

Year One Report to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

Sustainable Seattle's Neighborhood Indicators Project Grant Number: 2003-6-9



Greenwood-Phinney Ridge residents participating in Sustainable Seattle's April 24th ComNETsm survey

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
MEETING THE METRICS	4
METRIC 1	4
METRIC 2	4
METRIC 3	4
METRIC 4	5
METRIC 5	6
METRIC 6	6
ACTIVITIES	7
CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT	7
CITY ENGAGEMENT	8
<i>The Changing Landscape</i>	8
<i>Building Interest – Horizontally and Vertically</i>	8
OTHER COLLABORATIONS/PARTNERSHIPS	13
<i>Feet First</i>	13
<i>University of Washington</i>	13
<i>City Neighborhood Council</i>	14
<i>Communities Count</i>	14
<i>The Seattle Foundation</i>	14
<i>Performance Measurement</i>	14
INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT & COLLECTION	15
<i>Street & Sidewalk Conditions (ComNETsm)</i>	15
<i>Social, Economic, & Environmental Conditions</i>	18
DATA DISSEMINATION & ACTION	21
<i>Dissemination & Communication</i>	21
<i>Coordinating Action</i>	23
LESSONS LEARNED	24
NEXT STEPS	24



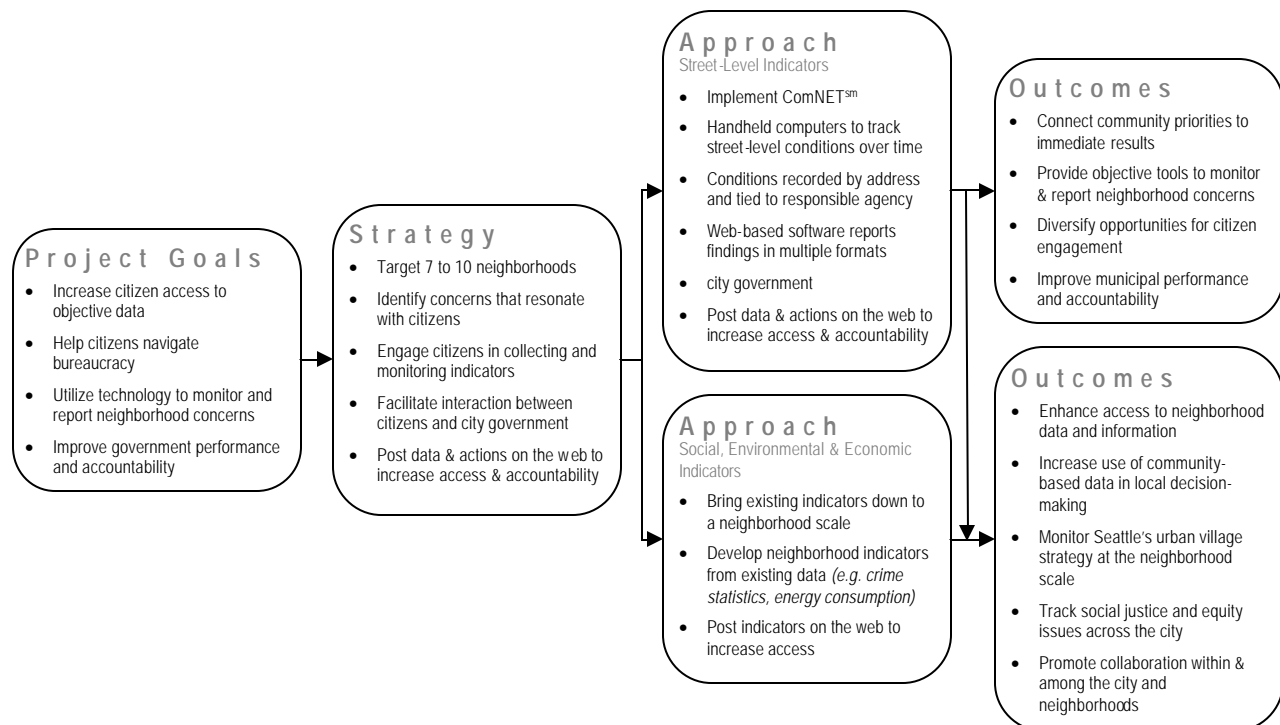
Introduction

Sustainable Seattle began as a volunteer network of citizens concerned about the long-term social, economic, and ecological health of Seattle and the region. Our three sustainability report cards, *Indicators of a Sustainable Community*, published in 1993, 1995, and 1998 helped spur sustainability indicator movements across the globe. Our efforts also contributed to the growing awareness in Seattle that sustainable policies and actions are the key to our region's long-term health. This is clearly reflected by the creation of Seattle's Office of Sustainability & Environment in 2000 and in the title of our City's Comprehensive Plan: *Towards a Sustainable Seattle*. But are we truly becoming a sustainable city?

