy and policy
Denver Planning Office	Housing and income characteristics of Denver neighborhoods	Neighborhood planning efforts
Metropolitan State College	Income and marital status by neighborhood	Classroom instruction
Archdiocese of Denver	Education characteristics by neighborhood	African-American Catholics for Youth Build proposal
Capitol Hill United Neighbors	Characteristics of at risk children by neighborhood	Advocacy and policy
Denver Parks and Recreation	Violent crime and violent death data by neighborhood	Program development and geographic targeting
Greater Denver Local Development Corporation	Education, labor force, housing and income characteristics by neighborhood	fund-raising
Colorado Department of Health	Labor force and disability data	Program development

Table 4.1 (continued)
The Piton Foundation Data Initiative
DATA USERS AND PURPOSES

User	Data	Purpose
Colorado Children's Campaign	Income and household composition	Policy and advocacy with Denver Public Schools
Governor's Family Center Initiative	Characteristics of at-risk children and families	Geographic targeting and training for applicants
Auraria Community College	Births and household composition	Program development and geographic targeting
Colorado Trust	General community characteristics	Healthy Communities planning and training
Young Americans Education Fund	Income and poverty by neighborhood	Fund-raising
Denver Indian Health and Family Services	Public assistance participation by race and neighborhood	Fund-raising
The Women's Foundation	Birth, education and income characteristics	Report on status of girls and women
Colorado Uplift	Teen births by race/ethnicity	Fund-raising
Five Points Community Development Corporation	Violence, crime, juvenile data	Fund-raising
Colorado Trust Teen Pregnancy Initiative	Birth, income and demographic data	Geographic targeting
Philadelphia Enquirer	Income and poverty	News story
Washington Post	Income and poverty	News story
Rocky Mountain News	Income and poverty; school mobility; household composition for children; youth and crime	Various news stories
Denver Post	Teen pregnancy; labor and employment; income and poverty; juvenile crime	Various news stories
Montview Presbyterian Church	Income and poverty by neighborhood	General information
Park Hill Congregational Church	Income and poverty by neighborhood	General information
Office of State Planning and Budget	Indicators of child poverty by age	Budget planning

Table 4.1 (continued)
The Piton Foundation Data Initiative
DATA USERS AND PURPOSES

User	Data	Purpose
Uptown Partnership	Population, public assistance, earnings, education and violent crime for two central neighborhoods	Program development
Sunrise Youth Center	Child maltreatment risk indicators	Program development
Office of Community Services, HHS	Poverty, free school lunch participation, employment, teen births, and family composition of children	Program development
Food Bank of the Rockies	Poverty and associated characteristics by neighborhood for metro area	Keynote address at annual conference of food bank providers
Northwest Denver Ministerial Alliance	Poverty and educational statistics for northwest Denver	Program development for church organization
Knapp Elementary School	Neighborhood characteristics	Planning by school collaborative decision making team
Greater Park Hill Neighborhood Organization	Neighborhood poverty and education data	General information
Neighborhood Funders Group	Income and poverty data by neighborhood	Targeting decisions of pooled grant funds
Safe City Summit	Neighborhood crime and poverty data	Planning for grant distribution of city violence prevention money

data base, but also some professional analysis of the data and, in some cases, relating the existing variables to some new sources of information. These assignments, of course, require much more time from the NNIP partner, and they are usually done under a contract with the user for a fee.

In all sites, the characteristics of users, purposes, and specific applications, have varied considerably. As one illustration, Table 4.1 identifies the user, the data requested, and the use to which it was put, for 65 specific applications provided by the Piton Foundation Initiative in Denver.

These represent only a subset of all applications Piton has provided since it first began making information available to the public in 1991. Its full log (through August 1995) shows information requests having been filled for 116 different users: 14 percent were grass roots

neighborhood organizations, 5 percent were church-based programs, 26 percent were nonprofit health and social service providers; 13 percent were boards of education and individual schools; 20 percent were local government agencies; 7 percent were state and federal government agencies; 7 percent were newspapers and other media representatives; and the remaining 8 percent were foundations and other interest groups.

Data applications and users in the other sites have been similarly sizeable and diverse. Another example is the Cleveland CANDO system which was accessed by 373 separate users during the eight month period from April through November 1995.

FUNCTIONS OF A NEIGHBORHOOD INDICATOR SYSTEM

Based on a review of both uses and users in the seven NNIP cities, a classification of functions has been developed as shown in Figure 4.1. While patterns of emphasis differ across the sites, the capabilities and functions identified are reasonably consistent with both the current realities, and the aspirations, of all of them.

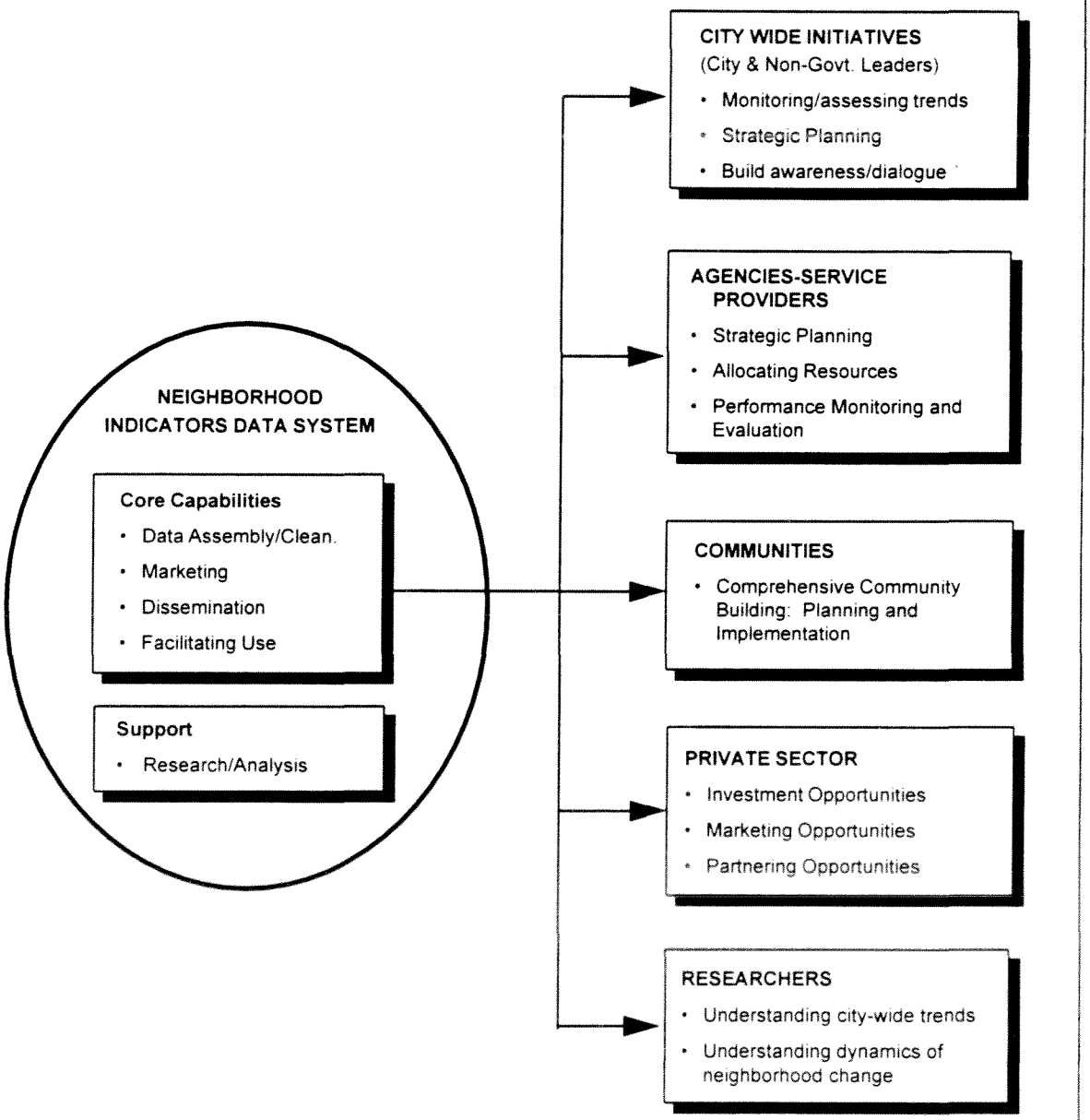
Neighborhood Indicators Data System Capabilities

The block on the left side of Figure 4.1 notes basic capabilities required of any NNIP partner. Those we have identified as "core capabilities" are fairly obvious given the materials already presented, but are worth stating clearly in this form.

1. ***Data Assembly and Cleaning*** will probably always be the most extensive element of their workloads. Defining characteristics entail: (a) obtaining data at the neighborhood level; (b) obtaining such data from multiple sources, with the intention of covering all topics that contribute to or affect the definition of healthy communities; (c) checking and cleaning the data received and storing it in a form that is logically consistent and easy to use; and (d) recurrently updating data from these sources.

2. ***Marketing***. This activity is not a substantial one in the seven NNIP sites as the "product" is now largely selling itself. As noted, a broad array of users are now aware that the data systems exist and they are taking advantage of them without the system managers having to devote much attention to advertising. However, marketing in relation to their underlying mission is something the partners still emphasize. They are always on the lookout for new data and new ways of looking at old data that provide new insights about poverty and poor neighborhoods. They

Figure 4.1
FUNCTIONS OF A NEIGHBORHOOD INDICATORS DATA SYSTEM



work actively to bring these to the attention of appropriate leadership groups, and they then work with those groups to assure that new issues and opportunities they discover will be given consideration in contexts that lead to action.

3. Dissemination. This continues as a major part of the workload of all NNIP partners. The term implies not only making the data available (e.g., servicing Web-Sites) and preparing and mailing out reports and data summaries, but also giving briefings to a broad variety of audiences. Today, all sites are exploring a mix of newer approaches to getting their information out to the public. These range from videos to more interesting forms of presentation on the World-Wide-Web to interactive "town-meeting" environments.

4. Facilitating Use. As the earlier discussion of characteristics implies, this is should be an important activity for any institution operating a neighborhood indicators data system. Some of the NNIP partners devote more effort to it than others, but all feel their responsibility goes beyond pure dissemination. They all interact with users in various ways to encourage both that the data will be used and interpreted appropriately and that it will be applied creatively in helping to address relevant policy problems and opportunities. Activities here range from programs to train users to use information independently (e.g., neighborhood groups—see Box 4.7 for a description of a relevant Piton Foundation application), to extensive interactive involvements, providing ongoing guidance and insights as partners in processes of strategic and program planning.

Research and Analysis: A Supporting Role. Traditionally, the entities that assembled sizeable amounts of urban data were planning agencies and research institutions whose primary motivation in collecting the data was to use it themselves. All of the NNIP partners are quite capable of conducting highly professional policy research—indeed, some of them have earned prominent national reputations for doing so. However, that is not their driving motivation in operating a neighborhood indicators data system. The staffs of such systems need to be trained in research and analysis—otherwise they could not train and assist other local stakeholders. It is quite likely that they will be asked to conduct some research independently themselves. However, in this context, such work is a supporting role, rather than a central one.

The following paragraphs discuss the functions of a neighborhood indicator system in terms of different users and types of substantive applications. The fact that *communities* represent only one of several types of users shown on the chart does not undermine the position that strengthening communities is the central mission of all NNIP partners. As they work with the other types of users they do so in a manner that supports that mission.

City-Wide Initiatives

In these application, the user could be the city or county government, but it has most often been a nongovernmental (or public and private) leadership coalition.

Monitoring and Assessing Trends. This is the function the term "neighborhood indicators system" first brings to mind: establishing a set of indicators with measures of various aspects of the comparative health of a city's neighborhoods, recurrently updating the data, and reporting on trends. Some of the NNIP partners first became noted in their cities for doing this (e.g., Cleveland, Boston, Oakland, Providence). Atlanta, in contrast, has never published a comprehensive set, although it is planning to do so in the future and clearly uses multiple indicators in many of its individual studies.

It is of interest that none of the NNIP partners attempts to issue a full indicators update report every year. The reason is less due to the work required in producing such a report than their views that: (1) the communication processes in getting broadscale community understanding of the trends are much more arduous and would be hard to motivate on an annual basis; and (2) year to year changes in many indicators can be erratic and not indicative of real trends (i.e., it is better to wait for at least two or three more years of data before drawing interpretations).[15]

Strategic Planning. It is in this area that several of the NNIP partners have made their most noteworthy contributions. Here, they provide data to and work with city level leadership coalitions in planning strategically to address important social issues. Influential examples include the Oakland Urban Strategies Council work with the local school system and social service agencies to develop new approaches for integrating services around children in needy families (Box 4.1) and the Cleveland Center for Urban Poverty and Social Change effort, supporting the Cleveland Foundation Commission on Poverty and others over several years, in shifting the city's overall approach to dealing with inner-city poverty to one that is driven by the varying characteristics (problems and opportunities) of different neighborhoods (Box 4.2).

A culmination of use at this level to date for all NNIP partners with operative systems (Atlanta, Boston, Cleveland, Denver, Oakland, and Providence) was the use of their data as the primary basis for their cities' Empowerment Zone/ Enterprise Community (EZ/EC) application processes. The federal requirements for this program emphasized themes that resonated well with the philosophies of the NNIP partners, including collaborative and inclusive planning processes and neighborhood based approaches as well as strategic thinking based on the analysis of objective

[15]See discussion of this issue in Coulton, 1995.

Box 4.1

Integrating Social Services Around Schools
(City-Wide Initiatives—Oakland)

In 1990, the Urban Strategies Council (USC) and the superintendent of the Oakland Unified School District recognized a common challenge. The school system and the city's array of social service agencies were not dealing with children holistically. Students' difficulties at school often emanated from problems at home, but the efforts of the schools and other agencies to help were fragmented and sometimes contradictory. They normally become involved only at times of crisis, rather than working coherently to address root causes so as to prevent crises. The response is documented by Casey (1995) and summarized below.

Because of the recognition of its advanced data processing capabilities, and the fact that it already had some of the relevant information on hand, the USC was able to secure, process, and link school and social agency data files for the students of one elementary school and their families. The results were presented to agency representatives in a 1991 meeting called "The Same Client." The results on the overlap of service provision were striking and motivated agreement to conduct a similar study for a much larger population (students at eight schools). In 1992, USC published the results in the report Partnership for Change. They showed that almost two out of three students used public services, and more than a third used at least two different services. It also documented that the system was investing much more in crisis services than prevention, and that there were important differences in the nature of service needs and provision for different racial groups.

Study findings were presented to the County Board of Supervisors and other high level officials, but their most important use was the work of Oakland's Interagency Group (convened and facilitated by USC). The process established new working relationships between representatives of different agencies and forced them to recognize their common challenge. They had to "acquaint themselves with agencies outside of their normal scope of work" in defining the questions they hoped the data-match would answer, and then, after the results were in, "discuss the kinds of joint action they might undertake, patterns of service use, relationships among agencies, and the ultimate effectiveness of existing programs" (Casey, 1995).

The process resulted in the idea of redeploying staff from different agencies to form a "Family Support Team" around individual schools. The Team would "develop new collaborative strategies for working with troubled families, taking on the crisis situations most taxing for schools, and leaving school resources to be focused on prevention, on establishing more positive activities, and on outreach to parents." This concept has since been tested in several schools and widerscale implementation is underway. USC continues to be involved in monitoring performance and providing ongoing guidance and support.

Box 4.2

Neighborhood Based Strategy for Urban Improvement
(City-Wide Initiatives—Cleveland)

In 1990, the Mandel School's Center for Urban Poverty and Social Change (CUPSC) issued it first full analysis of trends in Cleveland's neighborhoods (Coulton, et al, 1990). The report used the Center's expanding system of administrative indicators but also relied on census data back to 1970. It was widely disseminated and discussed and raised the consciousness of local leaders about the growth of concentrated poverty and its impact on poor people and poor communities. It uncovered, however, substantial diversity of conditions and circumstances even among poor neighborhoods—facts suggesting that the "one-size-fits-all" approach of many past city initiatives was never likely to be workable.

This report motivated the Cleveland Foundation to support the creation of the Cleveland Poverty Commission (Directed by Arthur Naparstek, Dean of the Mandel School). The Commission worked to devise a new strategy to revitalize poor communities and the Center's neighborhood indicators were drawn upon frequently in process. Several special analyses were performed to focus on pertinent topics such as education, health, housing and investment.

The Commission's conclusions called for a framework of comprehensive community building—improvement strategies for individual neighborhoods (or "urban villages"), designed and managed by resident groups, based on community assets, spurring integrated priority setting across traditional programs, and with public agencies in supporting roles (see further discussion of these principles in Chapter 3). A Cleveland Community Building Initiative (CCBI) was created to spearhead implementation and CUPSC data was again relied upon extensively in the process of selecting the initial neighborhoods to participate, and by the selected "Village Councils" as they developed their strategies. Maps, trend graphs, and profiles, have been prepared by CUPSC, CCBI, and Village Council representatives, working collaboratively. CUPSC is also working with CCBI on plans for evaluating the process which, given the nature of the strategy, would of course be impossible without recurrently updated information on outcomes at the neighborhood level.

This approach was later used as the basis for Cleveland's successful application for funding under the federal Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community Program. In short, Cleveland's entire strategy for urban improvement was motivated by neighborhood data and such data continues to be instrumental to its implementation.

data (The President's Community Enterprise Board, 1994). All of these cities were in fact successful in receiving designations under this program, and the NNIP partners there continue to provide support in local EZ/EC implementation. Those in Boston and Providence have been playing central roles in meeting current requirements to establish quantitative "benchmarks" for program monitoring.

In addition to Cleveland, the EZ/EC approaches in several other cities also recognize the importance of greater sensitivity to neighborhood differences in programming public and private action to help the poor. In such cases, neither effective strategic planning nor implementation monitoring would have been possible without a reliable neighborhood based information system.

Building Awareness and Dialogue. The two functions discussed above refer to comprehensive uses of data to influence change in city-wide policies. The NNIP partners, however, issue frequent reports on special topics that, over time, build greater public understanding (city- and metropolitan-wide) of policy topics with which they are concerned. An example is the collaboration between the Piton Foundation, neighborhood groups, and metropolitan newspapers to cover newsworthy events in Denver's neighborhoods proactively and, thereby, avoid the negative distortion that is typical with the selective reporting on the "nightly news" (Box 4.3).

Agencies/Service Providers

The conclusions of the EZ/EC strategies noted above reflect a growing recognition of program operators in many cities that, particularly with today's resource constraints, sensitive spatial targeting is a necessity. Whether it is community policing or the deployment of health workers or child-care centers, variations in neighborhood conditions mandate variation in program strategies. This is true for the many new nonprofit service providers that have emerged over the last decade as well as city agencies.

Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation. The most obvious first application in this category is the provision of neighborhood data to assist in strategic planning. All NNIP partners have served a variety of program managers in this way—see, for example, the list of Piton Foundation applications in Table 4.2. Two cases, focusing on the spatial allocation of resources, are discussed in more detail in Box 4.4 (the allocation of job tax credits in Georgia) and Box 4.5 (the implementation of the Family Preservation and Support Act in Denver). In both instances, serious misallocations of resources, in relation to program intent, would have occurred if data at the neighborhood level had not been available.

Performance Monitoring. Over the past several years, there has been a growing acceptance of the need to develop and maintain quantified measures of the performance of government programs. This practice has been emphasized in Osborne and Graebler's (1992) *Reinventing Government*, reinforced at the federal level by the passage of the 1993 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), furthered by the publication of guidelines on useful approaches and techniques (Hatry, et al, 1992) and collaborative efforts to spur action by professional groups (like the International City Management Association—ICMA), and popularized by some notable monitoring achievements (e.g., the Oregon Progress Board's (1992), *Oregon Benchmarks*).

Box 4.3

Another Generation/Neighborhood Facts
(City-Wide Initiatives—Denver)

One of the most difficult issues low-income neighborhoods face is getting others outside of their community to look at both their assets and their problems realistically. Not only is there not a place to share the stories of your neighborhood's successes and struggles, but people outside assume "facts" about low-income neighborhoods regardless of their truth or context. The only news about Denver neighborhoods that routinely made it into the newspapers was once a year when the police department released their neighborhood crime rates showing, of course, disproportionately high rates in low-income neighborhoods. Everyone outside of those neighborhoods thought the story said it all. What else was there to say? The residents of those neighborhoods knew there was a great deal more to say but had no venue in which they could speak.

In late 1991, The Piton Foundation entered into a partnership with the Rocky Mountain News, the largest newspaper serving Colorado. Together, staff of the newspaper and the Data Initiative meet and decide on issues that portray the realities of Denver neighborhoods. The data initiative then develops a data profile for Denver neighborhoods, the Rocky Mountain News provides usually headline and detailed coverage of the data in the newspaper, and the data initiative follows with a newsletter (called 'Another Generation') sent to key local and state leaders. In addition, the data initiative issues well-timed press releases on neighborhood issues as data become available and follows up with a fact sheet entitled 'Neighborhood Facts' to the same mailing list.

Both Colorado major newspapers, the Rocky Mountain News and the Denver Post, are now accustomed to reporting on neighborhood issues. While they still routinely report the latest crime rates, they also now know enough to contact local residents for their views. But more importantly, neighborhood news gets headlines and the newspapers cry for more.

What does all of this mean for neighborhood indicators systems? Actually, not much use has been made of data from NNIP partner systems for performance measurement as yet, but we suspect that will change over the next few years. We do not expect that institutions like the NNIP partners will take on the task directly in any formal sense. In fact, there is much to suggest that if they are actually to have an effect in improving performance, performance measurements systems have to be designed and operated ("owned") by the program managers themselves (Hatry, et al, 1992). However, it seems likely that program managers (in nonprofits as well as governments) are likely to want access to more neighborhood level data as their own systems become more sophisticated.

Box 4.4

Allocating Job Tax Credits
(Program Targeting—Atlanta)

In 1989, the Georgia General Assembly created the Georgia Job Tax Credit Program (GJTCP) to encourage job creation in the least developed areas of the state. Initially, the state's 159 counties were ranked according their comparative economic strength, based on four indicators: (1) unemployment; (2) per capita income; (3) percent of persons in poverty; and (4) average manufacturing wage. Of the total, 40 counties were selected as the "least developed." Under GJTCP, firms in qualifying industries operating in these counties would be eligible to claim a job tax credit (initially $1,000, later increased to $2,000) for each new full-time job they created.

A number of observers saw that this scheme created serious inequities. Several counties not qualified for the program (i.e., whose average conditions did not meet the "least developed" criteria), had within them pockets of poverty (mostly clusters of inner-city neighborhoods) that represented among the most economically distressed areas in the state. DAPA was asked to analyze the same indicators, state-wide, on a census tract basis. It identified 236 tracts in these other counties whose economic conditions were worse (sometimes by a substantial margin) than existed in the qualified counties.

In 1993, legislation was passed to extend the tax credit to residents of these concentrated poverty zones in urban areas, defined on the basis of DAPA statistics, in addition to those in the counties already qualified. DAPA has since provided information assistance to businesses (scans to determine which of their job applicants live within the specified zone) to help them take advantage of the program in Atlanta.

For some types of programs, the neighborhood context should not have a great influence on performance. For example, once you have measures of the current condition of different roads being repaired and some related data you should be able to assess the cost-effectiveness of the work of different street repair crews regardless of what neighborhood they are working in. But for many other programs it is not so easy. Suppose, for example, that trends in the rates of child maltreatment, structural fires, and student test scores vary substantially in two different neighborhoods. On the surface, it is impossible to attribute such variances to differences in the performance of the public interventions that are charged with dealing with these issues. Performance can be inferred only by examining measures of program activity in relation to data on trends in neighborhood social, economic, and physical conditions.

Box 4.5

Implementing the Family Preservation and Support Act
(Program Planning and Targeting—Denver)

This 1993 federal legislation requires that states engage in a community assessment and planning process to determine community characteristics that influence risks of child maltreatment. The Colorado Department of Human Services requested the Piton Foundation Data Initiative to provide information to help assess community need as a basis for program planning and resource targeting.

The Initiative performed a literature search, identified 16 indicators of economic, family, stress, and violence risks as well as 10 indicators of children and family service capacity, and provided risk profiles using these indicators for all Colorado counties and for neighborhoods in Denver. These profiles formed the basis for decisions to target federal resources to 10 Colorado communities, three of them in Denver inner-city neighborhoods. The decision to pass funds through to inner-city neighborhood organizations represented a major departure from previous state practice, which had relied solely on county government for implementation.

The profiles are now being used within the targeted communities to help in form organizations, prepare plans, and benchmark improvements they intend to demonstrate as a result of their efforts. Staff of the Piton Data Initiative continues to provide guidance and data updates, working directly with community organizations. Copies of updated community profiles are sent to legislators, county commissioners, mayors, chiefs of police, and interested citizens.

Program Evaluation. Similar arguments can be made concerning formal program evaluations. Governments and foundations have spent a great deal of money on evaluations whose results turn out to be inconclusive, mainly because the evaluators did not have the resources to collect all of the data on the changing neighborhood context they need to properly interpret the program's effects. And it would clearly wasteful to provide substantially more money to each in a series of "one-shot" assessments to collect similar data over and over again. It seems likely that the only way an adequate range of information on changing neighborhood contexts—so necessary to sorting out the impacts of many programs—will ever be provided is through the development in each city a single efficient ongoing data assembly system like those that have been developed by the NNIP partners—systems that exist to serve multiple users, including program evaluators.

Communities

As noted, most NNIP partners give their highest priority to providing data to community groups to use in designing their own revitalization initiatives. In doing so, they endorse the principles of comprehensive community building (mentioned in Chapter 3) but they also approach the task via their own principle of information-led collaboration. The notion is to encourage community residents to learn about their neighborhood—its comparative advantages and disadvantages—as a part of the process of designing action programs, and to use the process of joint learning and discussion as a vehicle for organizing and building a collaborative tradition.

