

**Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance
and
Johns Hopkins University**

**Independent study:
Indicators used in 5 cities**

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PURPOSE

This is a report comparing different cities and their methods for measuring the quality of life in neighborhoods using indicators.

INTRODUCTION

I interned for Baltimore Neighborhoods Indicators Alliance with the guidance of Odette Ramos and of Professor Crenson from Johns Hopkins University for the 2002 spring semester. My main assignment was to create a summary report tracking indicators from already established neighborhood organizations. The assignment was to look at:

1. What are some things other cities have done before?
2. What was their measuring process?

The resultant paper is the combination of a trend analysis and a literary review comparing given indicators and the standard processes each city used for measuring the indicators.

METHODS

I researched using material from the extensive files at Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance located at 2300 North Charles Street. I also found relevant information from the Internet. Many of the organizations have published articles and handbooks describing their methods.

ISSUES

Why is there a problem with indicators? Why is there a lack of consistency?

1. The ambiguity and complexity of any effort to reveal the values of a society
2. The ineffectiveness of indicators that gloss over controversy or conflict

(Source: Cobb, Clifford "Measurement Tools and the Quality of Life, page 2)

Because the relationship between indicators and the qualities for which they stand cannot be directly observed and are open to interpretation, there will always be competing ways of defining the fundamental character of the good life. The following are examples of three different cities who have used different types of indicators to measure the quality of life in their neighborhoods.

DEFINITION OF AN INDICATOR:

What are neighborhood indicators?

Indicators provide evidence of conditions or problems. Indicators may be qualitative or quantitative. There are also limits to how useful indicators may be. Indicators offer a snapshot or a glimpse of a larger situation, but don't offer absolute understanding. Indicators can help measure change over time, but don't measure end objectives. In a neighborhood context, indicators help evaluate whether local actions are having the effects desired. A neighborhood can use indicators to help determine that conditions exist and whether the direction the neighborhood is headed is consistent with community goals. Indicators can allow a group to hold itself, its public officials, its funders and supporting institutions accountable to neighborhood goals. Finally, indicators can also be used as a reporting tool that can help build consensus for an action strategy.

According to the BNIA website, an indicator is the statistic or measure that helps describe a social or physical condition. An indicator may be used to measure achievement or progress toward an outcome but in its purest definition it is the measure alone. Indicators are used by a variety of organizations, businesses, and administrative agencies to *indicate* how they are progressing towards their goals over time. The information enables them to make plans and take action towards achieving their goals in a more informed way.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Each neighborhood group I researched have all emphasized the same goal of attaining a stronger environment for people to live in. In analyzing neighborhood indicators they all are striving to improve the quality of life in their respective cities by keeping track of indicators. The neighborhoods I analyzed have broad similarities but the indicators they selected for the measurement of the overall health of their cities have emphasized different points in terms of what each city felt they needed to focus on.

Neighborhood Progress, Inc. is Cleveland's neighborhood organization for measuring indicators and dedicated to improving the quality of life. It has identified 15 main indicators as a source for analyzing their neighborhoods. The categories they identify as important are the economy, housing market, retail services, neighborhood market conditions, stability and community health, and well being. In Cleveland, the emphasis on the selection of indicators was focused on economic indicators. Cleveland has a declining economy that has been a source of distress in addition to the rising crime rates, which may be the source for their focusing on the economy. In terms of achieving goals, Cleveland has created five areas it deems important for measuring the "health" of their neighborhoods. Within these goals are the 15 indicators it used for measurement.

The UNC Charlotte Urban Institute has coordinated efforts in measuring the indicators for Charlotte. Charlotte evaluated their neighborhoods on a calculative level, by computing the mean values on a score of 18 indicators. The categories they divided their indicators under are broader than other cities: economic, physical, crime and social. The indicators under these categories are different from other cities because of they only use a few indicators to define these dimensions. I found that their emphasis in choosing indicators leans towards the social dimension and education of their neighborhoods. The areas Charlotte has focused on improving are categorized under the title of "City Within a City". Although 58.3 percent of Charlotte's population is white, 32.7 percent of the population is black and in the areas they have analyzed which are of concern, blacks consist of the majority. This might be the reason why they consider the social livability of the area more important than other indicators.

The Piton Foundation is the organization measuring and keeping track of Denver's neighborhoods. In my research, I found Denver focuses their indicators on the demographics of their community. The growing Latino/Hispanic population in Denver poses a growing problem which the city has to accommodate. They are the largest minority group in Denver, accounting for 63 percent of the city's population growth. The demographics in Denver are rapidly changing and as a result, an emphasis on these indicators have been stressed as important. The Piton Foundation also emphasizes their goal as providing opportunities for children and their families to move from poverty and dependence to self-reliance. They have identified 52 indicators under six different categories: demographic, housing, economic, education, health and safety.

The Jacksonville Community Council, Inc. tracks and measures indicators in Jacksonville. Jacksonville has 9 elements of quality of life measurements: education, economy, natural environment, social environment, culture/recreation, health, government/politics, mobility, and public safety. I find Jacksonville to have a very comprehensive and organized method of measurement. Jacksonville has a problem with their aging population and declining birthrates. As a result, Jacksonville looks at the environment and social dimensions of their neighborhoods.

The economic aspect of Jacksonville is not a major source of discontent, but the declining population will lead to potential decline. The enrollment of children in schools has gone down and improving the overall quality of life would hopefully attract younger and more people to live in Jacksonville.

The Providence Plan is the organization that has monitored the progress of Providence using indicators. Providence has 24 indicators split under five areas they chose as important: economic, civic culture, education, urban fabric, and housing. Providence has a large number of whites in their city. It has a healthy population spread and their goals for using indicators is to restore hope and create opportunity for the people of Providence. They emphasize retaining the city's middle class. The majority of Providence's population is educated, so the overall analysis is very broad. I find the types of indicators used for their categories are spread out.

The differences between the cities I analyzed for this paper can be seen in the indicators each has felt is important. Providence and Jacksonville are the only two cities with a separate section dedicated to civic culture and participation in the government. All of the cities have an economic and social category in terms of analysis. Providence does not have a crime dimension when all the other cities has at least one measure for crime, especially Charlotte. Jacksonville and Denver has a health dimension that the other neighborhoods do not have. The difference is that Jacksonville has more indicators of "health" than Denver does.

