SUCCESS MEASURES®

Evaluating Community Stabilization Efforts at the Neighborhood Level:

A NeighborWorks® Pilot with Success Measures®

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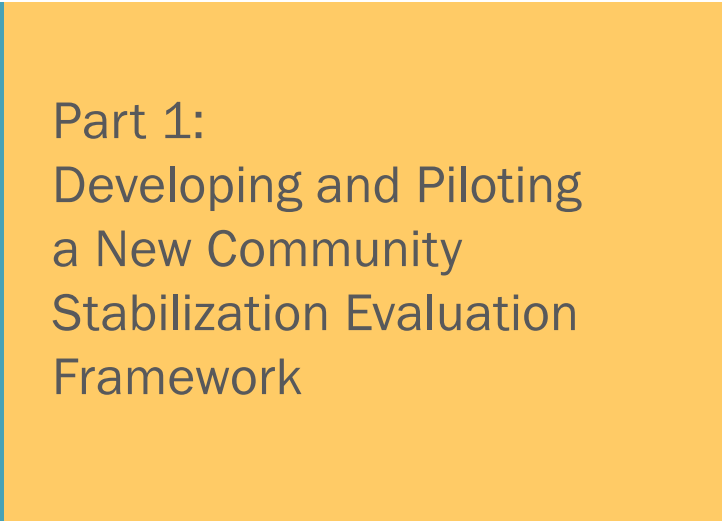
I. Introduction

As localities across the country have grappled with record numbers of foreclosures, instability in their housing markets and the myriad of problems caused by the recent economic downturn, community residents, nonprofit organizations, and public sector agencies have been hard at work addressing the impacts of this crisis as it plays out at the neighborhood level. A number of communities have begun to make progress in their stabilization efforts through a strategic combination of innovative local, state and national partnerships[1]. However, at this writing, the demand for creative strategies and investment continues to escalate as does the need to learn about how these interventions are impacting communities over time.

NeighborWorks® America has played a leading role in supporting both national and local responses to address the needs of communities most impacted by the economic and foreclosure crises. Its key contributions include:

- Serving as a collaborating founder and ongoing sponsor of the National Community Stabilization Trust, which facilitates the transfer of foreclosed properties from financial institutions nationwide to local housing providers to promote productive property reuse and neighborhood stability. In addition to NeighborWorks America, NCST's sponsors include Enterprise Community Partners; the Housing Partnership Network; LISC; National Urban League; and the National Council of La Raza.

- Providing over $7.5 million in grant funding and focused technical assistance to 68 of its affiliated NeighborWorks organizations to support their community stabilization initiatives. These efforts were designed to complement and strengthen the NeighborWorks organizations' local initiatives funded through the three rounds of federal (HUD) Neighborhood Stabilization Program awards as well as other public and private investments to help stabilize and revitalize communities.

- Creating and hosting of www.stablecommunities.org , a specialized online information and networking resource for community stabilization practitioners that has been visited by almost 74,000 users.

- Conducting training courses, symposia, web conferences and other information resources for the field that have reached more than 3,500 practitioners and organizations nationally.

- Developing the Success Measures® Community Stabilization Evaluation Framework, an outcome focused evaluation framework and set of data collection instruments that organizations and local governments can use to measure and better understand how their focused stabilization efforts are changing key housing market, community condition and resident confidence factors essential to strong, vibrant neighborhoods.

This report summarizes this last component of NeighborWorks America's efforts, the development of the Success Measures Community Stabilization Evaluation Framework and its pilot use by affordable housing and community development organizations who are members of the 235-member NeighborWorks network.

The report begins with a contribution by Alan Mallach, Senior Fellow at the Metropolitan Policy Program, Brookings Institution and Senior Fellow at the National Housing Institute. Mr. Mallach is a leading scholar of community revitalization who outlines the challenges facing communities hard hit by foreclosure and provides background on the key housing market, financial, policy and community dynamics that must be addressed in stabilization efforts.

Next the reader will find a description of how Success Measures, a social enterprise based at NeighborWorks America that offers outcome evaluation services for the community development field, engaged a working group of leading researchers and other experts on the impacts of foreclosure in communities, as well as a sample of local community stabilization practitioners, to

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[1] Gass, Anne, *Implementing the Neighborhood Stabilization Program: Community Stabilization in the NeighborWorks Network, NeighborWorks America, 2011.*

help develop practical evaluation measures to document and learn from community stabilization efforts. In addition to outlining the resulting four-part evaluation design and set of new measures developed, the report describes a pilot process in 2009 and 2010 through which NeighborWorks member organizations gathered baseline data about the communities in which they are targeting community stabilization programs and investments. The report includes profiles of nine of these organization's evaluation efforts as well as key findings based on analysis of data collected on common measures across the nine localities.

Finally, the report provides examples of the Success Measures community stabilization data collection tools now available for use by nonprofit organizations, public sector agencies, researchers and others through subscription to the Success Measures Data System (www.successmeasures.org) which provides full online data management services for conducting community stabilization evaluations over time. Additionally, an extended print version of this publication, which includes the complete set of all 13 community stabilization tools, is available for purchase at $35.00 by contacting successmeasures@nw.org or 202-220-2330.

II. Thinking About Community Stabilization Programs

Alan Mallach

Crisis and Response

The foreclosure crisis that began in 2006 and 2007, coupled with what has come to be known as the Great Recession of 2008-2009, has devastated neighborhoods across the United States, from the older industrial cities and inner-ring suburbs of the Northeast to the once fast-growing cities of the Sunbelt. Foreclosures, vacancies, distress sales and plummeting house prices have destabilized hundreds of communities, including many which – rightly or wrongly – were seen only a few years earlier to be gaining strength and stability. Today, five years after the onset of the crisis, its effects are still being played out. Foreclosures, although slowed down during the first half of 2011 by regulatory pressures arising from the 'robo-signing' scandal, are once again on the rise, unemployment rates remain severely elevated, and the housing market in most of the nation may yet to have hit bottom.

As the crisis spread, new organizations and initiatives emerged to address it. NeighborWorks America was among the leaders in those efforts, providing valuable resources for local counseling and foreclosure prevention efforts and helping to organize the National Community Stabilization Trust, which has played a key role in helping cities and non-profit organizations recycle vacant foreclosed properties. Most notably, in mid-2008, Congress established what came to be known as the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). Under this program, between 2008 and 2010 nearly $7 billion was provided to over 300 states, cities and nonprofits, including many NeighborWorks organizations (NWOs), to deal with foreclosed and abandoned properties in high-foreclosure areas. Grantees have used the program to buy and restore single family houses and apartment complexes, help struggling low and moderate income families buy REO properties, demolish dilapidated abandoned buildings, and build new homes on the vacant land created through demolition or land bank the sites for future use.

Thinking About Community Stabilization

For all the useful activity generated by the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, it raised important and often troubling questions. What is neighborhood or community stabilization, and what does it mean to stabilize a neighborhood? And, if the goal is to stabilize neighborhoods destabilized by foreclosures and vacancy, did the activities that were authorized under NSP and carried by NSP grantees constitute neighborhood stabilization? Or, was something missing? The answers to these questions go to the heart of what local governments and non-profits should be thinking about when they embark on efforts, whether through NSP or otherwise, to rebuild neighborhoods devastated by foreclosures and abandonment.

I have previously suggested that neighborhood stabilization can be defined as "the process of fostering market recovery, by reversing destabilizing trends and rebuilding resident and homebuyer confidence." In other words, as many researchers and practitioners have pointed out, a stable neighborhood is one with a healthy housing market, where people actively want to live, and where both residents and prospective buyers feel confident about the neighborhood's vitality and future prospects. It is not a neighborhood without problems; as Jane Jacobs wrote fifty years ago, "a successful neighborhood is a place that keeps sufficiently abreast of its problems so it is not destroyed by them." In a stable neighborhood, the power of the stabilizing forces – home buying, property improvement, and residents' engagement with their neighborhood, among others – outweighs that of the forces working to destabilize the community.

From that standpoint, it is clear that the NSP is at most one element – an important one, but still only one part – of a larger effort that must be pursued to bring about community stabilization. This is particularly true of the many neighborhoods where foreclosures are still raging. As long as large numbers of new foreclosures are taking place, a city or CDC may spend two years using NSP funds to restore 50 houses to productive use, only to look around at the end of those two

years to discover that in the meantime another 200 houses had been vacated and abandoned in the same neighborhood. In most cases, moreover, the foreclosed and vacant houses acquired under the NSP program make up only a small percentage of the total number of such houses in the neighborhood; the rest of the houses may be acquired by others, who may be speculators or 'flippers', or go begging. The outcomes of those properties ultimately affect the stability of the neighborhood as much as the outcomes of the properties that the nonprofit or CDC acquires.

A growing number of cities and nonprofits understand these dynamics, and are working to link their NSP efforts to other activities in order to stabilize neighborhoods, rather than simply create yet another affordable housing product; those products may or may not be desirable in themselves, but may have little or no impact on the stability and vitality of the neighborhood as a whole. That raises the question: what does it take to foster market recovery, reverse destabilizing trends, and rebuild confidence?

A full answer to that question would take far more space than I have available here, yet a few thoughts may be worth offering. First, dealing with vacant properties does matter, particularly in those cases where one or two vacant properties have the potential to destabilize the entire block. It is important to remember, though, that in most neighborhoods in most cities in the United States today, there is no need to spend large amounts of public money to rehab vacant properties just for the sake of adding more units to the housing stock. The value of putting vacant properties back to use lies in how that action affects the neighborhood's quality of life, and the confidence level of its residents.

While it is important to acquire and restore vacant properties, it is equally important to put in place and use effective regulations and incentives to make sure that absentee investors who may also be buying vacant properties in the neighborhood maintain those properties, rather than milking them and walking away. It may be even more important to stem the continuing tide of foreclosures, to help homeowners in the neighborhood keep their homes, or – where that is not possible – to organize orderly transitions, so they can stay in the community, and so that their property is reused rather than abandoned. Equally important is building the confidence of the much larger number of home owners who are not in trouble, making them feel that the neighborhood is turning around, and that it makes sense for

them to stay and invest in their properties and in their community rather than move out. Some homeowners may find their confidence return if they see the neighborhood's vacant properties returned to productive use, but seeing a handful reused, while many others continue to sit empty, may in itself have little or no effect.

The issues that may need to be tackled go well beyond the housing issues, narrowly defined, that have historically been the purview of many CDCs and nonprofit organizations. Rebuilding confidence may require organizing efforts to build community engagement, and addressing other destabilizing forces, such as increased crime and drug activity, or the deterioration of the public infrastructure such as neighborhood parks and playgrounds. Fostering a healthy housing market may involve reaching out beyond the neighborhood, marketing the area to the larger city and region as a desirable place to live. Such multi-dimensional efforts can rarely be carried out by a single organization or local government; they require nonprofits and city agencies to form partnerships with others, breaking down the barriers between public and private, between nonprofit organizations and profit-motivated businesses. This is not easy, but it is feasible. Many of the NeighborWorks organizations whose work is profiled in this report are leading the way, showing that it can be done.

Measuring Neighborhood Stabilization

It is not surprising that cities, nonprofits, intermediaries and others have tended to focus heavily on housing-related activities. Not only do they lead to visible results on the ground, but they are also easily measured. Measuring the success of a neighborhood stabilization effort is more complicated. There is no single measure that can be used to determine that a given neighborhood is stable or unstable, or a single index on which its stability can be plotted. Neighborhood stability is by its nature multi-dimensional; as such, it can only be measured by using a series of what are known as indicators, measures of the disparate elements that coalesce to define (or indicate) the neighborhood's condition. This is what the Community Stabilization Evaluation Framework designed by Success Measures, and described in this report, tries to do.

One fairly obvious set of measures are those that have to do with market conditions. When houses are available in the neighborhood, how quickly do they sell? Are they being

bought by home buyers, or only by investors? Do they sell for prices that are equal to or greater than replacement cost; that is, the cost to restore a vacant shell, or build a comparable new house on a vacant lot? Are vacancy rates within healthy levels, or are they excessively high? With respect to all of these measures, are they trending up or down? These questions all bear on the dynamics of market activity in an area; by pulling together the information to answer the questions, all of which is fairly readily available for small areas, one can assemble a good picture of the market strength or weakness of an area.

Market strength is a critical element in neighborhood stability, and is relatively easily measured, but is not the only element. The Success Measures evaluation framework goes beyond market factors and looks at two other key elements: tracking the visible physical conditions of the area through field surveys, and measuring neighborhood image and confidence through interviews of both residents and key outside informants. In addition, by gathering key baseline demographic and socio-economic data, the evaluation framework will enable those working in the neighborhood to track trends in demographic and social change as well.

What makes this process particularly challenging is that the goal is not only to assess whether a neighborhood is stable or how stable it is today, but to attempt to evaluate the effect of a particular intervention – the activities of the NeighborWorks organization – on the stability of the neighborhood. That requires not only measuring neighborhood conditions today, but tracking them over time to measure how much the neighborhood's status on these various indicators has changed during the period that the organization has been at work. Even if the indicators show significant progress, however, a further question comes up: can the change be attributed to the NWO, or did it arise, in whole or part, from some unrelated factors, such as immigration, change in the local economy, or the opening of a new transit line? Similarly, in an environment where region-wide prices may still be trending downward and would-be homebuyers stymied in their efforts to buy homes for lack of mortgage money, if the indicators fail to show progress, does that mean that the organization's efforts were a failure, or would matters have been even worse without them?

Even though these questions can often never be fully answered, they do not undo the value of the evaluation pro-

cess. Whatever the reasons for change, it is important for practitioners to understand what is going on in their neighborhood, as a validation of their efforts if successful, but much more importantly as a tool to assess those efforts, make corrections to existing initiatives, and design new ones based on the knowledge they gain from the assessment. As the report makes clear, even at the beginning of this process, the NeighborWorks organizations using the evaluation framework are already realizing value from their work.

The Value of the Evaluation Framework

While the report details some of the findings of the initial pilot effort that launched the evaluation framework, I would like to add my own observations to those in the report. Since at this stage only baseline data has been gathered, and that data is preliminary and often fragmentary, it cannot yet tell us anything about the effect of the community stabilization efforts under way in these neighborhoods. Such information is, at best, over a year away, and may never be as definitive as some might like. The data, and the process by which it was gathered, however, have already added value to those efforts in at least three other ways. All of these have to do with the critical task of bridging the gap between the organization carrying out community stabilization activities and the community in which they are working, a gap that is often particularly wide when the organization is a citywide or regional one, rather than a neighborhood-based CDC.

Better understand how residents feel about their neighborhoods.

A constant risk for professional staff working in a neighborhood is that of making assumptions about resident perceptions of their neighborhood by projecting their own perceptions of the area onto the residents. The individual interviews provide a valuable corrective to that tendency; as the pilot found, in many cases residents felt more positively about their neighborhood, and about whether they would recommend to others that they move there, than the organization conducting the surveys expected. While these initial responses would benefit from follow-up questions that could tease out underlying factors driving these feelings, or perhaps compare them to how people in other parts of the city feel about their neighborhoods, they are important both as raw information and as guides to how NWOs could better pursue confidence-building activities.

Better understand neighborhood physical conditions

Ultimately, the only way one can truly understand the physical conditions of a neighborhood or block is by walking down the neighborhood's streets, carefully observing the conditions of the houses, yards and other features of the physical environment, an activity for which, unfortunately, few non-profits allow time in the normal course of work. Again, the data from the pilot shows that physical conditions were often better than the surveyors expected to find before they conducted the surveys. This is clearly a positive finding, since it suggests that physical problems in many neighborhoods tend to be localized, and perhaps more manageable than expected. At the same time, it is not cause for complacency; as the well-known "broken windows" thesis holds, it does not take many vacant or visibly substandard properties, or many ill-kempt yards or front yard fences, to undermine the vitality of a block or a neighborhood.

Better connect organizations to residents

While the first two ways in which the evaluations add value is through the information they provide, the third flows from the process itself; as the report points out, the fact that people working for the NeighborWorks organizations were actually out on the streets, meeting people, talking to them, and even more, listening to them, enabled them to connect with residents in important ways that do not necessarily happen through the usual course of organization-resident interactions, which tend to be either in formal settings such as community meetings, or in the context of individual residents seeking the organization's services. Particularly for organizations which may not have an office or other physical presence in the community, this form of structured yet informal contact can be a valuable way of making connections, and building the credibility of the organization in the neighborhood.

Closing Note

The work of stabilizing communities is ongoing, and will not be done in one, or five years. For anyone pursuing this work, the ancient Greek maxim "know thyself," is worth bearing in mind. Know your organization, know your neighborhood, and know – to the best of your ability – what effect your activities are likely to have not only on the buildings or families directly involved, but on the block and the neighborhood as a whole. The better one understands these things, the more effective one's efforts are likely to be. The Community Stabilization Evaluation Framework is an important step in building that level of self-knowledge, and ultimate achievement.

III. Developing the Community Stabilization Evaluation Framework

Origins of the Project

As part of its coordinated response to the foreclosure crisis, NeighborWorks America instituted a number of programs to support community stabilization efforts being undertaken by both members of the NeighborWorks Network and those in the wider community development field. These local community stabilization strategies supported by NeighborWorks encompassed activities eligible under the three rounds of federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP 1 – NSP 3) funding as well as other strategies including, but not limited to, the following:

- Acquisition and disposition of foreclosed, Real Estate Owned (REO) residential and commercial properties through rehabilitation, resale, lease-purchase or rental strategies

- Vacant land strategies including acquisition, maintenance, greening, land banking, community gardens and other reuse options

- Community planning, organizing and outreach to engage community residents in transformative neighborhood change

- Strategies to improve public safety and public services

- Neighborhood marketing and events to highlight community assets

In the development of national programs to support these local efforts, NeighborWorks recognized the importance of documenting the results of stabilization activities over time, in order to sharpen understanding of effective strategies in ways that would serve to guide future similar work.

NeighborWorks tapped its Success Measures social enterprise to manage the design of new evaluation measures and the implementation of an evaluation process that would capture the results of an array of stabilization efforts over time. This partnership drew on Success Measures' expertise in evaluating place-based revitalization and its experience in assisting NeighborWorks organizations (NWOs) in the collection of data to measure the community level outcomes of their affordable housing and community development programs.

While the initial stages of this project were underway, NeighborWorks America developed a new multi-year partnership with CIT Group Inc., a leading provider of financing to small businesses and middle market companies. The funding support available through this partnership expanded the scope of a number of NeighborWorks America's community stabilization grant programs and initiatives, including the development of the Success Measures Community Stabilization Evaluation Framework and a pilot project that engaged a sample of NeighborWorks organizations in testing this new evaluation framework in local communities during 2009 and 2010.

What is Success Measures?

Success Measures is a specialized outcome evaluation resource for the community development field based at NeighborWorks America. It offers an integrated set of technology-supported evaluation consulting, training and technical assistance services for community-based organizations, intermediaries, and funders, including foundations, government agencies and funding collaboratives, seeking to learn from and demonstrate the results of their programs and investments in communities and metropolitan regions across America.