In some cases they are not involved directly themselves; i.e., they provide the data to community leaders and other facilitators who take it from there. Where they are directly involved, they do not enter the engagement with any formula approach. The concept of democratizing information means encouraging the users to select the issues and the kinds of information they want to look at, as well as controlling the processes of analysis and strategic planning. They of course explain the data they have available and options for analyzing it, and offer suggestions as they go along, but they do so in a way that encourages—rather than stifles—choice by the participants.

Also, they make it clear their systems contain only a part of the information that is relevant for such processes, and encourage the residents to collect more. Most endorse the idea of "asset mapping," which entails neighborhood interviews and surveys to discover detailed information about potential strengths that, in many cases, are never likely to be captured in recurrent administrative record keeping.[16] They see these two approaches as complementary. The statistical information is an important part of what anyone needs to know to design a sensible community improvement strategy. For a community group, the costs of assembling such data on their own would be substantial (in most cases, probably prohibitive). The fact that they can obtain this data at virtually no cost from the neighborhood indicators systems thus frees up resources to permit the community to probe more deeply in areas the statistical data cannot address.

The use of systems data goes beyond their use in strategic planning, however. Box 4.6 shows how communities have used parcel level data provided by DAPA in Atlanta as the basis for day-to-day *implementation* of a major component of their revitalization initiative. Box 4.7 offers a quite different example: one Denver community's use of Piton Foundation data as a basis for training community leaders, and thereby, encouraging creative data use by the graduates later on in various ways to improve conditions in their neighborhoods.

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[16]Chapter 3 pointed out that this orientation is explained fully in McKnight and Kretzman, 1993. Its relevance for neighborhood indicators data systems will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Box 4.6

Neighborhood Tax Delinquency and Redevelopment Studies
(Community Building—Atlanta)

*Based on programmatic interests expressed by resident groups, DAPA has provided considerable parcel level data to eleven Atlanta Plan clusters to assist in planning for redevelopment and reinvestment. The work entailed: (1) preparing data on the status of property tax delinquency for all parcels within each cluster; (2) analyzing the effectiveness of the Homestead Exemption Program; (3) locating properties with buildings which had potential for redevelopment; (4) identifying elderly homeowners in jeopardy of losing their homes due to outstanding tax liens; and (5) identifying, by name, absentee property owners whose decaying and abandoned properties hamper the residents' quality of life. The data have been presented in tables and listings and also, via DAPA's ATLAS*GIS system, in a series of parcel-level maps for each cluster.*

This information has been used to facilitate cluster-wide resident planning processes. These have resulted in the design of new code enforcement initiatives and programs through which religious organizations and others assist elderly homeowners in repaying delinquent taxes. The work has also caused the County Commissioners to revisit their policy of selling tax liens to outside third parties, and the State legislature to pass new laws expediting foreclosure processes when communities are prepared to redevelop sites with nonprofit housing.

The Private Sector

So far, none of the NNIP partners has made much effort to formulate their data in a way that would make it more marketable to private firms. The private sector should be mentioned as a potential user, however, since there are some private applications that would contribute to the improvement of poor communities. Such applications are worth considering particularly in light of recent evidence that some private interests (particularly retailers) are now reconsidering inner-city locations for investment.

With the vast expansion of suburban shopping facilities that occurred over the past several decades, the suburbs no longer offer such attractive locations for further growth. But over the same period, many old retail establishments pulled out of the inner-city, creating what is today a sizable pool of unsatisfied demand. This is true even though inner-city incomes are low on average. In one of Boston's core areas, for example, the average household income is 21 percent lower than that in the rest of the city, but spending power per square mile is 6 percent higher (Porter, 1994). And a number of retailers who have tried it (including Woolworth and Pathmark) have found that some of their urban locations are now more profitable than their suburban ones.

Box 4.7

Westside Neighborhood Leadership Program
(Community Building—Denver)

The Westside Neighborhood Leadership Program is a grass-roots leadership effort housed in five of Denver's poorest, largely Latino, neighborhoods. With a long history of activism and a strong sense of community, Program founders believed that among their residents were latent leaders, the next generation of activists who had the motivation but lacked some of the skills to assert their place in local leadership. They developed a curriculum, negotiated approvals, and obtained the funding they needed to move ahead. Now their own 501(c)(3), the Program has 59 graduates, most of whom have gone on to assume key leadership roles within the community. Seventeen graduates now serve as parent representatives on their local school's collaborative decision making teams. Many serve as board members for various nonprofit organizations.

Initially, the Piton Data Initiative assisted the Program only by providing data to help them prepare grant applications. However, struck with the frustration residents felt when they found their neighborhood again and again the topic of disparaging news reports and the difficulty they faced when attempting to gain access to more complete information, the Program board asked Initiative to develop a component of the leadership curriculum to teach people how to obtain and use neighborhood data effectively. The Piton Initiative now trains each new class as a whole on what data are available about their neighborhood, how to obtain and interpret those data, how to develop their own data, and how to use those data in specific policy initiatives. In addition, each participant is provided an individual consultation in which they select the issue or issues which they plan to devote their energies to once they graduate, and the Initiative helps them explore both the information available relevant to the topic and possible links between information and action.

This program has yielded many concrete results. One parent used school specific special education data provided by Piton to successfully argue for more effective screening for behavioral and emotional disabilities to avoid the disproportionate tracking of children of color into special education programs. Another parent, concerned about extremely high mobility rates among children in her local school, used Piton data to create special programs to identify children at risk of high mobility, work with the parents to stabilize them, and work with the children to ensure continuity of education when they did have to change schools. Another graduate used data to expand recreational and sporting activities in evening hours at the local recreation center. Yet another founded a youth arts recognition program and used the data to encourage local businesses to support their efforts by making donations, and opening up business facilities to display artwork. Still others used the data to encourage neighborhood residents to vote and to help explain some of the key issues facing the community.

There are at least three ways in which data from neighborhood indicator systems could help. First, data on the location, tax status, and other characteristics of vacant parcels, could be used to help investors help select appropriate locations for development. Second, spatial data on consumer characteristics and preferences in inner-city communities could guide private firms in

deciding how best to market their products or services in these areas. Finally, information on the characteristics of local institutions could reveal attractive partnering opportunities for joint-ventures in local development.

Researchers

Finally, we note that researchers from universities and research institutes (local and national) have already taken advantage of data from the systems developed by the NNIP partners. Providing information to outside researchers is clearly an appropriate and valuable function of a neighborhood indicators data system.

In the 1990s, there has been surprisingly little research on the dynamics of neighborhood change in America's cities. Even though census data are more comprehensively accessible and easier to manipulate than ever before, there have been few studies to describe the changes that occurred at the neighborhood level over the 1980s, to examine how those trends differed from those of the proceeding decade and between cities, or thereby, to gain understanding of the forces most likely to be influential in altering neighborhood outcomes in the next few years.

One of the reasons for the lack of attention recently given to neighborhoods by researchers may be their recognition that the only nationally comparable data source—the census—lacks measures of some of the most critical concerns in contemporary urban society, both negative (e.g., rates of crime or drug use), and positive (rates of reinvestment). Since they have begun to flesh out measures in these directions and incorporate all census measures as well, the systems developed by the NNIP partners should be extremely valuable bases for fresh research over the next few years.

OPERATING COSTS

The materials in this chapter and the two that precede it suggest that the NNIP partners are institutional models that should be attractive for replication. Their missions, the way they have built their data systems, and the functions they perform—all should be able to serve as models for the development of similar capacities in other cities.

But what about their costs? Their stories indicate that they have taken advantage of impressive advances in computer and telecommunications technology to collect and analyze data at a much lower per-unit cost than would have been possible even a few years ago. But, still, is the aggregate expense too high to be affordable in most cities?

The conclusion reached in this report is that, while the costs are not trivial, the development of similar neighborhood indicator systems should be affordable, given the internal resource-mobilization capacities of most of American's larger metropolitan areas.

All of the NNIP partners have worked hard to keep operating expenses at low levels. Most of them (Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Providence) are either part of, or do their work in affiliation with, local universities. In these cases, they have benefited from the ability to use existing university computer facilities (without having to pay the full cost) and from varying amounts of contributed time from professors and graduate students whose work on the indicators systems also supported their academic pursuits. All of them have also benefited from the work of other unpaid volunteers, to some extent.

Because of the institutional mixes involved—with relevant accounting records in different places—none of the partners has complete financial statements exhibiting the full costs of operating its neighborhood indicators system per se. All, however, have a reasonably good sense of their outlays. With selected data on some, and comments and guesstimates from the others, we have been able to piece together what we believe is a reasonable sense of expectations.

The Composition of Project Costs

The operating costs of a neighborhood indicators system fall in three broad categories: (1) staffing; (2) data acquisition; and (3) computer hardware and software. The following paragraphs discuss cost determinants in each category.

Staffing. Ultimately, personnel costs are now by far the most expensive component of system operations. The lowest staffing level among the NNIP partners currently is 1.2 full-time-equivalents (see discussion of Piton Foundation below). The most important set of skills required relate to the work in conceptualizing the system and its uses, working out arrangements with data providers, marketing outputs to various users, and providing assistance to users in applying data. This work needs to be done by someone who knows about computers and what they can do, and can operate today's user-friendly software packages, but it does not require a high level of technical computer training. Computer specialists can always be obtained as needed on a consulting basis; i.e., full-time computer specialists are not likely to be required.

In short, the starting point for a new system is acquiring the services of someone skilled at management, community outreach, and applications (i.e., policy analysis, strategic planning) on a full-time (or almost full time) basis. This could be someone locally who is already working in community building or local policy issues and could phase into the task of systems development. Ideally it would be someone with a Masters level of education in planning, public policy, social work, or the social sciences. Most people with this type of background will be able learn the necessary

skills needed to develop a neighborhood indicators system. The data analysis and mapping software that are available today are very user-friendly and can be learned fairly easily even by people without a college education.

In addition to full-time staff people, the local neighborhood indicators project can also make use of temporary or part-time consultants on an as-needed basis. This would be especially useful in the early stages of the developing the system, when a lot of work must be done to clean and process new data sets. Joaquin Herranz of the Urban Strategies Council estimates that it typically takes one to two person-months to incorporate a new data set into the neighborhood indicators system. Graduate students are good candidates for this type of work, especially if work on the neighborhood indicators system can be incorporated into their academic interests. If the indicators system is affiliated with a local university, this type of analytic and support work can often be obtained at no cost.

Data Acquisition. Data acquisition costs in most cases are quite low compared to the other outlays for a neighborhood indicators system. Data from the Census bureau are now available on economical and convenient CD-ROMs. AHS Metro data can be obtained for $175, while Census STF3A data (both long and short-form data) for an entire state can be bought for between $50 and $200, depending on the population of the state.

The NNIP partners report that they obtain most of their administrative data (such as from social service agencies) at no cost. In some cases, the administrative agency charges a fee for providing the data; this seems to be most typical for birth records. Depending on the form of the data, it may need to be converted from one format to another and further transformed before it is ready to be incorporated into the neighborhood indicator system and this may or may not entail additional expense..

Some of the NNIP partners have the agency providing the data do any necessary manipulation so that the data files that they receive can be added directly to the neighborhood indicators system. Because the agency staff knows their own data files better than anyone else, they are well equipped to process the data files and convert them to the needed format. This saves the organization that is maintaining the neighborhood indicators system from having to learn how to work with this data set and hire personnel to do this work.

A disadvantage to having the agency manipulate the files is that one may not be aware of certain weaknesses or characteristics of the data that are only exposed by examining it in disaggregated form. Generally, much can be learned during the data manipulation process that can be hidden in aggregated data files. Another problem is that if one later needs to have the data in a different form than that originally requested (say, aggregated by block group instead of by

Census tract), it would be necessary to go back to the agency and ask them to reprocess the data files.

Computer Hardware and Software. Not too many year ago, operating even a basis GIS system would have required a main-frame computer (or at least a mini-computer). As discussed in Chapter 3, that is no longer the case. Personal computer technology has been progressing by leaps and bounds over the past decade, to the point where very powerful computer systems capable of storing and processing large amounts of data are well within the budgets of even modestly funded organizations. This change has made developing a neighborhood indicators data system both technologically and financially feasible for many communities.

A basic neighborhood indicators data system will consist of a variety of information assembled from different sources. Some of this information may be at the address level, such as birth records for individual children. Other information may only be available summarized for a larger area, such as U.S. Census data at the tract or block group level. All of these various types of information must be integrated together by matching records from different data sources on common units of geography. Once the data from the different sources have been linked together, they can then be displayed and summarized through descriptive tables, charts, graphs, and maps.

The technology needed to perform these tasks is now readily available and quite affordable. A typical collection of hardware and software needed for supporting a basic neighborhood indicators data system is given in Box 4.8. At current prices, this prototypical system would cost between $7,000 and 8,000.

The list in Box 4.8 is intended to be primarily illustrative and not the definitive collection of technology that one must have. Obviously, the current capacities of the organization should be taken into account before actually deciding on purchases of additional hardware and software. In some cases, it may be possible to upgrade or adapt existing equipment rather than buying new hardware. For example, while a mainframe computer is not generally necessary for creating and maintaining a neighborhood indicators system, it certainly can be a useful tool if one has experienced staff who know how to use it.

An additional issue in terms of computer hardware and software needs is that of the format in which those data are available from other organizations. For example, if crime report data can only be obtained from the police department on nine-inch tape spools, then one needs to have some way to convert the data from that format to a form that can be read by a personal computer. It should be noted, however, that most commercially available data sources, such as almost all Census data and the American Housing Survey, are now available on CD-ROMs.

Box 4.8

Minimum Hardware and Software Requirements for Local Neighborhood Indicators System

Hardware:

Pentium-based personal computer with:
- 32 megabytes of RAM
- 2 gigabyte hard disk drive
- Large (15") monitor
- CD-ROM reader
- Tape cartridge backup system

14,400 bps modem

Black and white laser printer

Color ink jet printer

Software:

Windows 95

Software suite with word processing, graphics, and spreadsheet packages (such as Microsoft Office, Novell PerfectOffice, or Lotus SmartSuite)

For data processing: a database package (such as Paradox, dBase, or FoxPro) or a statistical software package (such as SPSS, SAS, Stata, or Systat)

Mapping software (such as MapInfo, Atlas GIS, or ArcView)

Total Cost = $ 7,000 to 10,000

The basic system described in Box 4.8 provides support for displaying indicators geographically using mapping software, but it is not sufficient for a full parcel-based GIS as defined in Chapter 3. This system relies entirely on externally produced geographical boundary files and it assumes that the user will not be digitizing geographical information, such as parcel maps.

directly. Files containing the boundaries for Census tracts, counties, states, places, zip codes, and other units of geography are readily available commercially for most brands of mapping software.

Total Costs

What are the implications for total costs? To examine this issue, we reviewed the cost data that was available for our partner institutions.

The Base Case. The review indicated that the Piton Foundation Data Initiative, which has among the most coherent expense records for its system, operates at the lowest annual cost among the NNIP partners. As such, its cost structure serves as a reasonable base case for expectations elsewhere.

In its first year (the start up period), Piton spent about $78,000: 37 percent for direct labor (including benefits), 6 percent for data acquisition, 31 percent for the purchase of computer equipment and software, and the remaining 26 percent for producing and disseminating reports and other data products.

Now that it is fully operational, the cost structure has changed substantially. Staffing levels have increased and are now dominant (half of the time of the director, a half time research assistant, and around on 0.2 FTE in clerical support). Less is spent for data acquisition and much less for equipment. Report production and dissemination costs are also lower, due both to producing less extensive reports than they did initially, and efficiencies gained in these functions.

The total cost is only 12 percent higher ($88,000 annually). The breakdown is: 84 percent for labor, 2 percent for data acquisition, 3 percent for equipment, and 11 percent for reports and dissemination. These figures, however, do not account for overhead (space rent, phones, supplies, etc.) which is contributed to the Initiative by the Foundation. Assuming overhead at 15-25 percent of the above costs, the full required outlay would be in the range from around $100,000 to $110,000 per year.

The Piton Initiative financial data are interesting from the point of view of revenues as well as expenditures. Again, the structure has changed dramatically. In its first year, 87 percent of the Initiatives' operating costs (excluding overhead) were covered by start-up grants from a national foundation (Rockefeller), the remaining 13 percent from Piton Foundation support. The initiative has since become "locally self-supporting." Piton covers 15 percent of the ongoing costs and the remaining 85 percent is covered out of contracts and fees for services the initiative provides.

Higher Cost Options. The cost of operating a neighborhood indicators data system can, of course, exceed these levels depending on the workloads involved. Costs will certainly be higher

where more research projects are taken on internally (e.g., Cleveland), or where the initiative chooses to develop a more extensive automated data system.

DAPA in Atlanta is an example of the latter, given its decision to develop a full parcel-based GIS system. Recall that Denver obtains the largest share of data in the form of census-tract level summaries, pre-tabulated by the providing agencies. Thus DAPA, with geo-coded data for individual parcels, is moving along a path that requires it to obtain, clean, and store a much larger amount of information.

Costs, however, are not necessarily proportional to the size of the data base. For DAPA annual personnel costs charged to the Atlanta project are now running at about $143,000 annually (covering a mix of levels of research and administrative staff adding to about 3.1 FTEs). Additional staff time is contributed by Georgia Tech and this figure does not include outlays to cover for space rental, other overhead, equipment, publication, and dissemination expenses.

We cannot extrapolate from these data meaningfully, but they are suggestive. Our guess is that while a basic neighborhood indicators data system can be provided in a city for as little as $100,000 per year, some cities are likely to find value in spending at annual rates in the $200,000-$300,000 range.

Conclusions

We think the experience of the Piton Foundation may offer relevant guidance for a number of metropolitan areas of a roughly similar size. As we see it, this translates into a need to raise general support (from national and local foundations and the business community) for a two year start up period, probably in the neighborhood of $100,000 for the first year and from $50,000 to $100,000 for the second year. During the second year, it should be possible to begin to bring in fee income from data services. As we noted earlier in this Chapter, there has been sizeable demand for such services in all partner cities, and the level of demand is likely to grow rapidly once people become aware that the basic capability has been established.

It would probably be possible to develop a local system in a way that fee and contract income would cover the full costs over the long term. However, the notion of such systems in NNIP is that their fundamental mission must relate to local public purposes. We think that a metropolitan community (local philanthropic and business sectors) should be willing to make a commitment to cover a reasonable part of the operating costs over the long term. However, this may not need to be extensive. Based on the Denver model, something in the range of $15,000 to $25,000 may be required.

As we have emphasized throughout this report, however, the state of the technology and data access in this field is advancing rapidly. Our guess is that lower cost modules may be possible in the near future. Indeed, considering approaches to developing such modules will be an element of the work program for the implementation phase of NNIP. As a special case, we will consider how similar capabilities could be developed at a scale suitable for use in smaller cities.

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Chapter 5

ENHANCING NEIGHBORHOOD INDICATOR SYSTEMS

The preceding chapters have told us much about the seven NNIP partner institutions: about who they are, about how they see their mission and objectives, about the indicator systems they have developed, and about how their data have already influenced real policies and programs. While they have many accomplishments, all of them recognize that their systems are still far from what they would like them to be.

All have followed an incremental approach. They have been openly opportunistic in assembling their data, starting by acquiring data sets that were readily available and could be obtained at a comparatively low cost. These data covered topics (e.g., crime, public assistance) they knew to be of interest in local policy discussions, but they clearly recognize there were yet other topics, probably of equal significance, left untouched simply because the data were too difficult or expensive to obtain. Additions occurred, again, mostly when there was a good match between expressed user needs and low-cost availability.

This approach has much to recommend it. The alternative—designing some ideal model system first and then trying to build it all at once—has often been a recipe for disaster (see discussion in Chapter 1), setting an agenda so demanding that, in fact, no product is delivered. Still, it is important to think about a more ideal model to guide incremental development and, indeed, our partner institutions have done that. In NNIP, they and Institute staff jointly examined ideas about a more complete model and what that should imply for next stages in actual systems development.

This chapter presents the results of those deliberations. We first discuss some principles for system development the NNIP team would propose for other cities. We then present a concept

of the content of a more complete local neighborhood data system. Next, we discuss what consideration of that model in relation to the economics of data acquisition and emerging policy issues implies for priorities in expanding local systems under NNIP. Finally, based on all of this, we propose an approach for building and using a *national* neighborhood indicators data system.

PRINCIPLES FOR SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Data vs. Indicators: Avoiding Narrow Conceptions

There are good reasons to avoid "fishing expeditions" in building an indicators system—throwing in all the measures that come up in the net of ready availability. Doing so can be expensive due to the costs of collecting and storing a considerable amount of data that may not be relevant to or useful for the analytic purposes for which the system is being built.

To guard against this, much literature on social indicators recommends a more thoughtful approach up-front: review your purposes carefully in relation to relevant theory, define a limited set of indicators that will address your purposes, and then assemble only the data you need to construct that set.

The experience of the seven NNIP systems suggests that it may be wise to relax these constraints, at least somewhat, for two reasons. First, there is more understanding now that important policy issues are likely to emerge in ways that are very difficult to predict ahead of time, implying the need to recurrently drop some old indicators and add new ones as priorities change in the future. It is clearly desirable to maintain a sizeable core set of indicators that does not change too dramatically, but the likelihood of the necessity of change around the edges needs to be recognized.

Second, the costs of assembling and storing data have been dramatically reduced. When the systems manager receives an update tape on public assistance cases, for example, it may not be appropriate to copy and retain all of the administrative data on that tape. But it may well be reasonable to retain a broader range of data than is needed only to update the current set of accepted indicators. The cost of retaining some other variables that have a reasonable chance of being relevant to in future policy dialogues is likely to be quite low.

It is helpful to distinguish between two tasks, both of which need to be taken seriously on their own: (1) building a neighborhood data system, and based on that, (2) constructing a system of indicators. Again, maintaining a carefully defined core set of indicators (e.g., to support recurrent reports on changes in the overall state of the city's neighborhoods) is an important application. But

maintaining a data system that is, within reasonable limits, broader than that is also advisable; i.e., a data system that may support the construction of new indicators, or the reconstruction of some existing indicators, to respond to new policy issues or new ways of looking at old ones.

Defining Types of Indicators Depending on the Use at Hand

In Chapter 3, we noted that systems containing only indicators of outcomes (measures that tell you how well social goals are being achieved) are not likely to be as useful for local policy analysis as those that also contain other types of indicators, including those that help you understand the mix of forces that are changing outcomes. We introduced the scheme by Land (1975) that identifies five different types of indicators.

1. Policy instrument indicators
2. Nonmanipulative descriptive indicators
3. Outcome or end product indicators
4. Side-effect indicators
5. Analytic indicators

It is appropriate here to repeat the implications we drew in Chapter 3: (1) in any specific use, it is important to be clear about the roles different measures are expected to play; but (2) it is important to recognize that the appropriate role for any one indicator may change depending on the use at hand. We noted as an example that, the crime rate is clearly and important societal outcome in its own right. But changes in the crime rate may also be instruments in producing other outcomes; e.g. level of reinvestment in the neighborhood and, ultimately, housing quality.

This argues against selecting data for a local system on too narrow a base or classifying them rigidly. It also argues, again, for building over time a data base that is somewhat broader than what may be needed to monitor the current "hot issues" alone.

The Importance of an *Asset* Orientation

Chapter 2 pointed out that one of the principles of comprehensive community building to which all NNIP partners adhere is an *asset orientation*. The importance of this view has probably been articulated most clearly so far by McKnight and Kretzman (1993). They contrast it to the traditional approach in which city agencies and other outsiders assess a community's needs and problems and then use their existing programmatic tools to apply assistance to address the problems that are identified.

They characterize that approach as a "needs driven dead end" resulting only in a perspective of long term dependency inside the community. But it also distorts the reality in the

way the neighborhood is viewed from the outside. Recall, the Piton Data Initiative example in Chapter 4. Newspaper reporters most often reported the bad news about inner-city neighborhoods because that was the information they typically received from standard sources (e.g., statistics on crime, infant mortality, etc.). Piton used its data to get the press to pay attention to the more complete—and positive—story about the same communities.

In comprehensive community building, it is the community itself that determines the agenda, and McKnight and Kretzman suggest that this should occur by community residents first taking stock of their own assets. and then finding ways to build on them. They categorize assets into three groups (in priority order):

1. ***Assets and capacities located inside the neighborhood and largely under neighborhood control***. For example: the skills, talents, and experiences of the residents; individual businesses and home-based enterprises; resident income; community business, civic, and cultural associations, religious organizations.

2. ***Assets located within the community but largely controlled by outsiders***. Assets that can be brought under community influence with the right strategy, like: public schools, police, private hospitals, vacant land, energy and waste resource.

3. ***Resources originating outside the neighborhood, controlled by outsiders***. For example: welfare expenditures, public capital improvement expenditures, public information.

What is the relevance of this orientation for city-wide neighborhood indicator systems? We draw three conclusions. First, while city-wide data systems could not, and should not, replace the process by which neighborhood residents identify and assess such assets for themselves (that process is a valuable community organizing device, building community solidarity in and of itself), properly oriented city-wide data systems can do much to facilitate it (recall the examples in Chapter 3). In other words, the existence of a city-wide system with a broad range of neighborhood indicators can substantially reduce the cost, and improve the reliability, of the task for community residents if the system mangers approach their role sensitively.

Second, much of the data that is most readily available from administrative records is deficit oriented. This is an openly recognized problem with the data systems now operated by the NNIP partners (see the data listings in Chapter 3). This implies the need for extra effort for such initiatives to add more asset measures to their data sets.

Third, however, the managers of city-wide systems can use deficit measures in a productive manner if they make a definite effort to do so (again see the examples in Chapter 4). McKnight and Kretzman do not argue that no one should ever look at measures of problems in a

neighborhood—such indicators are also a part of the reality and it would undermine serious planning to pretend they do not exist. They simply say that such measures used alone lead to defeatism, and they should take a back seat to the more productive asset based approach in strategy formulation. They can be used positively to inform strategic processes that are dominantly asset driven.