The methods for measuring indicators for these cities are similar. Many of these cities use Census Data as a source for obtaining a lot of their information. They also look towards established organization for their data. Where there are gaps, they have created surveys to analyze the dimensions that lack information. If there was an exact form to measure indicators, then I feel the process would be a lot easier for neighborhood organizations in terms of "ranking". One of the problems for cities in terms of finding indicators is to narrow down the amount of information to ones that are most relevant. Factor analysis could be a possible technique for narrowing information.

Cleveland, Ohio

Cleveland, Ohio

Neighborhood Progress, Inc. compiled a list of indicators of healthy and competitive neighborhoods in broad categories, as follows:

1. **Economy**—Ensure that neighborhood residents participate fully in the region’s economy
 - a. Unemployment rate
 - b. Median household income
 - c. Median household income disparity
 - d. Employment/occupation by industry
 - e. Assessed property values: residential, commercial, and industrial properties
 - f. Neighborhood businesses, jobs, and payroll
 - g. Mode of transportation to work
 - h. Automobile registration

2. **Housing market**—Ensure an adequate supply of high-quality, affordable, and market-competitive housing for all income levels
 - a. Housing unit
 - b. Median value
 - c. Housing affordability index
 - d. Owner-occupancy rate
 - e. Permits for new construction
 - f. Total mortgage lending
 - g. Residential properties listed in poor condition
 - h. Total home-improvement loans
 - i. Median sales prices of homes, new/old
 - j. Median value for housing unit
 - k. Assembled vacant land

3. **Retail services**—Enhance the neighborhood’s market appeal and resident satisfaction by increasing the quality and convenience of commercial and retail services.
 - a. Number and type
 - b. New square footage
 - c. Total new investment
 - d. Storefront renovations complete
 - e. Vacancy: properties, land
 - f. Income and retail spending power
 - g. Organized business interest
 - h. Tax delinquencies
 - i. Assessed values

4. **Neighborhood market conditions**—Shape a healthy and competitive neighborhood by providing basic neighborhood services and amenities
 - a. Crime rate

- b. Public sector investment: capital budget, Community Development Block Grant
 - c. Commute time, mode of transportation, automobile ownership
 - d. Acres of open space, beaches, parks, playgrounds, and natural habitat
 - e. Miles of bike paths, number of swimming pools
 - f. Number and type of recreational and educational programs
 - g. Number and type of social services
 - h. Investment in public infrastructure, streets, curbs, sidewalks, signage, and landscaping
- 5. Stability and community health**—Development a stable and healthy neighborhood community by building a common vision, community institutions, a positive sense of place, and the ability to act on behalf of itself
- a. Total population: ethnic/racial
 - b. CDC
 - c. Effective leadership
 - d. Adopted vision and plan
 - e. Annual neighborhood events
 - f. Neighborhood identity signs
 - g. Local newspaper
 - h. Historic properties (# preserved and \$ invested)
 - i. Voter turnout
 - j. Organizations/block clubs
 - k. Neighborhood vision/plan
 - l. Linkages, both internal/external
 - m. Vacant parcels
- 6. Well being**—Ensure that families and children are receiving the services and opportunities needed to prosper, enjoy, and fully participate in community life.
- a. High school drop-out rate
 - b. High school graduates plus
 - c. Household income disparity rate
 - d. Poverty rate
 - e. Public assistance recipients
 - f. Food-stamp recipients
 - g. Female heads of households
 - h. Births to teen mothers
 - i. Educational proficiency scores

Cleveland identified 15 key indicators of healthy and competitive neighborhoods that are used to measure the degree of change (pg 30). They grouped them under categories of “goals”. The “goals” category had certain indicators that were supposed to measure up and provide a measure for how far off or how near the goals were for certain neighborhoods.

Goals	Indicators
Healthy and Competitive Neighborhood Economy	1. Unemployment Rate 2. Median Household Income and

	Household Income Disparity 3. Assessed Property Values: Residential, Commercial, and Industrial
Healthy and Competitive Housing Market	4. Owner-Occupancy Rate 5. Permits for New Construction or Price for New Home 6. Median Sales Price of Single-family Homes 7. Total Conventional Home-purchase Loans 8. Total Home-improvement Loans
Healthy and Competitive Neighborhood Services and Amenities	9. Crime Rate 10. Vacant Storefronts
Healthy and Stable Community	11. Vacant Parcels 12. Social Capital: Voter Turnout 13. Populations
Healthy and Prospering Children and Families	14. Poverty Rate 15. Educational Attainment: High School Plus and/or Proficiency Test Scores

The reason why they chose each indicator differs and they state the reasons why for each and link it to a goal they would like to see each neighborhood achieve.

1. The Unemployment Rate

Unemployment is an indicator of how many people are seeking employment. It measures to what extent neighborhood residents are fully participating in the regional economy, and it provides a quick scan of the neighborhood residents' economic conditions. Understanding the regional economy will help determine if market forces support or constrain efforts to improve job opportunities. It also is an indicator of residents' success in improving and gaining employment. The data comes from the U.S. Census.

2. The Median Household Income or Household Income Disparity

This is an indicator because earning determine housing market demand and ultimately residential spatial distribution. That is, income determines where and what homes people choose based on housing prices and neighborhood conditions. This indicator also measures gains in middle- and upper-income households living in Cleveland neighborhoods or whether the economic strength of the neighborhood is improving or declining. A household-income disparity indicator can also illustrate the income gap between the neighborhood's higher and lower incomes. It provides a closer look at overall prosperity of the neighborhood residents. The disparity will be reduced only if incomes in the bottom percentile rise faster than incomes in the top percentile. Recognizing disparities among households within and between neighborhoods encourages strategies to lessen the disparities. The data comes from the U.S. Census. The median is the number where half the households have income above it and half the households have income below it. Income per capita is calculated by totaling all the income earned in a given year within the neighborhood or target area and then dividing that number by the number of households living in the area.

3. Assessed Property Values

This indicator is a strong measure of investment in the neighborhoods, as well as the progress among different portions within each neighborhood. It effectively shows the increases or decreases in residential, commercial, and industrial property values as a result of development, investment in new housing, and retail construction and rehabilitation. This indicator shows a neighborhood value compared to other neighborhoods, the city, the county, and the region. It is also an indicator of the city's health and its tax base. In summary, it is the clearest measure of economic progress. The data was from Cleveland State University's Housing Policy Research Program which provides data, based on tax records from the County Auditor's Office, on an annual basis.