Representing more than a decade of development and testing by community development practitioners across the country, Success Measures evaluation services and the Success Measures Data System (SMDS), a user-friendly web-based software, were first offered to the community development field in 2005. Since then, Success Measures has provided technology-supported evaluation services to 340 clients including over 100 NeighborWorks organizations, more than 200 other local community development organizations and 28 foundations, intermediaries and government agencies.

Success Measures assists community-based organizations and their funding partners to plan and conduct evaluations drawing on a growing, well-vetted resource library of over 80 outcome measures and 240 corresponding data collection instruments that include surveys, interview and focus group guides, observational protocols/checklists, and spreadsheets or related tools to array or analyze numeric program and secondary data. These tools measure outcomes of a wide range of community development programs including affordable housing, economic development, neighborhood revitalization, community building and organizing, financial capability, green residential and community energy saving practices and more. Organizations using Success Measures have web access to these data collection tools that they use alone, or in combination, to measure the results of community development programs. The Success Measures Data System also structures data collection for field work or online delivery, tabulates, aggregates, and stores the resulting evaluation data for easy retrieval or download for further analysis. In addition, Success Measures provides custom evaluation consulting services for funding initiatives and other multi-site projects.

Practitioners use Success Measures to:

- Assess the impact of sustained, strategic interventions

- Demonstrate effectiveness and provide more transparent communication with stakeholders

- Inform development and sequencing of program strategies

- Enhance resident engagement in revitalization and other programmatic efforts

- Identify emerging trends and hidden opportunities

- Make the case for continued or increased funding support

Funders, intermediaries and policy makers use Success Measures to:

- Assess impact of grants and other investments

- Build grantee capacity to conduct evaluation and share meaningful data on results

- Guide and refine grant-making and investment strategy

- Inform policy analysis and development

- Gather a valuable repository of data to understand the most effective practices

- Identify broader trends and needs across a grant-making portfolio, geographic region or broader constituency

Building on Field Expertise to Define a Common Evaluation Framework

Success Measures uses a highly collaborative process to develop new evaluation measures and related data collection tools. The first step in developing the parameters of a new evaluation framework, or set of common measures, to assess the progress of community stabilization programs was to convene a working group of experts including practitioners from the NeighborWorks network, leading researchers, and other stakeholders in the field. (See Appendices for a list of working group participants.) The working group convened in February 2009 for a two-day session in which it examined existing literature on the dynamics of community change and explored the key outcomes and most relevant measures for community stabilization programs. Working group members also continued to advise on the tool development and reviewed draft tools at key points in their development. Convening this working group of community stabilization experts and practitioners helped ensure that the new tools developed were based in existing research and would be credible and broadly applicable for use at the neighborhood level.

Among the most important issues that emerged from this group of experts and practitioners was consensus about the fact that, in order to demonstrate the impact of stabilization activities, an understanding of market conditions over time would be critical but not sufficient. Therefore, in order to produce a complete picture of change, a robust and accurate outcome evaluation would also have to describe residents' (and others') perceptions of transformations in their neighborhoods. Equally important are observations of physical conditions of blocks and individual properties, including unoccupied buildings and vacant land. These elements, taken together, would provide a comprehensive view of community conditions in real time. What emerged was a Community Stabilization Evaluation Framework that included the following dimensions:

- **Community Image, Confidence and Management:** A resident survey and key informant interview to understand internal and external perceptions of the community.

- **Community Physical Conditions:** A set of observation tools at the block and parcel levels coordinated with some secondary data and an analysis framework so that an organization can measure change over time to the physical conditions of the community as well as determine which properties, if any, are reasonable to obtain and rehab.

- **Community Characteristics:** A set of secondary data to frame the demographic, economic and social context of the community.

- **Market Health:** A set of secondary data to address the market health of a community.

Creating Practical Evaluation Tools

Over the course of several months, based on feedback from its group of peer advisors and using content from its established evaluation content, Success Measures developed a set of data collection tools to measure the outcomes of community stabilization work over time. A key consideration was to develop tools that could be effectively used by community-based organizations.

Success Measures also partnered with PolicyMap, an online data and GIS mapping platform specializing in data for community development analysis, thus providing participating organizations not only with access to secondary data and a means of mapping their findings, but added sources of information that could help guide future stabilization strategies.

The new community stabilization framework is based in a mixed method evaluation approach that combines visual observations, qualitative perceptual data and secondary data on community context. The framework is designed to be used to gather both baseline data and longitudinally at two or three year intervals. It is designed so that both the initial data collection and the follow-up comparisons contribute information of value for organizations. For example, as the pilot organizations began their baseline data collection, many were in the process of planning their emergency intervention plans for vacant properties and other stabilization issues. The new data collection forms available for observing property conditions were paired with a form to assist in determining ownership of these properties, data needed to help with planning property acquisition and disposition. Community organizations investing time and energy to carry out the first stage of the evaluation reaped an immediate benefit in terms of neighborhood information needed to carry out their programs.

IV. From Theory to Practice: Implementing the Community Stabilization Evaluation Pilot

Engaging Organizations in the Evaluation Pilot

In spring of 2009, NeighborWorks launched a pilot evaluation with a group of ten NeighborWorks organizations. The NWOs chosen to participate in the pilot were those working in specific target areas. This group included organizations that had broad revitalization agendas and those whose primary focus was on housing. The final selection included organizations operating in historically weak housing markets, as well as those in markets newly affected by the impacts of foreclosures. (See Appendices for lists of organizations participating in the pilot and those using the evaluation in subsequent years. See page 21 for profiles of the pilot organizations' evaluation experiences.)

In order to participate in the pilot, NWOs agreed to select one or more defined community target area and collect baseline data using the set of common community stabilization evaluation tools that included the following:

- A resident confidence survey
- A set of key informant interviews with stakeholders who had a direct connection to the community
- Block observations of the target area
- Parcel-level observations of all or selected blocks
- Relevant market data

In return, each NWO in the pilot was provided with a Success Measures consultant/coach to assist in the implementation of the evaluation, access to a range of distance learning offerings on evaluation topics, and subscriptions to both the Success Measures Data System and to PolicyMap, an online data and GIS mapping platform specializing in data community development analysis. In addition, organizations received a $2,000 stipend to offset costs associated with data collection. These stipends, though modest, were of universal assistance to organizations.

This evaluation pilot was also intended to encourage more cohesion among community-based organizations working on stabilization and to develop peer alliances across the country.

A convening was held in August 2010 for pilot organizations to share the learnings of their baseline data collection. This convening also served as an orientation of additional organizations that were beginning to use the new evaluation framework.

Evaluation Technical Assistance and Technology Support

Success Measures provides evaluation consultants to serve as coaches to participating organizations as they collect and analyze data. In the Community Stabilization Evaluation Pilot a team of three coaches who were both skilled evaluators and experienced neighborhood revitalization practitioners, provided in-depth evaluation training and technical assistance to plan and implement data collection. Coaches also assisted groups to analyze their data, as well as how to use their results to inform strategy, leverage funding and market their neighborhood to prospective buyers.

Organizations entered all data collected into the Success Measures Data System (SMDS), where it was stored over time and could be accessed for additional analysis. As part of the analysis process, Success Measures and PolicyMap staff assisted organizations in mapping a set of key variables from both the surveys and observations on the PolicyMap platform to better understand and present data in a meaningful, visual way.

Nine of the NWOs completed baseline data collection. Several of the organizations decided to use some of the data collection tools in additional target communities. All of the participating organizations plan on repeating the evaluation process in 2012 or 2013. Seven additional NeighborWorks organizations are completing their baseline data collection in 2011.

Role of Data Collection Teams: Staff, AmeriCorps Vista Volunteers and Community Residents

The composition and methods of deploying data collection teams varied widely across participating organizations. Participants highlighted several strategies that contributed to successful data collection. Prime among them was using

a consistent team to foster the morale needed to tackle a large job. Some participants reached out to their communities to create teams, building additional partnerships with residents, local institutions, and graduate programs at universities. Many participants found that using their own organizational staff fostered a deeper understanding of community dynamics, particularly where this level of understanding had been limited. The AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers played critical roles in outreach, coordination and implementation strategies of the evaluation efforts.

One organization had impressive success with youth volunteers who conducted the greatest number of resident surveys in any site. Teams of bilingual staff members at another organization conducted resident surveys and facilitated the process by offering the option of responding to the survey online. One organization tapped its in-house architect to complete all of the block and parcel observations. There were some challenges encountered in the process as well. Although stipends were paid to some community volunteers and students in one community, the additional personpower was unable to overcome the difficulty of finding residents at home. And, an organization that depended solely on one volunteer, found it difficult to engage additional volunteers when needed.

Gathering Baseline Data

Participants used rigorous methods to collect baseline data on neighborhoods targeted for stabilization activities. Organizations collected neighborhood data in three ways — through a resident satisfaction survey; parcel and block observations; and interviews with key community informants. Nine of the organizations completed the baseline data collection in target neighborhoods using the common metrics that make up the community stabilization framework.

Two online technology tools aided the organizations with data collection and analysis: the Success Measures Data System and PolicyMap. The Success Measures Data System, an online platform that hosts a resource library of data collection instruments for community development evaluation structures data collection for field work or online delivery, tabulates, aggregates, and stores the resulting evaluation data for easy retrieval or download for further analysis. SMDS was used to collect, manage, and tabulate primary level data, on perceptions of community confidence and other quality of life factors, physical condition of properties, and vacancies. PolicyMap, a national data warehouse and mapping tool, was used to access and map key market and community data for the geographic areas where organizations were targeting their stabilization work. Key data points from both the observations of physical conditions and the resident survey were mapped on PolicyMap, combining the secondary data with the data collected at the local level. In addition to maps, data loaded in PolicyMap could be accessed in charts and reports for a variety of geographic areas.

The following describes implementation of the core components of the evaluation in more detail:

- **Community Image, Confidence and Management — Resident Surveys:** Surveys of community residents were used to measure resident satisfaction with neighborhood quality of life, confidence in the community's future and a variety of factors related to community engagement. Through a practical yet rigorous approach, pilot organizations either surveyed all households in their target communities or used sampling methodologies under the guidance of their evaluation coaches. Organizations employed a variety of techniques to ensure an adequate response rate, such as publicizing the effort at community meetings, through mailings and other community venues, and providing small incentives for participants who completed surveys. One organization obtained a donation of long-life light bulbs from a local utility and awarded them to residents who completed surveys. Many organizations enlisted community residents to participate in the data collection effort.

  Surveys were conducted either as in-person interviews, paper/pencil survey forms or online. The data collection instruments were available in English and Spanish and some organizations used translators for other languages. As noted earlier, staff members who carried out the surveys and observations were assisted by a variety of personnel such as community volunteers, college and graduate students, and, in numerous sites, AmeriCorps VISTA Volunteers.

  These resident surveys presented both the greatest number of challenges in conducting the evaluation and the richest opportunities to strengthen ties within communities. For example, one organization found that, despite working in a familiar neighborhood, many residents worked two or three jobs and were simply not home so it was unable to achieve its survey response

rate goal. Another organization was unable to send its trained student volunteers into the community due to recent violence in the community. In retrospect, some participants said it was helpful to anticipate that all surveys might not need to be conducted at the same time, but could be stretched out over a longer period to accommodate limited windows to find residents at home, unforeseen circumstances, and weather issues. Several organizations employed creative data collection strategies that positively influenced overall success of their efforts. For example, organizations that created and distributed advance publicity about the evaluation found great value in approaching residents who were expecting a knock at their doors. Conducting the surveys with teams of two interviewers eased the process and enabled greater efficiency.

- **Community Image, Confidence and Management – External Perceptions by Key Community Informant Interviews:** Participants who were able to conduct interviews with key community stakeholders found that these individuals often provided a longer-range perspective. The most insightful results came from interviews that were conducted by executive directors or other senior staff members who had a deeper understanding of their communities and the peer standing to have meaningful conversations with the interview subjects. However, not all organizations found the time to conduct these interviews with their baseline data collection. Most organizations recognized the value of conducting these additional interviews and planned to conduct them more consistently in future evaluations.

- **Property and Block Conditions – Parcel and Block Observations:** Participating organizations found block observations to be an easy and practical part of the evaluation process. Combining block observations with parcel observations proved to be a productive strategy that provided valuable opportunities to look at the overall conditions of the target areas and allowed organizations to focus more narrowly on select areas to go parcel by parcel. Some participants selected a collection of blocks where their work was already focused; others intentionally selected blocks for which they had little or no prior information. Upon reflection, a number of participants regretted not having conducted more parcel observations due

to the level of detail they provided about community conditions. In some cases, participants found that walking through the neighborhood to conduct the block and property observations caused the participants to re-examine previous assumptions.

Success Measures training strategies, delivered routinely through coaches and webinars, provided the data collectors with many tools that resulted in increased inter-rater reliability for the observations. Participants were mindful of the need to be consistent for the next evaluation in two to three years time, incorporating many documentation strategies including creating photographic templates to rate parcel conditions by visually distinguishing between exterior features in sound condition and those needing minor maintenance or major repair. Emphasis was also placed on reaching consensus in definitions of ratings between teams of observers to ensure consistency in rating block conditions.

Assessing the physical characteristics of communities at the block and parcel level had strategic implications. Participants used data collected and analyzed to determine how and where to target financial resources, plan for housing development or rehabilitation, and deliver community services. Several organizations immediately began fundraising to create rehabilitation loan funds for the high proportion of minor repairs they knew would help revitalize their communities.

- **Community Context and Market Health — Use of Secondary Data and PolicyMap:** The use of secondary data and PolicyMap was another important dimension of the evaluation. Current data on foreclosures and other property information proved to be difficult to obtain in some sites though it was more readily available in others. Organizations found value in using PolicyMap and, at least one, went significantly beyond the evaluation to use data available through PolicyMap for a number of purposes including fundraising, planning housing rehabilitation efforts and community organizing. Some organizations felt they needed both more time and training to put PolicyMap to most effective use. All participants looked forward to continued use of PolicyMap in the future, particularly during a second round data collection, for its ability to provide comparisons of changing social, demographic, housing and economic conditions over time.

V. Learning Across the Evaluation Pilot

Background on Data Analysis and Use

The target communities selected for the pilot evaluation process were diverse in terms of geography, housing types, and number and condition of vacant properties. There were also differences in organizational capacity, levels of experience, and response rates across the pilot cohort. In light of these factors, and given the nature of this particular project, data was not aggregated across sites. Instead, the analysis captures trends and patterns in the data and identifies findings that were similar across sites. In some cases, these findings confirm research, practitioners' experiences, and commonly-held beliefs in the community development field. In other cases, the findings represent new insights for community stabilization practice.

In keeping with Success Measures' participatory evaluation approach, project staff and consultants worked with each participating organization to help analyze their data and help them reflect on how they could best use it to advance their community stabilization efforts. This assistance included training in quantitative and qualitative analysis as well as generating a complete set of analyzed data for each organization. Organizations found this information immediately useful as they planned their stabilization strategies. This process aligns with the overall purpose of the pilot project — to provide each participating organization with key information that they could use for project purposes in the short term and that would also serve as baseline information to be tracked over time to monitor change in the target communities. Examples of the utility of specific data are in the brief profiles in Chapter VI, Highlights from the Field.

Evaluation Findings: Resident Survey of Community Image, Confidence and Management

Methods

The majority of NWOs used a sampling approach for households in their target area. Although some participating organizations did have experience collecting information from community residents, few had used a random sampling approach. While completing door-to-door surveys proved challenging, most of the participating organizations proceeded in a systematic way and were successful in conducting the survey. In those few cases where the number of households was small, the organization made every effort to survey every household, rather than drawing a sample. Their efforts were facilitated by the availability of individual consulting and supporting guides and training materials for data collectors developed by Success Measures. Because Chelsea Neighborhood Developers had conducted a very similar survey of 345 residents the previous year in the same target area, it was not required to repeat the effort.

Most organizations succeeded in obtaining responses from both long and short term residents, and renters as well as owners. In every community the majority of respondents reported living in the neighborhood for at least five years; many had lived in the community for more than 20 years. In most communities, the percentage of renters and owners who responded to the survey reflected the housing tenure of the population in the larger community.

Common Patterns in Survey Responses

An analysis across sites presents a number of interesting findings from the resident survey of community image, confidence and management:

- When residents were asked to select the major reason they decided to live in the community being surveyed, the two most frequent responses in every site were "to live near family or friends" and "affordability of housing." Respondents were roughly divided between "to live near family or friends" and "affordability of housing" as their primary and secondary reasons.

- Given a choice of options, the majority of residents in five of eight sites selected "affordability of housing" as what they like best about living in their community.

- When asked what things they liked least about living in their community, the majority of residents in seven of the eight sites noted their concerns about "safety in the community."

The survey also included the following three areas of inquiry that provided additional insights into residents' attitudes about living in their neighborhoods:

Residents were asked to rate their satisfaction living in the community.

- In every community, the majority of respondents indicated they were either "satisfied' or "somewhat satisfied."

- In three communities, approximately 25% of respondents indicated they were "very satisfied."

- In seven communities, the percentage of respondents that indicated they were either "very dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied" ranged from 10% - 32%. In one community, the percentage was 40%. (However, at the time of the survey, that community was experiencing a series of violent crimes. The violence the community was experiencing is reflected in other related questions, including likelihood to recommend the community to others.)

Residents were asked how likely they were to recommend the community to others as a good place to live (Chart 1).

- In each of the communities, at least 50% of respondents indicated they would "definitely" or "probably" recommend the neighborhood.

- In four of the communities, at least 37% of respondents indicated they would "definitely" recommend their neighborhood.