Qualities of Good Indicators

Along with the guidelines suggested above, there are a number of other criteria that should be sensible to follow in selecting neighborhood indicators for a sound local system. The criteria stated by the Piton Foundation Data Initiative are generally endorsed by all NNIP partners:

Timely and routinely gathered. Is the indicator readily available on at least an annual basis? Is the indicator current?

Reliable and stable. Can we be confident that the statistic will be compiled using a systematic and fair method, and that the same method will be used each year?

Understandable. Is the indicator simple enough to be interpreted by the general user and the public? Information that no one understands contributes nothing.

Relevant. Does the indicator reflect community realities and history? Is it capable of small area analysis?

Useful. Does it tell us something important and, more importantly, is it possible to do anything about it? Is the indicator useable for policy and planning decisions? Does the indicator respond quickly and noticeably to real change?

Simple. Is the indicator relatively easy to obtain or do complex confidentiality agreements have to be negotiated? Is it in a format that we can read and use.

Honest. Does the indicator accurately portray the issue? Is it capable of misinterpretation? Don't set out to prove a fact but, rather, to find the truth.

Indexes vs. Typologies

Some have thought that one purpose of neighborhood indicators should be to create some sort of composite index that would be used to rank the comparative "quality of life" in a city's neighborhoods. Further, it might be possible to develop a model, based on such an index, that

would enable local officials estimate the probability that a particular neighborhood is likely to "decline or improve."

The NNIP team rejects the idea of any such single index because it would seriously oversimplify the reality of neighborhood conditions in America's cities and would almost certainly be an inappropriate guide to policy. Research to date (including that by NNIP partners in Cleveland and Denver cited in Chapter 4) indicates that there is tremendous diversity among neighborhoods in any city, even among poor neighborhoods. Some with quite low incomes, for example, have strong social and cultural bases while others do not. All of them have strengths and assets to build on; many are deteriorating in some ways while improving in others. Any simple classification—good vs. bad, going up vs. down—would deter the search for strategies that address the specific opportunities of each neighborhood on its own terms.

We do think, however, that it may be possible to construct typologies of neighborhoods that could offer more useful guides to policy. In any city, there might be a fairly long list of neighborhood types, each of which warrants a somewhat different mix of programmatic support. Any such typology will still be something of an oversimplification. The design of a truly effective strategy for community improvement requires a more thorough asset-mapping type process like that discussed above, performed by the residents themselves. Still, a typology might be constructed which would represent a reasonably good approximation and at, the very least, avert misguided actions by city governments and other outside agencies. In selecting indicators, the possibility of constructing such a typology is worth keeping in mind.

CONCEPT: A MORE COMPLETE SYSTEM OF INDICATORS

While they have assembled a considerable amount of relevant information, all NNIP partners are well aware that they are missing a number of measures they believe to be important in characterizing community conditions for policy planning. In this project, the team felt it important to identify priorities for systems expansion and to do so as coherently as possible.

Unfortunately, there is no unifying theory or body of empirical work that can answer the question, "What should be in a complete system of indicators?" in a fully satisfying manner. There has been some useful research on residents' overall sense of satisfaction with their neighborhood. This has identified various components of the neighborhood environment that generally distinguish

themselves as prime contributors.[17] However, the results of this work needs to be blended with ideas about other types indicators; e.g., various measures that influence outcomes, although they may not reflect outcomes themselves.

Keeping the above principles in mind, the NNIP team met in several sessions to suggest contents for a more ideal and comprehensive set of neighborhood indicators. This section presents the results of these deliberations to date.

Attributes of a "Healthy Neighborhood"

The central theme that guided our selections in this scheme was to identify attributes of a healthy neighborhood. Of first importance was identifying what we thought to be as complete a list as possible of the relevant outcomes—those characteristics that actually *define* neighborhood well-being. However, in reference to the discussion above, we also included other types of indicators; i.e., those that are not outcomes themselves but are reasonably sure to play some role in determining, or at least influencing, outcomes.

At this point, the scheme represents no more than the collective judgements of a group of professionals, albeit professionals who are familiar with the relevant literature and have been working with community groups in using indicators for several years. We regard it still very much as a work in process. It will be tested and refined through additional research and exposure to community decision makers and others in the implementation period. However, even now we believe it is suggestive of directions that may benefit others.

It should be emphasized at the outset that no real world system is ever likely to be able to afford to obtain and maintain *all* of the types of indicators identified. We think having the whole framework is helpful, however, as a guide to both securing new additions and better interpreting the indicators that are at any time available (remaining aware that some parts of the whole story are still missing should help maintain the "honesty" of system presentations).

System Contents

Box 5.1 presents the framework for the proposed system. It has 14 domains. The first of these—Basic Descriptors—contains indicators that define a neighborhood's "type" (such that the meaning of indicators in the remaining domains can be better understood) but are not of themselves measures of neighborhood health. For example, it is useful to know whether a

[17]The most important of these elements include: condition of neighboring properties, noise, crime, public service quality, people with much in common, and others (Michelson, 1976; Galster and Hesser, 1981; Galster, 1987: ch. 6).

neighborhood predominantly contains elderly households (rather than younger families) and apartment buildings (rather than single family detached houses). Such characterizations help in interpreting both assets and problems more responsively, but they do not themselves indicate whether one neighborhood is better-off than another in terms of societal goals.

Under the remaining domains we group indicators in several categories. We first differentiate between objective measures of conditions in the neighborhood and data on the residents' attitudes, perceptions, and aspirations related to those conditions. The latter are hardly ever available in local indicator systems today, but their potential importance for policy interpretation should be self-evident.

Among the measures of conditions, we distinguish between basic characteristics of the neighborhood and its residents (e.g., student school achievement, housing quality, the intensity of local friendship/acquaintanceship networks) and characteristics of public and private services and assistance programs that affect those conditions (e.g., the nature and performance of local schools, housing code enforcement programs, commercial services, cultural programs, and street repair).

Data Sources and Availability

With respect to each type of indicator identified, we also the sources from which measures are obtainable. We note four categories:

(C) = Available from U.S. Census (to obtain intercensal measures, would either have to estimate the variable, based on other explanatory variables, or conduct a special survey)

(A1) = Available from administrative records typically obtainable with agency approval (most NNIP partners either have these or could access them without great difficulty)

(A2) = Available from administrative records typically more difficult to obtain.

(S) = Could only be obtained by conducting a special survey

Box 5.1

FRAMEWORK FOR A NEIGHBORHOOD INDICATORS SYSTEM

DOMAINS

Basic Descriptors

Family, Children, and Youth
Education
Public Health
Economics: Income and Wealth
Economics: Consumption Patterns
Economics: Neighborhood Economy
Civic Life
Social/Cultural Life
Public Safety
Housing
Physical Environment
Transportation
Stability, Turnover

WITHIN EACH DOMAIN

Objective measurement

Population and neighborhood characteristics
Service provision characteristics

Attitudes and aspirations of population

PRIORITIES FOR ENHANCING NNIP PARTNER SYSTEMS

As noted, no real world system is ever likely to be able to afford to obtain and maintain *all* of the types of indicators shown in Box 5.2. But the NNIP partners would like to extend their current systems so they could shed light on more of the topics included in that framework. Clearly, some of those topics are more important than others.

Box 5.2

Domains and Types of Indicators

BASIC DESCRIPTORS

No. of people, households **(C)**
Population/household composition
- Household types **(C)**
- Age structure **(C)**
- Race/ethnicity **(C)**

No. of housing units **(C)**
Housing units by type
- Type of structure **(C)**
- Size of unit **(C)**

Land area **(A2)**
Land use **(A2)**

FAMILY, CHILDREN, AND YOUTH

Family composition and management

Children living with single parent (male, female) **(C)**
Divorce rate **(A1)**
Births to teen mothers **(A1)**
Births to unmarried mothers **(A1)**
Entrants into foster care **(A2)**
Parenting skills **(S)**
Measures of family dysfunction (child abuse/neglect rates) **(A1 or 2)**

Services for families, children, and youth

Child care (no. of providers, capacity, quality, $) **(A2 or S)**
After-school care (no. of providers, capacity, quality, $) **(A2 or S)**
Youth programs (no. of providers, capacity, quality, $) **(A2 or S)**
Youth mentoring (no. of providers, capacity, quality, $) **(A2 or S)**
Family counseling/support (no. of providers, capacity, quality, $) **(A2 or S)**
Foster care services (no., capacity, use, $) **(A2 or S)**

Attitudes/aspirations concerning children and youth

Attitudes re quality of life for children and youth **(S)**
Attitudes re services for children and youth **(S)**

Box 5.2 (continued)

Domains and Types of Indicators

EDUCATION

Education/skill levels of population

Adults by years/type of education **(C)**
Skill inventory **(S)**

Student performance

Enrollment rates **(A1 or 2)**
Attendance rates **(A1 or 2)**
Drop-out rate **(a1 or 2)**
Pct. high school graduates going to college **(A2 or S)**
Pct. above proficiency level in math/reading **(A1 or 2)**
Adult education enrollment **(A1 or 2)**

Education services and facilities

Schools (no., capacity, condition, $) **(A1 or 2)**
Student/teacher ratios **(A1 or 2)**
Parental involvement in schools **(A2 or S)**
Adult education (no., capacity, quality, $) **(A2 or S)**
Job training programs (no., type, capacity, quality, $) **(A2 or S)**
Library services (no., capacity, condition, use, $) **(A2 or S)**

Attitudes/aspirations concerning education

Attitudes: parent satisfaction with schools **(S)**
Attitudes: satisfaction with job training programs **(S)**
Attitudes: satisfaction with library services **(S)**

PUBLIC HEALTH

Health of population—children and youth

Infant mortality rates (by age and cause of death) **(A1)**
Low birth-weight births **(A1)**
Adequacy of pre-natal care **(A1)**
Immunization rates **(A1 or 2)**

Box 5.2 (continued)

Domains and Types of Indicators

Hospital admission rates (by age and cause of illness) **(A1)**
Rates of smoking, drinking, substance abuse **(A2 or S)**
Suicide rates (by age) **(A1 or 2)**
Wellness behavior (exercise, sports, etc.) **(S)**

Health of population—adults

Hospital admission rates (by age and cause of illness) **(A1)**
Mortality rates (by age and cause of death) **(A1)**
Rates of smoking, drinking, substance abuse **(A2 or S)**
Suicide rates (by age) **(A1 or 2)**
Wellness behavior (exercise, sports, etc.) **(S)**
Health insurance coverage **(A2 or S)**

Health services and assistance

Primary care providers (no. by type, capacity, quality, $—managed care vs. other) **(A2 or S)**
Hospitals (no. by type, capacity, condition, $) **(A2 or S)**
Mental health care providers (no. by type, capacity, quality, $) **(A2 or S)**
Substance abuse treatment providers (no. by type, capacity, quality, $) **(A2 or S)**
Medicaid participation (no., $) **(A1)**

ECONOMICS: INCOME AND WEALTH

Income, employment, wealth of population

Income (total and by source; meas. of income inequality) **(C)**
Poverty rate **(C)**
Employment (total, pct. of labor force, by occupation) **(C)**
Self employment rate **(C)**
Unemployment rates (by age) **(C)**
Commuting (distance, in-neighborhood vs. not) **(S)**
Homeownership rate **(C)**
Value of owner-occupied homes **(C)**
Auto ownership rates **(A2 or S)**

Box 5.2 (continued)

Domains and Types of Indicators

Income assistance

AFDC participation (no., $) **(A1)**
SSI participation (no., $) **(A1)**
Food Stamp participation (no., $) **(A1)**

Attitudes/aspirations concerning income and wealth

Attitudes: employment opportunity, self employment **(S)**
Attitudes: public assistance programs **(S)**

ECONOMICS: CONSUMPTION

Consumption patterns of population

Consumer expenditures, by type of goods and services **(S)**

Commercial services

Commercial services, by type (no. establishments, vol. sales, quality) **(A2)**
Consumer prices **(A2 or S)**

Attitudes/aspirations concerning economics

Attitudes re consumption patterns **(S)**
Attitudes: satisfaction with commercial services **(S)**

ECONOMICS: NEIGHBORHOOD ECONOMY

Characteristics of the neighborhood economy

Business establishments in neighborhood (total and by sector) **(A2)**
Components of change in business establishments (new starts, closings—total and by sector) **(A2)**
Employment in neighborhood (total and by sector) **(A2)**
Components of change in neighborhood employment (total and by sector) **(A2)**
Business telephone connections **(A2)**

Box 5.2 (continued)

Domains and Types of Indicators

Building permits, non-residential structures **(A1 or 2)**
Borrowing for business development/expansion (access to credit) **(A2 or S)**
Tax delinquency of business zoned parcels **(A1)**

Attitudes/aspirations concerning neighborhood economy

Attitudes re neighborhood economic development **(S)**

CIVIC LIFE

Participation in civic life

Voter registration **(A1 or 2)**
Voter turnout **(A1 or 2)**
Participation in civic organizations (neighborhood, city-wide) **(S)**
Volunteerism **(S)**
Charitable giving **(S)**
Newspaper subscriptions/100 households **(A2 or S)**
Population awareness of civic leaders, issues **(S)**

Civic institutions

Neighborhood civic organizations (no., type, membership) **(S)**
Neighborhood newspapers (no. type, circulation) **(S)**

Attitudes/aspirations concerning civic life

Attitudes re neighborhood civic life and institutions **(S)**
Attitudes: satisfaction with local government, governance **(S)**

SOCIAL/CULTURAL LIFE

Social/cultural activity of population

Intensity of friendship/acquaintanceship networks **(S)**
Participation in arts/cultural activities **(S)**
Support for arts/culture **(S)**
Participation in recreational activities **(A2 or S)**

Box 5.2 (continued)

Domains and Types of Indicators

Participation in religious activities **(S)**
Extent of social/cultural diversity **(C and S)**
Incidence of intergroup conflict, racial tension **(S)**

Social/cultural institutions and infrastructure

Art/culture activities, events, celebrations **(S)**
Commercial entertainment (e.g., movie houses) **(A2 or S)**
Manifestations of culture (public art, restaurants, street performers)**(S)**
Historic preservation programs **(A2 or S)**
Parks/recreational facilities and programs **(A2 or S)**
Social organizations (no., type, membership, facilities) **(A2 or S)**
Cultural organizations (no., type, membership, facilities) **(S)**
Religious organizations (no., type, membership, facilities) **(S)**

Attitudes concerning social/cultural life

Attitudes re social life **(S)**
Attitudes re cultural life **(S)**

PUBLIC SAFETY

Criminal activity

911 call rates **(A1 or 2)**
Crime rates in neighborhood (by type of crime)**(A1)**
Offender rates (by type of crime and char. of offender)**(A1 or 2)**
Victimization rates (by type of crime and char. of victim)**(A1 or 2)**

Physical safety

Structural fire rates **(A1 or 2)**
Automobile accident rates **(A2 or S)**
Home injury rates **(A2 or S)**

Box 5.2 (continued)

Domains and Types of Indicators

Services and safeguards

Police service (type, extent, and performance measures) **(A2 or S)**
Fire protection service (type, extent, and performance meas.) **(S)**
Extent of street lighting **(A2 or S)**
Neighborhood watch activity **(S)**

Attitudes concerning public safety

Attitudes re performance of police and fire departments **(S)**
Attitudes re safety and the physical environment **(S)**

HOUSING

Housing adequacy and affordability

Homeless population **(S)**
Rate of overcrowding **(C)**
Housing physical quality measures **(C)**
Housing affordability (ratio of housing expense to income) **(C)**
Value and rent levels **(C)**
Vacancy rate **(C)**

Housing market activity

Housing construction rates (building permits and completions) **(A1 or 2)**
Housing rehabilitation rates **(A2 or S)**
Mortgage lending (applications and disposition, $) **(A2)**
Eviction and foreclosure rates **(A2)**
Tax delinquency **(A1)**
Housing abandonment **(A1)**

Housing assistance and market services

Subsidized housing projects (size, quality) **(A2)**
Other housing assistance (extent certificates, vouchers) **(A2)**
Realtors (number, business volume, practices) **(A2 or S)**

Box 5.2 (continued)

Domains and Types of Indicators

Home insurance agencies (number, volume, practices) **(S)**
Lending institutions (number, volume, practices) **(A2 or S)**
Housing code enforcement (extent and performance) **(A2)**

Attitudes concerning housing

Attitudes re own housing unit (quality, affordability) **(S)**
Attitudes re housing in neighborhood **(S)**
Attitudes re housing market intermediaries **(S)**

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Physical quality

Variety of open spaces **(A2 or S)**
Landscaping, public street furniture **(A2 or S)**
Graffiti on structures **(S)**
Accumulated trash, litter **(S)**
Incidence of vectors (rodents, cockroaches, etc.) **(S)**
Quality of streets, sidewalks **(S)**
Noise level violations **(A2 or S)**
Drainage, flooding problems **(S)**
Water quality **(A2)**
Toxic waste, radon, other pollutants **(A2)**

Services

Trash collection (frequency, performance) **(A2 or S)**
Street repair/maintenance (frequency, performance) **(A2 or S)**
Maintenance of public spaces (frequency, performance) **(A2 or S)**

Attitudes concerning physical environment

Attitudes re quality of the physical environment **(S)**
Attitudes re environmental services **(S)**

Box 5.2 (continued)

Domains and Types of Indicators

TRANSPORTATION

Access to modes of transport

Auto ownership rates (by type of household) **(A2 or S)**
Reliance on public transportation **(S)**

Transportation related services

Off-street parking (availability, condition) **(A or S)**
Performance of public transportation **(A2 and S)**

Attitudes concerning transportation

Attitudes re means of transportation **(S)**
Attitudes re transportation services **(S)**

MOBILITY/TURNOVER

Mobility

Net change (population and households) **(C and S)**
Rate households moving into neighborhood (by household type and location moved from) **(C and S)**
Rate households moving out of neighborhood (by household type and location moved to) **(S)**

Attitudes concerning mobility

Attitudes re mobility and neighborhood stability **(S)**

The NNIP partners already have a considerable amount of information in some of the most critical areas in social policy today; e.g., Families, Children, and Youth; Public Safety; Housing. After assessing the options, the team felt that the highest priorities for system expansion in all sites related to (1) employment (the linkage of neighborhood residents to jobs and business investment

in the neighborhood), and (2) more complete information on neighborhood assets (particularly those concerning social, cultural, and civic life in neighborhoods).

Employment and Community Economic Development

Regardless of final decisions on welfare reform at the federal level, many states are already moving ahead to reform their current programs. Changes focus on adding work requirements for those receiving assistance and placing time-limits on such assistance altogether, which would obviously force all those in jeopardy of losing welfare support to try to prepare themselves to find employment.

The NNIP partners see considerable urgency in expanding their data systems so that they can: (1) provide better information to help link those seeking work to real job opportunities; and (2) keep track of the outcomes of these reforms (i.e., How many, and who, actually find adequate employment? What is the overall impact on poverty?).

There do appear to be opportunities for enhancing indicators in these areas in the short term. For example, research by our NNIP partner in Cleveland is taking advantage of Ohio's ES-202 data for these purposes (an automated data file based on the reports almost all firms must file each quarter on their employees as a basis for unemployment insurance). After an exploratory analysis for one community (Leete and Bania, 1995), researchers have compared the characteristics of public assistance recipients who will need to find jobs under current reform proposals, to the characteristics and volume of new job openings in metropolitan Cleveland.

The most valuable part of this analysis was *spatial*: comparing the neighborhood locations in which the job seekers reside to the locations of the businesses where jobs suitable for them are likely to be opening. Preliminary results indicate substantial disparities in this regard: most of the job seekers live in the inner city and the likely new job openings suitable for them are mostly in dispersed suburban locations. The data produced offer a natural basis for reexamining public transportation policies in the region.

The ES-202 data base could also provide valuable information on the changing economies of individual neighborhoods. With address-matching, it would be possible to calculate neighborhood level indicators on the births and deaths of business establishments and changes in the level of employment, by type of business. The data would show, for example, the changing level of retail services avail in each neighborhood as well as the changing mix of job opportunities being provided by neighborhood businesses.

While the ES-202 file appears promising, it may not be the best answer for all cities in the short term. Annex 5A at the end of this chapter examines it in more depth, concluding that the

locational accuracy of the file varies widely in different states. But there are alternatives. We mentioned Boston's use of the Coles Business Directory in Chapter 3. Some cities are constructing data files that merge a number of commercially available business directories (Coles and others) to achieve similar purposes. Examining these options, and providing new data to address community economic development issues in the short term, should be a high priority in the first phase of NNIP implementation.

Community Assets: Social, Cultural, and Civic

We have talked about the importance of an asset-oriented approach to the analysis of neighborhood conditions several times in this report. The NNIP partner data sets already have considerable information that support this approach (e.g., inventories of community institutions, vacant land, population characteristics, public assistance flows, characteristics of the housing stock). Fleshing our more information about the neighborhood economy, as discussed above, will add to the value of their data in this regard as well. But still, some important aspects will be missing at that point.

We noted earlier that neighborhoods with high levels of poverty often differ from each other substantially in other ways. Some provocative research is suggesting that those differences may be key in examining their potential to improve outcomes, particularly outcomes for children and youth. Most important here may be characteristics some refer to as the "soft side;" measures of social interaction, community culture, and the nature of informal as well as formal community institutions.

One example is the work by Furstenberg (1993) which discusses how such characteristics seem to matter in the quality of parenting that occurs in a neighborhood (it seems most probable that parenting, and its effect on future directions for children, is more successful on average in neighborhoods that provide stronger social/cultural support). Another is additional work by our NNIP partner in Cleveland (Coulton and Korbin, 1995, and Coulton, Korbin, and Su, 1995), indicating that child maltreatment rates vary surprisingly across neighborhoods and that similar factors are likely to be important in influencing such variations.

The Rockefeller Foundation has already given a grant to the Urban Institute to examine one theme in this area in conjunction with the broader NNIP project: indicators of community arts and culture. The research will examine literature on the topic but it will also entail field studies to help determine how community arts and culture might be sensibly measured and how this theme is being used in comprehensive community building.

This work will inform NNIP's broader interest in these questions. Our assessment of the potential for developing indicators of social, cultural, and civic aspects of neighborhoods (Box 5.2)

is that it will require special surveys. How such surveys might be conducted both meaningfully and efficiently will be a priority activity during the first year of NNIP.

Broader Potentials

Although new indicators in the above areas will enhance the value of their systems, the NNIP partners do not believe that they need to wait until all such data are in place before they can make further contributions to our understanding of the effect of neighborhood conditions on important social issues.

Researchers and policy makers in a number of fields are increasingly suspecting that neighborhood conditions matter importantly to their own policy concerns. Those interested in reducing crime rates, for example, are seeing that they cannot do a good job of predicting future vulnerabilities to criminal activity or seeking out high payoff vehicles for crime prevention by looking at neighborhood level crime data alone. A mix of other characteristics of neighborhoods (social, economic, and physical) need to be known, so they can develop a more comprehensive understanding of differing community contexts, to enable them to develop effective strategies. The same is true for those who would expand local employment opportunities, address the problem of substance abuse, or encourage market-oriented investment in communities' retail services or housing stock.

Because they have been learning a great deal about the neighborhood in their cities in the course of their regular work over the past few years, and thinking hard about the policy implications in process, our NNIP partners feel that they are close to the edge in shedding more light on these issues. But they have not had enough time or resources to pursue the questions the feel to be most relevant. They give high priority to the opportunity to do much more of that, in partnership, early on in the course of NNIP implementation.

PROSPECTS FOR A NATIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD INDICATORS DATA SYSTEM

Given the content of the NNIP partners' current data systems and what we have said about possibilities for expanding them, how should we judge both the feasibility and potential value of combining data from their systems to form a *National* Neighborhood Indicators Data System (NNIDS)? Our analysis concludes that doing so should be highly cost-effective and particularly valuable in the current policy environment.

Concept and Technical Feasibility

From the data presented in Chapter 3, it is clear that the NNIP partners' systems contain a number of variables that do not match. However, we judge that they clearly contain a sufficient number of indicators of interest that are comparable across most systems. Our strategy then, would be to assemble only a *core set* of comparable indicators to form the heart of the national system. We would add to the core set over time as the sites add more useful indicators with comparable definitions to their own systems.

Obtaining copies of the full administrative data files the NNIP partners now store would imply a number of difficulties because of technical complexities as well confidentiality problems. However, our examination suggests that this would not be needed to construct the national system. The greatest benefits NNIDS could provide would be gained simply by assembling nationally only those comparable indicators already constructed by the sites at the census tract level.

With census tract totals we would not risk breaching any confidentiality agreements. While some reliability checks and data cleaning would be done by the Urban Institute, we recognize that the NNIP partners have already spent considerable effort to clean these "final outputs" of their own systems. Thus the additional work required in this regard should be modest. Further, given today's software (available at the Urban Institute) it is very easy to convert data files we receive in different formats so they can be input into a common overall system. In short, we see the process of combining data from the different sites in this manner to be free of serious technical barriers and likely to be quite inexpensive.

Contents and An Asset Orientation

Urban Institute staff have examined the technical definitions of each of the variables maintained by the NNIP partners and learned about how the original data were assembled. We conclude that we can obtain comparable administrative indicators by census tract for a majority of sites now on the following topics (with expansions of the local systems, we would hope to have comparable data series on these topics for almost all sites over the next year):

- Birth rates (by age of mother, marital status, birth-weight, level of prenatal care, and household characteristics)
- Death rates (by age, cause of death, and household characteristics)
- School performance (enrollment, attendance, drop-out rates, test scores)
- Crime and victimization rates (for FBI Type I crimes only)
- Public Assistance (rates of household participation in AFDC, Food Stamps, Medicaid, with basic household characteristics)
- Property characteristics (vacant parcels, tax arrearage)

- Public housing

These data, all from administrative sources, will convey much about what is going on in the different neighborhoods in our partner cities, but they tell only a part of the story. It will be possible to supplement them, however, by adding to the NNIDS system statistics for the seven NNIP cities from national data sets that can also be made available at the census tract level.

