



Making the Data Sing and Dance

Great Lakes District Pursues GIS Initiative

BY MEGHAN ESTABROOK

The Great Lakes District of Neighborhood Reinvestment has begun a district-wide geographic information systems (GIS) project that is expected to benefit both the Corporation and the district's NeighborWorks® organizations.

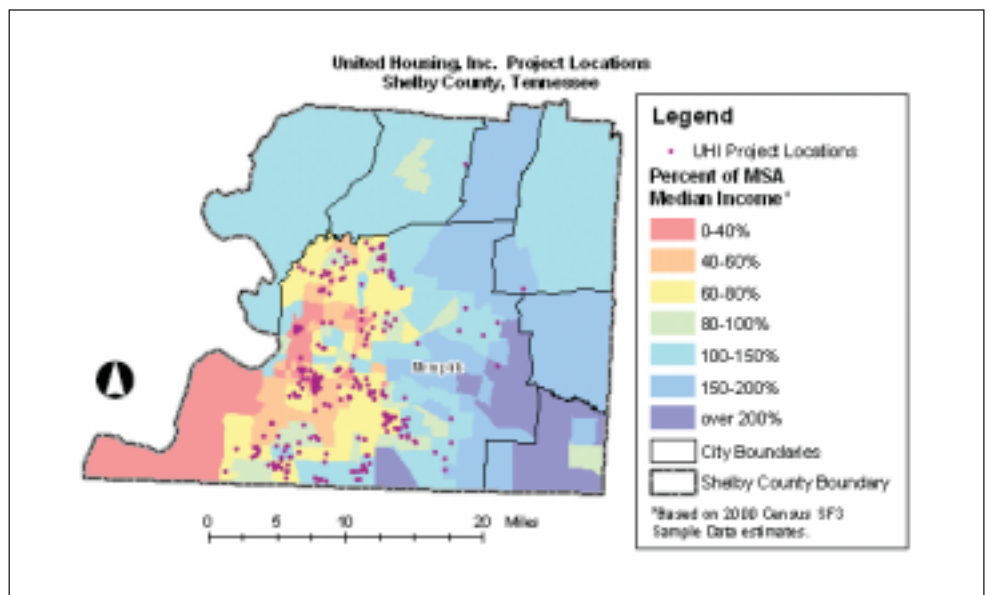
Geographic information systems are defined by the U.S. Geological Survey as "computer systems capable of assembling, storing, manipulating, and displaying geographically referenced information – data identified according to their locations."

Almost all data used by community development professionals have a geographic component, whether they are on an address, census tract, neighborhood, city, county or any one of numerous other geographic delineations. GIS connects the geography to the data – allowing for analyses beyond tables, charts, graphs and the like – in the form of maps.

For Neighborhood Reinvestment, GIS can enhance decision-making processes, evaluate programs, and determine potential growth areas, and help to meet the strategic goals set for 2006.

Among Great Lakes District states – Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Tennessee – the resulting GIS maps can help local NeighborWorks® staff visualize their communities, mapping demographic and lending trends to determine where there may be potential new customers and to plan for future target areas.

Census data on income, population, racial composition, vacancy rates, renter-occupied units, and so on together with available local data on property value, land use, and so



This map, for United Housing Inc. of Memphis, shows where it has rehabbed property, done new construction, written loans and more. COURTESY OF MEGHAN ESTABROOK

forth have been collected and are being mapped, along with individual network organization data, including service areas and lending and program data. Eventually, additional local data also will be collected, such as building permit issuance and crime data, to further develop a neighborhood indicator system.

On the district level, data are being collected that will show broader trends, such as underserved areas (as defined by HUD), poverty and population density, and home mortgage lending from Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) aggregate reports. This can aid in determining where Neighborhood Reinvestment could find new affiliates and expand the market.

The goals of the GIS initiative are to provide GIS as a service to network organizations that will help them have a greater impact in their communities, and to develop a tool

that Neighborhood Reinvestment can use in meeting some of the goals in its Strategic Plan.

GIS and Mapping

Maps are powerful analytical tools because they can convey geographic patterns visually and very convincingly to a wide variety of audiences. A GIS combines many data layers and can show a number of things, including locations and proximity to other features, quantities, densities and change over time. Its data are interactive and linked from database tables to the geography, meaning that data can be called up on demand.

Moreover, GIS is flexible and has the capacity to customize the display to address a particular problem or to examine data from differing scales and levels of detail. Maps can address simple problems by displaying one or two variables or they can address more complex problems by layering several variables, and this can be done on varying scales, from one or a few city blocks to entire cities, counties, states or regions.