4. Owner Occupancy

A high rate of owner occupancy within a neighborhood indicates a neighborhood's stability. It reflects confidence in the future value of homes and the neighborhood's appeal as a good place to live. It indicates a household's stake in the neighborhood's future and increasing affordability. A reduction in owner occupancy can be an early indicator of potential decline. It signals a change in the market appeal, a household's concern about the future value, and an increase in speculative small investors, often resulting in decreased maintenance. The data comes from the U.S. Census.

5. Permits for New Construction

This is an indicator because it shows the change of the single- and two-family housing market within the neighborhood. It also indicates the degree of confidence by the key decision-makers: households, developers and builders, and financial and real estate institutions. It also indicates access to private capital. The data represents "permits issued" as opposed to "units completed" and is from the Department of Community Development, Division of Administrative Services, and the City Planning Commission.

6. Median Sales Price of Single-family Homes

Sales price reflects the market. If sales prices are increasing at the same rate citywide, the health of the values in a particular neighborhood is positive. This is also an indicator that looks at homebuyers' willingness to invest in the neighborhood because safety, overall physical conditions, neighborhood amenities, and retail services have improved, and because financing mechanisms are providing better housing and the opportunity to acquire a home. The data is from the County Auditor, Cleveland State University, and City of Cleveland.

7. Conventional Home-purchase Loans

This indicator is the total number of applications for the purpose of purchasing a home. Conventional lending indicates that (1) the households with choices selected a particular neighborhood; (2) households have increasing equity in their homes, due in part to increasing values; (3) home ownership is increasing; (4) there is an increased influence of lending institutions and intermediaries in the neighborhoods' housing market; and (5) families have access to capital. Of significance to NPI is that it is a measure of private investment, which is fundamental to its strategy. The data is based on the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) and is available on a yearly basis.

8. Conventional Home-improvement Loans

Home improvement suggest that there is confidence in the future of the neighborhood, as well as the ability of the homeowner to afford repairs. It also represents the degree of private-sector

commitment and investment in the neighborhood by providing loans. More significant to the CDCs is that it is also a measurement of their effectiveness in participating in a range of home-repair programs. This data is based on the HMDA and is available on a yearly basis.

9. Crime Rate: Number of Violent Crimes Reported per 1000 population

The crime rate is one indicator of how safe people feel for themselves, their families, and their personal and business property. Crime rates reflect a community's economic health and a neighborhood's property value, as well as a household's decision about where to raise and educate its children. Crime rates influence a business owner's decision to remain in or leave the neighborhood, as well as the decision to locate in the neighborhood. The sources of this data are the Department of Public Safety and the Cleveland Police Department.

10. Vacancy Rate of Storefronts

This indicator addresses the vitality of neighborhood commercial areas. It reflects the health of retail activity, the extent to which existing services meet residents' needs, the neighborhood economy, the extent to which residents are willing to shop in the neighborhood, and the sense of community. Vacant storefronts also project a market image of the neighborhood to the general public. Commercial activity helps the neighborhood both socially and economically. Each CDC could collect this data.

11. Percent Vacant Parcels

This indicator measures the problems and the opportunities of a neighborhood. It also indicates how well the neighborhood has been able to work with outside decision-makers in affecting positive change. That is, does a neighborhood have the capacity to work with the private sector and intermediaries to maintain and invest in new housing and retail businesses? Does the neighborhood have the capacity to work with developers and builders on development projects? Does it have the capacity to put together a deal? Does the city have the mechanisms in place to support the neighborhood and the private sector in redeveloping vacant lots? How does a neighborhood market itself when the "missing teeth" image projects a negative market image? The data is from the County Auditor.

12. Social Capital: Voter Turnout or Sense of Community

There is a growing consensus that inner-city neighborhoods suffer from a lack of social capital because they lack a strong social infrastructure in place to support revitalization efforts. This is an indicator because a neighborhood's stability and its ability to defend itself against threats and decline depend on its "social capital". Neighborhoods will not prosper unless they have the interest, groups, and institutions to ward off threats. Most importantly, this is an indicator because it has been tested empirically as a measure of the neighborhood's social capital or institutional infrastructure. The data is available from the Board of Elections.

13. Population

This is an indicator of stability. Cleveland neighborhoods experienced significant losses between 1980 and 1990. Much of the loss is attributable to economic changes, increase in crime, school busing, and poorer educational resources. Population loss leads to more vacant and abandoned housing and storefronts. Growth could be a result of new immigration groups, improved market appeal due to significant new improvements in the housing stock, and/or new construction, or a growing population who wish to remain in the neighborhood. The data comes from the U.S. Census.

14. Poverty Rate

This indicator illustrates the degree of poverty within a neighborhood. It also suggests the context within which community development efforts must operate. While poverty alleviation is an assumption, it is also one measure of whether these community development strategies have had a positive impact on poor residents in the neighborhoods in which they operate. The data comes from the U.S. Census.

15. Educational Attainment: High School Graduates Plus or Ninth-Grade Proficiency Test Scores

This is an indicator because education plays a critical role in the regional economy and its ability to compete worldwide. Education also plays a significant role in the quality of the community overall. A healthy neighborhood is one in which every member has an opportunity to acquire a quality education; that will provide the tools of learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving; and that will provide each member an opportunity to develop his or her full potential to become an effective member of the community. The data came from data on high school graduates plus the U.S. Census.

Charlotte, North Carolina

Charlotte, North Carolina

Charlotte's inner-city neighborhoods have been the focus of considerable investment and research over the past several years. In 1993 the City Within A City (CWAC) Neighborhood Assessment was published which revealed the issues the neighborhoods had to address in order to survive. In 1997, the CWAC Neighborhood Quality of Life Index was published. The Index evaluated the quality of life in each CWAC neighborhood through the analysis of multiple variables.