Most obvious here is the U.S. Census which can give an analyst the historic context about each neighborhood that is needed to interpret the more recent changes conveyed by the administrative series (see the list of the most useful census variables on Table 3.1). The Urban Institute has developed a special data file containing census variables which should be particularly useful for these purposes: The Underclass Data Base. This file contains the major variables of interest for 1970, 1980, and 1990, with adjustments made as needed to provide comparable definitions of census tracts for three dates.

In addition, based on examination of the costs and procedural requirements, we have concluded that we can also incorporate in NNIDS two other data files that have a great deal to say about changes in neighborhood assets: the HMDA files (which contain data on home mortgage applications and their disposition), and the Coles Business Directory (which, as noted earlier, can be constructed so as to convey information on the number and types of businesses in each neighborhood and measures of change in these variables). The following paragraphs note more about each of the national data files that would be incorporated into NNIDS:

- ***1990 Census Population and Housing Data***. The NNIDS will include selected census tract level variables from the 1990 Decennial Census Summary Tape File.

- ***1980 and 1970 Census Population and Housing Data from the Underclass Database.*** The Urban Institute will adapt its Underclass Database (UDB) and integrate it with the NNIDS. Like the NNIDS, the UDB uses the census tract as its smallest unit of geography. Because the boundaries of census tracts can change from one decennial census to the next, one cannot generally compare data for a census tract across years. Appropriate adjustments have been made to this file to assure consistent definitions of tract boundaries over time.

- ***Home Mortgage Disclosure Act Data.*** The Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) is a federal disclosure law that provides information about the home lending activities of institutions with offices in metropolitan areas. Prior to 1990, HMDA applied only to large depository institutions, but coverage has since been expanded, now reporting on the activities of many independent mortgage companies as well. Yearly HMDA data, since 1990, are available in machine-readable format and can be presented at the census tract level.

- ***Business and Employment Data.*** The NNIDS will make use of commercially available business and employment data (such as Cole's Business Directory). These data will be aggregated to the census tract level and include number of business establishments and employees by SIC code.

The Potential Uses of NNIDS

The first use of NNIDS will be to characterize neighborhood change in America's cities in the late 1990s in ways that are relevant for policy. Whatever the form, it now seems likely that legislation will be enacted devolving responsibility for, and reducing federal funding for, America's social safety net. The impacts of these changes will not occur evenly across the nation's terrain. A large share of the poor are concentrated in a relatively small number of urban neighborhoods. Watching indicators at even the county or city levels could be quite misleading, telling us little about the real changes that are occurring in those communities.

To be sure, the indicators that can now be assembled in this to form the NNIDS will not include all of the measures needed to understand social and economic change in this period. However, they will offer reliable measures of many of the trends that are of vital interest to public policy. If interpreted properly, they should provide a much more responsible picture of impacts than could ever be constructed from information at higher levels of aggregation alone.

In addition, we believe there can be many productive uses of NNIDS by local planners and analysts. They are likely to be better able to understand emerging trends in spatial patterns and other phenomena in their own cities, if they can see them against comparable types of changes in a number of other cities across the country.

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Annex 5A

THE POTENTIAL OF ES202 DATA FOR LOCAL INDICATOR SYSTEMS

Unemployment insurance reports (known as ES202 reports) are a potentially very useful source of information for analyzing neighborhood level on employment and business patterns both geographically and over time. Although analytic use of these data is not widespread, several researchers have been taking advantage of this unique source of information to analyze employment and business patterns. For example, researchers at Case Western Reserve University have used ES202 data to compare the availability of different types of jobs with the skill levels of the workforce in different areas in the Cleveland-Akron MSA (Leete and Bania, 1995).

Nearly all employers in the U.S. are required to submit ES202 information on a quarterly basis. An employer must file an ES202 report if that employer had a paid employee for 20 or more weeks during the year or paid an employee $1,500 or more during any quarter. Certain firms are exempt from ES202 reporting, such as agricultural enterprises with fewer than 10 employees and sole proprietorships. Firms with more than one location or branch may report as a single firm or as a series of establishments.

While each state creates its own ES202 reporting form, the basic information is the same for all states. The first part of the form asks the employer to list the average number of people it employed in each of the three months for the quarter. The numbers of employees are to be grouped by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code. On the second part of the form, the employer must list the social security number and total wages paid for each employee.

One of the major advantages of this data source is its coverage. Although, as noted above, a few types of firms are exempt from ES202 reporting requirements, these firms represent a very small proportion of the total jobs in a state. All major employers, both public and private, are included in ES202 data. Furthermore, the employee levels reported in ES202 are considered to be very accurate. The fact that the data are reported on a monthly basis means provides a rich series of data for those wishing to look at short-term and long-term labor market trends.

Nevertheless, there are several important obstacles or shortcomings to using ES202 data. Some of these can be dealt with through data cleaning, while others must simply be accepted as inherent weaknesses in the data. In the latter category, one must note that ES202 data do not provide the number of hours worked by employees, nor do they distinguish between full-time and part-time employees. This could lead to misleading results if one is comparing industries that use very different percentages of part-time employees. Second, some businesses that are required

to report are either late in reporting or fail to report altogether. Examples may include households that employ baby-sitters and house cleaners for more than the required time.

There are several types of problems that can, at least in principle, be dealt with and corrected by researchers who wish to use ES202 data. These are enumerated below. While some of these problems are not serious if one is examining employment levels at larger levels of geography, such as aggregated by county, they can become very important if one is interested in looking at levels of employment at the neighborhood level.

Access to ES202 Data

Because ES202 data contain detailed information on company employment levels and individual salaries, they are confidential and are not generally made available to the public. The data are compiled and processed by the individual states, who then pass the information to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) at the Department of Labor in Washington. While the BLS does sell summaries of ES202 data aggregated to the county, MSA, and State level, it will not provide disaggregated ES202 records to outside users.

Disaggregated ES202 data for each state can only be obtained through the state agency that is responsible for preparing the data. Each state has its own policies on access to ES202 data, which can range from fairly open to quite restrictive. For example, in Ohio ES202 data are made available to researchers who are willing to enter into a confidentiality agreement with the state, while in Wisconsin, the state government does not normally allow even other state agencies to have access to ES202 data.

Data Suppression

To protect the confidentiality of firms' employment information, the BLS has set limits on the amount of detail that can be reported from ES202 data. An employment summary for a particular geographical area and industrial classification must be suppressed if it contains information from three or fewer firms or if one firm accounts for 80 percent or more of the total employment for that area and industry grouping. In addition to these federal suppression requirements, individual states may place further restrictions on the reporting of ES202 data. The State of Wisconsin, for instance, does not allow ES202 data to be reported using four-digit SIC codes. It will allow reporting of employment only by one-digit SIC codes for all industries except manufacturing, which may be reported by two-digit SIC codes.

At the larger levels of geography at which ES202 data are typically used, such as state, MSA or county, data suppression rarely needs to be applied, even if one is using four digit SIC codes. If the data are to be used at the neighborhood or Census tract level, however, then data

suppression restrictions could become very important. In this case, one would most likely have to trade detail in SIC breakdowns against geographic precision, that is, one would either have to report data for larger geographic areas or less disaggregated industry classifications.

Multi-Establishment Firms

ES202 data are intended to be establishment level data, but this is frequently not the case. Many large firms that have multiple offices or are chain or franchise operations (such as McDonald's) will report all of their employment under a single record for a central office, even though employees may work at different locations throughout the state. As was the case with data suppression, the problem of multi-establishment firms becomes more serious the higher the level of precision one is trying to get in locating jobs.

Although BLS does some processing of the data once it is received, it is primarily up to the States to make sure that firms report the information correctly. While the extent of this problem varies from state to state, all researchers familiar with ES202 files indicate this as being one of the major sources of error in the data. In an analysis of ES202 employment data for the Milwaukee MSA, Sammis White of the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee reported that about 12 percent of all 1983 employment had to be corrected to reallocate single firm totals to separate establishments (White, et al., 1990).

Address Errors

A further problem with correctly identifying the location of jobs with ES202 is that the address specified by the reporting firm may not actually be the address where the employment occurs. This may be for several reasons. First, many firms now contract accounting or payroll processing firms to handle their payroll processing and ES202 filing for them. The address that appears on the ES202 report will often be the address of the payroll firm and not the address of the firm for which the information applies. In other cases, the address may simply be a post office box or a misreported addresses.

SIC Codes

While some researchers have noted errors in SIC designations that firms use to disaggregate employment figures, most feel that this is a less important source of error when compared to the multi-establishment and address errors. Nevertheless, one notable problem with SIC codes is temporary agencies. Since temporary agencies are categorized as being part of the service sector, these firms will classify all of the temporary workers who they place in other companies as service sector employees. Some of these people may actually be working in some

other type of industry, such as manufacturing, and so will be misreported in terms of their actual SIC code.

Cleaning ES202 Data

As has been noted, locational errors from multi-establishment reporting and incorrect addresses are the two most important ES202 data problems, especially when one is examining the data at small units of geography. The reported rates for locational errors can vary widely from state to state for two reasons. First, each state implements its own processing and quality control checks on the data and some states do a better job and catching and correcting reporting problems than others. Second, the rate of error will tend to increase the more precision one needs in firm locations (i.e., the smaller the level of geography one is interested in). Uncleaned ES202 are considered to be generally free of locational errors at the State or county level, but the error rates rise quickly when one examines the data at smaller levels, such as place or census tract.

Using ES202 data for the Milwaukee MSA from 1983, White estimates less than 13 percent error rates from both multi-establishment and address errors when cleaning data to the Census place level (i.e., city or town). Laura Leete and Neil Bania found an average error rate of 26 percent when cleaning 1994 data from the Cleveland-Akron MSA to the zip code level (Leete and Bania, 1995). Bart Lewis estimated that almost 75 percent of the data for 10 counties in Georgia contain inaccurate or unusable addresses prior to cleaning.

Disaggregating multi-establishment firms and correcting erroneous addresses is painstaking and time-consuming work. Individual records must be checked by comparing them to telephone directories or other lists of businesses. It is often necessary to telephone individual firms or actually travel to businesses to verify the location of establishments.

Because the data cleaning is so labor intensive it can be quite expensive. Bart Lewis estimates that the cost of cleaning one quarter of 1995 ES202 data for 10 counties in Georgia to be $128,000. It should be noted that Lewis has been cleaning ES202 data for the past ten years and so these costs do not include start up costs, such as developing a business establishment database. So, initial costs for an organization just starting to clean ES202 data could be much higher. In his 1990 paper on ES202 data, White put the total cost for cleaning 1979-1987 data for the Milwaukee MSA to be between $120,000 and $300,000.

The accuracy of the data has been getting better in some states, however, which may substantially lower the cost of further cleaning ES202 data in the future. Over the past few years, the BLS has been encouraging states to improve the reporting of data so that firms separate multiple establishments and give correct establishment addresses. With the help of BLS, most states are developing a Business Establishment Listing (BEL), a database of business

establishments that can be compared to ES202 to find errors more quickly. Because of these improvements in Wisconsin, White noted that when using 1993 data, less than 1 percent of the records had problems with locational errors (compared to 13 percent in 1983). Unfortunately, all states have not made this much progress.

Chapter 6
INTERESTS AND CAPACITIES IN OTHER CITIES

The recurrent monitoring of changing neighborhood conditions has become an activity of growing importance in the NNIP partner cities. But what about the rest of the nation? To what extent have other cities recognized a need for better information about neighborhood trends and circumstances to guide their own policy planning? To what extent have they taken action to develop similar capabilities? To what extent—and how—do they think they could benefit from outside assistance to move more rapidly in this direction?

To respond to these questions, we conducted an informal telephone survey with respondents in 33 major U.S. cities (excluding the seven NNIP cities). This chapter reports the results and discusses their implications.

SURVEY OF "INDICATOR READINESS" IN MAJOR CITIES

Survey Respondents and Questions

No attempt was made to contact a representative sample of all U.S. cities. Rather, we started by trying to obtain information about the central cities of the largest U.S. metropolitan areas, contacting as many as we could given the time and resources available. Our reasoning was that those cities contain the most significant concentrations of urban poverty in America and, because of their size and complexity, they would be most likely to recognize a need for monitoring neighborhood change. We also contacted a few other (smaller) cities, where we learned in our interviews that they had an interesting indicators project underway.

Altogether, we obtained information on the situations in 33 cities. These included 29 in the largest 50 metropolitan areas; adding the cities of our 7 NNIP partners (all of which are in that category), the total accounts for 72 percent of the central cities in the top-50 group.

As expected, we normally had to talk with more than one person in each city to find answers to the questions that interested us. We began by contacting individuals known to one or more of the NNIP team members as being generally familiar with policy research issues in the city at hand (most often, local researchers that had worked as affiliates on Urban Institute studies in the past). We asked them a series of questions and, when they did not know the answers, we asked them to suggest names of other local contacts who could help round out the story. In some cities, we had to talk with as many as four respondents before we felt we had sufficient information (and verification). Respondents included leaders of community foundations, university professors, city officials (mostly in city planning or community development departments), Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community offices, and other knowledgeable civic leaders.[18]

The exact pattern of inquiry varied depending on the respondent, but the basic questions were:

1. Has a system of social indicators been established in your city, either at the city-wide or neighborhood level? (We defined this as the collection, and recurrent updating, of intercensal data from multiple sources, intended to monitor changes in city or community "health" or "quality of life.")

2. If so, what institution operates the system and why was it established? What plans are underway to enhance the system (including plans to add neighborhood-level data if it is not already provided)?

3. If not, are there definite plans to establish such a system? (If plans are underway, what institutions are involved, what is their motivation, and what characteristics are desired?)

4. If there are no such plans, has there been an explicit recognition the need for a neighborhood indicators system on the part of some important local institution?

[18]Even where we talked to several people in a city, of course, we cannot be sure we did not miss something. Metropolitan areas in this size class have a large number of public interest organizations developing their own agendas, and no small set of individuals could be fully up to date on all of them. However, given our purpose—to depict general patterns of interest across cities—we do not think this possibility is of concern.

5. What do you see as the key barriers to establishing (or sustaining and expanding) a system of social indicators in your city? Do you think a project like NNIP could help you in overcoming those barriers and, if so, how?

Summary of Results

Responses to the survey make it clear that the notion of local social indicators systems is currently of substantial interest in urban America. In every city we contacted, there was at least one respondent who advocated the idea for his or her city. More important, in 82 percent of them (27) an indicators system either existed or was being developed, or some local institution (or partnership) was seriously planning to develop one (Table 6.1).

- 14 cities (42 percent) already have established basic indicator systems that meet our criteria, but most of these are still primarily oriented to city-wide (rather than neighborhood) information. Only two of them (Indianapolis and Milwaukee) have extensive neighborhood data that comes close to matching the capacity in the NNIP partner cities—7 more have "some" neighborhood-level indicators. The remaining 5 still maintain indicators for larger geographic areas only (e.g., city or county), however, all but two of these either definitely plan to extend their systems to the neighborhood level or are in the midst of doing so.

- 6 cities (18 percent) have projects to develop neighborhood-level indicators systems underway.

- 8 cities (24 percent) have institutions that have the development of neighborhood indicators on their agendas but have not yet started the work.

- The 5 cities that remain (16 percent) have no current plans to develop full systems of the type we noted above. In each of these, however, the city planning department is incrementally expanding the inventory of neighborhood data it maintains.

The Mix of Institutions

As with the NNIP cities, the primary momentum behind the development of indicators systems in the cities we surveyed has most often come from outside of government—although the work has typically occurred with local government support and/or collaboration.

Among the 14 cities that already have indicators capacity, that capacity is maintained solely by a government agency in only two cases (Portland and St. Louis). Of the others, those with primary operating responsibilities include 7 nonprofit civic interest organizations, 3 universities, 1 nonprofit/university partnership, and 1 university/government partnership.

Table 6.1
SURVEY RESULTS - 33 CITIES

	Established System		Development Underway		Plan to Devel System	Responsible Institution				
	Some Neighb. Data	City or County Only	Expan-sion	New System		Gov't	Non-Profit	Univer-sity	NP + Univ	Univ. + Gov't
Baltimore, MD	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	●	–	–
Birmingham, AL	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Cincinnati, OH	–	–	–	●	–	–	●	–	–	–
Columbus, OH	●	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Dallas, TX	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	●	–	–
Dayton, OH	–	–	–	●	–	●	–	–	–	–
Detroit, MI	–	●	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
Ft. Lauderdale, FL	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Honolulu, HI	–	–	–	●	–	–	●	–	–	–
Houston, TX	●	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
Indianapolis, IN	●	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	●	–
Jacksonville, FL	–	●	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Kansas City, KS	–	●	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Los Angeles, CA	–	–	–	–	●	–	●	–	–	–
Memphis, TN	–	–	–	●	–	–	●	–	–	–
Miami, FL	–	–	–	–	●	●	–	–	–	–
Milwaukee, WI	●	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Minneapolis, MN	●	–	●	–	–	–	–	–	–	●
New Haven, CT	●	–	–	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
New Orleans, LA	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
New York, NY	●	–	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Norfolk, VA	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Philadelphia, PA	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	●	–	–
Phoenix, AZ	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	–	●
Pittsburgh, PA	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	●	–	–
Portland, OR	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–
Rochester, NY	●	–	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
St. Louis, MO	●	–	●	–	–	●	–	–	–	–
Salt Lake City, UT	–	–	–	●	–	●	–	–	–	–
San Antonio, TX	–	–	–	–	●	–	●	–	–	–
Seattle, WA	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Tampa, FL	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Washington, D.C.	–	–	–	–	●	–	●	–	–	–

Among the 14 that are either developing new systems or plan to do so, the composition is similar: 6 nonprofits, 4 universities, 1 university/government partnership, and 3 local government agencies.

Motivations

The reasons so many of these cities are building indicators capacity appear similar to those that motivated the systems of our seven NNIP partners. In a number of cases, the idea was supported by outside stimulants; e.g., the National Civic League's *Healthy Cities* movement, national promotion by the United Way, the general growth of interest in performance measurement (discussed in Chapter 4), or the need to establish benchmarks for the federal Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community program. But more important everywhere was an internal awareness of need for better data on the part of one or more key local institutions.

Support for Indicator Systems Generally. One story we heard frequently relates to the recognition over the past few years of the inadequacy of many well-intended local efforts to alleviate poverty, mounted in response to federal funding cut-backs in the early 1980s. One respondent said, "We spent a lot of money trying to help the poor in the 1980s—it didn't work and we still don't understand enough about how to focus initiatives for results. We have to have more and better information and then study it more carefully to find new approaches that will really work."

In some cases, the recognition of the need for better data was spurred by collaborative attempts to create city-wide "visions for the future" and "improvement strategies." Over the past decade, collaborations in many American cities (often including local government officials but dominated by nongovernmental leaders representing a variety of local stakeholders) have mounted such initiatives. These forced the participants to try to learn about directions of change and the forces behind them, and to identify and assess problems and opportunities across traditional programs. It appears that the lack of information to perform these tasks well often became a major frustration, as reflected in the remark of one survey respondent: "We still don't know what conditions are getting worse or better . . . have no clear basis for setting priorities." Another said, ". . . we find that much of what *communities* are interested in are relationships that aren't measured directly or well through conventional means or sources."

Another respondent gave prominence to the difficulty of conducting responsible program evaluations without reliable and current multiple indicators of social conditions. Outcomes of interest are jointly determined by, (1) program interventions, interacting with (2) a host of ongoing social and economic forces operating in the community. Normally there is so little information available on the latter one cannot unambiguously determine the effects of the former: "One-shot data collection doesn't work . . . you never get enough information on changing context to really understand what is happening. You need a recurring system."

Remarks we heard in the survey suggest that two other factors have given the data issue a greater sense of urgency in the 1990s. Both emanate from perceptions of the likelihood of reduced federal funding for cities. First, is the feeling that localities are going to have to assume more complete responsibility for thinking up and implementing solutions to their own problems. The current political environment in Washington seems to be heightening this orientation. As one respondent put it, "With block grants and welfare reform, well informed local action will be much more urgent."

Second, was the feeling resources had to be used much more carefully than they had been in the past; that every dollar now has to be spent with maximum efficiency. The only way to do that is to "work smarter;" to apply information intelligently in all phases of program development and operation.

Several respondents were also quite aware of the point emphasized in Chapter 4 about the work of the NNIP partners; i.e., the potential of information as a leading force in breaking down traditional barriers to collaboration and forming the basis for more innovative and participative strategies. One said, "Having everybody work off the same information base is key to collaborative strategies . . . building bridges."

Interest in Neighborhood Indicators. The reasons for the current interest in indicators at the neighborhood-level are also generally similar to those reflected in the experience of the NNIP partners. Some of the surveyed institutions that first established city-wide indicator systems said they always wanted data on neighborhoods—they just started with city-wide information to raise awareness and start a dialogue using indicators that they expected would build support for finer grained data later on. Others have come to the realization of the importance of neighborhood-level indicators more recently. In a follow up letter, one survey respondent who was involved in a state-wide benchmarking process wrote to us, ". . . in using a community based approach, it has become clear that neighborhood level indicators will become critical for future decision making."

The main point is, as discussed in Chapter 3: the recognition that city or county trends, on average, may markedly misrepresent what is actually occurring in different neighborhoods and, as such, are likely to be a poor guide for program planning at the community level. Survey results suggest that this issue has become more important of late because more cities seem to be working toward making a number of their programs more community sensitive; including public works, policing, and some aspects of social service provision as well as traditional community development activities. This sometimes means decentralizing operating responsibilities within agencies and it almost always means giving community residents more of a voice in program planning and priority setting.

We did not ask about this approach directly in the survey, but a number of respondents volunteered that it was an important factor locally. An example is Minneapolis' Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP)—a joint venture between residents, government, and the private sector. It encompasses 79 of Minneapolis' 81 neighborhoods and uses government and private funds to leverage financing for plans for service delivery and revitalization initiatives. The plans are actually "Neighborhood Action Plans" developed collaboratively by residents and city/county agencies. The city puts money into the implementation of these plans directly (up to $450,000 for some neighborhoods).

Other cities where respondents told us their city governments were either considering or implementing similar approaches include: Birmingham, Dallas, Kansas City, and Seattle. In some cities, politics is driving a neighborhood orientation. Two years ago, Norfolk, Virginia, for example, moved to a "ward-system" for council elections, and this has led to pressure on city government to shift to a more neighborhood sensitive approach to program delivery.

Barriers and the Potential Role for NNIP

While some cities are moving ahead rapidly to develop new indicator systems, or expand existing ones, others that are attracted to these ideas are having a hard time getting them implemented. This is particularly true where proponents want to move to a neighborhood level system.

The remarks of one respondent give a sense of the barriers perceived by a number of them: "Since it would not be too complicated and would not require expensive computer equipment, we probably could start a city-level social indicators system, but many people are not sure it would offer enough information to help us very much. A neighborhood indicators system would be much more valuable, but it would probably be very expensive and we don't have enough good computer people to operate it. It is very hard to push for something like this when budgets are so tight and getting tighter."

From this and several other conversations, we judge that the greatest barrier is the perception that developing a neighborhood level system would be much more difficult and costly than the experience of those who have tried it indicates to be the case. The respondents who had not yet developed a system were generally not aware of: (1) the technical advances (Tiger files, address-matching techniques, mapping software) that have substantially brought down the production costs involved; (2) the way neighborhood indicator systems have been used of late to gain practical payoffs both at the policy and program levels; and (3) the fact that a sizeable number of cities have actually set up such systems and are operating them on a self-sustaining basis.

In short, our explanations of the concept of NNIP and what the NNIP partners had accomplished were a revelation to many. Robert Hoke of the United Way Community Service Council, responsible for the established SAVI system in Indianapolis, wrote us, "I wish NNIP had been completed . . . when we began planning SAVI . . . We really struggled at the beginning of the project with finding good models and best practices." NNIP is manifesting a concept that many cities have been pursuing—and struggling with—largely unaware of other efforts currently being undertaken (sometimes even within the same state).

How could NNIP help? We received a range of responses varying depending on the circumstances in each city. First, respondents in all cities said they would be interested in being a part of an NNIP network; i.e., keeping informed about what was being accomplished in other cities, receiving tips on new methods and approaches, and having the names, phone numbers, and E-mail addresses of those doing the work (so they could contact them and share ideas when they needed to). Mr. Hoke also wrote, "The time is right to build a network of communities who can share their learnings and assist others in developing comprehensive systems."

Second, a substantial majority mentioned the "push" that NNIP could give them in "selling" this concept to their funders and others who might need more motivation to participate or, at least, cooperate. These included two who have established city-wide indicator systems but are being held back from obtaining neighborhood data because of local perceptions about high costs. Responding to this interest could occur through the availability of reports on the project, but would be more valuable "if NNIP team members could come and spend a day with us." (In fact, NNIP has already provided assistance to Kansas City along these lines—see discussion later in this chapter).

Third, a number said they thought they would benefit from more detailed technical assistance as they proceeded. This ranged from intensive on-site involvement helping them start a new system, to focused guidance (on-site advice and related guidebooks and models) on specific technical topics and/or methods of applying data meaningfully in policy or program planning.

There was considerable interest in obtaining a better fix on the costs various types of systems capabilities, and advice on what types of hardware and software made sense for such systems today. Others wanted to learn more about how to negotiate relationships with data providers and gain their trust, and how to design processes (and use data effectively in those processes) that "bring information to bear on key issues in a way policy-makers and community residents alike can understand and deal with."

Yet others felt they needed help in taking advantage of national data bases (like the census) which have a substantial amount of information on individual cities but are sometimes seen as difficult to apply locally. The problem is not that such data sets are that hard to access—the

Bureau of the Census and others have done much to make their full data bases more easily available to users and a low cost. But there is the feeling that it takes a great deal of work for a local analyst to understand enough about them to know how to draw down the useful parts intelligently. Some more user-friendly interface, set up to support those who are interested in neighborhood analysis, is needed.

Fourth, several respondents said that in addition to assistance to individual cities, they hoped NNIP would create a greater national awareness of both the problems and opportunities of inner-city neighborhoods, and deal with the topic objectively. There is considerable feeling that typical media images being conveyed in most metropolitan areas are distorting the reality.

