Meeting Minutes
MetroGIS Socioeconomic Information Need Workgroup
Tuesday, September 23, 2003
County Insurance Trust Building
(2:00 to 4:00 p.m.)

1. Call to Order/Attendance

Members Present: Paul Buschmann (Hennepin County), Heather Britt (Urban Coalition), Dick Carlstrom (TIES), John Carpenter (Excensus LLC), Will Craig (CURA-U of M), Amy Fisher (MN Dept. of Economic Security), Kathy Johnson (Metropolitan Council), Sandra Paddock (Wilder Research Center), Mark VanderSchaaf (City of St. Paul), and Heidi Welsch (Dakota County),

Members Absent: Mary Karcz (Ramsey County), Barbara Ronningen (State Demographic Center), Tim Zimmerman (Hennepin County).

Staff Present: Randall Johnson (MetroGIS) and Tanya Mayer (MetroGIS/Metropolitan Council)

Chairperson Craig began the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

1. Approve minutes from June 4, 2003.

Welsch moved and VanderShaaf seconded to approve the June 4th meeting summary as submitted. Ayes all.

2. Research Reports

a) VanderShaaf provided the group with a summary of data options related to measuring housing the household characteristics important to addressing housing affordability issues, focused primarily on rental housing because that is where the major crisis exists. The summary document shared with the workgroup is attached as Appendix A. VanderShaaf suggested and the group concurred that of all of the measures listed the best of them is presented in the 6th bullet – Very Low Income with Gross Rent Less than 30% of Household Income: applying the previous measure to those with incomes less than $10,000 annually.

   Kathy Johnson, that in addition to Census Data, the Council produced a report last year that investigated relationships between available housing stock and household incomes at various levels for various types of housing units.

   All concluded that adequate data sources are lacking to properly investigate matters associated with suitability of housing in conjunction with housing affordability. The rationale being that there are decent suitability data (i.e., overcrowding) and decent affordability data in the Census, but they aren't crosstabbed in published tables. (VanderShaaf noted he believed we could pay the Census Bureau to generate special crosstabbed tables at a level of geographic small areas (e.g. Planning Districts, tracts) but by the time we got them they would no longer be very timely). The American Community Survey was briefly discussed but most were skeptical it will be of substantive value. The PUMS (Public Use Micro Sample) data generated by the Census was also rejected as an option because the summary areas are too large.

b) Buschman offered a listing (Appendix B) of summary of selected program data that Hennepin County generates on a regular basis. The group added to this list medical

assistance, child support, and dislocated workers. All agreed that the availability of this data on a regional basis would address priority socioeconomic information needs and that the only practical source for the data are the counties, as opposed to the state because the data are not geocoded art the state level and they are housed in several different departments.
It was agreed that fixed geographies for summary of the data should be augmented with thermal analysis – the data points themselves drive the concentration contours – if at all possible. However, significant issues with the lack of address data accuracy will need to be overcome to support the desired geocoding.

Buschman agreed to provide the workgroup with examples of the maps produced by Hennepin County from these data. Welsch and Buschman also agreed to speak with the other five counties to determine if they produce similar data and, if so, if they have an interest in pursuing a regional solution with common agreed upon data reporting guidelines. Staff noted that MetroGIS has a budget for one-time programming projects to implement region solutions.

3. Gap Identification Exercise Results

Chairman Craig summarized the procedures used to evaluate gaps between existing data sources and agreed upon desired characteristics of socioeconomic data which where illustrated in the matrix distributed with the agenda materials (dated 9/19). Craig then lead the group through a discussion to refine the data sources listed in the matrix and assign members to various supplemental research to finalize the matrix. Craig noted that the objectives of phase I is to identify data needs that can be met with existing data, data needs that have no practical solution, and modifications to existing data that can be pursued (e.g., seek reporting from the state at a finer level of geography).

Summary of discussion points:

1) Schools need detailed sub-neighborhood level data (blocks within individual school attendance areas) to effectively carry out their functions. Member Paddock noted that she receives numerous data requests for sub-neighborhoods as well. Craig commented that the focus of this workgroup is to identify solutions that rely upon predefined summary geographies and that the desire for flexible boundary, sub-neighborhood level data will be dealt with in Phase II.
2) Craig and Kathy Johnson volunteered to further investigate Census data options related to the American Community Survey and small area data needs.
3) Craig will contact Tim Zimmerman regarding the possibility of a tract level summary geography for Births-Deaths- Section A2.
4) It was agreed to modify the matrix to reflect that Item C2 “Business Types” can be addressed by the data related to “Industry” in Section D.
5) Craig will speak to Fisher about the possibility of the state reporting Section E data needs at a finer level of geography.
6) Section D – Forecast Jobs – add reference to the Council’s report cited by Kathy Johnson
7) Section D – Sales – Add census of retail trade. Kathy Johnson will review F.W. Dodge report to see if it addresses any of the Section D information needs.
8) Section D (home of workforce) and H (home / work places). Carpenter announced that a new federal program will produce migration and daytime population data at a finer level of detail than available in the past. It was agreed to add this data source with a note when it is expected to be available.
9) Section E – Mayer agreed to investigate a source for addresses of individual schools.