Charlotte divided their quality of life variables into four broad categories:

- a. Social dimension**—The social well being of a neighborhood is dependent on many interconnected issues. Neighborhoods with a desirable quality of life are economically and socially diverse, self-sufficient, have healthy populations with a mix of older and younger residents, are served by strong public schools, and have residents that are involved in community or neighborhood based civic organizations. These neighborhoods provide strong role models for youth and opportunities for young people to be involved in a variety of after-school activities. The social vitality of a neighborhood is one dimension of a comprehensive assessment of neighborhood quality of life.
- b. Physical dimension**—The physical appearance of a community is a valuable indicator of the level of social and economic distress experienced by residents. Deteriorated housing stock and vacant or abandoned businesses indicate a neighborhood in trouble or at risk. Conversely, well-maintained public areas and infrastructure, affordable and attractive housing, and accessibility to basic retail establishments indicate a low level of stress—a desirable and safe place to live. Lack of maintenance of neighborhood structures weakens the social fabric of a neighborhood. An abandoned, boarded-up home invites criminal activity, jeopardizing resident safety and scarring the appearance of the neighborhood.
- c. Crime dimension**—Crime rates play an integral role in the overall quality of life in an area. High rates of crime create an unstable and undesirable living environment. The Crime Dimension measures the rate of crime in each NSA and compares it to the crime rate for the City of Charlotte. By comparing crime rates between small geographic areas and the larger city area, it is easier to assess whether the rate of crime for a neighborhood is above or below average for the city. In this way, NSAs with crime conditions affecting quality of life can be identified.
- d. Economic dimension**—The economic vitality and the economic characteristics of a neighborhood are the most commonly cited quality of life indicators. Often indicators look at household income measures. As a consequence, the evaluation of economic vitality can easily become biased towards affluent neighborhoods. This report seeks to look at a different measure of economic vitality which is less biased towards higher income neighborhoods. This variable is the change in median NSA income.

Within these broad categories are they following 20 indicators and things they used to measure:

1. Social Dimension

- a. Percent of persons receiving food stamps
- b. Percent of persons over age 64
- c. Average kindergarten score
- d. Dropout rate

- e. Percent of children passing competency exams
- f. Percent of births to adolescents
- g. Youth opportunity index
- h. Number of neighborhood organizations

2. Physical Dimension

- a. *Appearance index*
- b. Percent substandard housing
- c. Percent homeowners
- d. *Projected infrastructure improvement costs*
- e. Percent of persons with access to public transportation
- f. Percent of persons with access to basic retail
- g. Pedestrian friendliness index

3. Crime Dimension

- a. Violent crime rate
- b. Juvenile crime rate
- c. Property crime rate
- d. Crime hot spots

4. Economic Dimension

- a. Percent change in income

Method of Measurement

The method of measurement for Charlotte was based on a set of 20 variables collected for 73 City Within A City (CWAC) neighborhoods and 100 additional neighborhoods outside the urban core. The italicized indicators under “Physical Dimension” (appearance index and projected infrastructure improvement costs) were eliminated from analysis due to the lack of data. Thus the resulting analysis for the neighborhoods was based on 18 of the original 20 variables.

The data were standardized by computing the mean value for the neighborhoods on each of the 18 variables. The mean for each variable was given a value of zero and each neighborhood score was expressed in terms of the number of standard deviations above or below the mean (Z scores). This procedure converts all variables to the same unit and allows neighborhood scores to be added to derive an overall or composite score based on multiple variables. Some of the variables used in the analysis were inverse measures of the quality of life. The signs of the Z scores for these variables were reversed before summing scores for several variables to derive an overall or cumulative score for the quality of life.

An overall or composite quality of life index for each of the neighborhoods was determined by summing each neighborhood’s quality of life score for the four dimensions. In computing the overall index, the four dimensions were weighted in the following manner: Social, 30 %; Crime, 30%; Physical, 30%; and Economic, 10%. Once a weighted composite score was determined for each neighborhood, these scores were again standardized by setting the mean value to zero and expressing each neighborhood’s score in standard deviation units above or below the mean. Large positive scores indicate a high quality of life while large negative scores reveal a low quality of life.

Using 18 variables, they converted these variable values and cumulative scores into categories of “stable”, “threatened”, and “fragile”. “Stable” neighborhoods are defined as those that have few social problems, low rates of crime, few infrastructure and housing needs, and high levels of economic vitality. These are neighborhoods that score highly on the Social, Physical, Crime and Education dimensions. “Threatened” neighborhoods are defined as those that have relatively high on most of the dimensions but may have a significant problem on one or more of the dimensions. “Fragile” neighborhoods are defined as those that have generally low to moderate scores on all four dimensions. A fragile neighborhood has a lower quality of life and is “at risk” on multiple dimensions.

Denver, Colorado

Denver, Colorado

The Piton Foundation in Denver developed the 52 indicators in six key categories:

1. Demographic
2. Housing
3. Economic
4. Education
5. Health
6. Safety

Within these categories, the following are the indicators measuring each.

1. Demographic

- a. Population
- b. Number of children under 18
- c. Number of elderly over 65
- d. Percentage of population under 6
- e. Percentage of population 6-11
- f. Percentage of population 12-17
- g. Percentage of population 18-24
- h. Percentage of population 25-34
- i. Percentage of population 35-44
- j. Percentage of population 45-54
- k. Percentage of population 55-64
- l. Percentage of population 65 and older
- m. Percentage of African-American births
- n. Percentage of Lation births
- o. Percentage of non-Latino white births
- p. Percentage of other race births
- q. Percentage of births to teen (<18) mothers
- r. Teenage (15-19) birth rate
- s. Percentage of births to unwed mothers
- t. Percentage of children living with fathers only
- u. Percentage of children living with married parents
- v. Percentage of children living with mothers only
- w. Percentage of children living with no parent present
- x. Percentage of children living with single parents
- y. Percentage of population that is African-American
- z. Percentage of population that is American Indian
- aa. Percentage of population that is Asian/Pacific Islander
- bb. Percentage of population that is Latino
- cc. Percentage of population that in is non-Latino white
- dd. Percentage of population that is other race
- ee. Households
- ff. Persons per household
- gg. Total births

2. Housing

- a. Number of housing units
- b. Percentage of households living at current address <1 year
- c. Percentage of housing units built before 1940
- d. Percentage owner-occupied housing units
- e. Percentage of renters paying more than 30% of income on housing
- f. Average home sale price
- g. Percentage of housing which is publicly subsidized