SURVEY FINDINGS BY CITY

The following paragraphs discuss in more depth the circumstances found in each of the cities that responded to the survey.

Baltimore, MD

The City of Baltimore has compiled census data to describe neighborhood conditions in the past, and it has recently been home to the work of the Enterprise Foundation and others in supporting an information-led comprehensive community building process (in Sandtown-Winchester) that has gained considerable national attention. However, it does not have an indicators system that covers the city as a whole.

There is interest in developing such a system. The process of preparing the City's Empowerment Zone application made many participants aware of the need for better data. Two Institutes at the University of Baltimore (both with relevant data bases and advanced data processing capabilities) were asked to help in preparing the application, and have since provided additional data services to those implementing the program. They are aware of the NNIP approach and are developing a plan for establishing a similar capacity in Baltimore. The plan is still at a preliminary stage, but discussions have been held with two prominent funders in Baltimore (the Abel Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation) about supporting the initiative.

Birmingham, AL

Currently, no recurrent information system exists in Birmingham. The City of Birmingham's Office of Community Development is piecing together a GIS network and hopes to put in socio-economic data soon. The police department in Birmingham keeps data by neighborhood, and it

is this type of information the city is hoping to add into the GIS. However, there is no clear plan to establish comprehensive system capacities like those of the NNIP partners.

Birmingham should be a good environment for doing so because the city's policy environment is both participative and neighborhood oriented. Birmingham's Citizen Participation Program was founded in 1974 and operates as a partnership, combining neighborhood priorities with city resources in an effort to improve the quality of life. Neighborhood priorities are defined by the ninety-nine Neighborhood Associations. In the development of Birmingham's Comprehensive Plan, citizens devise "Neighborhood Action Plans," incorporating data from the census. Citizens also participate in the formulation, review and commentary stages of the Plan. One Birmingham city government official characterized the citizen participation program as "elaborate," and noted that in this program, the city does accumulate a great deal of information about neighborhoods, although information is maintained at a city-wide level.

Cincinnati, OH

The Civic Association of Cincinnati, a collaborative, multi-sector initiative, is currently putting together a benchmarking process and data system focused on the county-level, with the intent of gathering data at a city-level as well. There is interest in collecting neighborhood-level information, but the plan is to complete the county/city-level system first and then add neighborhood data later as time and resources permit. The City government recognizes fifty-four neighborhoods for which it tracks some census data, but expansion has been curtailed because of the problem that different local administrative agencies collect data for differing service area definitions. For example, the police have defined twelve districts while the hospitals and schools have different areas of service. Such problems can be solved through address-matching of original data files, of course, but it does not appear that arrangements for doing so are planned. Neighborhoods are important politically in Cincinnati, as this is where the politics really happen; operationally, however, from the standpoint of budgeting, service delivery is not yet strongly tied to neighborhood characteristics.

Columbus, OH

The Metropolitan Human Services Commission (MHSC), an organization sponsored by the city, county and United Way in Columbus, operates an impressive county/city level indicators system. MHSC maintains the People and Information Exchange (PIE) and a DataIndex for Columbus and Franklin County, which is driven mainly by their DataIndex, containing census data, local survey data, and local administrative data. Active plans are underway, as a task force has been established to work on the development of a set of neighborhood indicators. Citizens are provided with free accounts on PIE, and in addition to data can access related Internet resources and get connected via E-mail to other PIE users. Although a specific set of neighborhood indicators has not yet been established, the DataIndex contains a substantial amount of information

for the county and city, and some zip-code and tract data are included. The DataIndex is divided into seven categories, and is updated throughout the year. The goal of this Quality-of-Life research component at MHSC is to use these data in the development and maintenance of a set of indicators to be tracked over time. MHSC is "committed to assisting the community in building and maintaining a human services system that is responsive to changing needs...An important part of this mission is fulfilled through the development, analysis, maintenance, and communication of relevant and up-to-date information on human services needs."

MHSC staff also noted that the Healthy Communities project in Columbus, *Together 2000*, has published a book of statistical information that is useful, but they have not attempted to develop a complete system.

Dallas, TX

Dallas is another one of the cities without an indicators system, where at least one local institution is aware of the concept and is making plans to pursue it. The City government is experimenting with a program that would bring community residents into a more commanding role in designing community development activities. Staff of the University of Texas at Arlington have been assisting in that program and the process has made all participants aware of the need for much more reliable information on changing neighborhood characteristics. A group from the University is now working on a concept and proposal on how they might proceed, in collaboration with the city and other local actors, to develop a full neighborhood indicators data system.

Dayton, OH

Based on compilations of block-group level census data, Dayton's City Planning Department has created a neighborhood profile for each of seventy defined neighborhoods, looking at both 1980 and 1990 census records, and it is working to build a more comprehensive system. Dayton does have a GIS which is currently being built upon, and local administrative data will hopefully be added to it on a block by block basis. Information that currently exists in the GIS includes housing code violations, and other planning data. They are presently trying to figure out if it is possible to reconcile police beats and school districts for inclusion with the GIS system. One complication in creating the neighborhood profiles was the dramatic change in the definitions of many census tracts in Dayton from 1980 to 1990. The neighborhood profiles have been used to do one-shot research projects on selected neighborhoods. For example, in the Five Oaks neighborhood, the city compiled local administrative data and contracted for another research firm to conduct resident surveys. Dayton put in an application for the Enterprise Community program but was not selected. The consensus of city officials is that they had a great application, which involved intensive research in 10 or 12 census tracts.

Detroit, MI

MIMIC is the data repository and data analysis center at (and funded by) Wayne State University. MIMIC does have a data system for the Detroit area driven primarily by census data, but that also incorporates some address-based economic data ("very extensive" survey data from small firms in Detroit). Crime data is collected on a city-wide basis, but they are beginning to look at the precinct level and point level data. Also, the Fire Department in Detroit has some very good response time data. Finally, inter-censal measures are available at the jurisdictional level but no one is really doing this type of work at a smaller geographic unit as yet. The MIMIC data are "in the public domain," and are used by a variety of NGOs, the Council of Governments, and the city. Most often, the data are used as "boiler plate" type documentation for proposals and grant applications.

Additionally, WTVS (Channel 56) in Detroit has been working in collaboration with the University of Michigan and the United Way to establish individual web pages for neighborhood groups and develop an on-line database of community resources. Currently they have a database that is able to direct children within the community to services that provide them with tutoring and enrichment in mathematics. The network is designed to be geared for neighborhood organizations and nonprofits and is free to those with their own equipment. The system is fairly versatile and is intended to increase communication and access to resources.

Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Ft. Lauderdale is in somewhat of a transition period. The City's Department of Planning and Economic Development (CPED) maintains a GIS, keeping census information available by tract, and they are currently investigating the range of possible uses of MapInfo, but there are no firm plans to develop a full-fledged indicators system as yet. They would like to reorganize the crime data, housing code violations, and property tax revenue data into neighborhood units. These three items seem to be at the top of the priority lists of the local neighborhood organizations, which are very strong in Ft. Lauderdale. The Ft. Lauderdale city government has just recently shifted around several departments, and are now beginning to sort out the distinct responsibilities of each department. One staff member of CPED noted that as Ft. Lauderdale now has single-member district (in general a district is roughly the same size as a neighborhood) elections, the city is splitting up into small, politicized areas; and in general more information about smaller geographic areas is much needed.

Honolulu, HI

The Hawaii Community Services Council (HCSC) has initiated a statewide community benchmarking process using a "community based approach," and is in the initial stages of systems

development for Honolulu. In the development of this process, HCSC has concluded that "neighborhood level indicators will be critical for future decision making." The effort is jointly sponsored by the United Way, Chamber of Commerce, Hawaii Community Foundation, HCSC, Polynesian Voyaging Society, and the State of Hawaii. Funders of the project include The Hawaii Community Foundation, HCSC, the Harold L. Castle Foundation, and Queen's Health Systems. HCSC has held community hearings to gather citizens' input—interests, recommendations, and concerns—to add to the process. HCSC is very interested at the moment in how NNIP partners organize their selection of indicators and convene people together across sectors. HCSC has published *Charting the Course with Outcomes and Indicators: A Guide for Communities*. The Guide suggests various indicators for community benchmarking but also invites readers to fill out a form and submit ideas.

Houston, TX

The Center for Public Policy at the University of Houston, has been using a "small area model for forecasting population and employment at the census tract level, every three years, up until 2030, using utility connection data." Its Basic Integrated Regional Database, or BIRD, is a social indicators database with information at the census tract and zip code levels. The Center is dedicated towards the goal of full accessibility, although currently only researchers have access. BIRD is a GIS coded database for the city, and is used to do population projections. The Center has also received crime data from the Houston police department and plans to integrate this, along with two or three other data sets, into the main database. One other source the Center plans to access is the TEAMS (educational) data from the state of Texas. The Center's work is primarily funded by Harris County, the City of Houston, a three year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, and local corporate underwriting. BIRD has been able to generate some of its own revenue through user fees—the Center sells small area forecast data, but they will also give it away to CDCs and local groups. One major problem has been the format in which they receive the data. Center staff currently are focusing on the need to build a "critical mass" of funding, as the interest from community groups for access data has been demonstrated.

Several additional sources of neighborhood data currently exist in Houston and could be incorporated. The include: (1) the Texas Center for University-School Partnerships have micro-level data on every child in the school system, independent of city government data; (2) Rice University does a periodic survey of resident attitudes; (3) the Greater Houston Partnership collects business data; and finally, (4) the University of Texas, School of Public Health has just contracted with the city to establish a neighborhood data system on health conditions.

Several groups in Houston have explicitly discussed the need to have greater access to a sound neighborhood-level information system. The Inter-Ethnic Forum, a group of neighborhood

activists/leaders that seek to promote inter-ethnic neighborhoods in Houston, is prominent among them.

Indianapolis, IN

SAVI, an acronym for "Social Assets and Vulnerability Indicators," is a project, run jointly by the United Way of Greater Indianapolis Community Service Council (CSC) and the Polis Center at Indiana University. The overriding principles of SAVI are "to use the best technology available that would allow data to be easily accessible and allow distribution at no cost to the end user." The database is maintained for Marion County by neighborhood, with data from many different domains, and is intended to be a resource for the community. It contains forty indicators for 204 census tracts, with information ranging from census data to welfare records to community facilities to attitudinal surveys. SAVI administrators had planned to update their data every one or two years, based on usefulness and need, but currently there is no set schedule for updating.

The development of SAVI began in 1992, with discussions of two prior indicators reports produced by CSC. The most recent work is intended to go further than earlier reports in three ways: (1) incorporating asset mapping, (2) utilizing technological advancements to access more and different types of data, and (3) updating data and keeping it accessible and free to the community. The Polis Center became involved when CSC wanted to take the data base to a new level and incorporate more graphics and mapping capabilities. The SAVI project has mapped many of their indicators and presented findings (in both table and map formats) to a variety of interested groups. They include among their first phase achievements, "time savings for organizations collecting data about their neighborhoods," through a consolidated database. SAVI staff are now focused on (1) assuring long-term stability; (2) enhancing the database through increased community access and capacity for use; and (3) expanding the elements of the database, specifically with juvenile court records, unemployment benefit data, abuse and neglect statistics.

Jacksonville, FL

The Jacksonville Community Council (JCC) has been in operation for eleven years, and has a recurrent indicators system at the city and county level. Over the past few years, the Council been engaged in the development of a "Quality of Life" project. In nine identified areas (education, economy, public safety, natural environment, health, social welfare, government, civic culture, and mobility) the JCC has developed 75 indicators that comprise a whole picture of the "quality of life" in Jacksonville. The data are largely gathered from the census, a local telephone poll of about nine to twelve questions, and other local administrative records, and encompass such fields as education, crime, employment, and public safety. The data are maintained by JCC staff, at the

Duvall County level. They have the capability to do some mapping and plan to make this system accessible to neighborhoods and interested groups.

Every year, a small group of citizens, identified "experts" in various fields (housing, health, etc..), and local media representatives meet to review the indicators. The indicators are assessed on the basis of relevancy and usefulness, and data sources are also reviewed to determine if they are still reliable and available. Each year, upon completion, the indicators are presented to the Chamber of Commerce. The JCC has added "red flags" to their indicators to indicate a negative trend and "gold stars" to indicate positive progress. Currently, the JCC is proposing a six-month study to gather more in-depth information about neighborhoods. They have also developed a "replication kit" with a video, how to manual, and a copy of their study for people who want to initiate their own quality of life project. So far, they have sold about thirty of these kits, and about 250 copies of their study to interested communities. The study is used not only for replication, benchmarking, and grant writing; but also in Jacksonville for recruiting employers to the area.

The next big push the JCC is making will be with the city planning office and neighborhood planning office to integrate the work of JCC with the city's planning policies. One JCC staff member observed that "this is a process that is all built upon consensus building...neighborhood organizations are starting to form, and they are involving everyone." Additionally, a new funding cycle has just started for a community foundation in Jacksonville that is titled, "Building our Community," which has a distinct sub-component labeled "strengthening neighborhoods."

Kansas City, MO/KS

Over the past several years, leadership groups in metropolitan Kansas City have made considerable progress in developing collaborative strategies to address the area's problems and opportunities. These processes underscored the need for better information and, in response, the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and the Marion E. Kaufman Foundation spearheaded the creation of the *Vital Signs* project, implemented by the Midwest Research Institute (MRI). *Vital Signs* assembled social indicator data from the census and a variety of administrative sources similar in range to those of the NNIP partners, but it did not obtain measures for individual neighborhoods (county, city, and, in some cases, zip-code indicators only). It published its first reports in mid-1995.

This is the one case in which NNIP has already provided direct assistance. Because of an ongoing working relationship with the Urban Institute, the Community Foundation became aware of NNIP, before this survey was initiated, and this spurred its interest in moving *Vital Signs* to the neighborhood level. The NNIP Project Manager gave a briefing on the approach in Kansas City and contingents from the Community Foundation, the Kaufman Foundation and Kansas City (MO) government visited the NNIP partners in both Denver and Cleveland to learn about operational

details. The Foundations and MRI have now developed a joint plan to transform *Vital Signs* into a full neighborhood indicators capability along the lines of the NNIP model.

Los Angeles, CA

Coalition of Neighborhood Developers, a coalition of 14 CDC's, and LISC have come together to create a series of neighborhood profiles, also with the assistance of the School of Architecture and Planning at UCLA. They have produced a report but do not have the resources to maintain this activity over time. The City of Los Angeles has a number of different databases for various purposes and keeps census data in the Planning Department's GIS. The Mayor's Office may be doing something with economic indicators.

Memphis, TN

The Center for Neighborhoods, a nonprofit in Memphis, provides technical assistance to neighborhood groups both nationally and locally. Although no recurrent data system exists now, the Center is at the initial stage of developing one. It already works with the Office of Planning and Development and the University of Memphis to access census data. It is also working to establish an on-going way to accessing neighborhood information, building off of the County's GIS, and making information accessible to the neighborhood groups through the local library system. There are some other data sources available—for example, the city does random-sample phone "climate surveys" with a neighborhood focus, to determine how people feel about their neighborhoods—but it does not seem as if anyone is utilizing local administrative records so far. Locally, the Center assists by providing an on-going monthly update on community leaders and their activities, and maintaining the local definitions of neighborhood boundaries. On a yearly basis, the Center constructs flow-charts of city and county government offices and personnel in an attempt to assist neighborhood groups navigate the "maze" of local government

The local "Neighborhood and Family Initiative," sponsored by the Ford Foundation, is looking at neighborhood change and how it is measured. They are working with a local consultant, who specializes in education, to document recent activities in that field. Additionally, the Initiative has surveyed some residents to gather "impressions" of their neighborhoods (results of these efforts have not yet been made public).

Miami, FL

Miami's City Planning Department maintains a GIS with block-group level census data and thematic mapping capabilities. Although they do not have a recurrent indicators system in place, they plan to expand their current data to create one. They have defined a set of neighborhoods, ranging in size from a half-dozen to a dozen block groups. Currently, they are trying to aggregate

some administrative data on the block and tract level. The city does not now make any of its data available for public use, but once the data are formally compiled and the proper authority clearance has been obtained, they would consider doing this. Neighborhood plans are developed, based on area demographics, census data, and a city "needs assessment," which involves city collection of some local information regarding service provision. Right now, the planning department essentially responds to requests for information when possible and/or refers groups elsewhere.

Overtown Neighborhood Partnerships is a National Community Building Network member in Miami. They prepared a document published January, 1995 with the assistance of a consultant from Devplan. This report, *The Cost of Poverty*, was intended to establish a baseline measure for quality of life prior to the Empowerment Zone application. It includes census data analysis, public expenditures, social investments, and public spending figures for the Overtown area (which incorporates five neighborhoods as defined by the planning department).

Milwaukee, WI

Much like our NNIP partners, the Neighborhood Data Center at Milwaukee Associates in Urban Development (MAUD) maintains a rich database of neighborhood-level information. The Center has over 275 unique demographic tables which can be customized to any neighborhood. Data include census variables, 14 years of index crime data, twenty years of property data, and community resources (i.e, Boys and Girls Clubs, service agencies, etc..) In addition to the trend data, and lists of resources and organizations, the Data Center offers sophisticated GIS Services and computer services for producing reports, and offers training and technical support to nonprofit organizations exploring the potential of Internet usage. MAUD is an association of over 240 nonprofits, and receives funding from the United Way and CDBG.

Specifically, the Data Center offers data, maps, reports, and analysis to allow organizations to better plan and develop programs that address the problems of Milwaukee neighborhoods. They also offer micro-analyses of neighborhoods and assist neighborhood-based staff with accessing information, and building the capacity to interpret and use information. The Data Center fee structure is on a per-hour basis, and there is no charge for accessing work previously completed. MAUD has previously also been hired by the city of Milwaukee to provide technical assistance to various groups.

Minneapolis, MN

The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) at the University of Minnesota has begun to put information (census data, neighborhood profiles, and survey data) about neighborhoods up on a "freenet" site. The city of Minneapolis has the ability to address-match for the city or county on their GIS system. Their published report, *The State of the City* reports out a

fair amount of neighborhood-based information. Although these efforts are separate, together they produce a great deal of recurrent information about Minneapolis and many of its neighborhoods.

CURA is trying to figure out their priorities for data collection by talking to neighborhood groups. The University has put a "fair amount of resources into neighborhoods to encourage the use of technology, " using a three-prong strategy: (1) an Access Committee, which helps people to get computers and modems; (2) the "Horizontal" committee, which is pushing technical assistance through an Internet "bulletin board" approach; and (3) the "Vertical" committee, which is assessing which data are available for use. These three committees are part of the "Neighborhood Computing Group" under the "Neighborhood Participation for Community Revitalization" program at CURA. They are currently working on obtaining more administrative data from the City, and are aware that the President of the City Council and the City's Management Information Systems Department are very interested in these neighborhood efforts.

Also in Minneapolis, the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) functions as a joint venture between residents, government, and the private sector. It encompasses 79 of Minneapolis' 81 neighborhoods and uses government and private funds to leverage financing for plans that are designed to shape and better service delivery in the neighborhoods (areas of interest include: housing, safety, health, transportation, economic development, and more). One of the stated goals of this program is "to bring residents into the priority-setting process of their city." The plans financed by the city are actually "Neighborhood Action Plans" developed collaboratively by residents and city/county agencies. The plans are funded up to $450,000 directly, depending upon the type of neighborhood. (There are three categories: Protection, Redirection, and Revitalization Neighborhoods).

New Haven, CT

The Neighborhood Partnerships Network (NPN) was established in January, 1995 with a Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPCs) grant from HUD and is run out of the Institution for Social and Policy Studies at Yale University. They maintain a database of neighborhood level information, although all data are not available for all neighborhoods in the city. In addition to working specifically to support and strengthen three identified neighborhoods, NPN is "assisting New Haven's Office of Housing and Neighborhood Development with gathering, organizing, and analyzing data on hundreds of blighted properties in the city and assembling a broad database on blight by collecting data on indicators such as vacancies, demographics and more."

Furthermore, they are working with the City Room at Yale which has developed "New Haven On-Line," a community resource center. NPN also works with the Regional Data Cooperative for New Haven which has published *New Haven Maps* with funding from The City of New Haven, The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and Yale University. New Haven

Maps is a book of maps that includes information displayed pictorially on maps titled "The Geography of Race and Ethnicity," "Where are the Low Birthweight Babies Found?" and "The Geography of Despair" among others. Citizens have access to this information with no fees and the Regional Data Cooperative is actively pursuing collection of more data.

New Orleans, LA

Several people contacted in New Orleans were in agreement that there was a need for a long-term, on-going effort to collect socioeconomic data, but not definite plans have been made as yet. The State Data Center at the University of New Orleans monitors the macro-economy of New Orleans with a focus on existing data sources, and has developed a few city-level indicators. The city did report out 1990 Census data, but there is no data available at the neighborhood level. The Louisiana Urban Technical Assistance Center, a legislatively established, state-supported, university-based public administration and planning technical assistance center serving local governments and public bodies statewide, is trying to push the city ahead, technologically, on several fronts. A software called PIC-Base has been developed which lets its users join together several different types of data. Currently, there is a project in New Orleans wherein video images of homes are being linked to housing data. This work is being done in conjunction with the Neighborhood Services Office, a local CDC, and the city Office of Housing and Neighborhood Development. At one point, the city had a proposal to put $600,000 into establishing a GIS, but the idea was never implemented.

The State Data Center receives requests for information all the time from local groups and is interested in partnering with other organizations, but feels they have little capacity to do anything on the neighborhood level at this point.

New York, NY

The Fund for the City of New York, a local nonprofit, has a parcel-based GIS system developed in conjunction with the Planning Department several decades ago. Although their data base does not appear to compare in scope with most of the NNIP partners, the Fund does have a number of useful types of information. The city's entire street map is on the GIS along with census data and information on 19,000 nonprofits, the subway system, and supermarkets, day care centers, educational programs and schools. Information is usually added to the system when a particular need or project calls for it. The Fund will make maps for community groups and receives about 30 to 40 requests a year. They update their data regularly, for example, day care centers are updated every three months. The work of the Fund is supported by several foundations, and their organizational purpose is to find innovative methodologies in cities around the country and implement them. Their active plans are to increase the amount of information available and put it on the Internet. They have recently hired new staff in the area of Information Technology and

plan to provide classes and seminars for nonprofits wishing to acquire skills in navigating new technologies.

The New York City Planning Department (CPD) serves as a repository for all census data for the city. CPD maintains a sophisticated GIS with address-matching capabilities, but does not recurrently update their information similar to NNIP sites. The Human Resources Administration also collects relevant data, but budget cuts have deeply affected their capacities in this regard. The CPD has worked with over twenty agencies to collect data from on a range of topics in the past, and does supply census data to community groups, although the general consensus is that these are the types of activities that are being cut from the budget. Census data were the predominant kind of information used in the Empowerment Zone application. The EZ team is currently constructing certain databases for Upper Manhattan with business data (using the Dunn & Bradstreet Index) and summarizing the information on the tract level. The Police Department maintains very detailed data on neighborhood crime, and school-related projections are available by school district.

Interest in forming a neighborhood-level data system has also been expressed by The United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) of New York, an umbrella organization for thirty-seven settlement houses, which provide a wide range of services. Currently, they have set up some "Family Rooms" which are public spaces with access to networked computers and have the ability to give anyone in their programs an individual E-mail address.

Norfolk, VA

Norfolk Department of City Planning is currently moving "in the direction of strategic planning," although they presently do not have a recurrent data system. Some census data are maintained for the city and can generate and analyze census data at the neighborhood level if necessary. There is no operational system in place for access to these data. Norfolk has had a long-standing commitment to neighborhood planning that incorporates citizen participation and establishes links between the city planning office, residents, and the City Council. They are interested in finding out more about their neighborhoods, but have no definite plans for doing so as yet.

Philadelphia, PA

Over the past half-century, Philadelphia has been home to some of the most advanced urban planning and urban policy research in the country. It has not yet mobilized its resources to develop a local indicators system, but there appears to be serious interest in doing so. The Institute of Public Policy Studies at Temple University has both the interest and capacity (computer facilities as well as trained policy analysts) to serve as the leading agent. It has been involved in

discussions about the potential with the William Penn Foundation which recognizes the need. Preliminary planning is now underway.

In addition "Philadelphia Neighborhoods Online" is a nonprofit organization devoted to helping citizens and local groups to make effective use of telecommunications to meet community needs. They also receive their support from the William Penn Foundation, the Pennsylvania Humanities Council, and the Institute for the Study of Civic Values. Resources are listed on a web page and include: links to census files (retrievable by tracts in Philadelphia), local data and statistics built around Philadelphia's twelve planning districts, listings of neighborhood events and arts and culture highlights, and more.

Phoenix, AZ

The city of Phoenix has established a "neighborhood benchmarking project" jointly conducted between the city and the Morrison Institute at Arizona State University, and although this system is not complete, it is the basis for an NNIP-type indicators system. The Morrison Institute is working on the indicators project, developing over 50 indicators in the three identified domains: physical health, economic health, and social health. They city is planning to use the indicators to regularly assess the health of its communities. This benchmarking system is a work in progress—with information being collected over several different domains. Census information is available at the tract level and housing data is available at an address level. All of the indicators in some way relate to city services. They are being structured so that community groups can use them as a tool for analysis. Several potential data sources have been identified, and they are currently working on a pilot basis in five neighborhoods.

The Urban Data Center at Arizona State University is also well suited for involvement in an NNIP-type endeavor as they have worked with the city's Neighborhood Services Office on a HUD COPCs grant to incorporate census data, crime data, and school data into a GIS for analysis of certain areas in Phoenix.