Renters were asked if they would consider buying a home in the community. If they answered "yes," they were then asked to select up to three reasons from a list provided to them on why they had not yet bought a home in the community. They were then asked to identify the primary reason for this.
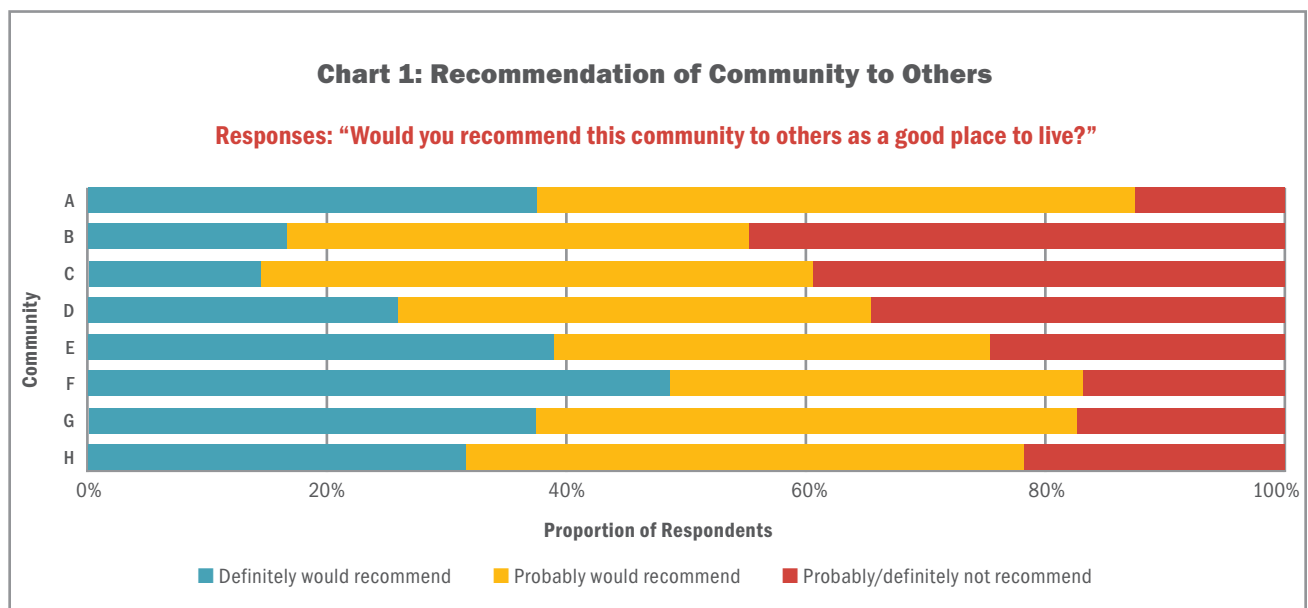
- In eight communities, renters' primary reasons had to do with "personal finances" and the "economy in general."

- "Crime or other safety issues" was mentioned as a distant third by renters in all but two sites as a reason for not having yet bought a home in the community.

One additional finding interestingly dispels the myth that renters in a community are, by definition, less connected to and satisfied with the neighborhood. In a number of communities, how long residents lived in the community was more closely correlated to their levels of satisfaction and connection, than whether they were renters or owners.

Evaluation Findings: Observations of Property and Block Conditions

Methods
To evaluate the conditions of properties, blocks and level of vacancy in the target communities, each organization determined its own block/parcel observation strategy. Some organizations, including NHS of Phoenix, conducted the block observations on every block in their target area, and selected

Chart 1: Recommendation of Community to Others

Responses: "Would you recommend this community to others as a good place to live?"

Horizontal axis: Proportion of Respondents (0% to 100%). Vertical axis: Community (A–H).

Legend:
- Definitely would recommend (teal)
- Probably would recommend (yellow)
- Probably/definitely not recommend (red)

specific blocks to conduct parcel-level observations. Others decided to do both block and parcel level observations for the entire neighborhood. Several organizations, including HANDS in Orange, New Jersey, were working in a neighborhood where there were multiple vacancies on many blocks. In other communities, the organization selected a target area with fewer vacancies. Observations ranged from 165 in Chelsea, MA where the majority of parcels were small multi-family unit buildings, to NOAH in East Boston, MA, with 739 observations.

The focus of the training provided by Success Measures was to assist participants to maintain consistency among data collectors at each site and to convey the importance of adequate documentation to ensure consistency over time. Because the data will be used primarily by the local organi-zation that collects it, there was not an effort to ensure consistency of data across all sites in the pilot effort.
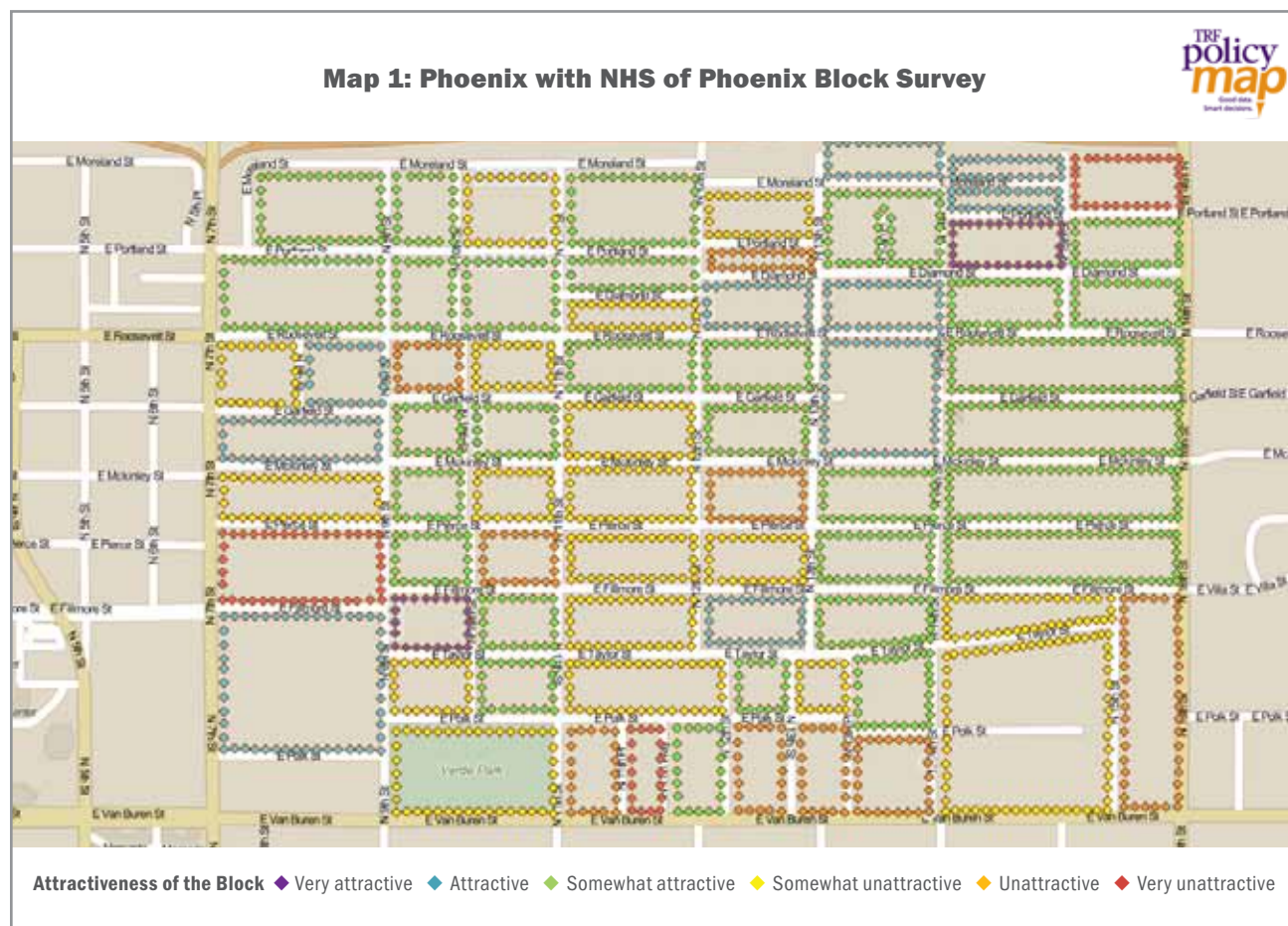
Each organization identified a target area to conduct its evaluation. The number of vacant properties in target areas varied from as few as .02% to 25%. In some cases, the area selected for the evaluation was the same as the target area for its overall community stabilization efforts; in other cases, it comprised only a part of the area. For this reason, it is important to note that the number of vacant properties in a given target area did not reflect the degree to which vacant properties are a problem in its wider community.

Highlights from Block Observations

The block observations, especially when mapped on PolicyMap, proved most useful as a means for organizations to draw a broad picture of current neighborhood conditions.

The block observations focused on the general condition of entire blocks, rather than on individual properties. These results conveyed the overall impression that attractiveness was due to a variety of factors. For example, the presence of a vacant lot or property, by itself, did not determine attractiveness. The level of maintenance did. This process enabled organizations to document the importance of col-lective maintenance of individual properties, both occupied and vacant, as well as the adjoining streetscapes (Map 1).

Map 1: Phoenix with NHS of Phoenix Block Survey

Attractiveness of the Block ◆ Very attractive ◆ Attractive ◆ Somewhat attractive ◆ Somewhat unattractive ◆ Unattractive ◆ Very unattractive

Highlights from Parcel-Level Observations

Participating organizations found that parcel-level observations yielded very useful information for their stabilization strategies. These organizations observed a large number of properties. The range within the pilot was from 165 to 739 parcel observations. The exception was NHS Phoenix which had a large target area. They conducted block observations throughout the entire target area and then selected a smaller number of blocks for complete parcel-level observations.

The observation protocol has an overall rating for the exterior condition of the building and another for the condition for features around the dwelling. There was strong interest in documenting the features around buildings, including fences, yards, and driveways, that can have a significant effect on the general impression of the property.

Rating of Overall Condition of Building Exteriors:

- In each of the nine sites, at least 70% of the parcels were rated either "in good condition" or "needing minor repair only."

- In four sites, more than 50% of the parcels were rated "in good condition."

Rating of Overall Condition of Features Around the Dwelling:

- In each of the nine sites, at least 75% of the parcels were rated either "in good condition" or "needing minor repair only."

- In five sites, at least 49% of parcels were rated "in good condition."

In many cases, these generally positive findings were at odds with both the common impression of the state of the physical conditions in the communities, and in many cases, with the perceptions of the practitioners themselves. There was a general impression that the buildings in these communities were in worse condition than they actually are. The findings called attention to the importance of tackling those easily addressed repairs that are often thought of as cosmetic, but contribute to a sense of general deterioration in a neighborhood.

However, while the percentages of dwellings that were rated as needing major repair or renovation were low, because the organizations conducted large numbers of observations, the numbers were still high. For example, in one community there were 73 properties needing major repair. Map 2 illustrates where those properties are clustered in HAPHousing's target area.

Map 2: Springfield with HAPHousing Observation Data

◆ Dwellings needing major repair or renovation
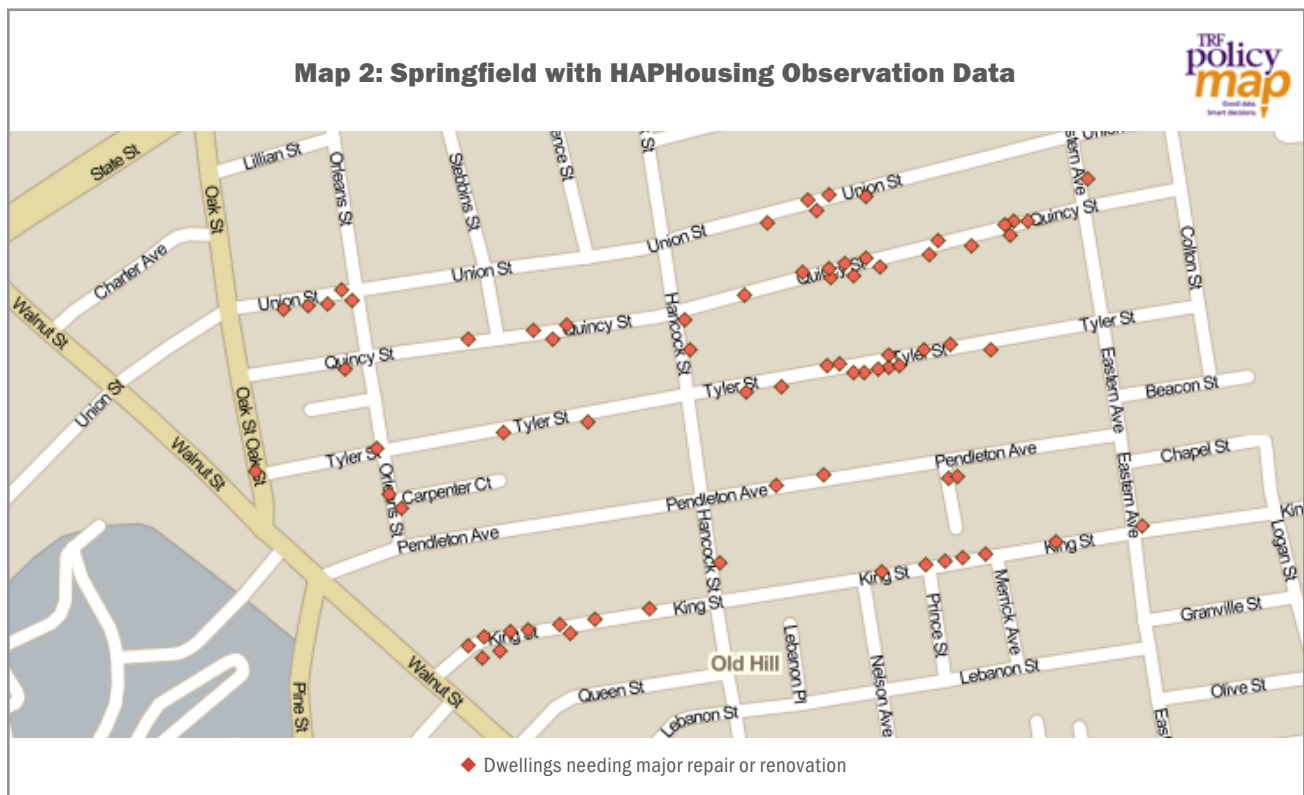
In addition to the general ratings, the observation tool included ratings for specific aspects of the building's exterior as well as features around the building, thus enabling groups to understand where specific types of repair are needed. Having this information in great detail can be used both for strategic planning now and to track change over time. As mentioned below, some organizations also conducted the observations in additional neighborhoods.

Value of Evaluation Process

Despite the variety of organizations included in the evaluation, there was consistency in the types of benefits and challenges experienced by participants. Participants gained both immediate and longer-range benefits from conducting the evaluation. Over the longer term, participants found value in collecting baseline data that, measured against results of a second round of evaluation in two to three years, will provide a detailed picture of the impact of their community stabilization work. In addition, some organizations found even the baseline data so valuable that they carried out the evaluation again on their own, in part or in full, in other communities or neighborhoods.

Additional more immediate benefits included:

- **Increased Organizational Capacity:** In many cases, the growth of organizational capacity led to immediate action, ranging from building new partnerships to providing new services to the community. At the outset, organizations were universally less familiar, or at least less up-to-date than they had believed themselves to be, with regard to both resident attitudes and the physical condition of communities. As anticipated, the evaluation offered an immediate way for participants to assess community conditions, but it also highlighted the value of continuing to do so in the future. The evaluation provided a means for organizations to rigorously analyze local data that can be carried forward to strengthen and broaden their skills for conducting future evaluation processes.

- **New Information on Communities Served:** Organizations gained new information about their communities and typically used that knowledge to reassess strategies and objectives. For example, organizations were able to learn about a community from multiple perspectives including substantively examining the physical conditions of communities, in many

cases for the first time. Many organizations used the results of parcel observations to develop new resources for rehabilitation initiatives. Perhaps most importantly, the lesson for many groups was that they had unwittingly been carrying impressions of the communities which proved to be outdated, and those impressions had programmatic implications.

- **New Analysis of Program Rationales and Expected Results:** Understanding the mechanics of the evaluation process, particularly clarifying an organization's or program's desired outcomes, helped foster transparent organizational learning and led to program improvements.

- **New Connections with the Community:** The evaluation provided opportunities for active engagement at the community level, both in terms of knowledge and human connections. Some organizations found that they had been operating with limited information while others had been operating with outdated information. Likewise, some organizations found new community connections, often through the resident survey and interviews, and built on them. Others learned that their community connections had atrophied, and used survey and interview opportunities to revitalize those relationships. For example, across almost all target communities, there was a nearly universal finding that residents were more satisfied with neighborhood quality of life than organizations had assumed. The block and parcel observations resulted in another common finding that the physical condition of communities was generally better than organizations had anticipated, allowing more modest and targeted rehabilitation programs than had been envisioned.

Challenges of Evaluation Process

Participants identified a series of challenges they faced in conducting the evaluation. These included:

- **Need for Careful Planning, Training and Flexibility in Organizing Data Collection:** Organizations consistently stressed the importance of advance planning and providing sufficient training for data collectors. Implementation was most successful when an organization had planned well, and therefore could keep alternative strategies in mind and to shift to other

approaches when one was not effective. Aware of data collection challenges, Success Measures also provided critical training for evaluation coordinators and data collectors in each site.

- **Need to Re-establish or Build on Community Relationships:** Organizations with established community building and organizing programs found it much easier to reach out to residents in conducting the resident survey. Other organizations experienced more difficulty in connecting with residents and found the survey process helpful in structuring a new opportunity to interact with the community. In some cases the community outreach process for the survey exposed "silos" within organizations in which the programs most engaged with community residents and those working on the "bricks and mortar" activities were not well integrated. Without exception, however, participants believed that the process drew them closer to the neighborhood.

- **Safety Issues:** In some cases, implementing the evaluation exposed issues about the neighborhood safety that had to be addressed to effectively field teams of data collectors.

Ongoing Learning for NeighborWorks America and Success Measures

NeighborWorks America and Success Measures also gained valuable insights from the Community Stabilization Evaluation Pilot. These include:

- **Participatory Evaluation Builds Broad Organizational Capacities:** Experiences of participants in the Community Stabilization Evaluation Pilot underscored the basic Success Measures premise that organizations build internal capacity not only by incorporating initial findings from the evaluation into strategy and programs, but also from actually conducting the evaluation itself. Because work required by the evaluation was outside the realm of participants' normal tasks, each had to find a creative way to gather resources needed to complete it. Some participants found a way to mobilize their own constituents to assist with data collection. Others assembled ranks of new volunteers. Some participants forged ongoing alliances with other organizations or academic institutions.

- **Participant Experiences Shape Services, Framework and Tools:** Success Measures also learned directly from the participants how it could improve the evaluation process in the future. Based on feedback from pilot organizations, Success Measures made revisions to survey and observation tools. Moving forward, the key community informant interviews have become a more central part of the evaluation framework with the recommendation that they be conducted by executive directors or other informed senior staff members for maximum value. In addition, Success Measures has created new training modules to support participants in conducting interviews.

- **Evaluation Frameworks are Useful for Affordable Housing and Community Development Business Lines:** The value of having a group of NeighborWorks organizations using a common evaluation framework was clear. It not only ensured that the effort organizations were investing in the evaluation process was yielding a robust, methodologically sound evaluation, but it also allowed analysis of the data across the cohort. In addition, it paved the way for greater peer learning and engagement as organizations were pursuing a common path and could share experiences and resources. This successful experience led to the creation of a common evaluation framework for NeighborWorks America's Community Building and Organizing program that a pilot group of NWOs are implementing in 2011. The experience also informed NeighborWorks America's strategic plans relative to developing a common framework for community outcome evaluation.

VI. Highlights from the Field

The following case examples highlight the experiences of nine NeighborWorks organizations across the country that completed baseline data gathering and analysis using the Success Measures Community Stabilization Evaluation Framework in 2009 and 2010. If they have not already done so, these organizations plan to complete a second round of data to document change over time in 2012 or 2013. As illustrated here, the pilot organizations represent a range of communities and program strategies and are using their baseline data in a variety of effective ways.