3. Economic

- a. Percentage of persons receiving public assistance
- b. Number of persons age 18 or older on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- c. Number of persons less than age 18 on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- d. Percentage of children (<18) on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- e. Number of licensed child care slots
- f. Percentage of children <12 in subsidized child care
- g. Percentage of Denver Public School (DPS) children receiving free school lunch
- h. Percentage of children (<18) in poverty
- i. Percentage of persons in poverty
- j. Percentage of construction jobs
- k. Percentage of finance, insurance and real estate jobs
- l. Percentage of government jobs
- m. Percentage of manufacturing jobs
- n. Percentage of retail trade jobs
- o. Percentage of service jobs
- p. Percentage of transportation, communication, and public utility jobs
- q. Percentage of wholesale trade jobs
- r. Percentage of other jobs
- s. Totals jobs
- t. Average annual wage
- u. Average household income

4. Education

- a. Denver Public School (DPS) enrollment
- b. Percentage of DPS students who are African-American
- c. Percentage of DPS students who are Latino
- d. Percentage of DPS students who are non-Latino white
- e. Percentage of DPS students who are of other race
- f. Percentage of births to women with <12th grade education
- g. Percentage of persons age 25 or older with less than a 12th grade education
- h. Percentage of persons age 25 or older with a high school only education
- i. Percentage of persons age 25 or older with some college but no degree

- j. Percentage of persons age 25 or older with a college degree (Associates degree or higher)
- k. Percentage of students not English-proficient
- l. Percentage of students reading in lowest quartile on Iowa Test of Basic Skills (score <25)
- m. Percentage of students reading in second quartile on Iowa Test of Basic Skills (score 25-49)
- n. Percentage of students reading in third quartile on Iowa Test of Basic Skills (score 50-74)
- o. Percentage of students reading in top quartile on Iowa Test of Basic Skills (score 75+)
- p. Percentage of 9th-12th graders who graduated
- q. Dropouts as percentage of 9th-12th graders

5. Health

- a. Percentage of births to women entering prenatal care in first trimester
- b. Percentage of births to women entering prenatal care in second trimester
- c. Percentage of births to women receiving late or no prenatal care
- d. Percentage of children (<18) on Medicaid
- e. Low birthweight rate

6. Safety

- a. Percentage of property crimes
- b. Percentage of violent crimes
- c. Percentage of other crimes
- d. Crime rate per 1,000 persons
- e. Burglary crime rate per 1,000 households
- f. Violent crime rate per 1,000 persons
- g. Confirmed child abuse and neglect rate

Method of Measurement

The data collected by the Piton Foundation for *Neighborhood Facts* are available both in the annually published volume and in a searchable form on the foundation's website. The online version provides both a searchable database and a clickable map layout. The database can be searched by multiple counties, year ranges, and multiple indicators. The map layout allows users to access the most recent data available for individualized neighborhoods. Sources for the data in *Neighborhood Facts* include the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the Colorado Department of Human Services, the Denver Public Schools, and the Denver Regional Council of Governments.

Jacksonville, Florida

Jacksonville, Florida

The Jacksonville Community Council, Inc. is cited as the oldest ongoing and annually updated community indicators project in the US. Jacksonville has 9 elements of quality of life measurements:

1. **Education**—The system of public education (pre-kindergarten through 12th grade) and higher education, including adult education
 - a. Public high school graduation rate
 - b. Percentage of public school 10th graders taking the FCAT who achieve at levels 4 or 5 in reading and in math
 - c. Average public school teacher salary
 - d. Percentage of public school students attending desegregated schools
 - e. Percentage of public school teachers holding advanced degrees
 - f. Percentage of people surveyed who report believing that the quality of Duval County public education is “excellent” or “good” (telephone survey)
 - g. Higher education academic degrees and vocational-training certificates awarded
 - h. Total student participation in noncredit higher-education programs
2. **Economy**—The standard of living for local residents, including individual economic well-being and community economic health
 - a. Net employment growth
 - b. Unemployment rate
 - c. Poverty as measured by the percentage of public-school students participating in free or reduced-cost lunch programs
 - d. Affordability of a single-family home
 - e. Income available per person
 - f. New housing starts
 - g. Total taxable value of real property
 - h. Typical monthly household costs for JEA utilities (electric, water, sewer) combined
 - i. Gross tonnage handled by JAXPORT’s marine terminals
 - j. Tourism as measured by Bed-Tax revenues per cent tax levied
3. **Natural environment**—The earth’s ecosystem, including the quality and quantity of water and air, as well as visual aesthetics
 - a. Number of days that are the Air Quality Index is the “good” range
 - b. Gallons of motor fuels sold per person
 - c. Frequency of compliance in the St. Johns River and tributary streams with water standards for dissolved oxygen
 - d. Frequency of compliance in tributaries of the St. Johns River in Duval County with water standards for fecal-coliform bacteria
 - e. Average City potable-water consumption per household account
 - f. Water level in Floridan Aquifer wells monitored by the City
 - g. Tons per person of solid waste processed for recycling
 - h. New septic-tank permits issued

- i. New on-site commercial sign permits issued
- 4. **Social environment**—Collective or group concerns such as equality of opportunity, racial harmony, family life, human services, philanthropy, and volunteerism
 - a. Percentage of people surveyed who report that they believe racism to be a local problem (telephone survey)
 - b. Verified reports of child abuse and neglect per 1000 children under 18
 - c. Percentage of people surveyed who report having volunteered time in the community during the past year (telephone survey)
 - d. Resident live births to females under 18 per 1000 live births
 - e. Percentage of people surveyed who report having experienced racism during the past year while shopping, while at work, or while renting or buying housing in Jacksonville (telephone survey)
 - f. Total value of charitable philanthropy through federated fundraising campaigns in the region
 - g. Percentage of people surveyed, who report volunteering in the community, who say that they volunteered more than seven hours per week, on average (telephone survey)
- 5. **Culture/recreation**—The available supply and use of cultural, entertainment, and sports events, the performing and visual arts, public recreation, and leisure activities
 - a. Total public events/performances selected, major public facilities
 - b. Public and private financial support per person for arts organizations receiving City Cultural Service Grant funding
 - c. Public-part acreage per 1000 people
 - d. Number of participants in supervised sports activities at City parks and pools
 - e. Attendance at selected, major musical performances per 1000 people
 - f. Attendance at major sports facilities and events per 1000 people
 - g. Public-library use as measured by total circulation of library resources per person
 - h. City recreation expenditures per person for activities in parks and park maintenance
 - i. Miles of trails in City public parks per 40000 people
 - j. Number of City water-access public parks per 35000 people
- 6. **Health**—The fitness and health of residents and to the local system of medicine and health care
 - a. Disparity in infant deaths per 1000 live births between people of color and white people
 - b. Resident infant deaths per 1000 live births
 - c. Percentage of people surveyed who report having no health insurance (telephone survey)
 - d. Percentage of people surveyed who rate the health and medical-care available in Jacksonville “good” or “excellent” (telephone survey)
 - e. Resident deaths due to heart disease per 100000 people