Pittsburgh, PA

The University of Pittsburgh has worked extensively with several city departments to put out abstracts at the neighborhood level in the form of a document titled *The Social Geography of Allegheny County*. City-wide socioeconomic indicators are available, but the information needs to be updated. They are planning to move toward a NNIP-type effort, although financing has not yet been secured. It appears that local foundations are very interested in supporting the building of a neighborhood information system, but they want to see a long-term collaboration and commitment for the community. Approximately eight years ago the City developed a neighborhood database in collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh, compiling census and other historical

data at the neighborhood level. These data incorporated information from the 1930s to the 1980s, but the information is now considerably out of date—e.g., 1990 census results have not yet been inputted.

The Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development (PPND) is focused on developing healthy communities through comprehensive approaches to community revitalization. Through support of eleven CDCs and two technical assistance agencies, PPND acts as a resource to community groups, providing technical assistance, project support, and operating funds. There has also been some discussion at PPND regarding the development of concepts about what a healthy neighborhood is and how to communicate these concepts to students at local Universities. They would be interested in collaborating on a neighborhood indicators system for Pittsburgh.

Portland, OR

The Portland-Multnomah County Progress Board (PMCPB) is a joint city-county venture that collects 104 performance indicators or "benchmarks" in five areas: economic indicators, local government/services, public safety, families and children, and business indicators. These five areas include a wide range of detailed information; for example, census data, multiple survey-source data, health department data, and crime data. Most data are available county-wide and city-wide, although the disaggregation and geographical unit of measurement depends greatly on the data source. Although many of the indicators are city-wide, PMCPB would like more detailed information since it feels its data are not finely grained enough geographically to determine what is going on in the central city, where many disparities exist.

There is also great interest in city hall to gather information about the neighborhoods. Politically, neighborhoods are important in Portland, and the neighborhood organizations and network is sophisticated and attuned to the issues of the moment. One major concern in Portland is how to collect data about neighborhoods and what is important to collect. The city government is currently conducting a model project around these issues. The Progress Board has also entered into a joint venture with the Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies (IPMS) at Portland State University. IPMS has published a report containing neighborhood profiles for Portland. IPMS staff have some concerns about the value of collecting neighborhood data: (1) the measurement systems (benchmarking) were created for a different purpose—to determine what is people care about at the metropolitan level; and (2) the perception exists that people tend to organize more around family-oriented issues than issues that are "neighborhood bound." That said, they will still work with the city to determine what data are available and to work on "what could be done to ensure that community time invested in data was as precisely targeted as possible." In addition IPMS is working with Portland's Urban League to develop an ongoing university-Urban League "center for community research" to provide social science research expertise to community-based groups.

Rochester, NY

The Center for Governmental Research (CGR) is an independent, nonprofit research and management consulting organization located in Rochester that has published several indicators reports and maintains city and county-level information from year to year. In 1993, CGR published *The State of a Greater Rochester*, prepared as a component of the Goals for a Greater Rochester program. The report presents numerous socioeconomic indicators of Rochester's growth and decline over the past decade, as well as comparing Rochester with "the whole of American society" and specifically five other comparable communities. It defines mega-trends and questions for further study. The effort was supported by the City of Rochester, Monroe County, the Chamber of Commerce, The United Way of Rochester and several local foundations.

In 1995 CGR published *Community Outcomes and Indicators: A Status Report* for The CHANGE Collaborative. Most indicators in this report were derived from individual level administrative records data geocoded to census tracks. The specific indicators selected were pulled from a larger set using both substantive and 'small area' statistical criteria. Presently, annual updates through 1996 are planned (and funded). The Status Report focuses in on: healthy births, children ready for school, success in school, avoidance of risk behavior, and family stability.

CGR is currently under contract with a coalition (that includes the United Way, the city and the county) to evaluate the impact of an intervention in Rochester schools. This social-intervention model requires data collection of indicators by census tract, and data from the police, Department of Social Services, and health records are also being geo-coded to construct a database. They are in the second year of a four-year effort, and have already geo-coded several years of local administrative data.

St. Louis, MO

The city of St. Louis has defined seventy-nine neighborhoods that do not conform to census tract boundaries. For each of these neighborhoods, the City's Community Development Agency has converted census data to the neighborhood level, and made it available on-line. Administrative data is available on an ad-hoc basis. On the St. Louis web page, a map is available under the heading "Neighborhood Information Center." The web page allows you to click on either the name of the neighborhood or an area of the map. The St. Louis Enterprise Community area is shaded for quick reference. Following this map is a "St. Louis Community Resource Directory" which lists a variety of resources, including neighborhood associations and neighborhood business associations. The city does receive data from the police and other agencies that they compile for reports. One CPD staff member observed that the most difficult step in providing community groups access to data is "talking people into giving up their data." The city has also worked with the University of Missouri Metropolitan Information Center—using them as consultants to collect

and geo-code data. Plans for the near future include establishing a community information network, buying a server and providing Internet access to all nonprofits in the Enterprise Community, and putting more detailed information onto the web site. A Professor at St. Louis University estimated that NNIP-type of data collection and dissemination has been a goal of the city for a long time, and that "there is a market and a need" for the information, although "issues arise around funding, access, and ownership."

Salt Lake City, UT

Salt Lake City has recently formed an Economics and Data Demography Center within the structure of city government, which has compiled some data and is gradually expanding its capacities in the direction of an NNIP prototype. So far, data have been compiled mostly at the city-wide level. The Center has produced some maps and they are working on enhancing their GIS. Also, the Police Department has statistics which encompass one decade of data and are available by "grid." There is much interest in neighborhood level information, but the Center feels it is only beginning in an effort to pull it all together. They do respond to requests for information (which average 3 to 5 requests per day), and have assisted the seven City Council Districts in publishing information.

One staff member described this office as "a centralized place to collect, compile, disseminate, and analyze the city's data." They are currently "going in the direction of smaller (geographical) units," and hoping that eventually anyone will be able to access their databases. The Data Center is affiliated with the Mayor's Office of Community Affairs, and is currently working on ways to reorganize how the city deals with neighborhoods. They would like to collect more neighborhood-based information, but so far have not had the time. The State uses ArcView to do their mapping, and they are currently looking into this software for the city. The city is also doing another data collection effort in regards to the 2002 Winter Olympics, to determine what the impact of the Olympics will be on the growth and future planning of Salt Lake City.

San Antonio, TX

No recurrent information system exists city-wide in San Antonio. However, several groups have been collecting data about the city and constructing reports and databases that could be expanded upon. Partnership for Hope, a local nonprofit and National Community Building Network member, does plan to develop a recurrent information system at the neighborhood level, although it does not have the funding to do so as yet. Partnership for Hope conducts general research on public policy issues related to poverty and has produced several reports in conjunction with the Urban Institute, funded by The Rockefeller Foundation. Their *Pride and Poverty* Report attempted to be the first comprehensive look at poverty through data about education, human services, employment, health care, and housing. They mainly used 1980 census data at the city level, and

are currently trying to get the money to update the database with 1990 census data. The Report: *Health and Poverty in San Antonio: A Profile of Needs and Services* produced a comprehensive picture of the status and capacity of health care in San Antonio through extensive use of census data, public health data, and surveys. *Growth Without Prosperity*, published in 1993, provided general economic and demographic data as well as a detailed profile of the labor force and labor market in the City.

Staff at Partnership for Hope feels that this information has been an important tool for community groups, and would like to take it further. The Partnership does respond to specific requests for information, and they have the ability to do tract level or zip code level analysis. They are interested in moving forward and creating more user-friendly data systems, but "don't have the luxury of doing research for the sake of research," and prefer to operate much like the "action agenda" method of NNIP cities.

Common Enterprise is a Rockefeller Foundation Initiative intended to help communities identify issues of concern and take on those issues. In San Antonio, Juan Sepulveda is the Director of the Common Enterprise program, and is focusing on the schools in about a half-dozen neighborhoods of San Antonio. The project is taking on neighborhood mapping projects, designed to define neighborhood parameters and collect information on assets within those neighborhoods. Essentially, they are taking "the McKnight/Kretzmann work (see Chapter 5) and adapting it to San Antonio."

Seattle, WA

A nonprofit citizens' group "Sustainable Seattle" maintains over 40 indicators for King County and the city of Seattle. These indicators are grouped into four categories and include data from a variety of sources, including public opinion surveys and local government sources. The data are presented almost entirely at the city and county levels. Sustainable Seattle is comprised mostly of volunteers and receives in-kind support from many private corporations. At present, it has no plans to add neighborhood level data and monitoring to its agenda, however, the City of Seattle does have a considerable amount of information at more detailed levels that could be a useful starting point for doing so.

The City has a parcel-based GIS system with good street networks and census data. They have tied the GIS to MapInfo, and collect data for a variety of different geographic areas. Although they do not regularly analyze trends, interested parties can gain access to: crime data (tract level), health data, census data, and land use data (county assessor tax records).

In policy terms, the city is also very "community oriented." Its Department of Neighborhoods has a commitment to allowing neighborhoods to remain self-defining. The

Department provides matching city funds for neighborhood self-help projects. These grants are awarded to grassroots organizations, community councils and block clubs and have produced very positive results over the past couple of years. Last year alone, the city funded 200 projects, ranging from playgrounds to neighborhood based oral history projects to public art experiments. Neighborhoods generally match funds with labor hours, which the city likes because it ensures community involvement. The groups that apply define the area and scope of work, and take full responsibility for the plan. In addition to the matching funds that are available, the city grants funds directly (with no match requirement) under the Comprehensive Plan program. Over four years, Seattle has granted $4.5 million to thirty proposals. The Department of Neighborhoods would like to stay out of defining neighborhoods but realizes that sometimes it is necessary to define these boundaries.

Seattle's newest Comprehensive Plan under the State of Washington's growth management law specified monitoring of development at the neighborhood level. As a provision of this, the city may be required to assemble neighborhood data more systematically, but with current budgetary constraints the timing of any such effort is uncertain.

Tampa, FL

The University of South Florida has received a COPCs grant from HUD to do in-depth study of several neighborhoods in Tampa. Block group and tract-level census data are available for analysis, as are general economic indicators. The two-year COPCs grant is being directed by the Center for Economic and Management Research (CEMR), at the University's College of Business Administration. The primary data gathering will be through survey research, and intended to influence strategic planning in the city, although they also intend to look at the needs of the community through a resident participation process. There is no current "database" of information, although information is available upon request. CEMR also has a telecommunications grant from GTE to study Tampa Bay regional economic data, and they are very interested in forming a publicly-accessible database with this information. The city's GIS has the geographic location of industry clusters. Although CEMR's primary interests are lie with economic indicators, they have considered collaboration with some of the other Centers at the University - the health center, the education center, the center on elderly issues - in order to expand the range of domains of available information. Finally, CEMR has extensive information from ES202 data, and maintains micro files for all firms in the state of Florida.

Washington, DC

The nonprofit Federal City Council has a tradition of bringing together leaders from many sectors to discuss issues of concern in metropolitan Washington and to develop collaborative approaches to addressing them. One of its recent initiatives, the D.C. Agenda Project, has

recognized the need for better institutional infrastructure within the city itself, leading to the idea of creating a new Locally Based Intermediary that would facilitate the work of resident community builders in individual neighborhoods, link them to broader supporting agencies (public and private), and take on selected policy issues affecting D.C. communities generally. This might move in directions similar to those being taken in Oakland's Urban Strategies Council, which (as discussed in Chapter 2) has given great emphasis to the use of neighborhood information in all such work. Planning for the new intermediary is now underway and the development of a full neighborhood indicators data system in line with NNIP models is a central part of it.

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Chapter 7

FACILITATING LOCAL USE OF NATIONAL DATA SETS

Most national data bases on social and economic conditions do not contain information for individual cities, let alone for neighborhoods within cities. But a few of them do. In our survey (reviewed in Chapter 6) and other discussions with urban policy specialists, we found that these data sources, which could be very valuable in discerning local trends, have not often been used effectively in local policy analyses. The most prominent, the U.S. Census, is used, but few cities take full advantage of the neighborhood level data it has to offer. Others are seldom used at all.

The project team felt there might be an opportunity for NNIP to make a contribution by finding ways to help local analysts and policy makers get more from these resources, including using them as a base for starting a more complete neighborhood indicators system. This chapter offers ideas on how this opportunity could be approached.

WHY RELEVANT DATA SETS ARE UNDERUTILIZED

We cannot answer this question definitively, but our interviews do support some hypotheses. They vary according to the data set in question.

The U.S. Census

Previous chapters have discussed the substantial neighborhood level data available in the census and its utility to the NNIP partners. Over the past decade, the Bureau of the Census has taken steps to make the data more accessible to users than ever before, and at surprisingly low

costs (see U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995). Yet we have discovered comparatively few studies of 1980-90 trends in neighborhood social, economic, and physical conditions in America's cities based on census data.

For small cities, our hypothesis is that, even though the costs of obtaining it may be low, the costs of using it effectively are often prohibitive. The census is formidable—it takes a well trained analyst to make sense out of it. Furthermore, trends are much more interesting than a static picture of conditions in any one year, and the Bureau of the Census itself has not linked comparable data between censuses. The users have to purchase the 1980 and 1990 files separately and do the linking themselves, and this also raises the cost.

Larger cities normally do make use of selected census variables for basic planning purposes. But the cost of doing more thorough analysis is not trivial even there. In addition, city officials sometimes have the view that reports with full characterizations of neighborhood change might be politically risky. The collaborations of prominent local stakeholders that have been involved in visioning and strategic planning exercises of late would probably be the most eager users. But it is difficult for them to take on a full census analysis given their normally limited budgets and operating periods. Also, some have told us they have avoided such analysis because "researchers have a hard time presenting data in ways we can understand and use."

The American Housing Survey (AHS)

The AHS is a sizeable survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census, for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), providing data on many of the same variables found in the decennial census. It is conducted on four year cycles for America's largest metropolitan areas; i.e., for these areas at least, it is possible to derive some reliable measures of socio-economic trends between censuses. Consistent data are available since 1984 for 44 areas and two additional metropolitan areas were added in 1995 (Table 7.1). The AHS sample does not support estimates at the tract level, but it does provide data for a number of "zones" within each metropolis. The zones have a minimum population of 100,000 and thus are, on average, the equivalent of least 25 census tracts. Therefore, the AHS can be used to discern at least broad trends in spatial patterns as well.[19] Again, the costs of obtaining the data from the Bureau of the Census are low. (Further discussion of the AHS is provided in Annex 7A at the end of this chapter).

[19]AHS sample sizes range from 4,200 to 7,000 housing units in each metropolitan area. This is sufficient to support useable estimates of trends for many variables, but it is of course important to watch confidence intervals closely, particularly at the level of individual zones.

Table 7.1
HOUSING SURVEY METROPOLITAN AREAS, 1984-1997

NAME	AREA	STATE	1990 POP. (000)	YEARS OF SURVEY													
				84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97
Anaheim	PMSA	CA	2,411	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Atlanta	MSA	GA	2,834	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–
Baltimore	MSA	MD	2,382	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	–	●
Birmingham	MSA	AL	908	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–
Boston	CMSA	MA	4,172	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●
Buffalo	CMSA	NY	1,189	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Charlotte[2]	MSA	NC	1,162	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
Chicago[1]	area PMSAs	IL	7,333	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	●
Cincinnati	PMSA	OH-KY-IN	1,453	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
Cleveland	PMSA	OH	1,831	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–
Columbus	MSA	OH	1,377	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–
Dallas	PMSA	TX	2,553	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Denver	CMSA	CO	1,332	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
Detroit[1]	PMSA	MI	4,382	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	●	–	●
Fort Worth	PMSA	TX	1,332	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Hartford	CMSA	CT	1,086	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–
Houston	area PMSAs	TX	3,494	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	–	●
Indianapolis	MSA	IN	1,250	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–
Kansas City	CMSA	MO	1,566	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
Los Angeles[1]	PMSA	CA	8,863	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	–	●	–	●
Memphis	MSA	TN-AR-MS	982	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–
Miami	CMSA	FL	3,193	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
Milwaukee	PMSA	WI	1,432	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Minneapolis	MSA	MN-WI	2,454	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	●	–	●
New Orleans	MSA	LA	1,239	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
New York[1]	area PMSAs	NY-NJ	11,454	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	●
Norfolk	MSA	VA	1,396	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–
Northern NJ[1]	area PMSAs	NJ	5,662	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	●	–	●
Oklahoma City	MSA	OK	959	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–
Philadelphia[1]	PMSA	PA	4,857	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	–	●	–	●
Phoenix	MSA	AZ	2,122	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Pittsburgh	CMSA	PA	2,243	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
Portland	CMSA	OR	1,478	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
Providence	area PMSAs	RI	984	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–
Riverside	PMSA	CA	2,589	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–
Rochester	MSA	NY	1,002	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
Sacramento[2]	MSA	CA	1,481	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	●	–
St. Louis	CMSA	MO-IL	2,444	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–
Salt Lake City	MSA	UT	1,072	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●
San Antonio	MSA	TX	1,302	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–
San Diego	MSA	CA	2,498	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	●	–	–	–
San Francisco	area PMSAs	CA	3,687		●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●
San Jose	PMSA	CA	1,498	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●
Seattle-Tacome	CMSA	OR	2,559	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	●	–
Tampa-St. Pete	MSA	FL	2,068	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●
Washington	MSA	DC-MD-VA	3,924	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	●

[1] As of 1995, these metropolitan areas were surveyed every other year as part of the national AHS
[2] As of 1995, these metropolitan areas were added to the AHS

The AHS has been used for national analysis of mobility and housing market conditions in metropolitan areas (see, for example, Nelson and Edwards, 1993, and Turner and Edwards, 1993). However, there are few local applications. Only one NNIP partner (Atlanta) has so far used the AHS extensively. After discussions about it in team meetings all of the others are now interested in taking advantage of the AHS, but team members are not aware of any other AHS analyses done for an individual city or metropolitan area to date. It may be that some local analysts are simply not aware that the survey exists and others who are aware of it have given it low priority because, since it is new to them, they fear substantial learning costs.

Other Data Sets

Other data sets that would seem to have potential in this category are the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) files and the business directories (Coles and others) which were recommended for inclusion in the NNIDS in Chapter 5.

The HMDA files have been used extensively for national and local analysis of discrimination in mortgage lending. But since they contain data on the volume of mortgage applications and approvals that can be disaggregated to the tract level they could also be used as indicators of the spatial pattern of housing investment and reinvestment in an individual metropolitan areas, as well to address the issue of discrimination. There has been little use of HMDA data in this way (as distinct from the focus on discrimination). Here, we suspect the barriers are cost as well as lack of awareness of this potential.

Chapter 5 also discussed how the business directories could be used to depict the comparative characteristics of neighborhood economies and trends in those economies. The Boston Persistent Poverty Project does use the Coles Directory, and we have heard of some other exploratory work along these lines elsewhere. But as far as we know, this work is not extensive nationally. Here the barriers include concerns about data quality as well as costs and lack of awareness.

APPROACH: METROPOLITAN PROFILES

It would make little sense for NNIP to serve as a distributor of these data files in full. Their producers already do that efficiently in our view (although the NNIP network and Web-Site—see Chapter 8—might help to promote the use of the full files). We think a more important contribution would be to create and make available easy-to-use subsets of these data files, focused around uses compatible with those common to the NNIP partners. For cities that do not already have

them, these subsets might serve as the foundations for building more complete neighborhood indicators systems.

In all cases, the data would be presented for the metropolitan area as a whole and for the most detailed internal subareas the source data would support: central city, suburbs, and zones in the case of the AHS; cities and census tracts for the other sources.

The Concept of Metropolitan Area Profiles

From each of these data sets, we would abstract a limited number of consistently defined *key indicators*, calculating them for each date for which information is available and explicitly calculating the changes implied. These would form "Socio-Economic Profiles" for all metropolitan areas for which data are available. We would then develop user-friendly software, and prototype analytic routines, to facilitate the local use of these profiles.

We would disseminate them via an NNIP Web site, which we will establish (see Chapter 8), along with text explaining what they are and giving appropriate cautions as to their use. Text and data would be presented in two forms to serve users with varying levels of sophistication:

- ***Basic users*** could access a standard set of pre-prepared tables, charts, and maps along with text that offers guidance as to what to look for in examining them. Any of this could be obtained in printed form simply by downloading it through the Internet.

- ***Intermediate users*** could access the data in spreadsheet files (which they could download and subsequently analyze themselves). Menu-driven software would assist them in selecting data and creating tables and graphs on topics that most interest them.

As noted, for more sophisticated users who want to work with the full data set, we would simply refer them to the original producers, and perhaps offer suggestions as to how they can access the information most easily.

Construction and Content

All of the census and AHS data needed to construct the profiles are already available at the Urban Institute. As noted earlier, the Institute's Underclass Data Base, which contains virtually all census data of interest at the tract level, has already been modified to assure consistent tract boundary definitions in all metropolitan areas for 1970, 1980, and 1990 (Tobin, 1992).

The census portions of the profile would provide historical context, showing patterns of change from 1970 through 1990. The AHS portions would be able to present a picture of trends post-1990, as would the HMDA files.

In both the census and AHS profiles, indicator selection would be guided by the framework presented in Chapter 5, recognizing that these sources offer data on only a portion of the full range of indicators suggested there.

A key component analytically would be a set of indicators that depict the comparative economic health of the metropolis, and economic disparities between the central city and the suburbs overall and between tracts (neighborhoods)—there is considerable literature to suggest that local economic conditions have a great deal to do with not only the level, but also the spatial pattern, of poverty in metropolitan areas (e.g., Jargowski, 1993). Another component would enumerate social conditions, emphasizing indicators related to the well-being of families and children. Others would deal with housing and neighborhood reinvestment.

Because these profiles cover all areas for which data are available, they can display not only the score on an indicator for a particular metropolitan area, but also show how that score compares nationally. In other words, with the AHS data, for example, the profile would show the percentage of children in poverty in the metropolitan area in question and how that percentage had changed over the past four years. But it would also show how both the score and trend for that metropolis rank in comparison to scores and trends in the same indicator for all of the other 43 metropolitan areas for which the AHS provides information.

There would be no attempt to create any composite index in order to "rate places." It has been shown that the several publications that have attempted to rate the quality of life or the business environment across American cities over the past few years are often misleading—either because of the lack of coverage of important variables or because of quirks in the data themselves (Walters, 1995). But there is a difference between publishing rankings for all the world to see, implying that one place is "better" than another, and allowing individual local users access to such rankings in order to interpret their own circumstances more clearly.

Several local respondents in our survey talked about a desire to know "not only what our score is, but also how we stack up against other major cities on that measure." If a city found out, for example, that it was one of the top cities in terms of housing affordability but near the bottom, in terms of the level of education of its work force that should certainly be of interest in the process of local priority setting. If the city found out that while it ranked well on housing affordability overall, it had dropped precipitously on that score over the past few years while most other metropolitan areas in its region were improving, that should also be something worth knowing.

For all indicators at the census tract level, the profiles would present measures that describe the spatial pattern as well as data on each tract independently. One such measure is the dissimilarity index, which is most often used as an index of the extent of racial segregation in an urban area. However, the same index can be used to quantify the degree to which any condition is either comparatively evenly spread or spatially concentrated within a metropolis. For example, Abrahamson, et al, (1995) and Coulton, et al (1995) have used it to show differences in the spatial concentration of poverty and wealth across metropolitan areas.

Interpretation: The Start of Inquiry—Not the Answers

Our descriptions of these profiles would emphasize that they are not "analyses" in and of themselves. Rather, they are intended only to contribute to, and serve as a starting point for analysis of relevant policy issues by local stakeholders. These data are likely to be better at raising questions (indicating which questions may be of interest and importance) than answering them.

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Annex 7A

THE AMERICAN HOUSING SURVEY

Introduction

The American Housing Survey (AHS) is actually a series of surveys: one conducted every other year using a sample for the nation as a whole; and one each for 44 separate metropolitan areas conducted on four year cycles. The survey is conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Currently, the national sample is made up of approximately 40,000 housing units while the metropolitan surveys are based on samples typically of around 4,200 units (see further discussion below). The sample units are weighted so as to represent the actual number and type of housing units in any given AHS year.

The questionnaire use by the AHS is replete with questions about the housing characteristics including information about vacant and mobile homes, structural quality indicators, and type of structure. However, it also includes many standard census questions about population and household demographic, social, and economic conditions. For each person residing in a housing unit, the questionnaire asks about their age, sex, income (by source), race, and relationship to the other household members. For those households that moved recently, the survey includes questions about the status of their former residence and reasons for moving. In addition, the AHS contains questions about the inhabitants' perceptions of various aspects of neighborhood quality. By way of illustration, Figure 7A.1 shows selected indicators for occupied housing units in the Atlanta metropolitan area in 1991.

The national AHS presents data for all "central cities," "suburbs," and "nonmetropolitan" areas in the nation's four major census regions (Northeast, South, West, and Midwest). The sample was not designed to produce estimates for individual states or smaller geographical areas. The metropolitan surveys support estimates for central cities and the total of all suburbs in the area. They also present data for zones: relatively homogeneous areas within metropolitan areas with a minimum population of 100,000 persons.

The paragraphs below note changes in the way the metropolitan components of the survey have been conducted since the process began in 1973.

The 1974 to 1983 Period

From 1974 to 1983, the American Housing Survey (AHS) was conducted in 60 selected Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs). These were divided into groups of 20 each, with a group interviewed once every three years on a rotating basis. The AHS SMSAs relied on boundary definitions established by Office of Management and Budget using data for counties from the 1970 decennial census. The AHS retained the same boundaries for each SMSA throughout the 1974 to 1983 period as well as relying on the same questionnaire for data. In general, the sampling frame for unit selection in each SMSA was stratified, first, by race of head of household and then further stratified by tenure, household size, and income groups.

The AHS sample of housing units was drawn from the 1970 decennial Census address file for these 60 SMASs then further supplemented with addresses from area building permit information. The sample for most SMSAs was about 5,200 housing units (including vacant and recreational units), but for 12 of the larger SMSAs, the sample was approximately 15,000 housing units.

The 1984 to 1994 Period

Starting in 1984 the metropolitan AHS was radically altered. Three fundamental changes took place; the number of metro areas was decreased; the questionnaire was redesigned, and; the number of sample units within an area was modified with new sample units drawn from the 1980 decennial census address file.