In community development, GIS can identify socio-economic conditions, pinpoint development opportunities, and track neighborhood change. It can be used for collection and analysis of information over time, to track outcomes, and serve as a warning device for impending negative changes. A GIS can show areas of vulnerability and areas of strength, allowing users to target their resources where they are most needed.

Components of GIS

While many think of GIS as a computer program and data, it is more complex than that. By definition, geographic information systems consist of several elements: computer software, hardware, data, processes and procedures, and users.

Several different GIS software packages are available, for different operating platforms and user needs. While a few allow users only to view and display data, many also allow manipulation and data creation. These packages vary in price as well; some are free, while others are quite costly.

Many of the software packages operate on desktop computers. The hardware required for a GIS begins with a personal computer, but more complex systems can include servers, scanners, digitizers and many other components.

A large amount of data and resources useful in community development is publicly available, either free or for a nominal cost. Census geography and demographic data are freely downloadable on the Internet, and HUD USER maintains several data sets which can be mapped.

Other useful data sources include the Federal Financial

Institutions Examinations Council (FFIEC), which maintains databases of HMDA and Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) lending activities, and local governments and planning agencies. Local agencies often have developed GIS tax-parcel databases that include land use, property values, and delinquent properties.

Some local governments may distribute this data free to nonprofits, others may charge a small fee, and still others have pricing policies that compel them to charge larger amounts. In addition, it is possible to form partnerships with social service agencies to map social welfare variables. Data also can be created by users either entering the data manually or using global positioning system (GPS) devices and software.

The remaining components of GIS – users and processes and procedures – are also important. Users manipulate and display the data, and must have some training in the processes and procedures in order to work with the hardware, software and data. ■

Meghan Estabrook (emeghan@nw.org) is an intern for Neighborhood Reinvestment's Great Lakes District. She completed her Master of Community Planning degree from the University of Cincinnati College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning in June 2003

For More Information

PolicyLink.org Equitable Development Toolkit: Community Mapping

<http://www.policylink.org/EquitableDevelopment/XQ/ASP/ID.32/QX/fsToolMain.htm>

National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership

<http://www.urban.org/nnip/index.htm>

GIS.com

<http://www.gis.com/>

HUD USER Data Sets

<http://www.huduser.org/datasets/pdrdatas.html>

HMDA and CRA Data

<http://www.ffiec.gov/hmda/>

<http://www.ffiec.gov/cra/>

Census Geography and Data

<http://www.census.gov/>

http://www.esri.com/data/download/census2000_tigerline/index.html

Freddie Mac Funds to Aid Homeowners, Training Institute Symposia

Freddie Mac has committed \$2 million to help the national NeighborWorks® network pioneer new ways to enable more minority and other underserved families overcome financial and cultural barriers to home ownership.

The funding partnership marks the expansion of a 10-year alliance that already has helped more than 67,000 low- and moderate-income families become homeowners through the NeighborWorks® Campaign for Home Ownership. Freddie Mac's expanded five-year commitment also includes sponsorship of national symposia to address critical housing and community revitalization issues.

Freddie Mac's support for Neighborhood Reinvestment is a component of its "Catch the Dream" initiative, Freddie Mac's comprehensive plan to help achieve the Bush admin-

istration's goal of adding 5.5 million minority homeowners by the end of the decade.

Neighborhood Reinvestment plans to use Freddie Mac's new five-year grant to build additional NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership CentersSM, while expanding the activities of more than 50 existing centers serving communities nationwide. The funding also will help expand the scope of the HUD Housing Choice Voucher program, which enables qualified renters to apply the equivalent of their Section 8 rental subsidies to mortgage payments.

Additionally, Freddie Mac will be a leading national sponsor of major symposia on housing and community development issues, conducted as part of Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institutes. ■



NEIGHBORHOOD REINVESTMENT TRAINING INSTITUTES

2003 December 8 - 12 ■ San Francisco

2004 February 23 - 27 ■ Atlanta

April 19 - 23 ■ Minneapolis

August 9 - 13 ■ Washington, D.C.

December 13 - 17 ■ New Orleans

GOING TO THE NEXT INSTITUTE? START PLANNING NOW!