Seattle, like many cities, is a city of neighborhoods. The quality of the neighborhood is one of the ways citizens gauge if things are getting better or worse. Are our streets safe? Do we have parks and open space? Are our neighborhood schools performing? With support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, we are working with ordinary citizens to understand what makes a sustainable community from the neighborhood perspective. We believe people are more likely to mobilize around concerns that are "closer to home" - connected to their homes, their schools, their children. Our hope is that documenting the health of the city from this perspective will engender increased involvement and accountability to create a sustainable city. Only when every citizen believes they live in a healthy and supportive environment can we truly say our city is sustainable.

Our approach is to target seven to ten Seattle neighborhoods over four years to understand what matters to citizens, represent these concerns through accessible data, and then work collaboratively with citizens, city government, and others to take steps toward improving and sustaining the quality of life in Seattle's neighborhoods. The diagram below illustrates our goals, strategy, approach, and intended outcomes.

Diagram 1: Neighborhood Indicators Project: Measuring What Matters





Meeting the Metrics

As part of the grant agreement with the Alfred P. Sloan Foundations, Sustainable Seattle developed six program metrics to help guide project activities and measure program success. We are pleased to present our progress towards meetings these agreed-upon measures.

Metric 1

Sustainable Seattle and neighborhood partners will develop performance measurement indicators for 7 to 10 Seattle neighborhoods. The first four neighborhoods will be Beacon Hill, South Lake Union, Greenwood/Phinney Ridge and South Park. The other neighborhoods will be identified by the end of the first year.

- Sustainable Seattle selected its first three neighborhoods: Greenwood-Phinney, Capitol Hill, and North Beacon Hill according to a selection process described in [Citizen Engagement](#) on page 7 and initiated work in those neighborhoods in January. In our fourth neighborhood, the International District, we will be partnering with the International District Housing Alliance, which engages immigrant youth and elders in the International District neighborhood.
- This summer we will be developing a process to select the remaining three to six neighborhoods.

Metric 2

With assistance from Sustainable Seattle, the city of Seattle and/or neighborhood residents will collect or assemble data for each indicator. This will be accomplished for at least 2 neighborhoods by the end of the first year, for at least 3 to 4 additional neighborhoods by the end of the second year, for at least 7 neighborhoods by the end of the third year, and for 10 neighborhoods by the end of the fourth year. ComNET data will be collected at least annually. Other data will be updated as these become available from the collecting agencies or organizations.

- ComNETsm data has been collected by citizen volunteers in three neighborhoods: Greenwood-Phinney, Capitol Hill, and North Beacon Hill. The work is described in [Street & Sidewalk Conditions \(ComNETsm\)](#), beginning on page 15. Youth and elders will be collecting ComNETsm data, along with other quality of life information in the International District in July/August, as described in [Citizen Engagement](#) on page 7.
- Social, economic, and ecological data are being assembled for three neighborhoods (Greenwood-Phinney, Capitol Hill, and North Beacon Hill) and will be available on our website by August. This data will be featured on a web-based interactive mapping system on our website. More detailed information about our website is found in [Sustainable Seattle's Website](#) on page 22.
- Sustainable Seattle is in active discussions with city staff about a new city initiative to post performance measures and community-level data on a web-based data and mapping program. Additional information about these activities is found in [Seattle Performance Measurement](#) beginning on page 12.

Metric 3

With assistance from Sustainable Seattle, the city will create ways and means to employ the performance measurement indicator data to better serve the participating neighborhoods. This



will be accomplished for at least 2 neighborhoods by the end of the first year, for at least 3 to 4 additional neighborhoods by the end of the second year, for at least 7 neighborhoods by the end of the third year, and for 10 neighborhoods by the end of the fourth year.