Over the 1984 to 1994 period the metro AHS was conducted in 44 metropolitan areas divided into 4 groups of 11 each, with each group surveyed once every 4 years on a rotating basis. Boundary definitions of metropolitan areas for this period relied on OMB definition of Metropolitan Areas (MA), including Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA), Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSA), and Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSA)[20]. In many cases these new area definitions differed from the prior SMSA definitions, though Census did attempt to match as closely as possible.

The questionnaire for the metropolitan AHS was redesigned in 1984 to more accurately track housing conditions. For example, the redesigned questionnaire included many more

[20]For a comprehensive definition of these terms as defined by OMB see Federal Register, March 30, 1990 (55 FR 12,154-12160). Basically, an MSA corresponds to what used to be defined as SMSA during the 1970s and early 1980s. With the exception of the New England area, an MSA is a county or group of contiguous counties which contains at least one city of 50,000 inhabitants or more, or "twin cities" with a combined population of 50,000. These areas exhibit strong economic and social linkages. A PMSA is basically a large (over 1 million population) MSA while a CMSA is an aggregation of geographically contiguous PMSAs.

questions related to structural quality than the previous questionnaire. In addition, HUD added questions and expanded definitions for housing costs (rent, utilities, and property insurance), the basic definition of households, and questions related to the characteristics of each household member. Many of these questions are not directly comparable to the ones listed in the first AHS questionnaire.

The number of housing units included in the sample was modified to reflect more uniform distribution of units among the AHS metro areas and to have an equal number of owners and renters. During this period the AHS sample was held to around 4,200 housing units per area.

Changes in 1995

In 1995, the AHS underwent further modifications. For six of the largest metropolitan areas, the survey will now be based on the same sample of housing units that are a part of the sample for the national survey. This implies a reduction in sample size (to a range of from 1,800 to 3,000 sample units per area). The sample frame will remain the same for most other metropolitan areas. In addition, two new metropolitan areas have been added (Charlotte, NC, and Sacramento, CA) and the survey for the San Francisco/Oakland metropolitan area will be split to create two separate surveys.

PART II

PLANS FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Chapter 8
PLANNING FOR NNIP IMPLEMENTATION

The earlier chapters in this report have documented the work of the NNIP partners (the indicators system they have assembled and the way they have used them), examined the interests of capacities of other cities with respect to developing similar systems, and discussed how current neighborhood indicators capabilities could be strengthened, both in the NNIP partner cities and at the national level. We draw three conclusions:

1. Both because of the richness of the information they have assembled, and the way they have fostered its use by stakeholders to strengthen communities, the NNIP partners are unusually well positioned to advance techniques in this field and to help other cities take advantage of them.

2. Across America's cities, there is now a growing recognition of the need to expand the provision of reliable neighborhood level information as the basis for more effective local program planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

3. Creating a National Neighborhood Indicators Data System (combining comparable information from partner-city systems and adding data from other cities in the future) could address a critical unmet need.

We believe these conclusions strongly support the full implementation of a National Neighborhood Indicators Project and offer substantial guidance as to the priority tasks it should accomplish. Accordingly, this chapter outlines plans for the full implementation of NNIP over a three year period consistent with those themes.

PURPOSES AND OVERVIEW

Purposes

The findings of this report, particularly those of Chapter 6, lead us to conclude that the highest payoff from a national project could be gained if its work is focused on assisting actors at the local—rather than national—level. Ultimately, local actors must play the leading role in developing their own capacity in this regard. But the task is a difficult one everywhere, and national support could importantly facilitate the potential. The development of local neighborhood indicator systems in additional cities is now being held back because of concerns about high start-up costs and the lack of technical and procedural knowledge.

The needs at the local level, however, do not pertain only to building better information systems. Equally, perhaps more, important is disseminating experiences that will help local actors use information as a motivating force collaborative community-oriented initiatives to further social change. Therefore, the primary purpose of NNIP is:

- ***To build local capacity to reliably assess neighborhood change as a basis for strengthening distressed communities in a large number of American cities.***

Accomplishing this will clearly entail facilitating the development (and/or expansion) of local information systems, and the development of improved processes and methodologies to bring the information to bear on real issues being faced in local policy at the community and city-wide levels.

However, given the prospect of further devolution and sharp changes in the social safety net, local actors will need support in a variety of forms from national level institutions. Therefore, the second purpose of NNIP is:

- ***To provide national agencies, foundations, and interest groups with better understanding of neighborhood change and of how they can best facilitate local actors in the effective use of information to strengthen communities.***

This will be accomplished through the close participation of representatives of national organizations in all phases of project activity.

Planned Activities: Overview

NNIP should be able to offer products and services that would help institutions in many other urban centers overcome the hurdles they face at present. It will do so by undertaking five ***development activities***. The first two will be dominant initially—implemented primarily by the NNIP partners in their own cities to leverage payoff from the capacities they have already established:

1. Develop and test model processes for asset-based comprehensive community building: innovative efforts that use information as a driving force in collaborations to strengthen distressed communities—working within individual communities and with outside groups acting to further community building.

2. Enhance current local indicator systems to address policy priorities: expanding NNIP partner systems in key areas and using the expanded systems to tackle priority issues: e.g., employment, crime and drugs, health.

3. Develop national data systems support: developing the new National Neighborhood Indicators Data System, and methods and software that will enable local groups to obtain information from other national data sources at lower cost and in a more directly useable form;

4. Prepare guides and training materials: to support training in efficient techniques for both building local indicator systems and using them in policy analysis, monitoring, and evaluation;

5. Conduct developmental research: preparing topical papers and monographs on: bases for establishing new indicators; new low-cost survey techniques; the dynamics of neighborhood change; methodological innovations; and *The State of America's Neighborhoods*;

Dissemination and capacity building, based on these products, will entail: developing a network parties interested in, and at work at, building indicator systems in other cities; providing direct technical assistance and training to information managers and community residents in a selected number of these cities; and implementing a national awareness program on the nature of neighborhood change in America and the importance of fact-based policy analysis in guiding that change.

The remaining sections of this chapter discuss each of these work components in greater detail.

APPROACH AND SCHEDULE: DEVELOPMENT

A three year implementation program is proposed with two overlapping phases. In the development phase, work will be intensive during the project's first two years, and decline in the third. The project team will work nationally and in the seven partner cities to undertake the five activities that will develop the project's major products.

The first two of these will be dominant during the first two years. They will be designed to simultaneously: (1) strengthen the NNIP partners' ongoing programs by helping them address key barriers or opportunities that they currently face in their own development; and (2) develop new data and case study experiences that will contribute directly to expanding the National Neighborhood Indicators Data System and/or the preparation of our guides and training materials. The work will create models worth replicating, and facilitate their replication in other cities.

1. Develop and test model processes for asset-based comprehensive community building

A new approach to community building has been evolving over the past few years. It is one in which community residents stop dwelling on problems. Instead, they survey the strengths and assets of their own neighborhoods and use those as the basis for the design of positive improvement strategies. While the idea is promising, it has not been attempted in many places to date. There are good reasons to believe such processes could be strengthened by access to broader information as is available in the systems of the NNIP partners and by the partners' expertise in using information as a leading force to stimulate collaborative action planning.

NNIP will take advantage of this potential by implementing actual asset-based community building initiatives as models in several neighborhoods in its partner cities. Surveys of assets by the residents will still be the centerpiece (such surveying can be a positive tool in the organizing process), but they will be supplemented and expedited by the information on the neighborhood and its surrounding context already contained in the NNIP partner systems. Training for community residents on using data effectively will be featured in each initiative.

This component will also include efforts at the city-wide level to support and spread asset-based community building. A key example will be the involvement of NNIP partners in furthering the application of information in helping to structure, monitor, and facilitate their local Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community programs. At both the community and city-wide levels, the work will focus not only on the design of more effective (understandable) forms of data presentation, but also on the design of interactive processes with stakeholders that will assure real application.

2. Enhance current local indicator systems to address policy priorities

Over the past few years, national agencies have supported indicator development related to their own policy interests, normally at the state or county levels. This is contributing clearer knowledge of trends, but interpretation often remains elusive because of inadequate knowledge of context, and context is determined largely by neighborhood characteristics. A given trend in say, job creation, substance abuse, the volume of mortgage lending, the rate of violent crime, or the incidence of tuberculosis could mean different things (and warrant different policy responses) if it is found in neighborhoods with varying social, economic, and physical circumstances.

In this component, the NNIP partners will expand their systems to incorporate new variables relevant to such issues and use them (independently and jointly) to better account for the impacts of neighborhood context on important policy issues. One area of particular interest is expanding information related to the linkage between resident skills and emerging employment opportunities, and other data to support planning to enhance local job generation. But all of the subjects touched on above merit further understanding along these lines. Systems will also be expanded with additional information on neighborhood assets (human, social, cultural, organizational, physical, and economic), in conjunction with the work just described under Component 1.

3. Develop National Data Systems Support

This will include the development of a National Neighborhood Indicators Data System (NNIDS): i.e., assembling a core set of comparable indicators at the neighborhood level from the systems of our partner cities and expanding it to include additional indicators and data from additional cities as the project proceeds. Complete NNIDS users manuals and software to facilitate use will be provided, with sections on rationale for indicator selection, operational definitions, and guides to interpretation and reliable application. More detailed plans for the development of NNIDS are presented in Annex 8A at the end of this chapter.

Also, this work will include developing user-friendly software, and prototype analytic routines, to facilitate the local use of other relevant national data sets. One example is the American Housing Survey, which provides comprehensive census-type data for zones in 46 metropolitan areas in two to four year cycles, but has seldom been taken advantage of in local policy analysis. The nature of the work here has been outlined in greater detail in Chapter 7.

4. Prepare Guides and Training Materials

This will include preparing case studies and other materials that describe successful techniques and processes for developing and operating local neighborhood indicators data systems and offer suggested guidance for other cities in adopting them. Some will be based on past

experiences in our partner cities, but others will describe new innovations developed during the implementation of this project.

Topics will include methods of institutional development and management (e.g., guides on marketing and pricing data services) as well as technical aspects of data assembly and use. A major emphasis, however, will be on community awareness and strategic planning processes, and forms of data analysis and presentation, that can most effectively support them; i.e., processes to assure that neighborhood indicators will actually be applied locally in a sensible way to address the burning policy issues affecting America's urban communities.

5. Conduct Developmental Research

NNIP will support a limited amount of new research on topics identified as critical to the nationwide development and use of local neighborhood indicator systems. Examples include: background research to establish rationale and approach for developing valid indicators in new areas (for example, work sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation is already underway in thinking through appropriate indicators of "arts and culture" in the community); examining the potential for more efficient types of surveys to supplement administrative data in indicator systems; analysis across sites to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of neighborhood change; study to support methodological innovations that hold the potential of important advances in system efficiency and application (an example, is the development of methods to much more accurately estimate population and the incidence of poverty at the neighborhood level between censuses).

Topical papers or monographs will be prepared for each authorized subproject. Toward the end of the project we expect to bring the work together in a major monograph on *The State of America's Neighborhoods.*

APPROACH AND SCHEDULE: DISSEMINATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

This phase will begin gradually from the mid-point of year one and intensify to a point where it becomes the project's dominant activity in year three.

Establishing the Network and Basic Dissemination

During the first year, NNIP will develop a newsletter which we will send to several audiences, but with emphasis on relevant institutions in at least 100 American cities. Initially, the newsletter will describe the project and its purposes and profile project activities that should be of

interest. Later, more substantive guidance will be presented based on the products of the development phase, as they are completed.

At the outset, the project will also establish an NNIP Home Page on the World-Wide-Web. Plans for using the Web as the central vehicle for disseminating NNIP products are discussed in more depth in Annex 8B at the end of this chapter. Initially, the Web site will be used as a base for:

- Disseminating descriptive materials about NNIP (e.g., the newsletter and the first year report).
- Establishing an electronic "bulletin board" to encourage information sharing among network participants.

During the second and third years, dissemination to these audiences and networking will expand to include:

- Distributing copies of all products (data-base dictionaries and manuals, guides, case studies, research papers, and reports) both in hard-copy and over the World-Wide Web.
- Convening at least one major national conference on these topics.
- Electronic conveyance of data (based on requests) from the National Neighborhood Indicators Data System and related national data sets.

Technical Assistance and Capacity Building

Technical assistance activities will also begin in year one, but build during the second and third years. In the interaction with local users in other cities early in the development phase (on current data availability and use and perceptions of future needs) we will gain considerable insight into both the need for, and capacity to absorb, technical assistance in different areas. We envision an array of responses. For example:

- Brief visits to cities that have not yet developed a mechanism for recurrent neighborhood monitoring, to help introduce the approach and give suggestions on how it might be implemented locally.
- Brief visits to cities that already have systems underway to help them overcome current barriers or enhance their capacity in specific areas (e.g., adding indicators on specific topics or applying new software).
- More extended technical assistance for a limited number of cities in building and sustaining a local neighborhood indicators data system and link it to the national system.

We expect that one important contribution of this project can be in lending its prestige to the efforts of local projects that are trying to secure new agreements with potential providers of critical data (e.g., police departments, health departments).

National Awareness and Continuing the National Network

This project represents a unique opportunity to enlighten public opinion as to the importance of neighborhood change in the future of urban areas and the importance of fact-based policy analysis in guiding that change. Therefore, the project team will take a proactive approach to the media throughout the implementation period. This means looking out for, and creating opportunities for, possible news features, op-ed pieces, magazine articles, and television appearances that would further these objectives.

Finally, assuming the success of the National Neighborhood Indicators Data System, the newsletter, and the related network, there will be good reason to establish an institutional framework to update the NNIDS and to continue the basic networking and support functions established during the project period. During the last year of NNIP, the project team will work with the planning committee to consider institutional and funding opportunities for doing so.

PROJECT STAFFING AND MANAGEMENT

Project Management

The project is based at the Urban Institute, which has long standing experience in managing large-scale multi-site projects as well as in information systems building and policy analysis related to the problems of U.S. cities, both at the national and local levels. Institute staff who managed NNIP during the planning period will continue to guide and direct its work during implementation. *James O. Gibson* will serve as Chairman of the Institute's Internal Management Committee for the project. *G. Thomas Kingsley* will serve as Project Director. *Talton Ray* will continue as Senior Advisor.[21]

The Internal Management Committee is being established because we believe that, given this project's scope and interdisciplinary nature, it will benefit from the insights of top managers with relevant but varied project experiences.

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[21]Brief biographical summaries for all individuals noted in this section are presented in an Annex A at the end of this report.

The Project Team

This work, however, needs to give primary emphasis to direct local experience. As noted, the potential of project is largely based on the concrete achievements of the seven NNIP partners. The leaders of these initiatives will be an integral part of the national team for this project. They include: *David S. Sawicki* (Atlanta), *Charlotte Kahn* and *Glen Pierce* (Boston), *Malcolm Bush* and *Robert Goerge* (Chicago), *Claudia J. Coulton* (Cleveland), *Terri J. Bailey* (Denver), *Joaquin Herranz* (Oakland), and *Pat McGuigan* and *Jack Combs* (Providence).

These professionals will play leading roles in all project activities: in developing model programs (strengthening the initiatives in their own cities so they may serve as more effective laboratories and models for work elsewhere), in designing new techniques and conducting research on urban change that will be applicable more broadly, and in dissemination and technical assistance to advance the development of similar initiatives in a range of additional cities.

Other Urban Institute staff who continue to serve on the project team include: *George C. Galster, Christopher Walker, Peter Tatian, Maris Mikelsons, Maria-Rosario Jackson, and Milda Saunders*. *Kara Hartnett* will continue as Administrative Coordinator.

Project Oversight

The national planning committee established during the planning period includes representatives of project sponsors and a number of federal agencies and national interest groups as well as the Urban Institute and NNIP partners that constitute the project team. This committee will continue to function during the implementation period, with some expansion to include local representatives from additional cities. This full committee will meet at the Institute on an annual basis to assess accomplishments and review and comment on proposed detailed work programs for the year ahead.

Annex 8A

BUILDING, MAINTAINING, AND DISSEMINATING THE NATIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD INDICATORS DATA SYSTEM

At its most basic level, the National Neighborhood Indicators Data System (NNIDS) is a database that combines data from several different sources into one, centrally-stored and accessible system. But, compiling such a large database alone would not be a worthy goal for a project that purports to democratize access to data and give local organizations the tools they need to use that data to affect community change. Such a database, all by itself, might be a good tool for experienced policy researchers, but would generally be unusable by most community-based groups, who probably have not had access to data or have not used data to help them in their goals.

Therefore, we must construct and disseminate the NNIDS in a way that gives users who have little or no experience working with data the ability to analyze and interpret neighborhood indicators. To achieve this, the NNIDS should have three qualities:

Ease of access. The NNIDS must be easy for people to use. Because users will have different preferences as to how they will use the data, ease of access means providing the NNIDS in a variety of formats and through more than one medium.

Ease of use. It must be easy for the user to produce different types of output from the NNIDS, such as tables, graphs, charts, and maps.

Flexibility. The NNIDS must give the user the flexibility to request summaries of the data that he or she wants. The user should not be constrained to predefined, "canned" outputs.

Today's technology gives us the means for constructing a data system with these attributes. Examples using this technology already exist. U.S. government departments and agencies, state and local governments, corporations, and nonprofit organizations are all providing vast quantities of information to a larger and larger base of users. Software that can do sophisticated data analysis, including spatial analysis, is becoming more widely available and much easier to use. We intend to use this technology to make the NNIDS more accessible to groups who traditionally have not previously had access to data.

Beyond using technology to make the NNIDS more accessible to less-experienced users, the NNIP will also work to improve the skills and understanding of these users and to enhance their ability to use data. Through training materials and hands-on seminars, the NNIP will make the

knowledge and experience of public policy researchers available to those who need guidance on how to interpret, analyze, and present data. These materials and seminars will highlight real world examples of how organizations have used data to influence policy decisions and to present more effectively their views on improving neighborhoods.

Building and Maintaining the NNIDS

Building the NNIDS will be a continuous and ongoing process that will evolve over the next three years. The composition of the NNIDS (i.e., the list of indicators that make up the system), will change over time in response to two factors. The first are the needs of the users. As time goes by and more people work with the NNIDS, they will develop a better sense of which data are important to them and what additional indicators would be most helpful in describing and analyzing neighborhoods. The NNIDS will provide for user input into the selection of indicator variables and attempt to include those data that they deem most useful.

The second factor that will influence the development of the NNIDS is the availability of different types of data at appropriate levels of geography. In its initial configuration, the NNIDS will consist primarily of Census-based data along with indicators coming from our seven partner cities. Although the seven cities collect much more data than will be included in the national database, most of the data cannot be matched across cities. We therefore must include only those variables that have the same definitions in several NNIP sites.

Over time, however, more local indicators will be included. Now that we have compiled and compared lists of variables from each of the seven cities, we can see exactly where the gaps or incompatibilities are. From this comparison, we can begin to address data compatibility problems by increasing the quantity and form of the data collected by the partner cities so that more of it can be incorporated into the NNIDS.

Building the NNIDS must be seen as a dynamic, as opposed to a static, process. Because many "positive," asset-based indicators, which are so important in understanding the dynamics of neighborhood change, are not yet readily available to us, the first version of the NNIDS will contain limited locally-based indicators. This situation will change as more information can be collected at the local level and added to the NNIDS. The data sources recommended for inclusion in the NNIDS initially are as discussed in Chapter 5:

- ***Locally-Based Data From the Seven Partner Cities.*** The NNIP partner cities will supply selected data from their own data systems for the NNIDS. The initial set of variables that the seven cities will provide was also noted in Chapter 5. The seven cities will do all needed geocoding and processing to aggregate their data to the Census tract level.

The Urban Institute and the seven cities will agree on checking procedures to verify data integrity, such as checking the minimum, maximum, and mean of individual variables and the consistency between different variables. Once the Urban Institute receives the data from the cities, data analysts will repeat the checking procedures on the entire data set before incorporating it into the NNIDS.

- ***1990 Census Population and Housing Data***. The NNIDS will include selected Census tract level variables from the 1990 Decennial Census Summary Tape File.

- ***1980 and 1970 Census Population and Housing Data from the Underclass Database.*** The Urban Institute will adapt its Underclass Database (UDB) and integrated as a part of the NNIDS.

- ***Home Mortgage Disclosure Act Data.*** These files, on mortgage applications and dispositions, will be acquired and adds to the system.

- ***Business and Employment Data.*** The NNIDS will make use of commercially available business and employment data (such as Cole's Business Directory). These data will be aggregated at the census tract level and include number of business establishments and employees by SIC code.

All of the data will be linked together geographically using 1990 census tracts. As noted, although the NNIDS will have indicators derived from address-based administrative data, we will not include data in that form in the database. All address-based data will be geocoded and aggregated to the census tract level before being incorporated into the NNIDS.

The sources listed above will comprise the formal NNIDS, with integrated data covering the seven NNIP partner cities initially, with the expectation that other data sets will be added as new cities join the partnership. In addition, as noted in Chapter 7, we will also assemble Metropolitan Area Profiles (selected key indicators) for a broader range of U.S. metropolitan areas.

- ***American Housing Survey (AHS) Data.*** The Urban Institute will develop AHS profiles for all of the 44 metropolises for which data are available, starting with the 1984 files and running through the most recent available surveys. AHS data will be available for the metropolitan area as a whole, and for central cities vs. suburbs, and individual zones, within each..

- ***Census and HMDA Neighborhood Profiles***. Selected indicators will be available at the tract level for all U.S. metropolitan areas. These will be derived from the U.S. Census

(1990 files, and 1970 and 1980 data from the Underclass Data Base) and the HMDA data base.

The different data sources will be combined into a relational database that will be maintained at the Urban Institute. Data specialists at the Urban Institute will prepare documentation for the database, convert the data to different formats (ASCII, Lotus 123, SAS, etc.) and make them available to users through various means (as described in the next section).

The NNIDS will be maintained and updated on a recurrent basis. The Urban Institute and the seven cities will agree upon a schedule for obtaining updates of the locally-based indicators. The updated indicators will be checked for consistency and incorporated into the main database. On a periodic basis, the NNIP team will review the indicator definitions and make changes based on data availability and quality.

The technical and logistical issues in setting up and operating a NNIDS can only be addressed when one has a real database with which to work. Tasks such as developing an appropriate interface for users to request custom tabulations of data, finding the best methods for supplying data to different organizations, and developing training materials on data analysis and interpretation can only be addressed in the process of working with real data.

Disseminating the NNIDS

As was mentioned previously, the NNIDS will contain data in different formats and in different media so that it will be easily accessible by a variety of users. We can divide these potential users of the NNIDS into three groups:

- **Sophisticated users** (e.g., researchers). This group is already very comfortable with data and so they will want to access the NNIDS in a very flexible format that they can manipulate as they like.

- **Intermediate users.** This group needs a more structured access to the data, but still will need some flexibility to explore different patterns.

- **Basic users.** These users may have access to some computer technology, but will want prestructured output that they can access quickly and easily.

To meet the needs of these three groups of users, we will be making the NNIDS available in several different formats. For sophisticated users, the indicators will be made available on diskettes, CD-ROMs, or in data files that can be downloaded through the Internet. The user can then read these files into data analysis or GIS software. One or two common formats, such ASCII

and dBase, will be provided. Most data analysis packages can read files in these formats quite easily.

For intermediate users, selected indicators will be made available in spreadsheet files (i.e., Lotus 123, Excel, or Quattro). These files will be available on diskettes or through the Internet. In addition, our NNIP partner in Boston (the Boston Persistent Poverty Project) is working with Lotus Development Corporation (the makers of Lotus 123) to create a menu-driven, user-friendly software that will work directly with spreadsheet files. This software will enable the user to quickly create a variety of tables and graphs from the Boston database without having to master the commands of a spreadsheet package. Once they have developed this software, adapting it to use with the NNIDS should be possible.

For basic users, we will create some ready-made tables, charts, and maps for each of the NNIP cities. These products will be made available in hard copy or by downloading from the Internet. This will allow these users to have ready access to outputs from the NNIDS without the need for doing processing of their own. Users who download tables, charts, and graphs from the Internet can then insert these outputs into word processor documents to create their own reports using NNIP information.

The means of dissemination are reviewed in Annex 8B, which follows.

Annex 8B

USING THE WORLD WIDE WEB TO DISSEMINATE NNIP PRODUCTS

We intend to make full use of the World Wide Web to disseminate not only the data from the NNIDS but other NNIP products as well. As was described in the section on the requirements for a local neighborhood indicators system, the World Wide Web is a part of the Internet. It uses a graphical, user-friendly interface to give users easy access to documents, data files, and images on a global basis. This technology is becoming more widely used and therefore should expand the base of potential users of NNIP products. For example, Digital Equipment Corporation has constructed an index of more than 16 million pages on the World Wide Web. There are several examples of organizations using the Web to reach more people and improve the quality and the quantity of the services that it provides. An excellent example of this, and one that is particularly relevant to the goals of the NNIP, is the online service of the nonprofit organization Join Together.

An Example of What the Web Can Do: Join Together

Join Together is a staff resource center created by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to the Boston University School of Public Health. The organization's sole mission is to help communities in the United States overcome the barriers they face trying to prevent and treat substance abuse. They do this by providing programs and services to support "community coalitions," broad-based groups working to reduce substance abuse in their cities and towns.

To facilitate communication and interaction between community coalitions, Join Together established *Join Together Online*, a set of electronic services that these groups can access. Join Together Online contains daily press clippings from major newspapers and wire services, news about expert policy panels hosted by Join Together, and regular updates on substance abuse legislation pending in each state. It has a section on funding information that includes listings of public and private sources of money, requests for proposals, and the full text of Federal Register entries concerning substance abuse and related issues.

To help community groups improve their own performance, Join Together Online has weekly profiles of community coalitions and foundations doing innovative work, monthly feature stories on complicated issues such as empowerment zones or block grants, technical assistance articles for improving organization of community coalitions, and discussions on advanced techniques for treating substance abuse problems. The service also tries to promote communication and interaction among community groups through a national calendar of major events, workshops, and conferences, and an electronic mailing list and idea exchange forum.