- f. Disparity in the number of newly diagnosed cases of HIV between African Americans and the remaining population
 - g. Number of HIV/AIDS-related deaths per 100000 people
 - h. Packs of cigarettes sold per person
 - i. Resident deaths due to lung cancer per 100000 people
 - j. Alcohol use reported by youth
- 7. Government/politics**—Participation in public affairs, as informed citizenry, as well as leadership and performance in local government
- a. Percentage people surveyed who rate the quality of Jacksonville city-government elected leadership “good” or “excellent” (telephone survey)
 - b. Percentage of people surveyed who rate the quality of Duval County School Board elected leadership “good” or “excellent” (telephone survey)
 - c. Percentage of people surveyed who report feeling that they have “moderate influence” or “great influence” over local-government decision making (telephone survey)
 - d. Percentage of population 18 and older registered to vote
 - e. Percentage of registered voters who vote in scheduled general elections
 - f. Percentage of people surveyed who report being “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” with basic services of Jacksonville city government, such as streets, parks, trash removal, and libraries (telephone survey)
 - g. Percentage of people surveyed who report being “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied” with public-safety services of Jacksonville city government, such as rescue, fire, and police (telephone survey)
 - h. Percentage of people surveyed who report keeping up with local-government news “frequently” (telephone survey)
 - i. Percentage of local elected officials who are people of color Percentage of local elected officials who are female
 - j. Percentage of people surveyed who can name two current Jacksonville City Council members (telephone survey)
 - k. Percentage of households watching local early-evening television news
- 8. Mobility** –Opportunities for and convenience of travel within Jacksonville and between Jacksonville and other locations
- a. Percentage of working people surveyed who report commuting times of 25 minutes or less (telephone survey)
 - b. Average number of seats available daily on flights through Jacksonville International Airport
 - c. Destinations served by direct flights to and from Jacksonville International Airport
 - d. Total airline passengers flying in or out of the Jacksonville International Airport
 - e. Average weekday ridership on Jacksonville Transportation Authority buses per 1000 people
 - f. Average weekday miles of Jacksonville Transportation Authority bus service

- g. Percentage of Jacksonville Transportation Authority bus headways within 30 minutes during peak hours and 60 minutes during nonpeak hours
 - h. Average weekday ridership on the Skyway
- 9. Public safety**—The perception of personal safety and the quality of law enforcement, the incidence of crime and accidents, fire protection, and rescue services
- a. Index crimes per 100000 people
 - b. Reported number of Class Three and Class Four violations of the public-school Code of Student Conduct
 - c. Percentage of people surveyed who report feeling safe walking alone at night in their neighborhood (telephone survey)
 - d. Percentage of people surveyed who say they have been victims of a crime within the last year (telephone survey)
 - e. Percentage of rescue-call response times that are four minutes or under
 - f. Percentage of fire-call response times that are four minutes or under
 - g. Percentage of “priority-one” police-call response times that are five minutes or under
 - h. Motor-vehicle accidents per 1000 people

Method of Measurement

Importance

The indicator measures an aspect of the community’s quality of life which a diverse group of people in the community would agree is important, in relations to the community’s vision

Policy relevance

The indicator measure an aspect of the community’s quality of life concerning which the community can achieve positive change through public decision making and policies at the community level

Responsiveness

The indicator responds relatively quickly and noticeably to real changes in the quality of life as revealed by changes in the direction or slope of indicator’s trend line.

Validity

If the indicator’s trend line moves either upward or downward, a diverse group of people in the community would agree on whether the quality of life is improving or declining.

Understandability

The indicator measures an aspect of the community’s quality of life in a way that most citizens can easily understand and interpret, in relation to their own lives.

Clarity

The indicator uses clear measures that filter out extraneous factors. For instance, dollar indicators are reported in deflated, constant dollars; per-person rates are used where appropriate to factor out population growth; and raw numbers are used where total magnitudes are important

Outcome orientation

Where possible, the indicator measures a community outcome—the actual condition of the quality of life (e.g. the crime rate). Alternatively, it measures an outcome of the community’s response to a quality-of-life issue (e.g. police response time) rather than the input of the response itself (e.g. number of police officers).

Asset orientation

Where possible, the indicator measures a positive aspect of the community’s quality of life (the community’s assets rather than its liabilities) so that an increase in the indicator’s trend line reveals community improvement (e.g. the high-school graduation rate rather than the dropout rate).

Availability, timeliness, stability, and reliability

Data for the indicator are readily available and affordably accessible annually from a credible public or private source. If the data come from multiple sources, staff can readily compile and calculate the indicator numbers. Data are consistently collected, compiled, and calculated in the same way each year.

Representativeness

Taken together, the indicator set and the indicators within each Element, cover all the major dimensions of the community’s quality of life.

Providence, Rhode Island

Providence, Rhode Island

Examples of the types of indicators that can be used to monitor progress in Providence include the following:

1. Economic

- a. Number of business startups.
- b. Number of persons that are unemployed.
- c. Number of persons that are employed.
- d. Number of persons applying for a form of public assistance.
- e. Number of abandoned/vacant commercial properties.
- f. Office market vacancy rate.

2. Civic Culture

- a. Percentage of eligible voters who vote in local elections.
- b. Number of people who volunteer.
- c. Attendance at community planning meetings.

3. Education

- a. Percentage of high school graduates who go on to college.
- b. Percentage of high school graduates who are working within six months.
- c. Percentage of students who start but do not complete high school.
- d. Number of people who complete a job training program.
- e. Percentage of job training program graduates who are working within six months.

4. Urban Fabric

- a. Bus ridership per 1,000 people.
- b. Number of metered parking spaces downtown.
- c. Number of city public recreation sites.
- d. Miles of maintained greenway.
- e. Number of trees planted.

5. Housing

- a. Number of people with subsidized housing.
- b. Number of vacant/abandoned housing units.
- c. Number of buildable, vacant lots.
- d. Number of people receiving emergency shelter.