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CHELSEA NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPERS, CHELSEA, MA

Chelsea Neighborhood Developers (CND) hoped to use the evaluation to gauge the success of its comprehensive work in community revitalization. Rather than viewing its neighborhoods through the lens of foreclosure and crisis, CND focused on acting as a bridge builder which not only connected residents with each other, but with social and political institutions as well. The parameters of the community stabilization evaluation proved to be an effective testing ground for CND's self-stated philosophy: "Relationships are the raw material from which social capital is made — valuable connections that make it possible for residents to improve the quality of life in their neighborhood."
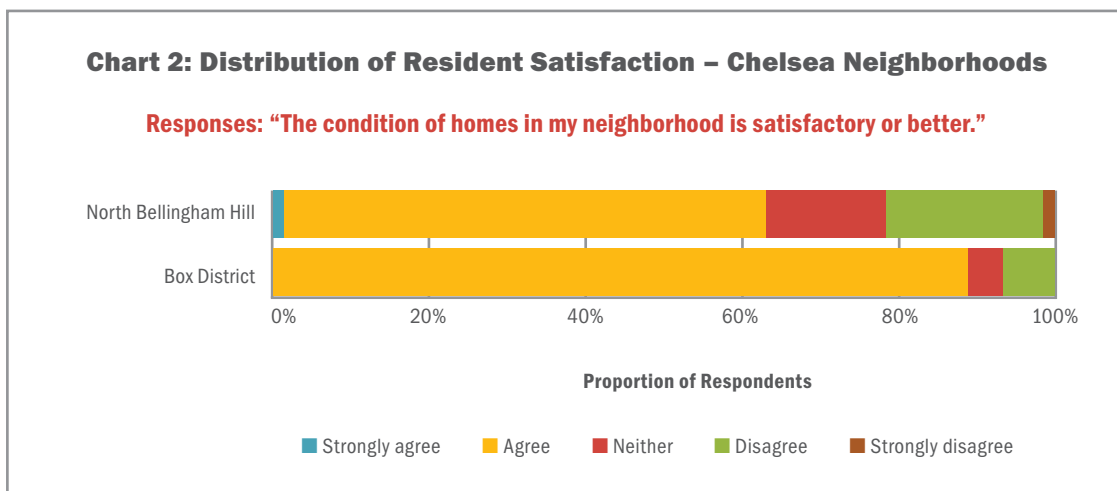
As part of its ongoing relationship with NeighborWorks America, CND had conducted a resident satisfaction survey in portions of two immediately adjacent neighborhoods during the previous year. North Bellingham Hill was an older, established, single-family neighborhood in which Chelsea had done both organizing and some small-scale improvements to existing homes. The Box District, by comparison, was a new, comprehensive $50 million community development project built in a former industrial area that includes market-rate and affordable condominiums and rental apartments for area residents, along with plans for new green space and parks. 79 units of housing have been completed, 53 more are underway and up to 168 more are projected for the area. The City of Chelsea completed street improvements, street lighting, and sewer and water infrastructure for the Box district project and also improved public safety and related technology. The resident survey demonstrated how these physical improvements to neighborhood infrastructure helped start conversations between neighbors and demonstrated the social impact of different styles of development. ▸▸▸
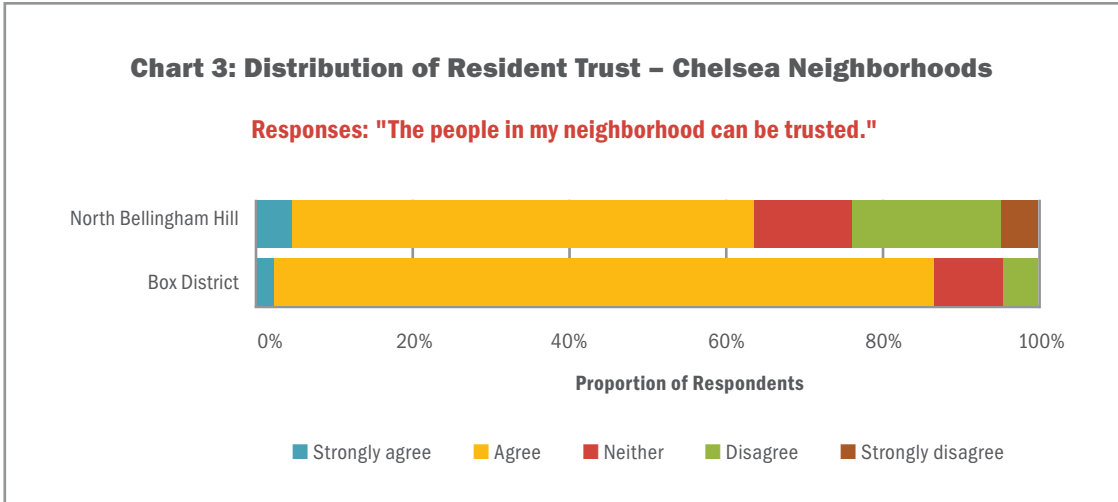
The biggest benefit experienced by CND was being able to see the social impact of two approaches to community development. CND had worked to build neighborhood relationships and civic leadership in both North Bellingham Hill and the Box District but found differing results of its community building and organizing efforts. CND's work in North Bellingham Hill was less targeted than in the Box District, and its results were less transformative. The comparison of the two neighborhoods validated CND's theory of change, that including infrastructure improvements enhances and even enables the rebuilding of social and civic structures.

Levels of resident satisfaction with their neighborhoods varied significantly, with just over 60% of residents surveyed in North Bellingham Hill expressing satisfaction compared to nearly 90% of those surveyed in the Box District. Inversely, more than twice as many North Bellingham Hill residents were dissatisfied with their neighborhood as those in the Box District (Chart 2). The survey, combined with neighborhood observations and key informant interviews, provided a method for understanding those differences and to plan for future work.

CND saw significant social impact from large-scale development in the Box District and its residents were more affected: they knew how to reach out to neighbors and they knew where to go for help at the city level. More than 85% of residents surveyed in the Box District expressed feelings of trust for their neighbors, compared to 63% of those surveyed in North Bellingham Hill. At the same time, North Bellingham Hill residents expressed an absence of trust at a rate more than four times higher than that of those in the adjacent neighborhood (Chart 3).

To conduct 320 resident surveys (275 for North Bellingham Hill and 45 for the Box District), CND placed a large number of its staff and representatives onto the streets of the two neighborhoods. Special Projects Associate George Reuter observed that, "Getting people onto the street for all parts of the evaluation furthered our cause and the person-to-person contact made the results more effective than they might otherwise have been." CND found that the consistency of a dedicated group of data collectors made the evaluation successful. Temporary paid staff conducted the resident surveys; AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, working in groups of two or three to ensure consistent scores, carried out the block observations; and one staff member completed all parcel observations, all to ensure inter-rater reliability. ▸▸▸

Chart 2: Distribution of Resident Satisfaction – Chelsea Neighborhoods

Responses: "The condition of homes in my neighborhood is satisfactory or better."

Proportion of Respondents

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Chart 3: Distribution of Resident Trust – Chelsea Neighborhoods

Responses: "The people in my neighborhood can be trusted."

In addition to the resident surveys, CND also conducted key community informant interviews. These provided the opportunity to build relationships with key players with whom CND wanted to strengthen relationships while also providing valuable data. Interview subjects included a local head librarian, the largest private real estate owner in Chelsea, the chief of police, the president of the local community bank, and the executive directors of local youth and human services nonprofits. Another such subject was the deputy school superintendent who had recently completed her dissertation on why people moved in and out of Chelsea and how that migration affected neighborhoods. Subsequent to the interview, CND invited her to join its board of directors.

CND staff members believe that the efficacy of their approach to community organizing was evident in the results of the resident survey because the resident satisfaction and trust responses were much stronger in the neighborhood in which their community organizing was active.

The organization is continuing to purchase properties in North Bellingham Hill to see if a slower pace of development might still result in better investment and social indicators. CND is now using this baseline evaluation data to describe its community in grant applications. Evaluation results allowed them to better understand the dynamics of their community and their efforts in using infrastructure improvements to strengthen the process of rebuilding social and civic structures. ▪

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OF LONG ISLAND, INC., FREEPORT, NY

The Community Development Corporation of Long Island (CDCLI) conducted an evaluation of Freeport, an area that had been suffering the effects of a number of foreclosures but in which the organization had not previously worked. Despite the fact that its homeownership center was located in Freeport itself, CDCLI is regional rather than local in focus and was not well known in the targeted neighborhood.

The Freeport evaluation results provided CDCLI with a detailed portrait of a community new to the organization and an opportunity to market its services to this potential new service area. In conducting the resident survey, CDCLI found that respondents were primarily longstanding homeowners. The profiles of the 60 Freeport respondents closely resembled the profiles of the homeowners in the neighborhood. Although CDCLI had hoped for a larger response representing all resident perspectives, because of this similarity, the results did provide valuable insight into community sentiment. The majority of survey respondents fell into the following categories:

- 88 percent were homeowners;
- 55 percent had lived there for more than 20 years; and
- 90 percent had lived there for at least six years.

Survey results revealed that 48% of respondents were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the neighborhood. Furthermore, 38% indicated they would "definitely recommend" and 50% would "probably recommend" the neighborhood to others as a good place to live.

The results were particularly informative when considered alongside the encouraging results of the property observations. CDCLI conducted more than 330 property observations and found, to its surprise, that their target area in Freeport was in fact in substantially better physical condition than staff had initially presumed. Despite the large number of foreclosed homes, there were relatively few boarded-up houses. Neighborhood homes reflected good maintenance and, as Map 3 illustrates with red and yellow dots, 93% of homes were found to be in good condition or in need of only minor repairs. ▸▸▸

These findings have become a useful marketing tool for CDCLI's homeownership center as it attempts to promote a neighborhood that has faced a number of challenges. The information about property conditions was particularly instructive for CDCLI staff members who had not previously had an opportunity to look at the community in a systematic way for some time. By conducting key community informant interviews with community leaders, CDCLI gained both additional information about Freeport and ideas for forming new partnerships in the neighborhood. The results of the data collection meant that when faced with skeptical homebuyers who only knew the neighborhood by reputation, staff members were able to talk about resident perceptions and conditions on a block-by-block basis.

This evaluation process was an illuminating one for CDCLI and one that directly improved the quality of its work in the targeted neighborhood. Vice President Eileen Anderson said, "Doing the evaluation was way out of our norm, but there was huge value for our organization in seeing the neighborhood firsthand and helping people overcome their negative perceptions through our marketing efforts." ■

Map 3: Freeport with CDC of Long Island Observation Data

Exterior Condition of the Dwelling

◆ Good and needs no maintenance or repair　◆ Needs minor repairs only

◆ Requires a limited number of major repairs　◆ Requires comprehensive renovation
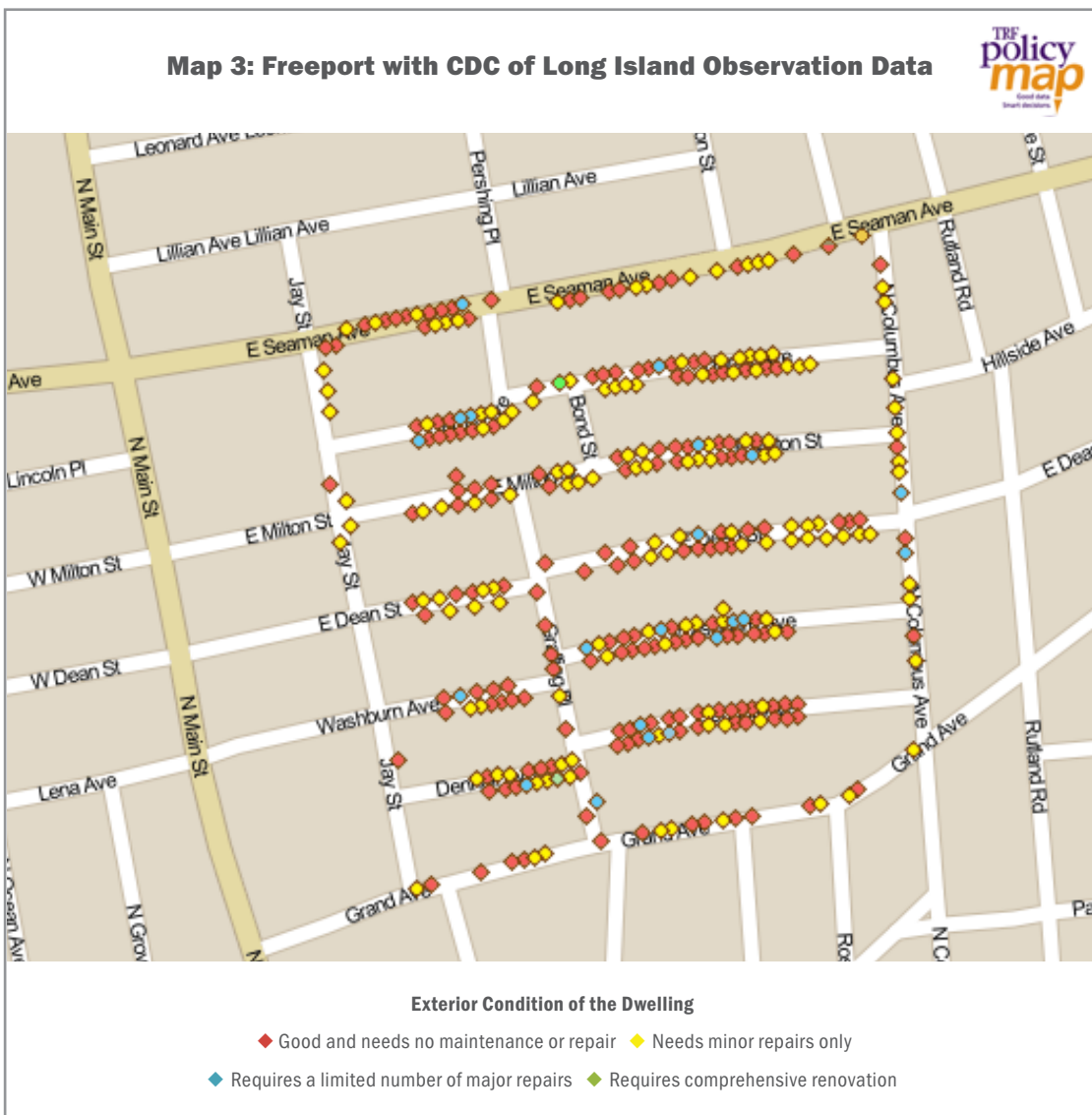
HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES, INC. (HANDS), ORANGE, NJ

HANDS came to the NeighborWorks Community Stabilization Evaluation Pilot with both prior experience with Success Measures and a focus on place-based strategy. In 2006 as part of a grant from the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, the organization had conducted the first part of a two-stage survey in The Valley of Orange, a neighborhood to which it had long-standing ties. While that survey differed somewhat in content and technique, the experience enabled HANDS to effectively conduct the community stabilization evaluation in a neighborhood with which it had no prior acquaintance. Rather than using the evaluation to learn more about a familiar neighborhood, HANDS selected Teen Streets at the request of the city of East Orange, which hoped to leverage federal stabilization funding for this pivotal area. HANDS viewed the evaluation as an opportunity to develop a new place-based strategy in a neighborhood suffering the effects of destabilization and other issues.

As part of conducting a community confidence, image and management survey, HANDS experienced the tremendous value of knocking on every door in a neighborhood. The organization used the evaluation process as an opportunity to meet new people in a new area, approach them as listeners, and engage residents without asking them to do anything. The comprehensiveness of the survey and observations provided a meaningful introduction to Teen Streets, which was adjacent to another neighborhood in which HANDS was working. Community Organizer Molly Kaufman said, "I can't think of another project we've done with such a significant result in such a short period of time."

HANDS staff members were struck by the speed at which they were able to achieve tangible results in understanding a new neighborhood. Once initial safety concerns about going door-to-door in an unfamiliar neighborhood were addressed by thorough planning and thoughtful training by a Success Measures coach, data collectors were able to learn about Teen Streets from numerous angles. Executive Director Pat Morrissy credits the Success Measures approach, in particular the resident confidence survey, with allowing HANDS to dig deeply into a neighborhood with which it had no previous familiarity. Two unanticipated discoveries were a lively commercial area and a mosque that was an anchor institution for rebuilding the neighborhood. ▸▸▸

Chart 4: Distribution of Resident Satisfaction - Teen Streets

Responses: "How satisfied would you say you are living in this community?"
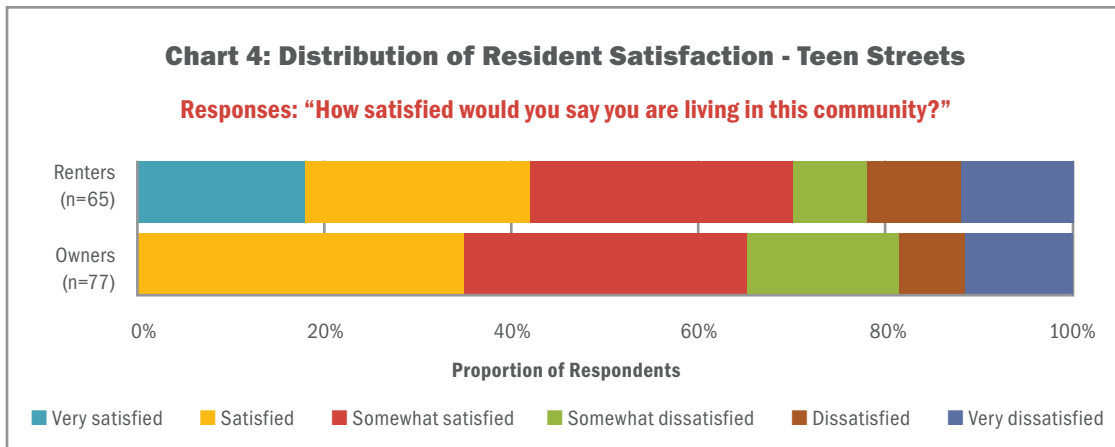
In the short term, HANDS was able to provide much-needed data to the city of East Orange to bolster its application for NSP2 funding. Over the longer term, the results of the evaluation provided a baseline from which HANDS will be able to measure the impact of its own revitalization work in Teen Streets.

Two findings were of particular importance to HANDS for future planning efforts. The first was an understanding of the range of resident satisfaction rates in the Teen Streets. More than 30% of respondents reported they were either "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with living in the neighborhood. While nearly 20% of renters reported being "very satisfied", virtually no homeowners expressed anything higher than "satisfied" (Chart 4).

The second major finding was a picture of the physical condition of the neighborhood through assessing repair and renovation needs. While 135 of the residential properties observed were rated in good condition, 190 residences needed minor repairs and another 65 needed more major repairs (Chart 5).