Currently, Join Together Online has about 11,000 documents, with 100 new documents being added each week. The documents come from different sources. Join Together provides some, while others, such as items for the calendar of events, are posted by the users themselves. Some information is downloaded automatically from other online sources, such as articles from other organizations and news services.

Join Together Online has been in existence for three to four years but has only recently moved to the World Wide Web. Originally, Join Together Online was part of an electronic bulletin board system called HandsNet. Through HandsNet, Join Together was distributing 7 to 8,000 documents per month. While HandsNet had the advantage of having an easy-to-use interface, it had no connection to the Internet and users had to pay between $30 and 60 a month in access charges.

Because of these costs to its users, Join Together moved its online services from HandsNet to an Internet-based service. Today, Join Together operates its own Web server consisting of six Macintosh computers connected to the Internet via Boston University. According to Chris Carter, who is responsible for managing the site, this investment in developing a Web site is starting to "pay off." Join Together Online is now distributing more than 50,000 documents a month, and through the technology of the World Wide Web they can provide several additional services that were not possible before. For example, the Web site allows users to complete survey forms online and to search the document database for articles on specific topics.

Join Together Online is a good example of how organizations can use the Internet to foster communication and interaction between community groups with a common interest. On a national scale, users can exchange information and ideas quickly, easily, and inexpensively. We plan to incorporate these interactive features, as epitomized by Join Together Online, in a Web site for the National Neighborhood Indicators Project.

The NNIP Web Site

The World Wide Web meets all of our requirements for providing access to the NNIDS and other NNIP products. The Web gives us *ease of access* because it can be reached through a variety of computer systems and through many different online services. It is *easy to use* because it has a standard, graphical user interface that requires little technical expertise. Finally, the Web is *flexible* because it can provide structured access to data through menus or can make raw data files available for downloading to the user's own computer system.

We intend to make full use of the capabilities of the Internet to disseminate data and information by establishing a NNIP Web site, which will be housed and maintained at the Urban Institute. The Urban Institute has been operating a Web site of its own since fall of 1995, and has

recently invested in a high speed connection to the Internet. The NNIP can benefit from the Urban Institute's Internet connection for its own Web site. The NNIP Web site will provide the following services:

- **Interactive access to the NNIDS.** Through the technology of the World Wide Web, we can give users interactive access to the NNIDS. Users will be able to specify custom tabulations, graphs, and even GIS-generated maps of neighborhood indicators through a series of easy-to-use menus. The resulting output will be displayed on the user's computer and can either be saved to a file or printed directly.

- **Downloadable data files and documents.** Users will be able to download copies of the NNIDS data and documentation for specific metropolitan areas. The user can then read these files into a data analysis package and perform analysis on the data. We will also provide tables, graphs, and maps of selected indicators in the form of files that can be downloaded to the user's computer.

- **Research papers written using indicators data.** As part of the NNIP, we will be producing several papers that demonstrate the usefulness of neighborhood-based indicators. We will make the text of these papers available online.

- **Online NNIP newsletter.** To keep people informed of the latest developments with the NNIP and the most recent activities of the partner cities, we will maintain an online newsletter.

- **Related non-NNIP materials.** We will post related articles and documents, such as news clippings, that are relevant to the work and goals of the NNIP. News clippings will be obtained by searching one or more online services.

- **Information exchange between NNIP users.** Users will be able to contribute content to the NNIP Web site by posting articles, reports, and announcements that other users can look up. We will also support the exchange of messages between NNIP users so that they can share ideas and information with us and with each other.

- **Links to Web sites of NNIP partner cities and to other, relevant Web sites.** Some NNIP partner cities (such as Providence), already have a presence on the World Wide Web. We will provide links to these sites through the NNIP home page, allowing users to easily visit these sites to see what is going on in different partner cities. We will also include links to other sites that are particularly relevant to the NNIP project, such as Join Together Online.

- **Access to non-NNIDS data from partner cities.** Since some partner cities do not yet provide their data on the Web, we will make the infrastructure created for the NNIDS available for distributing selected portions of their data sets as well. This will include indicators that we did not include in the NNIDS because they were not compatible with data found in the other partner cities.

Annex A
BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARIES:
NNIP TEAM

This Annex contains biographical summaries of all of the professionals who have been a part of the NNIP team during the planning period, organized into three groups: project management, NNIP partner city representatives, and other Urban Institute staff.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

James O. Gibson, Project Director

James O. Gibson has been a Senior Associate at the Urban Institute since January 1993. At the Institute he focuses on civil rights policies, community development, urban economic and social opportunities, and antipoverty strategies. Since June 1994, he has also served as Project Director of the D.C. Agenda Project, a private sector initiative to organize consensus-based proposals for addressing fiscal and governance problems facing the District of Columbia. He was director of the Equal Opportunity Program at the Rockefeller Foundation from 1986 through 1992. Gibson has been active in urban affairs, community development, race relations, and economic development for over three decades. Before joining the Rockefeller Foundation in January 1986, he served as President of the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation in Washington, D.C. Other positions include Assistant City Administrator for Planning and Development for the City of Washington and Executive Associate of the Potomac Institute. He has held consultant positions with many federal, municipal, and private sector agencies; presidential appointments include the President's National Commission on Rural Poverty and the National Capital Planning Commission. Cultural involvements include service with the Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington, the United

Arts Organization of Greater Washington, the Kennedy Center Commission on Scope and Constituency, the D.C. Black Repertory Company, the Ellington School of the Arts, and Washington's National Theater.

G. Thomas Kingsley, Project Manager

Tom Kingsley is the Director the Urban Institute's Center for Public Finance and Housing. He is a senior research manager and policy analyst in housing and urban development, and is the author of numerous publications in those fields. He has directed a number of major policy research programs, including: testing the market effects of housing allowance programs (1974-80, the HUD sponsored Housing Assistance Supply Experiment); analyzing the structure and potentials of metropolitan Cleveland's economy (1980-82, for the Cleveland Foundation); preparing a national urban development strategy for Indonesia (1982-85, for the United Nations); helping the Czech and Slovak Republics design and implement policy reforms in housing and municipal infrastructure (1991-95, for USAID); and assessing American Indian housing needs and programs (1993-95, for HUD). He was also co-director for the Ford Foundation sponsored Urban Opportunity Program (which produced four books on the status of urban policy issues in America in the early 1990s). In recent shorter term assignments, he has advised HUD on strategy guidelines for the Empowerment Zone and Consolidate Planning Programs, and assisted HUD Secretary Cisneros in developing a series of essays on the future of American cities. He previously served as Director of the Rand Corporation's Housing and Urban Policy Program, and as Assistant Administrator for the New York City Housing and Development Administration (where he was responsible for the agency's budgeting and policy analysis functions), and taught on the faculties of the graduate urban planning programs at the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Southern California. He received his Masters degree in Urban Planning at Berkeley.

Talton F. Ray, Senior Advisor

Talton Ray is an independent consultant who serves as senior advisor to the National Neighborhood Indicators Project. He conceived of the idea in late 1993 as a means of measuring changing conditions in America's neighborhoods. During the subsequent six months he invited the participation of the local research groups from each of the seven cities, introduced the project to the ultimate funders of the planning phase, and secured the involvement of the federal agencies and national organizations. Ray was president of the Council for Community-Based Development from its founding in 1988 until its closing in June 1993. The Council was a national nonprofit organization created to raise awareness of community-based development and to encourage increased support of the field by private-sector institutions. Its members were corporations and foundations which had an interest in furthering those objectives. Ray worked for five years (1981-1986) as the director of operations of the South Bronx Development Organization and for 12 years (1968-1981) as co-manager of the Ford Foundation's program-related investment fund. His work

in community development began in Venezuela in 1961-1964 when he was director of field operations of ACCION, a privately-funded nonprofit organization. He is the author of *The Politics of the Barrios of Venezuela*, a book on Venezuelan urban politics published by the University of California Press in 1969. Ray received his master's degree in Public Law and Government from Columbia University.

Kara Hartnett, Administrative Coordinator

Ms. Hartnett, a Research Associate, is currently working on several community development and housing programs projects. Most recently, she served as the Urban Institute's on-site Field Manager for the Initial Assessment of the Incidence of Discrimination in Housing Insurance, supervising testers during data collection. In addition, Ms. Hartnett has analyzed data, collated and researched relevant information, and contributed to writing the *Round I HOME Draft Report: Implementing Block Grants for Housing: An Evaluation of the First Year of HOME.* Ms. Hartnett has also trained staff members of ADAI (a subcontractor) on aspects of SPSS programming and data entry procedures in Teguicigalpa, Honduras. Prior to joining the Public Finance and Housing Center of The Urban Institute, Ms. Hartnett interned at the New York City District Office of U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and served as a Ford Foundation Public Service Scholar at Homes for the Homeless, also in New York, where she evaluated the policies and programs for three daycare centers in their operational Tier II transitional housing facilities.

NNIP PARTNER CITIES

David S. Sawicki, Atlanta

David Sawicki is Professor of City Planning and Public Policy at the Georgia Institute of Technology. At present he serves also as half-time Senior Advisor for Data and Policy Analysis at the Carter Presidential Center's Atlanta Project. Professor Sawicki has served in a number of administrative capacities: assistant dean and chair of urban planning at Wisconsin from 1971 to 1977; director of city planning at Tech from 1983 to 1992; chair of Tech's faculty senate, 1991-1992; and president of ACSP, the professional organization of planning faculty, from 1985 to 1987. In his role as senior advisor at The Atlanta Project, he directs a team of seven graduate students and professionals who provide policy analysis, policy research, and support for operations and planning to the resource directors in health, housing, economic development, education, children and families, and public safety. Currently his research is focussed on two areas. The first is the use of data and information to support grass-roots attempts to solve the problems of persistent poverty. His DAPA group makes extensive use of the latest information processing technology, including geographic information systems. The second surrounds the questions of labor force

participation, jobs generation, and economic development planning in areas of impacted poverty. His *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning* (Second Edition) (with Dr. Carl V. Patton) (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1993) is a best-selling textbook in public policy. He has published recently in: the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, *Economic Development Quarterly*, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, *Journal of Black Political Economy*, *Planning*, and *Economic Development Review*.

Charlotte Kahn, Boston

Charlotte Kahn directs the Boston Persistent Poverty Project at the Boston Foundation, a long-term campaign to develop and implement shared strategies to build community and reduce chronic, intergenerational poverty. Over the past five years, Ms. Kahn has: coordinated and documented the work of a diverse, 43-member Strategy Development Group, resulting in an award-winning report, *To Make Our City Whole: Principles for a New Social Contract*; coordinated the convening and documentation of extensive community-based focus groups and roundtables; initiated a partnership with Lotus Development Corporation, city and state agencies, community-based groups, and Northeastern University to develop the Boston Children and Families Database; convened a group to develop a vision and plan for the technology component of Boston's Empowerment Zone/Enhanced Enterprise Community proposal; and initiated efforts to create a Community Building Curriculum to implement the approach to poverty emerging from the project's community soundings.

Ms. Kahn is the former Director of the Public Education Fund of the Tax Equity Alliance for Massachusetts. Before that, she served for fifteen years as Executive Director of Boston Urban Gardeners, a community-based organization providing open space planning, job training, youth programming and site development services in Boston's low-income neighborhoods and, later, to public housing authorities in the Mid-Atlantic states. Ms. Kahn attended Cornell University, and was awarded a Loeb Fellowship in Advanced Environmental Studies at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. She holds a Masters Degree in Organizational Development from Antioch University. She coordinated a study group at the John F. Kennedy School of Government entitled "Urban Poverty and the New Thinking" and has lectured at numerous colleges and universities. Ms. Kahn currently serves on Boston's Enhanced Enterprise Community Board and the Mayor's Council on Technology. She is an active member of the Neighborhood Council of Dorchester's Codman Square, the community in which she resides.

Glenn Pierce, Boston

Dr. Glenn Pierce is Co-Director for the Center for Criminal Justice and Policy Research at Northeastern University. He has conducted research on a broad range of social and economic issues and has obtained funding for his research from the National Institute of Mental Health, the

National Institute of Justice, the National Science Foundation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the Sage Foundation and the Boston Foundation. His research publications have included work on gun control, delivery in mental health services, status of children and families, community policing, domestic violence, as well as other social topics. In addition, Dr. Pierce has conducted work on public sector databases and public sector information systems.

Dr. Pierce is also Director of the Division of Academic Computing at Northeastern. In this role he is responsible for the delivery of academic computing resources to Northeastern University's students, faculty, and staff. He has helped design and is responsible for the implementation of the University's 10,000 node enterprise-wide data communications network. As Director of Academic Computing, he has acquired and developed a broad range of databases for the social sciences. Most recently, he has overseen the development of the Children and Families database for the Boston Foundation. In addition, Dr. Pierce has collaborated in the development of a proposal for a super computing facility to support social science data analysis at the University.

Malcolm Bush, Chicago

Dr. Malcolm Bush has been President of the Woodstock Institute since September, 1992. He has directed Woodstock's applied research and public education to ensure access to capital and credit, and promote economic development in low- and moderate income neighborhoods. From 1987 to 1992 he was senior vice-president of Voices for Illinois Children where he directed applied research and policy development for this children's advocacy group. At Voices, he developed and worked on the implementation of policy agendas for urban educational reform, state tax reform, and child welfare reform playing a role in the Chicago school reform movement through the Parent-Community Council of the Mayor's Educational Summit and the Citywide Coalition for School Reform which he helped found.

Between 1979 and 1987, Dr. Bush was a regular faculty member of the University of Chicago and a faculty associate at the Chapin Hall Center for Children, teaching social policy and research methods and writing about child welfare policy. His policy and research writing includes a book on the roles of the public and nonprofit sectors in shaping child welfare services and their comparative roles in promoting reforms. Other positions include a regular faculty appointment at Northwestern University in urban affairs and education, and a policy appointment in the criminal law division of the Department of State for Home Affairs in London. He holds a BA from Oxford University and Ph.D. in social psychology and urban policy from Northwestern University.

Robert M. Goerge, Chicago

Dr. Robert Goerge is Associate Director and Research Fellow at the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago and holds a Ph.D. in Social Policy from the University of Chicago. He also holds a Research Associate appointment. His research interests center on the experiences of children and families in the social service system. Central to his research interest is improving the available information on all children and families, particularly those who are abused or neglected, disabled, poor, require mental health services, or come to the attention of service providers. In that vein, he has led the construction and analysis of the *Integrated Database on Children's Services* in Illinois, which is a longitudinal database on children's service receipt. He has developed multivariate models describing child service transitions in foster care, mental health, and special education. His recent work includes using event-history methods to analyze foster care drift, and describing and explaining foster care caseload growth in Illinois, New York, Michigan, California and Texas. These efforts have been based primarily on large administrative data files from public child welfare agencies in Illinois. Dr. Goerge co-directs the National Foster Care Data Archive funded by HHS Children's Bureau, and leads a project funded by NIMH on the disabilities of foster children. Dr. Goerge directs the Administrative Data Institute of Chapin Hall's HHS Child Welfare Research Center, and recently coordinated an instructional workshop for a national group of child welfare agency researchers and analysts on the use of administrative data for research and policy analysis. Dr. Goerge has also served as a consultant to numerous states on the development of improved information systems.

Claudia J. Coulton, Cleveland

Dr. Claudia Coulton is Professor of Social Welfare and Co-Director of the Center for Urban Poverty and Social Change, Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University. She was appointed the Director of the Center for Urban Poverty and Social Change in 1988. Dr. Coulton has worked with her colleagues to develop an extensive database on urban poverty conditions and has published many analyses of poverty and its impact on poor people and neighborhoods. She has also published numerous articles and reports and presented papers on poverty, social welfare and urban issues throughout the United States. During her career, Coulton has been either the project director or the principal investigator of many significant research projects. While working as Poverty Center Co-Director, Coulton is also Co-Investigator of a program of study on the Impact of Poor Neighborhood Conditions on Children and Families; Director of the Healthy Family/Healthy Start Evaluation; and director of ongoing research on the impact of welfare reform and on evaluating neighborhood change. She serves as an advisor to several national foundations and groups. Dr. Coulton received her B.A. degree (cum laude) from Ohio Wesleyan University, her M.S.W. from Ohio State University, and her Ph.D. in Social Welfare from CWRU. She is a member of many professional organizations and has served on the boards of numerous committees and publications. She was the recipient of the 1993 National Association

of Social Worker's Presidential Award for Excellence in Social Work Research, and in 1989, she received the John Diekhoff Award for Distinguished Graduate Teaching at CWRU. In 1994, she was inducted into the Ohio Women's Hall of Fame.

Terri J. Bailey, Denver

Terri Bailey is the Director of Research for The Piton Foundation, a private operating foundation located in Denver which develops and operates programs in a number of related areas all of which strive to improve the lives of low-income people and to strengthen the communities in which they live. She is responsible for research and public policy analysis of issues of poverty. Her work currently focuses on research, evaluation and systems reform efforts in the protection of children from abuse or neglect. Ms. Bailey also manages the Foundation's data initiative which serves as the clearinghouse both in Denver neighborhoods and throughout the state for data that chronicles the health and well-being of Denver and Colorado residents.

Since joining the Foundation in 1991, Ms. Bailey has researched and written, *Colorado Children and Medicaid: Fulfilling the Promise*, *'Can Do! Improving the Quality of Lives of Denver's Children and Families' Medicaid and Part H: Building a Connection for Denver Children*, *Poverty in Denver: Facing the Facts*, a detailed analysis of poverty in Denver and the surrounding metro area, *At What Risk: Community Assessments of Safety and Risk for Child Abuse and Neglect in Colorado* and a series of fact sheets and newsletters that use local data to portray the nature and consequence of poverty. Prior to joining the Foundation, Ms. Bailey held consultant positions with many public and private sector agencies including the City and County of Denver, the Office of the Governor of Colorado, the Hunt Alternatives Fund, the Colorado Trust, and the American Association of Retired Persons. She worked for ten years as the senior policy analyst for the Denver Metropolitan Legal Aid Society which provides free legal services to the poor.

Joaquin Herranz, Oakland

Joaquin Herranz has worked as a community organizer, program administrator, and policy analyst in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area. Since 1989, he has worked at the Urban Strategies Council in Oakland, a non-profit research and policy development group focusing on strategies to reduce persistent poverty. He specializes in information technology applications such as computer-assisted data and mapping analysis to support urban policy and program development. In addition to serving as an advisor to The Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Project, Mr. Herranz advises the National Community Building Network and the National Community Building Support Center. He has served on the expert technical advisory panel of a national study of state-of-the-art integrated information systems to support comprehensive human services. Mr. Herranz holds a master's degree in city and regional planning from U.C. Berkeley.

Patrick J. McGuigan, Providence

Patrick McGuigan has been the Executive Director of The Providence Plan (TPP) since January 1995. The Providence Plan is a private non-profit corporation charged with the mission of developing and overseeing a comprehensive and strategic plan for the revitalization of the city. TPP also convened and led a successful planning process in competition for a federal Enterprise Community designation and is now serving as the managing entity for the implementation of that plan in Providence. Prior to this position, Mr. McGuigan spent more than ten years with senior management responsibilities for neighborhood housing and economic development policies and programs for the City of Boston. In addition, he was the Executive Director of Boston Neighborhood Housing Services from 1983 to 1984 and was a senior member of the staff of the Massachusetts Community Development Finance Corporation for the five years from 1978 to 1983. In that capacity, he had responsibility for the development and implementation of new community development financing strategies in partnership with local Community Development Corporations across the state. Mr. McGuigan has a Master's Degree in City and Regional Planning from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and an undergraduate degree from Boston College.

URBAN INSTITUTE STAFF

George Galster

After earning his Ph.D. in Economics from MIT, George Galster has concentrated on developing a substantial body of theoretical and empirical work on both the topic of neighborhood indicators and the topic of patterns, causes, and consequences of neighborhood change. On the former topic, he has published five articles that offer new neighborhood indicators, provide their conceptual underpinnings, and suggest their usefulness in policy formulation. His efforts in this regard have been codified by his appointment to the Editorial Advisory Board of the international journal, *Social Indicators Research*. On the second topic, Dr. Galster has explored in six published articles the racial, income, and housing deterioration dimensions of neighborhood change and developed a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the sources of these changes. Both the social indicators and neighborhood dynamics themes of his work have been integrated and advanced in a series of books and monographs: *Information Nexus and Neighborhood Change* (1982), *Homeowners and Neighborhood Reinvestment* (1987), *The Dynamics of Neighborhood Change and Decline* (1987), and *The Maze of Urban Housing Markets* (1991). Dr. Galster has put this work into practice through his consultancies with several cities aimed at helping them better measure, understand, and affect neighborhood changes in their communities.

J. Christopher Walker

Chris Walker is Director of the Urban Institute's Community and Economic Development Program, and a specialist in housing and community development program and policy analysis. His primary research focus is low-income community development, with special emphases on neighborhood stabilization and revitalization programs, community development corporations, and housing rehabilitation programs. He is principal investigator of The Urban Institute's two-year national evaluation of the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, and has recently completed a national evaluation of the Community Development Block Grant program and research on the problems and prospects of the non-profit housing sector. His other projects include research on housing delivery programs and institutions and the financial performance of federally-assisted cooperative housing. Selected previous research includes several homeless assistance program evaluations, and an evaluation of the Neighborhood Development Demonstration Program.

Maris Mikelsons

Mr. Mikelsons is an experienced urban economist with background in housing related issues. Prior to joining the Urban Institute in 1989, he worked at the Institute of Community and Regional Development (ICARD). There his analysis dealt with the effects of manufacturing plant closing in Michigan on the economic development of various sectors of the regional economy. Mr. Mikelsons' domestic research experience at the Urban Institute related to housing and urban development has concentrated on housing needs analysis using small area databases. For the state of New York, he analyzed housing need drawing upon indicators found in the metropolitan American Housing Survey (AHS) combined with indicators from the Census of population and housing. Under an ongoing contract with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), Mr. Mikelsons has developed a series of data books that describe housing conditions of the elderly over time using the national AHS. His interest in understanding urban development promoted a collaboration with Dr. George Galster to study the geography of metropolitan opportunity by using mapping technology to spatially describe indicators of urban opportunity ("The Geography of Metropolitan: A Case Study of Neighborhood Conditions Confronting Youth in Washington" in *Housing Policy Debate*, Volume 6, Issue 1). Mr. Mikelsons also developed a unique spatial method to measure racial discrimination for four metropolitan areas ("Patterns of Racial Steering in Four Metropolitan Areas" with Margery Turner, *Journal of Housing Economics*, Volume 2, 1992). Currently, he is finishing work on a comprehensive analysis of housing needs for American Indians and Alaskan Natives using special tabulations of 1990 Census data combined with Census' STF-3C file.

Peter Tatian

Peter A. Tatian is a Research Associate I with the Urban Institute's Public Finance and Housing Center who has more than eight years of experience in analyzing primary and secondary data sources for policy purposes. Mr. Tatian has participated in a variety of studies using housing-related data. He is the author of the latest version of the Institute's Housing Needs Assessment Model, a computer program that uses U.S. Census and American Housing Survey data to project regional housing needs over a five-year period. The Institute has used this model to determine housing needs for the State of New York and the island of Guam. Mr. Tatian has also worked with 1990 Census STF-1 and STF-3 data in a HUD-sponsored project to analyze the extent of housing segregation in East Texas. As an important contributor to the Institute's work in Eastern Europe, Mr. Tatian has written several reports on housing privatization and housing management reform in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and he has developed simulations to analyze the impact of introducing alternative mortgage instruments in Hungary. Before joining the Institute, Mr. Tatian worked on data collection projects in West Africa carried out by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). Based on his experiences, Mr. Tatian wrote a manual on designing data entry and verification systems that has become one of IFPRI's most widely circulated publications. Mr. Tatian is currently working on an evaluation of food assistance programs in Honduras, for which he will carry out all data analysis, including summary tabulations and multivariate models.

Susan Wiener

Susan Wiener has been a Research Associate with the Urban Institute since 1987. She holds a Master's Degree in Regional Science from the University of Pennsylvania. Ms. Wiener's areas of research include persistent poverty, youth development programs, and funding in the nonprofit sector. Currently, she is studying inequality of neighborhood conditions across metropolitan areas, and is participating in a national evaluation of runaway and homeless youth services. Ms. Wiener also helped to develop and manages the Underclass Data Base (UDB), which contains social, demographic, economic, and housing data on tracts in the United States from the 1970, 1980, and 1990 censuses. The UDB enables users to examine changing tract characteristics between 1970, 1980, and 1990 based on a methodology which links the three census years, despite changing tract boundaries. Ms. Wiener recently completed an analysis of youth development programs serving African American men and boys. The study was designed to help the W.K. Kellogg Foundation build an inventory of knowledge about the kinds of community-based programs that work best to serve African American male youth. The findings were based on data collected from a mail survey and site visits to over 50 programs in 10 U.S. cities.

Maria-Rosario Jackson

Maria-Rosario Jackson, an Urban Institute Research Associate, has extensive experience with qualitative research design, data collection, and analysis. Jackson's research has involved the identification, tracking and evaluation of public, private and non-profit sector responses to the Los Angeles Civil Unrest of 1992; assessments of various comprehensive community based poverty intervention strategies in several US cities; studies of inter-ethnic minority politics around community building efforts; and research on tenant organizing in public housing developments. Jackson has also provided technical assistance to several inner city community improvement organizations including community development corporations, service provision agencies and various community consortia.

Milda Saunders

Ms. Saunders is currently a Research Assistant in the Urban Institute's Center for Public Finance and Housing. Prior to joining the Urban Institute, she worked as a policy intern for the Providence Plan. She attended Brown University and graduated with a B.A. in Public Policy in 1995. Her senior thesis, "The Issues and Actors in the Making of the Crime Bill: An examination of the Congressional Black Caucus in the policy-making process" was presented at the 1995 Conference of Black Political Scientists.