10) Section E – Britt agreed to investigate a data for the location source for Food Shelves.
11) Section E – Work Force Centers was added.
12) Section F. – The group concurred that it is unlikely that the Dept of Education will consent to report these data at a finer geography and deferred for later discussion whether it would make sense to pursue a regional solution to obtain the desired finer summary reporting.
13) Section G. Paddock volunteered to provide a citation for crime data summarized by city to add to the matrix but the group concluded this topic should be delegated to a separate workgroup for any further investigation.
14) Section H. (see #8)
15) A column will be added to matrix to identify those data needs for which there is no practical solution.

Craig asked staff to circulate the list of assignments to the workgroup members and he asked the members to submit their findings to him at their earliest convenience so he can update the matrix to send out with the next agenda packet.

It was agreed that at the next meeting the goal will be to accept the updated matrix and set a date to share it with a broader audience for comment before the workgroup develops its recommendations.

4. Next Meeting

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 28th.

5. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m.

APPENDIX A

Affordable Housing Socioeconomic Data for MetroGIS

Prepared by Mark Vander Schaaf, Saint Paul PED, September 23, 2003

1. There is no readily accessible data source other than the Census to report on actual affordability conditions at a municipal and sub-municipal level.

2. Census data can be analyzed and mapped in a number of different ways to shed light on affordability issues:

   - Median Gross Rent: identifies whether rental housing is typically low cost or not, and thus potentially more or less affordable to a typical renter

   - Very Low Rent Housing as a Percentage of All Housing Units - using $250/month as a "very low rent" standard (affordable at $10,000/year): identifies how much of the housing stock would potentially be affordable to very low income households

   - Median Gross Rent as a Percentage of Median Household Income: begins to examine the match between typical rents and typical incomes

   - Very Low Rent Housing as a Percent age of Very Low Income Households: using thresholds of $250 for rent and $10,000 for income, determine the demand for very low rent housing, and how close supply comes to meeting demand

   - Percent of Rental Households with Gross Rent Less Than 30% of Household Income: actual measure of how many households are in an affordable situation, as defined by the 30% threshold

   - Percent of Very Low Income Rental Households with Gross Rent Less than 30% of Household Income: applying the previous measure to those with incomes less than $10,000 annually

   - Adding the Dimension of Suitability: affordable housing advocates usually add the adjective "decent" or "suitable" to indicate that it is not acceptable, for example, for a very low income family of six to pay less than 30% of their income for a substandard efficiency apartment; the best Census data to address this dimension are "persons per room" data - with a threshold of 1.0 persons per room being an accepted international standard of overcrowding; unfortunately Census data don't crosstab persons per room with indicators such as rent levels, rent as a percentage of income, etc.

3. One way to report on the affordability of currently-available housing is to identify the percentage of households that can afford available housing (cf. NAHB "Housing Affordability Index")

4. A second way to report on the affordability of currently-available housing is to identify what income is needed to afford various typical housing types (cf. Boston website)

APPENDIX B

Selected Hennepin County Program Data

(Prepared by Paul Buschman)

General Client Data Characteristics

- Data is geocoded to a specific address, but aggregated in a large enough geographic unit to ensure individual privacy.
- Data is duplicated (ex. a person on MFIP may also be on Food Support).
- Data is usually point in time.

Selected Programs

Following is a list of client data that is often requested in Hennepin County. Programs were also selected if they are applicable to all metro counties and have somewhat uniform eligibility requirements.

- **MFIP:** Minnesota's welfare reform program. Statewide MFIP helps families work their way out of poverty by providing a monthly cash grant to supplement family income, help with child care costs, medical assistance, and employment services.
- **General Assistance:** General Assistance provides a monthly cash benefit for adults ages 18 to 64 who are unable to provide for themselves. To be eligible, an applicant must: be a Minnesota resident for at least 30 days, be unable to work for a minimum of 30 days, not have a minor, dependent child living in the household, have little or no income or resources, and not be a current SSI recipient.
- **Food Support:** Benefits are issued to low-income persons and can be used like money to buy food at local stores. Eligibility to participate and benefit amounts are based on the income, assets, and property of those who purchase and eat food together in a household, and/or those who must be considered together as a household under program rules.
- **Childcare Assistance:** Helps low to moderate-income families pay for childcare.
- **Adult Probation:** Adults convicted of a crime and sentenced to probation.
- **Juvenile Probation:** Juveniles convicted of a crime and sentenced to probation.
- **Licensed Foster Care Homes:** Homes licensed for foster care.
- **Child Protection Cases:** Either investigation or permanency cases.

Steps Towards Creating a Metro Area Dataset

1. Agree on programs to be included
    - Understand differences across counties that would affect interpretation of data
2. Determine if counties will commit to devoting resources for geocoding
3. Determine level of aggregation to meet data privacy concerns
4. Decide on uniform point-in-time.