With a core evaluation team that consisted of its own community organizer, two AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, and graduate students in public policy and social work who received academic credit for the project, HANDS also assembled a larger group drawn from partner organizations, religious congregations, and even staff families. With its prior community field work experience, HANDS completed the property observations relatively quickly and used time spent on the streets as a way to inform residents about its work and the upcoming survey. The resident survey proved to be a more time-consuming process, but it was also tremendously valuable as an effective way to understand the neighborhood.

The HANDS experience also reflects a fundamental objective of Success Measures, to promote the capacity of community organizations to conduct participatory evaluation. Practically, HANDS built a quality evaluation team that moved on to conduct the second round of data collection for the Valley of Orange survey later in the year. Philosophically, the organization understood that three parts of the evaluation (resident surveys, property observations, and key community informant interviews) were beneficial as a package because they intersected with each other to create a complete portrait of the neighborhood. For HANDS, conducting the evaluation in Teen Streets is the first step in allowing a new place-based strategy to unfold. ■

Chart 5: Exterior Condition of Residential Properties – Teen Streets
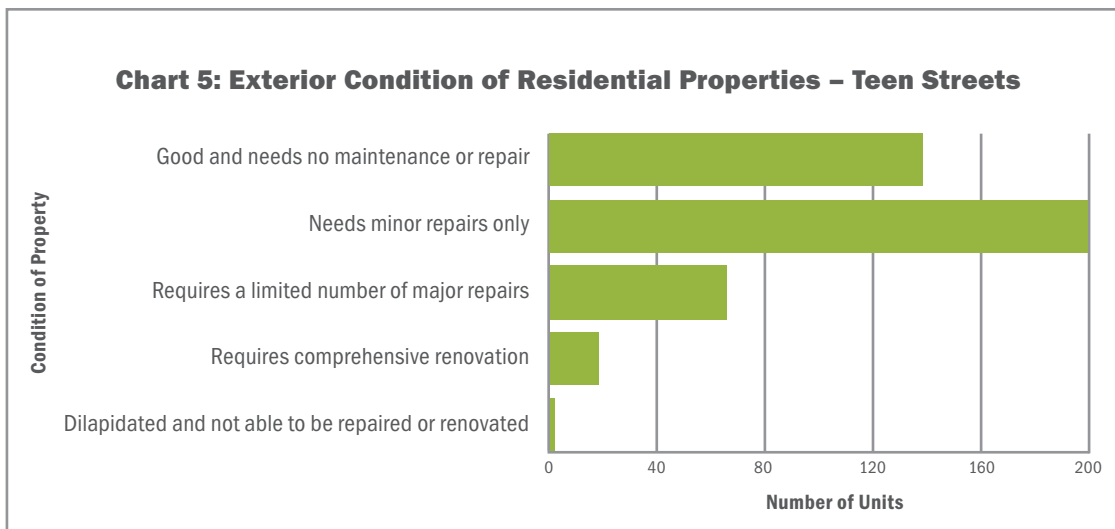
HAPHOUSING, SPRINGFIELD, MA

HAPHousing conducted the evaluation in Old Hill, a neighborhood in which it had recently worked collaboratively with three other housing organizations to develop 30 new units of housing and land bank an additional 11 properties for future development. Working in partnership with the city of Springfield, HAPHousing had focused its efforts on building housing more than engaging directly with residents. Because of this, the evaluation provided a first-time opportunity for the organization to connect directly with neighborhood inhabitants. HAPHousing credits the evaluation with renewing its understanding of the importance of community interaction as a vital component in successful community development. The organization found great value in focusing on a particular neighborhood and in developing a baseline against which to measure their future development work in that area.

Several events conspired against HAPHousing during the course of the evaluation, including departure of a staff member coordinating the evaluation effort, a series of crimes in the target neighborhood, and winter weather issues. Nevertheless, the organization completed the evaluation in the 10-block core of Old Hill, with a sampling of resident satisfaction surveys from throughout the neighborhood. In retrospect, HAPHousing reflected on the fact that additional community outreach would have eased the process. The challenges it encountered highlighted the importance of connecting to neighborhood residents and HAPHousing sought funding to add a community organizer to its staff as well as a dedicated AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer. The evaluation itself also proved to be a useful fundraising tool for this purpose.

The resident survey proved to be a particular challenge for HAPHousing due to recent serious crime in the neighborhood. Although HAPHousing had assembled a team of students to go door-to-door with the survey, local police advised against doing so. HAPHousing then attempted two other strategies, each with limited success: mailing surveys directly to residents and scheduling community meetings in central locations.

Concerns about safety were reflected throughout the survey responses. An analysis of the set of questions related to safety revealed that 50% of respondents reported having a "very low sense of safety;" another 20% reported having a "low sense of safety." When asked to select which characteristics of the community they liked least, 63% of respondents selected safety. Renters who indicated they were not interested in purchasing a home in the neighborhood rated safety as the #1 reason.

The level of satisfaction among Old Hill residents was higher, however, than HAPHousing anticipated. Of respondents, 14% indicated they would "definitely," and 46% would "probably," recommend the community to others. One-half of respondents indicated that, if given the choice, they would continue to live in the community. Residents indicated a number of features they liked best about the community. While safety emerged as a major concern, overall responses reflect the many other factors that residents consider that impact their satisfaction with living in the community, as illustrated in Chart 6. ▸▸▸

After HAPHousing's first attempt to carry out property observations with local college students was interrupted midway by safety concerns, the observations were started anew by four members of Commonwealth Corps, a state-sponsored organization similar to AmeriCorps VISTA. Training was done in conjunction with the local branch of Habitat for Humanity and the two organizations developed a PowerPoint presentation to use in future evaluation efforts. The observations also gave HAPHousing the opportunity to observe a noticeable number of freshly painted houses and gardens with newly planted flowers.

HAPHousing credits its Success Measures coach with helping it cope with the scale of the evaluation, as well as keeping it to a series of deadlines. HAPHousing has also initiated relationships with several academic institutions to assist with further evaluation work in Old Hill. ■

Chart 6: Residents' Ratings of Community Characteristics

Responses: "What characteristics do you like best about your community?"

Proportion of Respondents
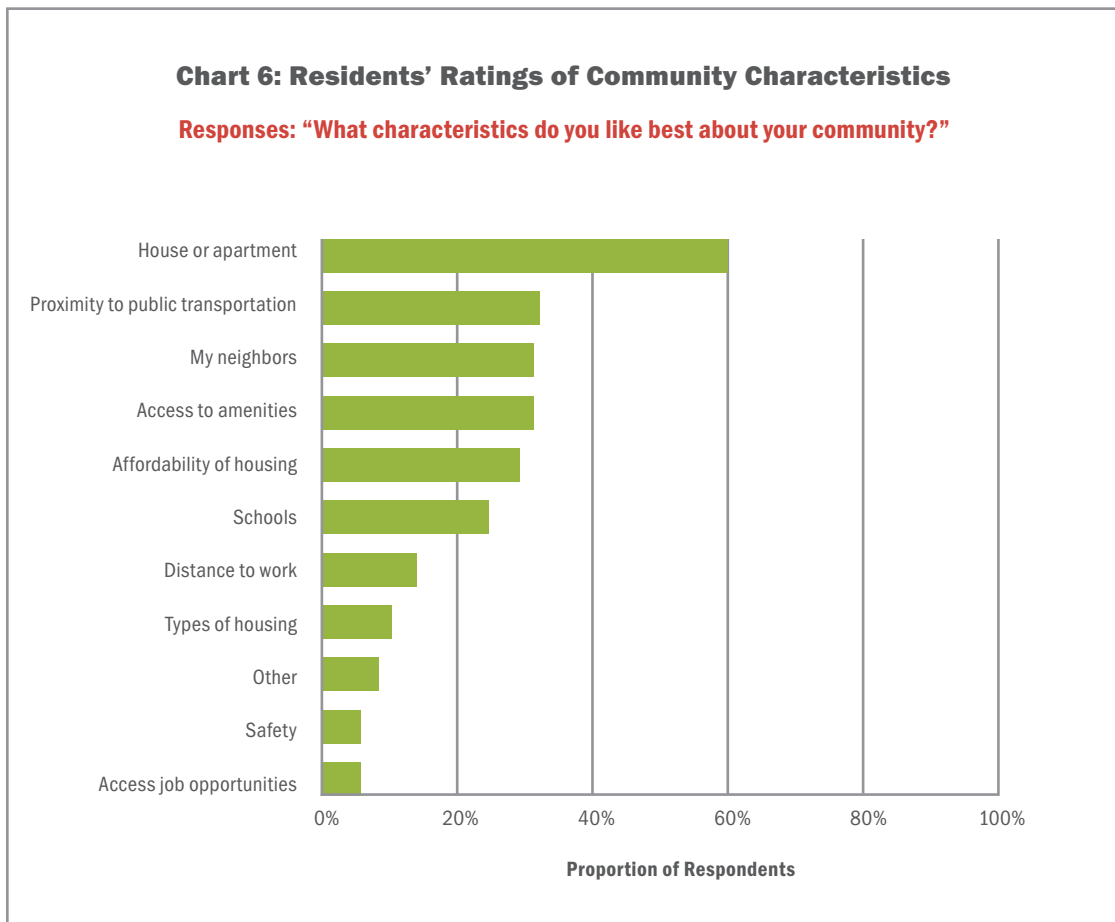
NEIGHBORHOOD OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING, INC. (NOAH), EAST BOSTON, MA

Conducting the evaluation in East Boston provided the Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH) with the opportunity to reconnect with the neighborhood where it was founded in 1987. In the intervening 23 years, NOAH had become a regional community development corporation whose efforts were spread throughout the suburbs of greater Boston. As NOAH developed into a multi-service organization, efforts in East Boston had become more focused on organizing around the issues of open space and environmental restitution and less on quality of life for residents at the block level. The choice of East Boston for stabilization work made sense as the neighborhood was at the intersection of numerous NOAH service areas, including an ongoing program to create wetlands, the creation of a community park on a former brownfield site, as well as education and youth soccer programs, some housing rehabilitation, and permanent housing for formerly homeless people.

NOAH found the evaluation's greatest benefit was the knowledge gained from the 739 property observations and 70 blocks observations it conducted. Despite the damaging weather conditions from the harsh northern climate and the neighborhood's location on Boston Harbor, most homes were found to be in reasonably good physical condition: of the 739 properties observed, 58% were rated in "sound condition and good repair." Another 40% of properties were found to need only "minor repairs or maintenance," leaving just 2% of homes needing "major repairs or replacement" (Map 4). ▸▸▸

Map 4: Boston with NOAH Observation Data

Exterior Condition of the Dwelling

◆ Good and needs no maintenance or repair   ◆ Needs minor repairs only
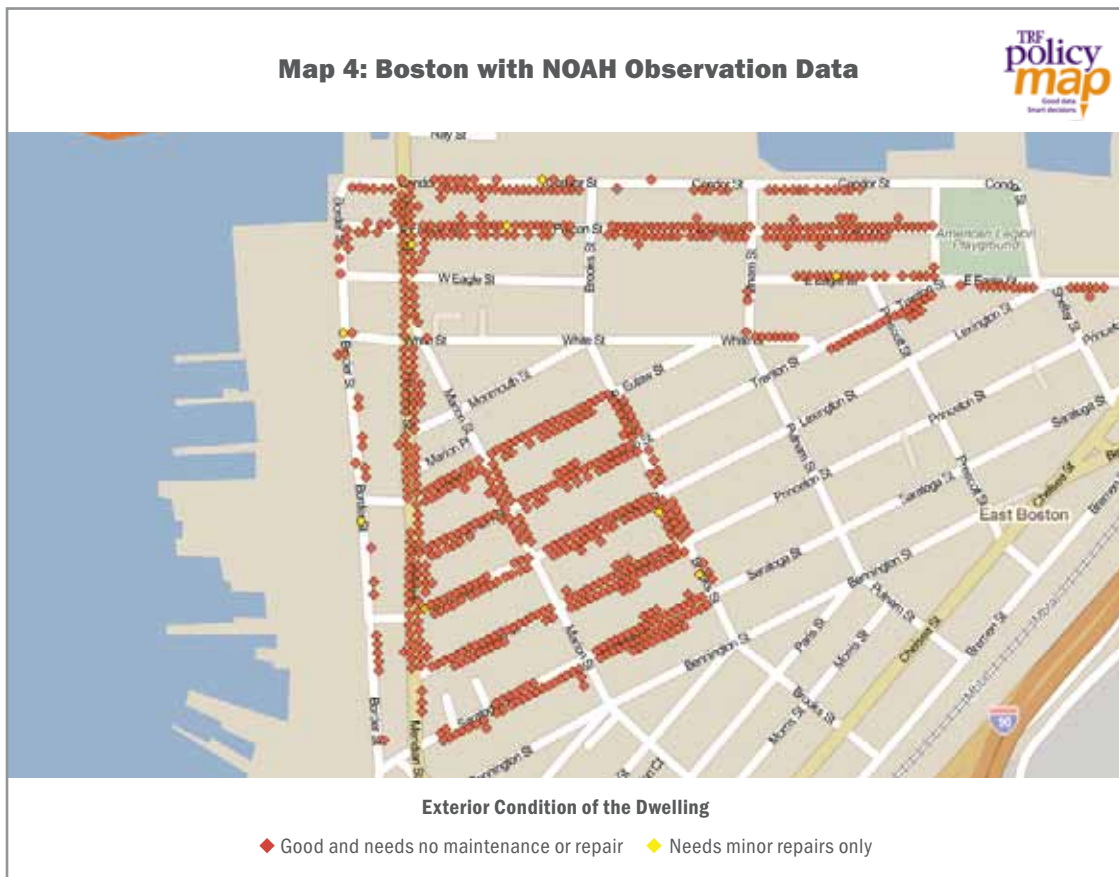
The small number of homes needing major work came as a surprise to NOAH staff members, who believed the housing in the neighborhood was in need of more significant rehabilitation. This perception was reinforced by the fact that most of the repairs needed in the neighborhood were related to siding (Chart 7). The amount of siding work needed, combined with its high visibility, gave the neighborhood a shoddy appearance that obscured other more positive signs of pride and investment. The most dramatic finding in this area was that 99% of the homes' surrounding features (such as fencing, driveways, and walkways) were found to be in sound condition and good repair. After determining that the small, relatively low-cost repairs needed could improve the appearance of the entire neighborhood, NOAH decided to revive its lending operation in the form of small home improvement loans and has applied to the US Treasury's Community Development Financial Institution for loan funds.

Additionally, the overlap of the East Boston neighborhood with city and NSP target areas enabled NOAH to get a head start acquiring vacant foreclosed properties and rehabilitating them for sale or rent. Through the property and block observations, NOAH identified boarded up properties that might have been poised for sale or auction. One key community informant interview resulted in the organization also gaining access to MSL real estate listings that allowed it to identify properties early enough to compete with cash buyers who were purchasing foreclosed homes with the intention of making minimal repairs and flipping them at higher prices. By intercepting properties before they fall into the hands of nonresident investors, NOAH hopes to initiate a foreclosure rehabilitation program. The majority of homes in the neighborhood are "tripledeckers" and by gaining control of one property, NOAH will be able to provide housing for three families. ▸▸▸

Chart 7: Assessment of Exterior Repairs Needed – East Boston

Types of repairs needed in East Boston
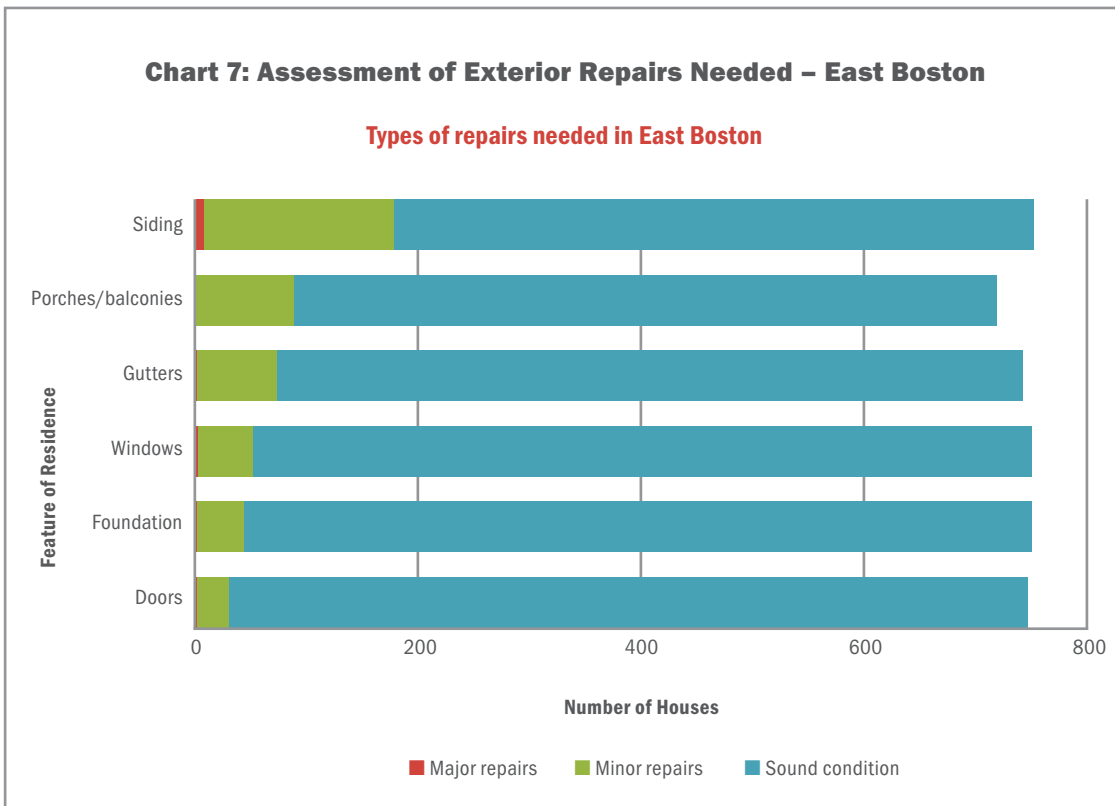
With its strong bent toward organizing, NOAH found a capable group of volunteers within the neighborhood to do the evaluation footwork. Drawing most heavily from adult students in its own English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program, NOAH provided stipends from a small grant provided by NeighborWorks and created bi-lingual teams to conduct resident surveys and property observations. Circumstances conspired, however, to limit the number of resident surveys NOAH was able to conduct. In a neighborhood where nearly half the population consisted of new immigrants, family members frequently held more than one job and were simply not at home to answer their doors. Additionally, the physical characteristic of "tripledecker" housing and the social dynamic of the neighborhood meant that residents who were at home were less likely to answer their doors unless they were expecting visitors. NOAH found, however, that the 78 resident surveys it was able to conduct gave a useful window into community thinking and that residents who were interviewed were more satisfied with the East Boston neighborhood than expected.