PEOPLE

Jennifer Kibby, management consultant, joins Neighborhood



Reinvestment's Great Lakes District office (Cincinnati). Prior to joining Neighborhood

Reinvestment, Kibby worked as an operations manager for the Virginia Small Business Development Center. She also served as executive director of both the Staunton Downtown Development Association and the Better Bennington Corporation. Kibby holds a master's degree in integrated marketing communication from Northwestern University and a bachelor's degree in growth and structure of cities from Bryn Mawr College.

Dawn Corley joins Neighborhood Reinvestment's Insurance Services division as a management consultant. Presently, Corley works out of NHS of Richmond's (Virginia) office. However, in September, she will relocate to Neighborhood Reinvestment's Washington, D.C., office. Before officially joining Neighborhood Reinvestment, Corley coordinated the activities of the National Insurance Task Force's (NITF) Richmond Home Safety Partnership. Her new responsibilities include providing customer service, technical support, and guidance to NeighborWorks® organizations that are members of the NITF. She also serves as the task force's liaison to other NeighborWorks® network organizations. Corley has a degree in public administration from Virginia State University.

Tom Rice joins Neighborhood Reinvestment's North Central District office (Kansas City,

Missouri) as a multifamily management consultant. Rice previously served as the regional director of development at Mercy Housing in Omaha, Nebraska, where he supervised five staff. Rice also worked with the Iowa Department of Economic Development and provided technical assistance in the use of HOME and CDBG funding. He received additional tribal land experience as planning director for the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska. Rice has received his housing certification from the National Development Council and has a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in communication from Southern Illinois University.

Celine Thomasson comes to Neighborhood Reinvestment as a management consultant for the



South Central District office. Her focus is single-family housing. Prior to joining

the Corporation, Thomasson worked for the San Antonio Neighborhood Action Department as a senior economic development specialist in the Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization (NCR) Program. While working with other nonprofits involved in the program, she provided technical assistance and monitored organizations' programs and budgets. Prior to her work in the community development field, Thomasson's career included advertising, marketing and public relations. While pursuing her master's degree, Thomasson held the position of public information officer with the San Antonio Public Library System where she functioned as

spokesperson for the system, worked with the media, and executed public relations plans and events. Thomasson graduated from the University of Texas at Austin and received her master's of science degree in urban administration from Trinity University in San Antonio. ■

Compiled and written by Charlotte Underwood.

Calendar

June 2003

- 16-20 **Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation Training Institute** – New Orleans
- 17 **Campaign Steering Committee Meeting** – New Orleans
- 18 **Symposium: “Measuring What Matters – How Do Organizations Demonstrate the Difference They Are Making in Communities?”** – New Orleans
- 19-20 **Rural Initiative Steering Committee Meeting** – New Orleans

July 2003

- 10-13 **New England District Community Leadership Institute** – Providence, Rhode Island*
- 11-12 **South Central District- Executive Director and Board President Meeting** – San Antonio
- 22-26 **CHAM Advanced Asset Management** – Denver

August 2003

- 1 **Round 1 Grant Applications Accepted**
- 18-22 **Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation Training Institute** – Washington, D.C.
- 19 **Campaign Steering Committee Meeting** – Washington, D.C.*
- 20 **Symposium: “Working Together to Change the Face of Home Ownership – Effective Tools and Strategies for Reaching Minority Markets”** – Washington, D.C.
- 20-21 **National Insurance Task Force Annual Insurance Symposium** – Washington, D.C.

- 25-27 **Rocky Mountain District NeighborWorks® Organizations Staff Symposium** – Salt Lake City, Utah

September 2003

- 9-11 **South Central District – Training Workshop** – San Antonio
- 17-21 **NHMS (Nonprofit Housing Management Specialist)** – Denver
- 18-21 **Southern District Community Leadership Institute** – Atlanta*

December 2003

- 8-12 **Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation Training Institute** – San Francisco
- 9 **Campaign Steering Committee Meeting*** – San Francisco
- 10 **Rural Initiative Symposium** – San Francisco

January 2004

- 14-18 **Nonprofit Housing Management Specialist Training** – San Antonio

February 2004

- 16-20 **Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation Training Institute** – Atlanta
- TBD **New Campaign Member Orientation*** – Atlanta
- TBD **NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership Center Training*** – Atlanta
- TBD **Multifamily Initiative Asset Management New Member Clinic** – Atlanta

*Denotes available to NeighborWorks® network members

NeighborWorks® *bright ideas*
Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation
1325 G Street N.W., Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20005
www.nw.org

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
P A I D
Washington, DC
Permit No. 1961

Return Service Requested