Method of Measurement

The National Civic League has developed the Civic Index, which is designed to assist communities in identifying and assessing their strengths and weaknesses, and then developing collaborative responses to build on their strengths and shore up their weaknesses. Examples of the types of items tracked in the Civic Index include the capacity of neighborhood and civic groups; whether government works collaboratively with other sectors; the types of mechanisms for promoting inter-neighborhood cooperation and informal dispute-resolution; the extent to which community foundations work together on local problems and the extent to which they target their investments to local problems; the degree to which citizens and key stakeholders in the community are involved in community planning; the willingness of key leaders to take a long-term as opposed to a short-term view on policy issues; and the ways in which communities demonstrate their pride, to name but a few. The items included in the Civic Index provide an important and appropriate inventory for the key skills, competencies and tools communities need to effectively solve their problems and move forward. As part of its community-based strategic planning process, Providence is committed to using the Civic Index as a diagnostic tool to assist in assessing its own strengths and weaknesses.

Additional Points

THE PROVIDENCE GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (GIS)

In 1993, The Providence Plan began developing a comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS) on Providence and its neighborhoods, with an emphasis on people-oriented data related to the problems of persistent poverty and neighborhood decline. While the city had participated in the Census Bureau's User Defined Area Program in both the 1980 and 1990 decennial censuses, there was no comprehensive reference source that planners, policy makers, community-based organizations, and concerned citizens could turn to in order to obtain a detailed portrait of their city or their neighborhood. We felt it imperative, therefore, to develop such a comprehensive database in order to provide the necessary foundation to move our strategic planning process forward and to assist a number of city, state and community-based organizations that were beginning to develop new program initiatives to tackle a number of difficult urban problems.

The information that has been compiled in this system has provided a solid foundation for undertaking the comprehensive community-based strategic planning process that has been used to develop Providence's strategic plan and has led to a much broader and deeper understanding of city and neighborhood needs in the areas of housing and community development, economic development, education, employment and training, children and family services, and public safety, to name but a few. It will become an even more important tool to monitor our progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of our approaches to community problems.

The Providence Plan's GIS system is based on an enhanced version of the Census Bureau's TIGER/LINE base map and includes a variety of census data for the city at the block, block group, census tract, neighborhood, and ward levels. Most important, The Providence Plan's GIS system includes an extensive collection of data from city and state administrative agencies that has heretofore not been easily accessible, largely due to incompatibilities in the units for which data is recorded and because of concerns regarding confidentiality. Agencies that are participating in The Providence Plan's GIS system include the following: RI Department of Human Services (AFDC, Food Stamps, Medical Assistance households and their characteristics); the RI Department of Health (vital statistics, WIC program participants); the RI Department of Children, Youth and Families (child abuse, foster care); the RI Department of Employment and Training (employment and unemployment); the Providence School Department (characteristics of public school students); the Providence Police (crime incidents) and Fire departments (fires); the Providence Plan Housing Corporation (properties assisted through various PPHC programs); the Providence Housing Authority (public and assisted housing units); and the Providence Department of Inspections and Standards (vacant and abandoned properties).

Individual record data from databases maintained by these and other agencies have been address matched and geocoded, and then aggregated to appropriate units of analysis, generally the census block group. This process allows for a much richer profile of neighborhood needs and conditions than has previously been possible, as this technique allows two barriers to be broken: the lack of uniformity in geographic areas for which data is maintained (e.g., census tracts, health planning areas, school districts, etc.) and confidentiality (by reporting statistics that represent the aggregation of data from individual records, privacy and anonymity are preserved). In addition, The Providence Plan has geocoded a wide variety of the city's social infrastructure, including locations of schools, hospitals and health centers, police and fire stations, libraries, community centers and recreation facilities, and social service agencies, to name but a few. It is now

possible, for example, to create a map showing the distribution of babies born to mothers who received no or late prenatal care, and overlay on that map the locations of the city's hospitals and community health centers along with the public transit route structure (see map 22-1). Such maps instantly allow one to readily identify high need/low accessibility neighborhoods.

Although The Providence Plan GIS is only a little more than a year old, it has already had a significant impact on raising the level of discussion and deliberation on public policy problems relating to persistent poverty and neighborhood decline. Further, The Providence Plan GIS has not been used simply as an academic planning tool, but has had a direct effect on program formulation and evaluation, and has influenced the allocation of millions of dollars in existing and new public funds. Examples include the siting of neighborhood-based family centers, housing rehabilitation assistance, recreation and open-space enhancements, community policing, and arson prevention, to name but a few.

To promote broader dissemination of the information that has been compiled in this unique data base, and to encourage the key stakeholders in the community to gain a better understanding of the city and its neighborhoods, a Providence Neighborhood Fact Book was created. The data presented in this reference source are presented in a variety of formats (tables, charts, graphs, maps) for several levels of geography. The databook includes information on several topics related to urban revitalization, including the economic base, population, race and ethnicity, education, employment, income, housing, crime, and health, among others. In addition, more than 100 theme maps are included that show the spatial distribution, primarily at the census block group level, for a variety of demographic, social and economic characteristics of the population including crime data, and several indicators related to the quality of the city's housing stock. Also, a map is included for each of the city's 34 public schools, showing the location of each school and a point distribution of each student that attended that school during the 1993 school year, with a different symbol used for each racial and ethnic group.

The Providence Plan GIS system has been nationally recognized for its design, function and use as the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association designated The Providence Plan as runner-up to the winner of the Corporate Systems Award in its 1994 Exemplary Systems in Government Awards Competition.

An important contribution of The Providence Plan GIS has been its ability to dispel myths and misimpressions about the city and its neighborhoods. These include racial composition, distribution of public assistance households, and crime, as well as the distribution of resources, particularly housing assistance. As Providence moves forward in the implementation of its strategic plan, GIS will be an important tool that will allow us to monitor our progress, assess our performance, and fine-tune our strategies to address the city's most pressing problems.

MONITORING, OVERSIGHT AND EVALUATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITIES

Using the example of the Providence Plan, monitoring, oversight and evaluation of strategic plan activities is an important factor for success. One of the most critical aspects of the success of Providence's implementation of its strategic plan is the structures and processes put in place for monitoring, oversight and evaluation of the activities included in the strategic plan, particularly those that are assisted with federal Enterprise Community funds.