NOAH used PolicyMap extensively as it found it to be a useful method both for examining current community conditions and assessing what it had accomplished over time. A second round of block observations is underway to provide additional information to map alongside the secondary data. NOAH looks forward to continued use of evaluation data for planning collaborations in East Boston and more effectively supporting residents in their pursuit of affordable housing strategies, environmental justice, leadership development, and economic development opportunities. ■

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING SERVICES OF NEW HAVEN, NEW HAVEN, CT

For the Success Measures evaluation, New Haven NHS selected two neighborhoods that were suffering from the destabilizing effects of foreclosure but had also been designated target areas for the "Neighborhoods of Choice" program by the Community Foundation of New Haven. This local program enables residents to address issues that are unique to their neighborhoods by guiding them through an analysis of a variety of key factors, with the goal of creating public partnerships to engage in joint action. The community building focus and preliminary research made the Blake Street and Winchester Avenue neighborhoods excellent prospects for the evaluation process. The results of the evaluation were so valuable that New Haven NHS went on to evaluate three additional neighborhood areas.

NHS staff conducted the baseline data collection and analysis using a diverse group of volunteers. At various times, the data collection team consisted of four AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, staff from the New Haven Community Loan Fund, and a Yale Presidential Fellow. Prior to carrying out the survey and observation portions, a Success Measures coach trained NHS staff, and together they trained the full team. NHS staff credited support from Success Measures with its ability to effectively carry out the evaluation. Neighborhood residents were engaged by the project with only a few declining to respond to the survey. The training team also created a visual template for the property observations to ensure a degree of consistency in distinguishing between, for instance, a roof in "sound condition," a roof "needing minor maintenance," and a roof "needing major repair." This technique ensured "inter-rater reliability" during the observation process, or a similarity in judgments among survey team members.

While the resident survey revealed a stable population and a notable level of satisfaction, this did not translate into feelings of connectedness to the neighborhood. The population surveyed was well established, with five out of six having lived in the neighborhood for more than a year, and over half for more than five years. ▸▸▸

Before   After

Additionally, three out of five residents were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the neighborhood and would recommend it as a place to live. At the same time, however, high levels of satisfaction did not translate into high levels of connectedness. With just four in ten residents feeling connected, New Haven NHS capitalized on the level of interest in the survey and launched a leadership training program for neighborhood residents.

The evaluation provided the impetus for the creation of this highly successful leadership program for residents of Blake Street and Winchester Avenue, as well as the three additional "mini" neighborhoods. As a result of this new program, New Haven NHS graduated 26 community leaders who fully completed a series of five classes based on best practices developed by NeighborWorks and led by local facilitators. NHS Community Building Specialist Stephen Cremin-Endes stressed that launching the leadership program is "the most significant thing we have done" to advance resident engagement. Cremin-Endes, who oversaw the entire evaluation, declared that the survey process itself had profound benefits for his organization. The very act of knocking on every door drew it closer to the communities it serves and the connection allowed New Haven NHS to pick up where city efforts had unraveled or stalled.

While the survey gave New Haven NHS the opportunity to connect with residents on their own doorsteps, the community itself also showed an interest in the survey results: people wanted to know what their neighbors thought. A Winchester Avenue resident, who had welcomed the survey takers into her home and had shown great enthusiasm for the project, later hosted an information session for her neighbors to review raw data with NHS staff. Out of this encounter grew a new Winchester Avenue residents association that has 30 members and meets weekly.

New Haven NHS has continued to benefit from the evaluation by a new partnership with The ROOF Project (Real Options, Overcoming Foreclosure), a collaborative between the city government and nonprofit agencies to address the mortgage foreclosure crisis. Inspired by New Haven NHS's neighborhood work, The ROOF Project is using the same model to purchase properties in foreclosure and preserve them for affordable home ownership or well-managed rental. New Haven NHS had been working in the previously gang- and crime-plagued Stevens Street neighborhood over several years, and had initiated substantial improvements using a "healthy neighborhood" model centered on fixing up a few of the 50 double- and triple-decker homes on the street to gain a toe-hold against the effects of foreclosure and absentee landlords. By conducting the resident survey and property observation tools in this "mini" neighborhood, NHS ascertained that many Stevens Street properties needed only minor repairs such as better lighting, landscaping, driveways repairs, and new front doors. Working with partners of The ROOF Project, they have helped establish a grant program for small repairs.

Reflecting on his organization's experience with Community Stabilization Evaluation, Stephen Cremin-Endes said, "It is wonderful to see organizational structures growing and strengthening, and Success Measures is the catalyst." ■

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING SERVICES OF PHOENIX, PHOENIX, AZ

Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) of Phoenix conducted its community stabilization evaluation in Garfield, an area that had been a target neighborhood for more than 15 years. Garfield was of critical interest to NHS Phoenix, which wanted to collect information to help build strategies for stabilization of the area in its partnership with the City of Phoenix. The evaluation began at the same time as the organization's first property acquisition under the City's federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program funded efforts, thus giving it the opportunity to provide a baseline picture of Garfield just before the impact of NHS Phoenix's work took effect.

NHS Phoenix's community stabilization strategy was grounded in the belief that foreclosures in a neighborhood result in a loss of confidence on the part of residents and stakeholders, and a decline in the physical conditions of foreclosed and vacant properties as well as the buildings and spaces surrounding them. Through its community stabilization efforts – including returning vacant properties to productive uses, improving physical conditions of buildings and space, and engaging residents in improving their community – NHS Phoenix hoped to improve the perceptions of residents in its target neighborhoods such as Garfield. Over time, it anticipated that positive changes in perceptions could help increase the appeal of a neighborhood to current and future residents, and thus strengthen the local housing market.

NHS Phoenix sought to accomplish its mission to stabilize and revitalize Garfield and other Phoenix neighborhoods through several strategies including:

- Providing opportunities for neighborhood renters to become homeowners,
- Helping mortgage delinquent homeowners to become current in their payments, and
- Mitigating the ill effects of vacant and foreclosed homes on its target neighborhoods.

NHS Phoenix saw that the evaluation would provide the means to measure the impact of its community stabilization efforts on its target neighborhoods. By collecting initial baseline data about current conditions in Garfield, NHS Phoenix would be able to measure change over time in the keys areas of community perception, neighborhood physical condition, and market health.

NHS Phoenix successfully carried out the evaluation in the central Phoenix neighborhood with 148 resident surveys and observations of every one of Garfield's 74 blocks. The organization carried out a sampling of parcel observations, however, by concentrating on 10 blocks consisting of 168 homes. Of residents surveyed, 88% were Latino or Hispanic, and NHS Phoenix depended both on bilingual teams of data collectors and Spanish language survey instruments.

Data drawn from the resident surveys, in particular, enhanced the organization's revitalization strategy of turning renters into homeowners. Specific information about resident satisfaction and preferences will serve as the basis for future marketing efforts in the neighborhood. NHS Phoenix had some of the highest rates of residents recommending the neighborhood among all pilot evaluation sites, with 49% definitely recommending and another 34% probably recommending. ▸▸▸
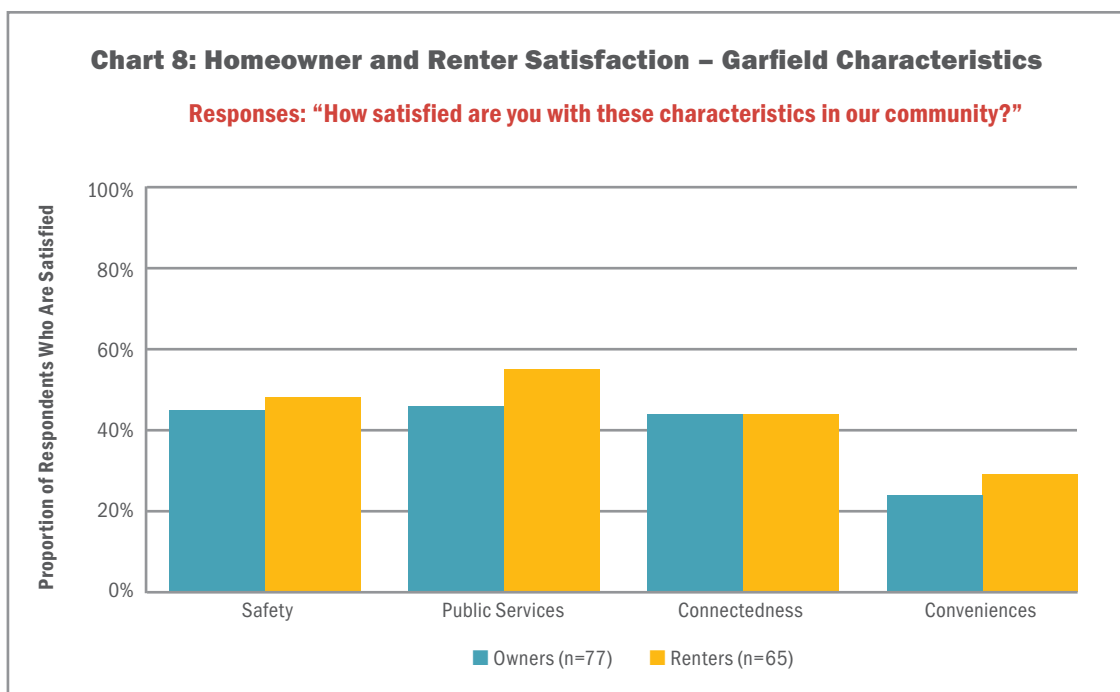
Of specific interest was the fact that 46 of the 65 renters surveyed in Garfield expressed a desire to buy a home in the neighborhood. Among those renters wanting to buy a home, personal finances and the state of the economy, rather than issues of safety or physical condition of the area, were cited as the most common reasons for not yet having done so. NHS Phoenix learned that Garfield itself was not the deterrent for potential buyers, but that the effect of larger economic issues was. Among the 22 renters who were not interested in purchasing a home in Garfield, however, safety was the most frequently cited reason. NHS Phoenix determined that it would direct future marketing efforts for Garfield at the substantial numbers of more satisfied renters.

Results from other parts of the evaluation reinforced the finding that renters overall had more positive feelings about Garfield than did homeowners (Chart 8).

While 53% of survey respondents identified themselves as homeowners, NHS Phoenix staff estimate through secondary data that the percentage for the entire neighborhood is closer to 35%. This finding lends further credence to the organization's decision to focus future marketing efforts on the many renters in Garfield.

NHS of Phoenix's executive director, Patricia Garcia-Duarte, found the process of conducting the evaluation useful. She emphasized that conducting the survey helped to re-engage with constituencies in the neighborhood. "Knocking on doors puts us back in the community" and, as a result, residents have gotten to know the organization and its work better.

Because they found the Garfield evaluation useful, NHS of Phoenix decided to survey the Isaac neighborhood where they intend to work more intensively moving forward. When they began to conduct the resident survey, however, the organization uncovered serious issues within the community. As a result, they suspended the survey effort and instead concentrated on addressing the conflict among factions in the neighborhood. Garcia-Duarte indicated that staff had not been aware of the extent of the conflicts, and "even this negative information will be useful." ∎

Chart 8: Homeowner and Renter Satisfaction – Garfield Characteristics

Responses: "How satisfied are you with these characteristics in our community?"

Evaluating Community Stabilization Efforts at the Neighborhood Level: A NeighborWorks® Pilot with Success Measures®

SOUTHWEST SOLUTIONS, DETROIT, MI

Southwest Solutions participated in the community stabilization evaluation in hopes of jumpstarting a neighborhood conversation about the future of the Hubbard Farms, an historic district with a mix of newly arrived, younger professionals, artists, musicians, students, and longer-tenured Hispanic and African-American residents. The organization's emphasis on developing neighborhood capacity was both philosophical and practical: budget cuts were reducing staff size at the precise moment the neighborhood began to face an increase in crime and a crisis of confidence. Southwest Solutions knew that the issues of safety, vacancy and deteriorating properties affected all members of the neighborhood equally, but the Success Measures evaluation provided documentation to demonstrate that to residents.

Despite attracting new residents and its proximity to downtown, Hubbard Farms was part of an area excluded from "Detroit Works", the municipal effort to create a comprehensive and collaborative plan for the city's future. One result of this exclusion was a lack of municipal assistance with the growing number of foreclosures, and soon the cycle that plagued other areas of Detroit came to Hubbard Farms: foreclosure, vacancy, break-in, scrapping, trespass, and, finally, arson. The fact that the arson episodes occurred between close-set, occupied homes in an historic area experiencing population growth set off a panic in the neighborhood. The arson risk devastated the members of new and established block clubs, particularly because lenders expected the city to clean up the sites after fires. The charred ruins were not only unsightly, but they jeopardized the continued presence of younger residents and anyone else who was able to move elsewhere.

This confluence of events added special urgency to Southwest Solutions' organizing efforts in Hubbard Farms. It could identify key individuals and stakeholders in the neighborhood, but it needed a way to encourage them to take ownership of problems and initiate actions on their own. Southwest Solutions viewed the evaluation as an opportunity to hold the neighborhood together by creating partnerships even in the face of deep-seated concerns about safety and economic decline.

Southwest Solutions hired a recent college graduate after he was profiled in the local newspaper, and he proved to be an effective leader for the evaluation team. Staff members conducting the evaluation found that both the publicity provided through a neighborhood electronic mailing list and the encouragement of community leaders greatly enhanced their ability to obtain a high rate of return on the resident survey. The team went door-to-door through the neighborhood and conducted the survey in both English and Spanish. Southwest Solutions also made the surveys available to fill out online. The team leader also recruited five AmericaCorps VISTA volunteers who wore Southwest Solutions t-shirts as they walked the neighborhood to conduct the property observations. ▸▸▸

Primary data from the survey identified neighborhood problems and perceptions; sharing those data with the community allowed Southwest Solutions to build a new level of mutual trust and open a dialogue on the central issue of safety. The organization knew residents were interested in immediate solutions and that many would simply leave if there were no prospect for improved safety. Conducting the evaluation also allowed Southwest Solutions to identify those residents who cared passionately about police responsiveness and functioning streetlights to discourage arson and other criminal activity.

The survey data proved to be especially useful for connecting the interests and concerns of the long-standing Hispanic population and those of the newer artists and younger professionals, regardless of other differences between them. First among these shared concerns was a lack of confidence in both the police and condition of the streetscape (Chart 9). Residents were asked to rate a variety of public services offered in the community and a majority responded with ratings of "fair", "poor", or "very poor" for police protection and street repair.

Furthermore, these safety-related issues directly affected the willingness of renters living in Hubbard Farms to buy homes in the neighborhood. Among the 69% of renters who would consider buying a home in the neighborhood, the most frequently cited factor for not having done so was personal finances, but closely following were crime and safety issues, and physical conditions in the community (Chart 10). ▸▸▸

Chart 9: Ratings of Community Public Services – Hubbard Farms

Responses: "How would you rate the following public services in your community?"
(Note: Only unfavorable ratings are reflected in this chart.)

Number of Residents Out of 115

■ Very Poor   ■ Poor   ■ Fair
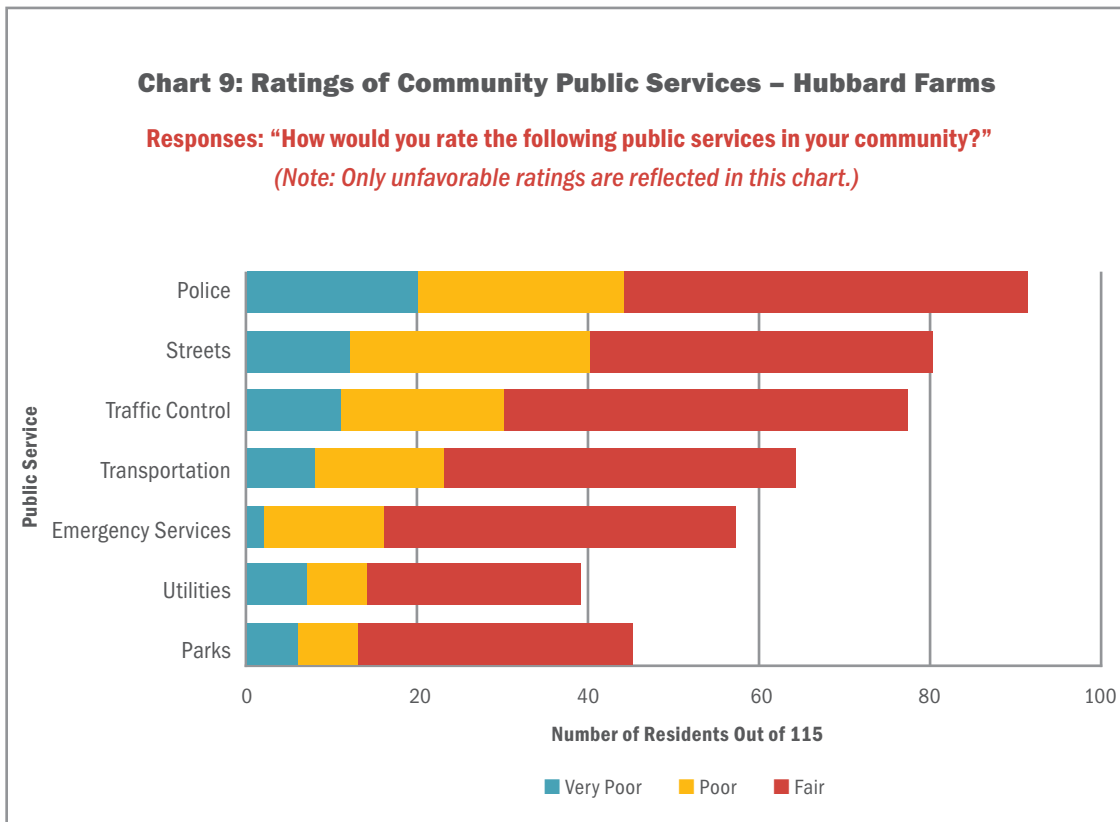
With these and more data from the evaluation in hand, Southwest Solutions organized three public meetings, two of which included the local police precinct commander. The meetings included members of the Hispanic community, a sprinkling of African American residents, and the younger, newer arrivals to Hubbard Farms. The first meeting was collegial but did not result in any concrete solutions to neighborhood problems. The second meeting made clear that the universal lack of confidence in the police among residents would require "outside-the-box" thinking, which resulted in the creation of community policing efforts. Residents began to patrol the neighborhood in three-hour shifts in vehicles with rooftop flashing yellow lights. Southwest Solutions staff observed that the early stages of this process were a successful merger of interests among different populations within the neighborhood and looked to it as an effective tool for building local leadership.

In keeping with its commitment to building neighborhood leadership, Southwest Solutions staff also initiated contact with the appropriate city services, but anticipated that residents would follow up on issues such as burned out streetlights and trash collection. It also developed a cadre of volunteers whose professional services helped mitigate some results of foreclosure by boarding up vacant properties and developing real estate listings. Additionally, Southwest Solutions has used PolicyMap extensively to collect demographic information such as homeownership and rental rates, as well as educational attainment in an effort to better understand the context in which it is working in Hubbard Farms. They also gained stronger relationships with individuals in local government who were part of the data collection outreach.