Sustainable Seattle has been working with diverse city agencies on establishing procedures to respond to our indicator-related findings and can show successes on several fronts:

- The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods (DON) District Coordinator in Greenwood-Phinney Ridge is using ComNETsm data to reallocate existing neighborhood funding to address neighborhood concerns. As described in [Coordinating Action](#) on page 23, she is using the ComNETsm Connection website to access the data.
- Capitol Hill's ComNETsm survey findings are being used by Clean Seattle as an initial task list for its August Clean Seattle event in Capitol Hill. This program involves the cooperation of nine city agencies and community volunteers and is described in greater detail in [Clean Seattle](#) on page 10, [Dissemination & Communication](#) on page 22, and [Coordinating Action](#) on page 23.
- Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) requested a list of parking-related concerns documented by the ComNETsm surveys. They have promised to inform Sustainable Seattle of progress they make in addressing these concerns. These activities discussed further in [Dissemination & Communication](#) on page 22.
- DON requested ComNETsm data to help inform policies around Alcohol Impact Areas. More information on the Alcohol Impact Areas is found in [Dissemination & Communication](#) on page 22.
- Sustainable Seattle presenting our ComNETsm program to Seattle's Department of Planning and Development (DPD) staff to explore opportunities for partnering on collecting neighborhood business district data to inform policy and regulatory changes. A more full description of this initiative is found in [Neighborhood Business District Strategy](#) on page 10.
- In July, Sustainable Seattle will be making an interdepartmental presentation to city staff about ComNETsm data and discussing ways to use this data to inform city action.

Metric 4

Communication with the citizens of Seattle will include: posting indicator data and the city's responses to these data on the Sustainable Seattle website and in local community newspapers; annual reports by Sustainable Seattle and the Department of Neighborhoods; and promotion by local neighborhood planning councils and community associations in each neighborhood.

In its first year, Sustainable Seattle made significant progresses in this area:

- Sustainable Seattle is currently developing our neighborhood indicators website to host project information, community data, and action to improve neighborhoods. The website will feature an interactive mapping program to help citizens see spatial data and information about their communities. The website is described in [Sustainable Seattle's Website](#) on page 22.
- We presented ComNETsm data and findings at two Community Council meetings in June. Presentations to three other community organizations are scheduled for September. These activities are described in [Dissemination & Communication](#) on page 22. We will also be including our finding in DON's publication *Neighborhood News*.



- We emailed a summary of ComNETsm findings to 37 ComNETsm participants, along with an evaluation survey. Results from the evaluation survey are highlighted in [Training & Survey](#) on page 16.
- The City of Seattle featured an article about ComNETsm in the January issue of *Brainstorm*, its community technology ezine (Appendix A).
- Organizations from all three of our neighborhoods have featured the neighborhood indicators work on their websites, in their local newsletters, or through email listservs (Appendix B).
- We are currently drafting data summaries for community organizations to include on their websites and in their newsletters.

Metric 5

Fundraising will succeed in maintaining the project at a viable level as the Sloan Foundation funding declines.

During its first year under the grant, Sustainable Seattle received full funding from the Sloan Foundation. Sustainable Seattle is gearing up to find funding as match and to fund actions to be taken as a result of our work.

- We are currently exploring the idea of marketing ComNETsm as a fee for service program to Seattle neighborhoods. We have talked with DON staff in the City to see if there are ways that the Neighborhood Matching Fund (a community grant program) could support community ComNETsm activities. We are also exploring a potential partnership between ComNETsm and Seattle's Clean Seattle program.
- We are building a relationship with The Seattle Foundation and plan to submit a proposal to them to support our indicators work in the coming year. We are also in the process of identifying other potential funders of this work.
- We have leveraged \$9,000 for a partnership with the International District Housing Alliance to work with immigrant youth and elders on neighborhood improvement. Sustainable Seattle helped write and coordinate a proposal to Seattle Department of Information Technology (DOIT). The \$9,000 was granted but will go directly to the community group.
- Similarly, we coordinated three community organizations in Greenwood-Phinney to come together and submit a \$20,000 proposal to the City's Office of Economic Development to address tree and tree pit issues in that neighborhood. These were the second highest category of problems identified through the ComNETsm survey. These efforts are discussed in [Coordinating Action](#) on page 23.