In an effort to better integrate the grass-roots, community-based strategic planning process with the more formal lines of authority and responsibility in local governance, an Enterprise Community Monitoring and Oversight Committee is established in Providence, consisting of representatives from city and state government, the private sector and the community. The committee, which is co-chaired by the Director of the Department of Planning and Development and the Executive Director of The Providence Plan, will include the following members:

- Chair, City Council Committee on Urban Redevelopment, Renewal and Planning.
- Chair, City Council Finance Committee.
- Two members appointed by the City Council, preferably one member from the private sector and one from a community-based organization or neighborhood resident association within the Enterprise Community boundaries.
- Two members appointed by the mayor, preferably one member from the private sector and one from a community-based organization or neighborhood resident association within the Enterprise Community boundaries.
- Two members appointed by the governor, preferably one member from the private sector and one from a community-based organization or neighborhood resident association within the Enterprise Community boundaries.
- Director or designee, Rhode Island Department of Human Services.
- Director or designee, Rhode Island Department of Economic Development.
- Director or designee, Department of Environmental Management.
- Director, Providence-Cranston Private Industry Council/Regional Employment and Training Board.
- Chairman of the Board, The Providence Plan.
- Executive Director, Providence Plan Housing Corporation.
- Executive Director, Providence Housing Authority.
- Superintendent, Providence Public Schools.
- Chair, Community Centers Association.
- Representative, Rhode Island Hospital.

The committee meets periodically to review and monitor the progress of Enterprise Community-funded programs and activities. The committee may suspend funding for a program or activity if it has determined that the program or activity is not making satisfactory progress. If all efforts at remediation fail, then Enterprise Community funds allocated to that program or activity may be reallocated to another activity, preferably for one within the same program category, and for an activity or program that is consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

In addition, the *ProVision* Steering Committee that was created to guide the community-based strategic planning process used in the preparation of Providence's community-based strategic

plan will continue to meet periodically. This group will play a critical role in further developing and enhancing the city's civic infrastructure, particularly in the areas of proactive problem solving, long-term community planning, and strengthening linkages and bonds within and across key sectors of the community.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PICKING INDICATORS

1. Design an indicator system for the explicit purpose of changing things—not just to monitor trends
2. Develop a single integrated system that can support one-stop shopping
3. Develop indicators at the neighborhood level—not just for the city as a whole
4. Build a data warehouse—not just a set of files on indicators
5. Serve multiple users but emphasize using information to build capacity in poor communities
6. Democratize information—help stakeholders use information directly themselves
7. Help stakeholders use data to tackle individual issues, but do so in a way that leads toward more comprehensive strategies
8. Use information as a bridge to promote local collaboration
9. Use available indicators but recognize their inadequacies—particularly the lack of sufficient data on community assets
10. Ensure integrity in the data and the institution that provides them

Source: Kingsley, Thomas. “Building and Operating Neighborhood Indicator Systems: A Guidebook.

21 NATIONAL REGIONAL INDICATORS

The reason why I added this section in this paper is to give an example of indicators on the national level. With the rise of neighborhoods using similar indicators, a consistent database should be created to make it easier for other neighborhoods to join in the efforts as well. The National Regional Indicators provides a baseline against which to monitor the state of the regions, collectively and continually, in the twenty-first century.

1. Economic Vitality

- a. Gross metropolitan product per capita
- b. Percent of population with high school and higher degrees
- c. International export trade (percentage of total trade, value of exports/worker or per capita)
- d. Unemployment rate—central city versus suburban average adjusted for inner ring suburbs
- e. Balanced job growth (percentage growth in jobs compared with growth in population across region)

2. Social Equity

- a. Per capital income—central city versus suburban average adjusted for inner ring suburbs
- b. Comparative poverty rate by census tracts (percentage of population below the poverty line)—central city versus suburban average adjusted for inner ring suburbs
- c. Median household income versus median owner-occupied housing value
- d. Uninsured population (percentage of population without health insurance coverage)
- e. Racial dissimilarity index

3. Livability/Growth

- a. Rate of population growth decline compared to land consumption
- b. Acres of parkland/open space per 1000 population
- c. Average commuting travel time
- d. Number of violent crimes per 100000 population (central city versus suburbs adjusted for inner ring suburbs)
- e. Total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita
- f. Number of days per year that the Pollution Standard Index (PSI) in the unhealthful range
- g. Percentage of population living within .25 miles of greenspace or a convenience store

4. Governance

- a. Effectiveness of the regional governance network (existence of regional public, private, civic, multi-sector, etc. organizations)

- b. Percentage of eligible persons voting in local elections
- c. Total debt as percentage of annual revenue
- d. Communities with growth management plans/regions with regional compacts

CONCLUSION

Each city in the above report focuses on different aspects of what they consider are important indicators for analyzing the quality of life. These cities have been effective in recording the status of their neighborhoods, but there has yet to be a standard for cities to model their indicators on. Although there are organizations like the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, there is no standard that every city uses as a baseline. This could be due to the nuances of each city and the differing characteristics each city has.

A method for creating a smaller set of indicators used for measuring the quality of life in cities is through factor analysis. The main applications of factor analytic techniques are: (1) to *reduce* the number of variables and (2) to *detect structure* in the relationships between variables, that is to *classify variables*. Therefore, factor analysis is applied as a data reduction or structure detection method (the term *factor analysis* was first introduced by Thurstone, 1931). There are many excellent books on factor analysis. For example, a hands-on how-to approach can be found in Stevens (1986); more detailed technical descriptions are provided in Cooley and Lohnes (1971); Harman (1976); Kim and Mueller, (1978a, 1978b); Lawley and Maxwell (1971); Lindeman, Merenda, and Gold (1980); Morrison (1967); or Mulaik (1972). The interpretation of secondary factors in hierarchical factor analysis, as an alternative to traditional oblique rotational strategies, is explained in detail by Wherry (1984) (<http://www.statsoftinc.com/textbook/stfacan.html>).

The growing number of organizations dedicated to the health of neighborhoods is encouraging and reflects the commitment to creating a better place to live for Americans. These groups and organizations are relatively new and should create a standard template for other cities to follow. Indicators have similarities and the methods for measurement are still vague. A method for measurement should be found so that other cities can use the same standard to measure against. That way, not only would neighborhoods be ranked within the respective cities, but also in a national context as well. If cities are ranked nationally, more funds could be provided to the cities from the government on a need basis. This could help cities that are in dire need of funds and more prosperous cities could also help those in need.

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**Much of the information in this report was copied from the sources due to the content of the data.*