Southwest Solutions is planning to conduct evaluations in two more nearby neighborhoods, Corktown and Hubbard-Richard. For Program Manager Dan Loacano, the value of Success Measures is that "it digs down deep and door-to-door among people who care about streetlights and police presence, not about the big, sexy development projects. If those people don't get a break, they will leave the neighborhood." ■

Chart 10: Reasons for Not Buying a Residence - Hubbard Farms

Responses: "What characteristics do you like best about your community?"

Number of Respondents

(Respondents were allowed to select multiple responses.)
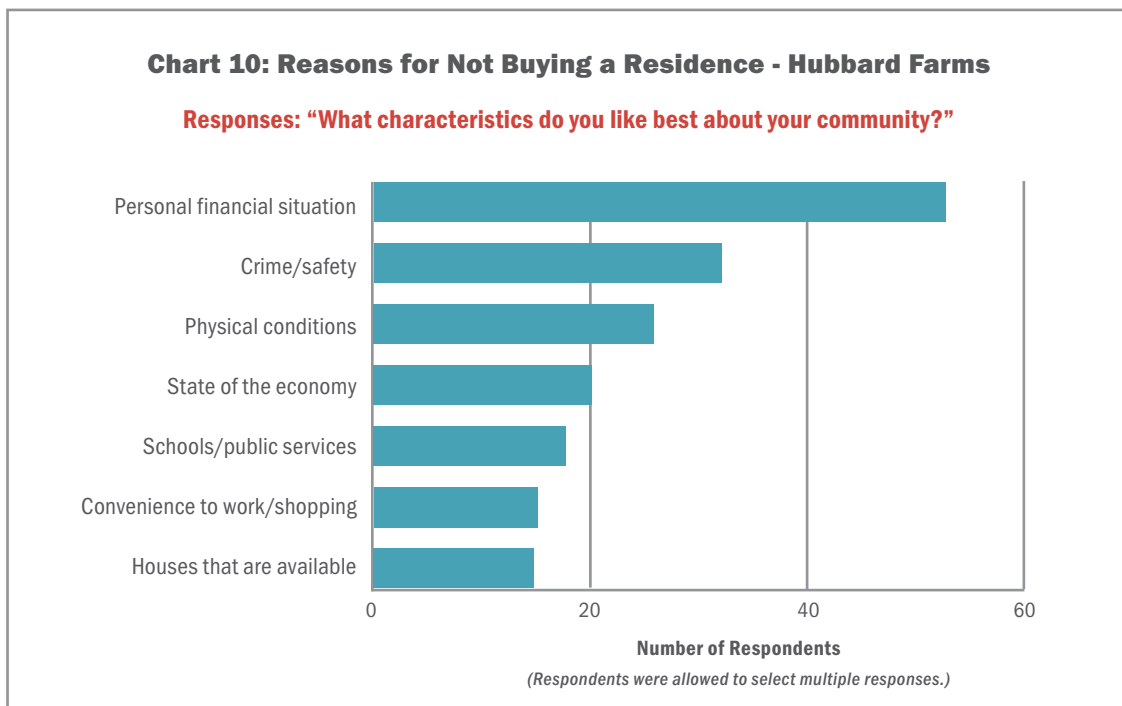
ST. AMBROSE HOUSING AID CENTER, BALTIMORE, MD IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BELAIR-EDISON NEIGHBORHOODS, INC., BALTIMORE, MD

St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center, a longtime citywide developer of low-income housing, conducted its community stabilization evaluation in partnership with Belair-Edison Neighborhoods, Inc., a community-based organization located in an area where it had done a substantial amount of housing development over the years. Most recently, St. Ambrose had concentrated on rehabilitating foreclosed homes and providing housing counseling services in the neighborhood. Because St. Ambrose had rehabilitated one out of every 12 houses in Belair-Edison, it had a considerable presence in the neighborhood, but a low profile. For St. Ambrose, the evaluation was useful as a detailed baseline of physical conditions in the neighborhood. It intends to repeat the observations in three years, at which time it hopes to be able to document the impact its work had on the neighborhood.

For Belair-Edison, the evaluation immediately raised its profile in the community and allowed it to gauge results of its organizing work over a broader spectrum of residents. The two organizations had worked directly with each other for four years in an initiative that developed and marketed housing while providing homebuyer education.

Map 5 reflects the current state of work in the community, with considerable progress shown. The organizations continue to look for opportunities to address the condition of even more properties in the near future. ▸▸▸

Map 5: Baltimore City with St. Ambrose Observation Data, St. Ambrose Aid Society Auction Data

Exterior Condition of the Dwelling
◆ Good and needs no maintenance or repair   ◆ Needs minor repairs only   ◆ Requires a limited number of major repairs
◆ Requires comprehensive renovation   ◆ Dilapidated and not able to be repaired or renovated
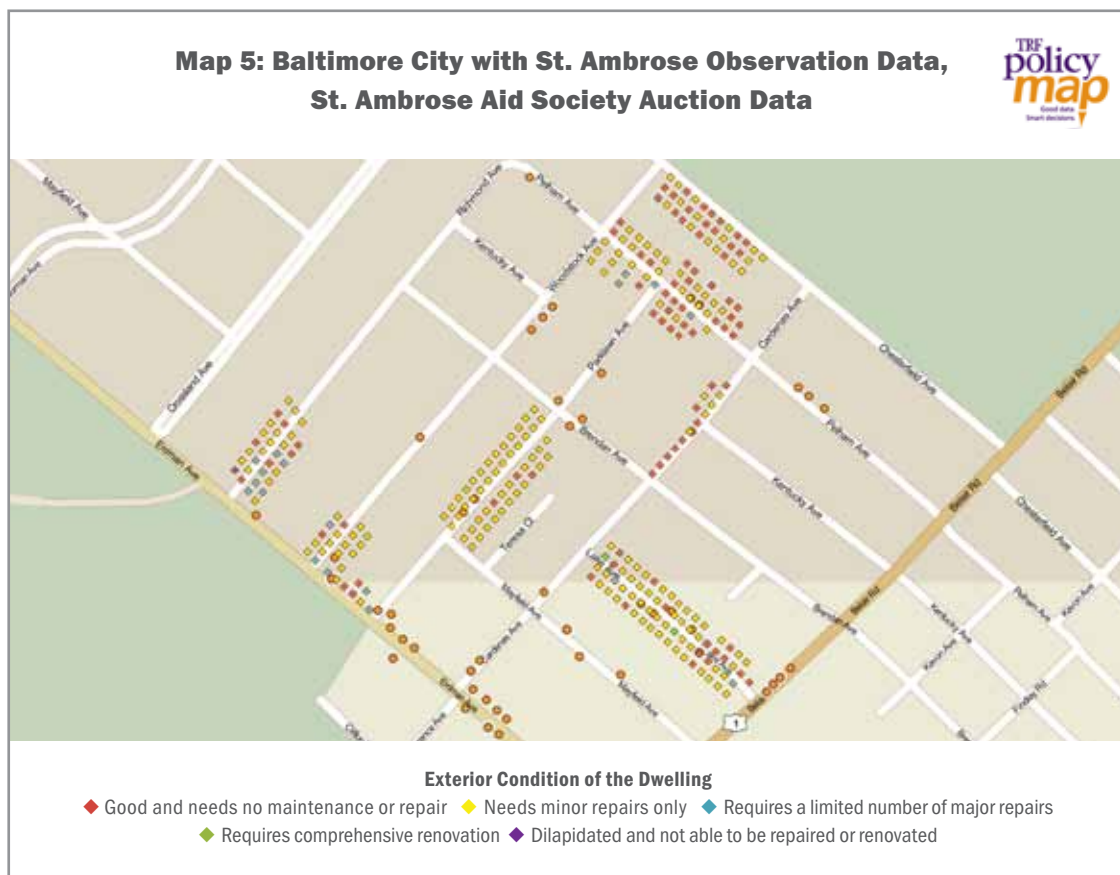
The partners selected a small area within Belair-Edison to evaluate and then combined efforts to carry out the resident surveys; St. Ambrose conducted the property observations with its own staff. The Little Flower neighborhood was self-contained and bordered by two parks and two major roads but still reflected the diversity of the larger community. Its more uniform style of housing differed from that of the surrounding area but it also made for easier data collection.

Of residents surveyed, 23% indicated that they were "very satisfied" living in the community, and another 56% were "satisfied". This satisfaction was further reflected in the rate at which both owners and renters recommended Little Flower as a good place to live. A total of 79% of residents surveyed indicated they would either "definitely recommend" the neighborhood (32%) or "probably recommend" it (47%). And, if given the choice, 63% of respondents indicated they would continue to live in the neighborhood. For both partners, this was the most surprising outcome of the evaluation. The high percentages were a signal to Belair-Edison that it had only been hearing complaints from a vocal minority; after the evaluation, Belair-Edison was better positioned to determine where to target services in the neighborhood.

Chart 11 reflects residents' perceptions about the improvement of aspects of neighborhood conditions. St. Ambrose will be able to track these perceptions over time as the organization continues to work on physical improvements.

St Ambrose found that the evaluation presented a unique opportunity to gauge the impact of its work. Director of Housing Development David Sann said, "St. Ambrose has always asked, 'So what?' about the many properties it renovates each year. How does it affect the neighborhood? Until now we have never been able to answer that question beyond speculation. The evaluation pilot intrigued us as a way to assess our own effectiveness at the community level." ■

Chart 11: Resident Perceptions of Community Change – St. Ambrose

Responses: "Compared to three years ago, how have the following aspects of this community changed?"

Proportion of Respondents

Legend: Declined a lot, Declined some, Stayed about the same, Improved, Improved a lot
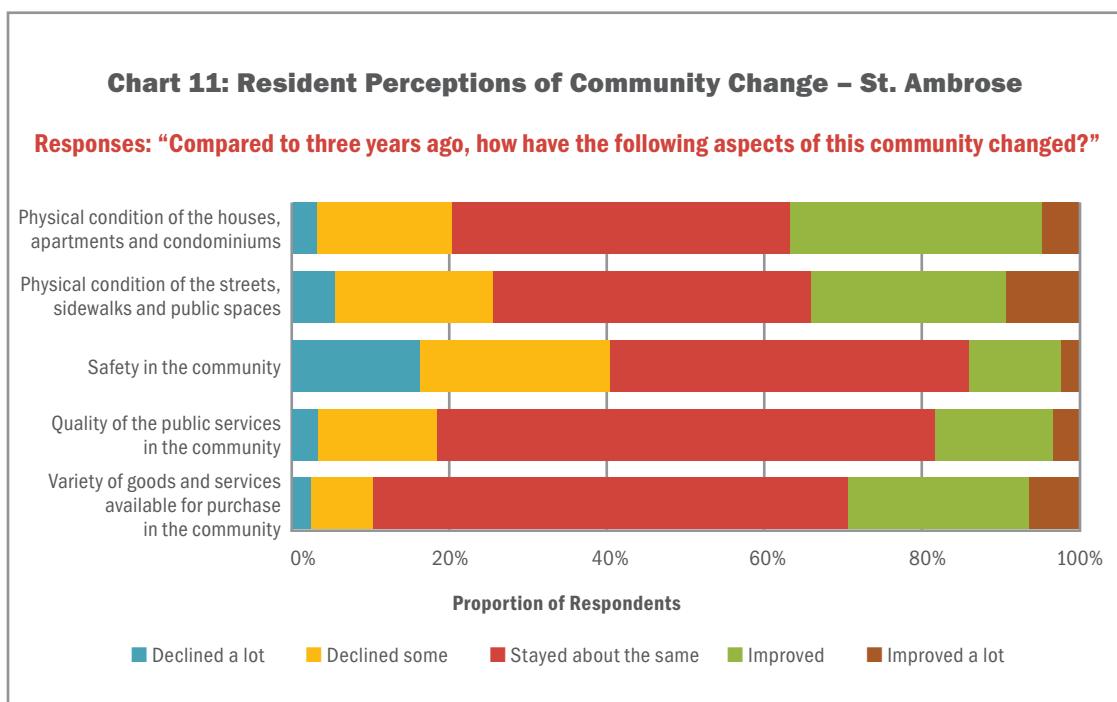
Part 2:
Success Measures
Community Stabilization
Evaluation Framework
and Tools

VII. Data Collection Tools and Methods

The Community Stabilization Evaluation Framework was designed to capture both secondary and primary data to create a complete picture of community change over time.

The evaluation framework included these four dimensions:

- **Community Image, Confidence & Management**— A resident survey and key informant interview to understand internal and external perceptions of the community

- **Community Physical Conditions**—A set of observation tools at the block and parcel levels coordinated with some secondary data and an analysis framework so that an organization can measure change over time to the physical conditions of the community as well as determine which properties, if any, are reasonable to obtain and rehab.

- **Community Characteristics**—A set of secondary data to frame the context of the community

- **Market Health**—A set of secondary data to address the market health of a community

The surveys, key informant interviews and observations of physical conditions for **Community Image, Confidence & Management** and **Community Physical Conditions** were collected using the Success Measures data collection tools; examples of these tools follow in this section.

We did not provide specific forms for groups to record **Community Characteristics** and **Market Health**. Through subscriptions to PolicyMap, organizations were able to access most of the community characteristics about their target area and the broader community, as wells as much of the market data. They were able to generate written reports as well as displaying data on maps. A list of data sets available on PolicyMap can be found at http://www.policymap.com/our-data.html.

We encouraged organizations to collect market data at the local level, including days on market and local foreclosure data. Some groups collected information they uploaded onto PolicyMap and displayed on a map.

List of Tools

Community Image, Confidence and Management

Resident Confidence in the Community *(See page 46)*

Perception of Services in the Community

External Perception of the Community

Community Physical Conditions

Block Conditions *(See page 53)*

Residential Property *(See page 55)*

Vacant Residential Property

Non-Residential and Mixed-Use Property

Vacant Non-Residential and Mixed-Use Property

Community Space

Vacant Land

Vacant Residential Property Analysis

Vacant Non-Residential and Mixed-Use Property Analysis

Vacant Land Analysis

Community Characteristics and Market Health *(See page 57)*

An extended print version of this publication, which includes the complete set of all 13 community stabilization tools, is available for purchase at $35.00 by contacting successmeasures@nw.org or 202-220-2330.

Survey Number: _____

Address: _____

Address 2 (unit or apartment number): _____

City: _____Zip Code: _____

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. Please answer the following questions about the community in which you live. When we use the word "community," we are referring to *[define community]***.**

LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY

First, we'd like to know your thoughts about living in this community.

1. How long have you lived in this community?
   - ○ Less than 1 year
   - ○ 1-5 years
   - ○ 6-10 years
   - ○ 11-20 years
   - ○ 21-30 years
   - ○ More than 30 years

2. What was the major reason you decided to live in this community? *Please choose only one reason.*
   - ○ To live near family or friends
   - ○ To be close to work
   - ○ Accessibility of amenities, such as community centers and stores
   - ○ Proximity to public transportation
   - ○ Schools for my children
   - ○ Access to job opportunities
   - ○ Safety in the community
   - ○ Affordability of housing
   - ○ Born here
   - ○ No choice / Nowhere else to go
   - ○ Something else *Specify:* _____

3. Overall, considering everything, how satisfied would you say you are living in this community?
   - ○ Very satisfied
   - ○ Satisfied
   - ○ Somewhat satisfied
   - ○ Somewhat dissatisfied
   - ○ Dissatisfied
   - ○ Very dissatisfied

4. Right now, how likely are you to recommend this community to someone else as a good place to live?
   - ○ Definitely would recommend
   - ○ Probably would recommend
   - ○ Probably would not recommend
   - ○ Definitely would not recommend

5. If you had the choice, would you continue to live in this community?
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No

5a. Please describe why you feel this way.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. What are the things that you like best about living in this community? *Please choose up to three of the following characteristics.*
   - ○ My house or apartment
   - ○ My neighbors
   - ○ Distance to work
   - ○ Access to amenities, such as community centers and stores
   - ○ Proximity to public transportation
   - ○ Schools for my children
   - ○ Access to job opportunities
   - ○ Safety in the community
   - ○ Affordability of housing
   - ○ Types of housing available
   - ○ Something else *Specify:*

   _____

7. What are the things that you like least about living in this community? *Please choose up to three of the following characteristics.*
   - ○ My house or apartment
   - ○ My neighbors
   - ○ Distance to work
   - ○ Access to amenities, such as community centers and stores
   - ○ Proximity to public transportation
   - ○ Schools for my children
   - ○ Access to job opportunities
   - ○ Safety in the community
   - ○ Affordability of housing
   - ○ Types of housing available
   - ○ Something else *Specify:*
     _____

8. How connected would you say you feel to this community?
   - ○ Very connected
   - ○ Connected
   - ○ Somewhat connected
   - ○ Not very connected
   - ○ Not at all connected

9. How involved would you say you are in addressing issues of importance in this community?
   - ○ Very involved
   - ○ Involved
   - ○ Somewhat involved
   - ○ Not very involved
   - ○ Not at all involved

10. How influential would you say you are in getting members of this community to take action on important community issues?
    - ○ Very influential
    - ○ Influential
    - ○ Somewhat influential
    - ○ Not very influential
    - ○ Not at all influential

11. Please indicate how likely you think it is that people in this community would help out if the following occurred.

	Very likely	Likely	Somewhat likely	Not that likely	Not at all likely
I needed a ride somewhere.	○	○	○	○	○
A package was delivered when I was not home and it needed to be accepted.	○	○	○	○	○
I needed a favor, such as picking up mail or borrowing a tool.	○	○	○	○	○
I needed someone to watch my house when I was away.	○	○	○	○	○
An elderly neighbor needed someone to periodically check on him or her.	○	○	○	○	○
A neighbor needed someone to take care of a child in an emergency.	○	○	○	○	○

12. To what degree would you say people in this community share information about what's happening locally?

    ○ A great deal
    ○ A fair amount
    ○ Some
    ○ A little
    ○ Not at all

13. How responsive would you say local government is to the needs of this community?

    ○ Very responsive
    ○ Responsive
    ○ Somewhat responsive
    ○ Not very responsive
    ○ Not at all responsive

YOUR HOME

Next, please tell us a little about your home.

14. Do you currently rent your home or do you own it?

    ○ I rent my home. *Please go to question 15.*
    ○ I own my home. *Please go to question 18.*
    ○ I live with family or friends. *Please go to question 15.*

Questions 15 – 17 are for those who rent their home or live with family or friends.

15. Would you consider buying a home in this community?

    ○ Yes *Please go to question 16.*
    ○ No *Please go to question 17.*

16. Which of the following factors would you say is the primary reason you have not yet bought a home in this community? *Please choose only one reason.*

    ○ Houses that are available in the community
    ○ Physical conditions in the community
    ○ Crime or other safety issues
    ○ Quality of public services and/or schools
    ○ Convenience to work, school, and/or shopping
    ○ My personal financial situation
    ○ State of the economy
    ○ Something else *Please specify:* _____

17. Which of the following factors would you say is the primary reason you would not consider buying a home in this community? *Please choose only one reason.*

    ○ Houses that are available in the community
    ○ Physical conditions in the community
    ○ Crime or other safety issues
    ○ Quality of public services and/or schools
    ○ Convenience to work, school, and/or shopping
    ○ My personal financial situation
    ○ State of the economy _____
    ○ Something else *Please specify:*

    _____

18. How long have you owned your home?

    ○ Less than 1 year
    ○ 1-5 years
    ○ 6-10 years
    ○ 11-20 years
    ○ 21-30 years
    ○ More than 30 years

19. In your opinion, what is your home currently worth?

    ○ More than I paid for it
    ○ About what I paid for it
    ○ Less than what I paid for it

HOME RENOVATIONS, REPAIRS, AND MAINTENANCE

Next are some questions about work you may have done on either the outside or the inside of your home.

20. During the past three years, did you do any major renovations or repairs to the outside of your home?

    ○ Yes *Please go to question 20a.*
    ○ No *Skip question 20a and go to question 21.*

20a. Please describe the major renovations or repairs you did.

    _____

    _____

    _____

21. During the past three years, did you do any major renovations or repairs to the inside of your home?

　○ Yes *Please go to question 21a.*

　○ No *Skip question 21a and go to question 22.*

21a. Please describe the major renovations or repairs you did.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

22. During the past year, did you do any routine maintenance on the outside of your home?

　○ Yes *Please go to question 22a.*

　○ No *Skip question 22a and go to question 23.*

22a. Please describe the routine maintenance you did.

_____

_____

_____

_____

23. During the past year, did you do any routine maintenance on the inside of your home?

　○ Yes *Please go to question 23a.*

　○ No *Skip question 23a and go to question 24.*

23a. Please describe the routine maintenance you did.

_____

_____

_____

_____

24. If, in the future, your home needed major repairs, how likely is it that you would make those repairs?

　○ Very likely

　○ Likely

　○ Somewhat likely

　○ Not very likely

　○ Not at all likely

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY

Next are some questions about what the community looks like.

25. Please indicate how you would rate the physical condition of each of the following aspects of this community.

	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor
Streets and sidewalks	○	○	○	○	○
Public spaces, such as parks and playgrounds	○	○	○	○	○
Houses, apartments, and condominiums	○	○	○	○	○
Other buildings in the community	○	○	○	○	○

26. Please indicate whether or not you think the following are issues in this community.

	Yes	No
Inadequate street lighting	○	○
Traffic or speeding vehicles	○	○
Litter, trash, or debris	○	○
Graffiti	○	○
Abandoned or vacant houses and/or apartments	○	○
Abandoned or vacant non-residential buildings	○	○
Drug activity	○	○
Dumping	○	○
Vandalism and/or break-ins	○	○
Squatting	○	○
Stray cats and/or dogs	○	○
Other issue: _____	○	○

PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY

Now, we'd like to know what you think about the services offered in this community.

27. How would you rate the following public services in your community?

	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
Police protection	○	○	○	○	○
Emergency services, such as fire department and ambulances	○	○	○	○	○
Public utilities, such as water, electric, and gas	○	○	○	○	○
Public transportation	○	○	○	○	○
Sanitation services, such as trash pickup and recycling	○	○	○	○	○
Street repair, cleaning, and plowing	○	○	○	○	○
Public elementary schools	○	○	○	○	○
Public high schools	○	○	○	○	○
Parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers	○	○	○	○	○
Public library facilities	○	○	○	○	○
Traffic control	○	○	○	○	○

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Next, please tell us about safety in this community.

28. How safe would you say you feel in each of the following places?

	Very safe	Safe	Somewhat safe	Not that safe	Not at all safe
In your home at night	○	○	○	○	○
Outside your home at night (on the porch or stoop, or in the yard or alley)	○	○	○	○	○
Walking in the community during the day	○	○	○	○	○
Walking in the community at night	○	○	○	○	○
In parks, playgrounds, and other outdoor recreational areas	○	○	○	○	○

29. How safe do you feel the following people are in this community?

	Very safe	Safe	Somewhat safe	Not that safe	Not at all safe
Children who are playing outside	○	○	○	○	○
Children and youth in schools	○	○	○	○	○
Senior citizens who live here	○	○	○	○	○
Community residents going about their daily lives	○	○	○	○	○

CHANGE IN THE COMMUNITY

Now, we'd like to know how you think this community has changed in the past three years.

For the following questions, please compare the community now to how it was three years ago.
If you have lived in this community for less than three years, please compare it to how it was when you first moved in.

30. Compared to three years ago, how has this community changed overall?
   - ○ The community has improved a lot
   - ○ The community has improved some
   - ○ The community has stayed about the same
   - ○ The community has declined some
   - ○ The community has declined a lot

30a. Please describe why you feel this way.

_____

_____

_____

_____

31. Compared to three years ago, how would you say the following aspects of this community have changed?

	Improved a lot	Improved some	Stayed about the same	Declined some	Declined a lot
Physical condition of the houses, apartments, and condominiums	○	○	○	○	○
Physical condition of streets, sidewalks, and public spaces	○	○	○	○	○
Safety in the community	○	○	○	○	○
Quality of the public services in the community	○	○	○	○	○
Variety of goods and services available for purchase in the community	○	○	○	○	○

FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY

Finally, please share your thoughts about the future of this community.

32. Thinking about the next three years, how would you say this community is likely to change?

   ○ This community will improve a lot
   ○ This community will improve some
   ○ This community will stay about the same
   ○ This community will decline some
   ○ This community will decline a lot

32a. Please describe why you feel this way.

_____

_____

_____

_____

33. Over the next three years, how do you think home values in this community will change?

   ○ Home values will increase
   ○ Home values will stay about the same
   ○ Home values will decrease

Block Parameters: _____

Block Group: _____

Land Use	Check all that are found on block.	Predominant land use *Check only one*	Vacant structures *Check all that apply*	If vacant, number of structures
Single-family homes	○	○	○	
Multiple-family buildings with 2-4 units	○	○	○	
Multiple-family buildings with 5+ units	○	○	○	
Commercial (e.g., restaurants, retail stores)	○	○	○	
Industrial (e.g., factories, warehouses)	○	○	○	
Office (e.g., companies, nonprofit organizations)	○	○	○	
Institutional (e.g., schools, libraries, churches)	○	○	○	
Auto-related (e.g., car lots, repair shops, gas stations)	○	○	○	
Mixed use (e.g., combination of the above)	○	○	○	
Other:	○	○	○	

Structures	Number of structures	Structures in sound condition and good repair					
		All	Most 75-99%	Many 50-74%	Some 25-49%	Few 1-24%	None
Single-family homes		○	○	○	○	○	○
Multiple-family buildings with 2-4 units		○	○	○	○	○	○
Multiple-family buildings with 5+ units		○	○	○	○	○	○
Commercial buildings		○	○	○	○	○	○
Industrial buildings		○	○	○	○	○	○
Office buildings		○	○	○	○	○	○
Institutional buildings		○	○	○	○	○	○
Auto-related buildings		○	○	○	○	○	○
Mixed use buildings		○	○	○	○	○	○
Other:		○	○	○	○	○	○

Spaces	Check all that are found on block.	Condition of space		
		Well maintained	Adequately maintained	Poorly maintained
Parks	○	○	○	○
Playgrounds	○	○	○	○
Gardens	○	○	○	○
Parking lots	○	○	○	○
Vacant lots	○	○	○	○
Other:	○	○	○	○

To be used at the block level only

Other Elements	Condition of space			
	Check all that are found on block.	Well maintained	Adequately maintained	Poorly maintained
Street surfaces	○	○	○	○
Curbs	○	○	○	○
Sidewalks	○	○	○	○
Street lighting	○	○	○	○
Other:	○	○	○	○

Cleanliness	Visible on the block		
	A lot	Some	None
Trash, debris, or litter on road surfaces	○	○	○
Trash, debris, or litter on sidewalks	○	○	○
Trash, debris, or litter in yards, lots, gardens, parks, or playgrounds	○	○	○
Graffiti on structures, sidewalks, or road surfaces	○	○	○
Illegal dumping (e.g., large household items) anywhere	○	○	○
Abandoned cars anywhere	○	○	○
Other:	○	○	○

Overall attractiveness of the block

- ○ Very attractive
- ○ Attractive
- ○ Somewhat attractive
- ○ Somewhat unattractive
- ○ Unattractive
- ○ Very unattractive

Additional comments on the block	

To be used at the parcel level only.

Survey Number: _____

Address: _____

Address 2 (unit or apartment number): _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Exterior of the Dwelling	Sound condition and in good repair	Minor maintenance, repair, or replacement needed	Major repair or replacement needed	Not observable	Not applicable
Roof	○	○	○	○	○
Gutters	○	○	○	○	○
Windows	○	○	○	○	○
Exterior doors	○	○	○	○	○
Siding/Exterior walls	○	○	○	○	○
Paint on walls and trim	○	○	○	○	○
Foundation	○	○	○	○	○
Porches/Balconies	○	○	○	○	○
Attached garage	○	○	○	○	○
Other:	○	○	○	○	○

Features Around the Dwelling

	Sound condition and in good repair	Minor maintenance, repair, or replacement needed	Major repair or replacement needed	Not observable	Not applicable
Detached garage	○	○	○	○	○
Other detached structure(s)	○	○	○	○	○
Fencing	○	○	○	○	○
Sidewalk(s) and walkway(s)	○	○	○	○	○
Driveway	○	○	○	○	○
Other:	○	○	○	○	○

To be used at the parcel level only.

Visible on the Property	A lot	Some	None
Trash, debris, or litter	○	○	○
Abandoned vehicles, appliances, or other equipment	○	○	○
Deteriorating or abandoned toys, tools, or other paraphernalia	○	○	○

Lawn and/or Landscaping	Signage on Site	Dwelling Appears Vacant
○ Well maintained	○ Realtor's "For Sale" sign	○ Yes *Please complete "Vacant Residential Property" survey on page 62*
○ Adequately maintained	○ "For Sale by Owner" sign	○ No
○ Poorly maintained	○ Foreclosure/Bank ownership sign	

Overall Exterior Condition of the Dwelling
○ Good and needs no maintenance or repair
○ Needs minor repairs only
○ Requires a limited number of major repairs
○ Requires comprehensive renovation
○ Dilapidated and not able to be repaired or renovated
○ Construction of dwelling is not complete

Overall Condition of the Features Around the Dwelling
○ Good and needs no maintenance or repair
○ Needs minor repairs only
○ Requires a limited number of major repairs
○ Requires comprehensive renovation
○ Dilapidated and not able to be repaired or renovated

Additional comments on the dwelling and the features around the dwelling

Community Characteristics and Market Health

As mentioned in section IV, the evaluation framework included secondary data about residents in the community, the geography of the community, and information about the housing market. The following is a comprehensive list of the data points from which organizations can choose.

Information about Residents

Tenure in community

Household structure and size

Income distribution

Demographics (e.g., race, age) of residents

School performance data

Employment and occupation

Homeownership

Information about Geography

Definition of area boundaries

Spatial relationship to larger geographic area

Population size

Number of households

Concentration of subsidized housing

Characteristics of the Housing Market

Sales volume

Days on the market

Property value

Vacancy

Foreclosures (optional)

Homeowner investment in property

Information accessed by organizations could then be displayed in a report, in a graph or on a map. As an example, the following is an excerpt from a PolicyMap report that was generated for ½ mile radius for the target area New Haven was working in.

(-) Tenure:

Across the area, an estimated **31.28%** or **986** households owned their home between 2005-2009. The average size of a household in this area was **N/A** between 2005-2009, as compared to the average household size for the county and the state, **2.53 (New Haven)** and **2.55 (Connecticut)** respectively.

Source: Census
Aggregated by: Block Group
Contains: 9 Census Block Groups

(-) Vacancy:

There were **3,642** housing units found in the study area in 2009, according to the Census' ACS estimates. For 2005-2009, the Census showed **13.45%** of housing units to be vacant, compared to **7.63%** in the state.

Source: Census
Aggregated by: Block Group
Contains: 9 Census Block Groups

The US Postal Service tracks vacancy rates on a quarterly basis, showing vacancy trends over the short term. In the second quarter of 2010, the vacancy rate in this area **ranged from 6.09% to 14.04%**.

USPS Vacancy Rates	2008Q4	2009Q1	2009Q2	2009Q3	2009Q4	2010Q1	2010Q2	2010Q3
Report Area								
Number Vacant	326	340	327	318	339	329	561	539
Percent Vacant	Ranged From 3.45% to 8.68%	Ranged From 3.29% to 9.27%	Ranged From 3.34% to 8.81%	Ranged From 3.15% to 8.65%	Ranged From 3.11% to 9.41%	Ranged From 2.95% to 9.13%	Ranged From 6.33% to 14.62%	Ranged From 6.09% to 14.04%
County (New Haven)								
Number Vacant	12,140	12,129	12,476	12,273	12,146	11,906	16,942	17,974
Percent Vacant	3.02%	3.01%	3.1%	3.04%	3.01%	2.94%	4.18%	4.42%

The following is an example of how specific market data for a target area can be displayed on a map.

Percent Change of the Median Sale Price of Residential Homes from 2007 - 2008

Organizations were also able to upload some market data that they obtained from local sources. The following is a map of foreclosures in the broader New Haven area.
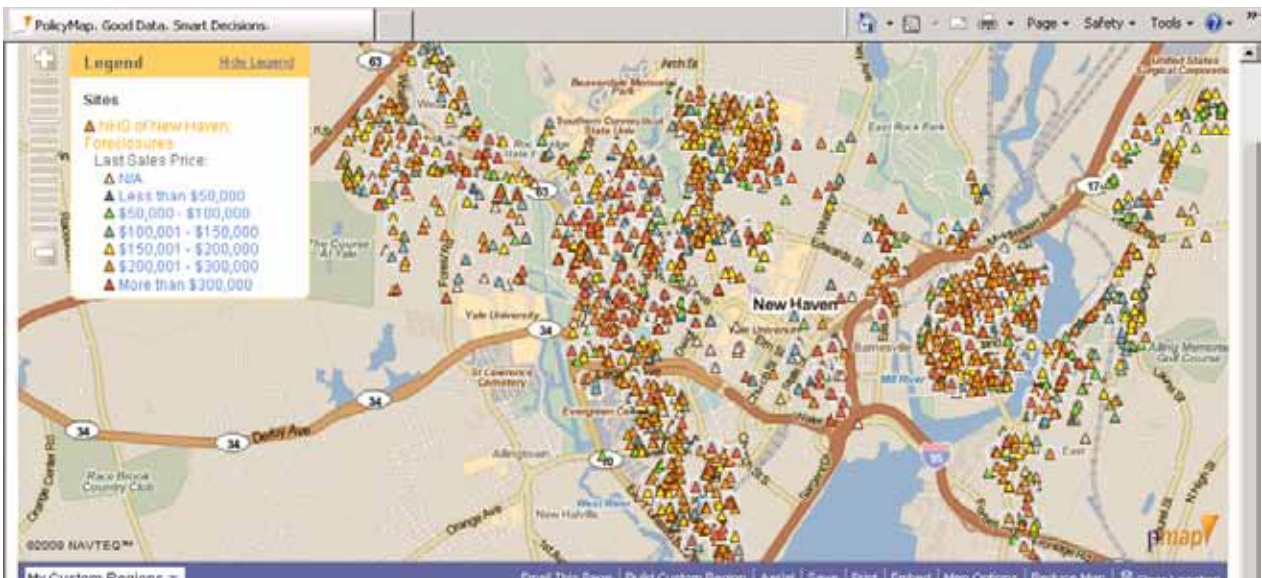
Some organizations collected market data and created their own graphic display. The following is an example of HANDS in Orange, New Jersey
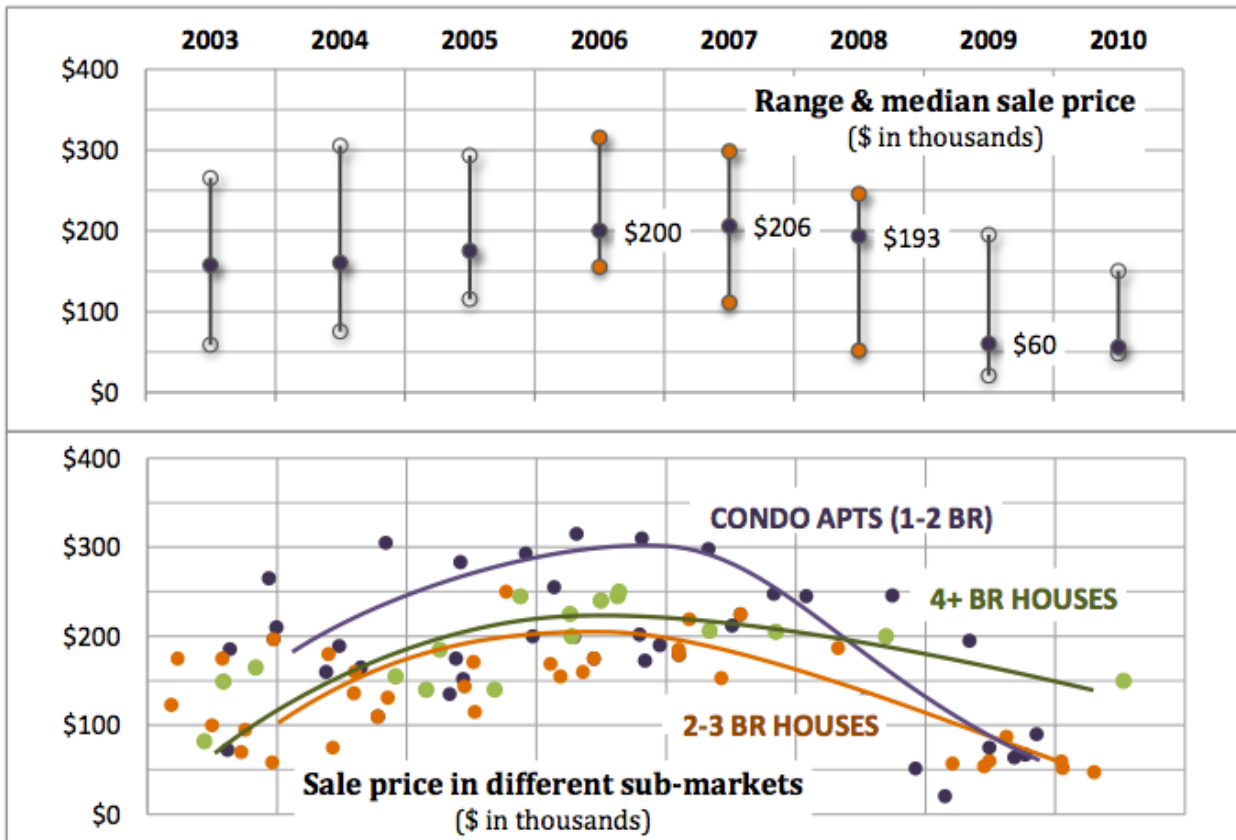
Appendices

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February 4-5, 2009
Information listed was current at time of participation.

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