Metric 6

This project will command wide attention and contribute significantly to the growing momentum for involving citizens in performance measurement and performance reporting.

While our first three ComNETsm surveys were just recently completed in April and May, 2004, we have already observed the following.

- Recognition of our work is beginning to quickly spread within city government. We are getting calls from various departments in search of more information about ComNETsm. A number of City staff have expressed interest in using this information to help document



neighborhood concerns and more effectively align city resources with citizen priorities. Some examples are highlighted in [Dissemination & Communication](#) on page 22.

- As indicated above in Metric 4, all three neighborhoods featured our project in their local newspapers or on their community websites. These postings helped to generate a number of citizen calls and helped recruit volunteers for the ComNETsm surveys.

Activities

Citizen Engagement

Engaging citizens in documenting and improving the quality of life in Seattle neighborhoods is fundamental to our work. In our original proposal we identified four potential neighborhoods in which to focus our first year efforts: Greenwood-Phinney Ridge, North Beacon Hill (pilot site during the planning grant), South Lake Union, and South Park. After conversations with City staff and community members, we selected Greenwood-Phinney and North Beacon Hill for year one activities. In addition, community members from another neighborhood, Capitol Hill, heard about our project and aggressively petitioned their inclusion. We were also approached by an organization in the International District about developing a partnership to engage immigrant youth and elders in documenting quality of life issues in that neighborhood. We collaborated in the development of a \$9,000 proposal to support this work and will begin activities in the International District this summer. Specific criteria used to select the four neighborhoods included:

- Is the neighborhood a designated *urban village*?¹
- Does the neighborhood advance our interest in reflecting diversity in terms of geographic location and population?
- Is there sufficient neighborhood interest in the project and local capacity to engage community members?

During the planning grant we took North Beacon Hill residents through a plan-do-act process to discuss neighborhood goals and visions and then to review indicators or performance measures related to these social, economic and ecological neighborhood goals. One lesson learned from the planning grant was that citizens were reluctant to attend a series of meetings to discuss goals and vision for their neighborhoods. They wanted action. Many community members felt burnt out and let down from Seattle's neighborhood planning process of the late 1990's. They had seen many of their neighborhood priorities unfulfilled in the face of shrinking city budgets and a new administration perceived by some to be less involved in neighborhoods. Conversations with our partners at the DON further supported this notion of there being a "crisis in civic engagement", with the same community members attending neighborhood meetings. For these reasons we decided to work with existing neighborhood groups rather than create new organizations or steering committees for our work. We also realized that ComNETsm would be an important entrée into our three neighborhoods. Citizens seemed excited about getting out

¹ The City of Seattle has 38 urban villages, which were designated by the City of Seattle's 1994 Comprehensive Plan. Seattle's Comprehensive Plan is mandated by the State of Washington's Growth Management Act, designed to combat sprawl by concentrating statewide growth in existing urban areas. The urban village strategy is the City of Seattle's approach to concentrating growth in urban areas with the existing zoning and infrastructure to handle growth. This urban village designation triggered a city-supported neighborhood planning process in 1995, which enabled residents near urban villages to develop neighborhood plans to help guide growth in ways that were amenable to residents.



and walking their streets and sidewalks to collect real data about their neighborhoods. They also liked the idea of documenting things that they could see and potentially do something about in the near-term. Our year one strategy then focused on building community involvement and support for tracking street and sidewalk conditions in the three targeted neighborhoods. We decided to use our ComNETsm work as a springboard into broader community conversations about a range of social, economic, and ecological conditions in neighborhoods.

City Engagement

From project inception, the City of Seattle has been an important partner to cultivate in this work. City support and involvement is critical to creating value in the data, generating action, and setting the stage for public funding and support in future years. Thus, our strategy was to build a broad coalition of support for our work: horizontally, across multiple departments and vertically, from frontline staff up to department heads and the Mayor.

The Changing Landscape

Prior to the current Mayor, city department goals and directives flowed from a variety of sources – the Mayor's office, the City Council, or a strong Director. Since Mayor Nickels came into office in 2002, there has been a steady shift in city government, where department activities are directly aligned with the Mayor's specific objectives, goals, and priorities. One strategy used by the Mayor to solidify his power over city departments was to require each department head to develop *accountability agreements* – formal documents developed by the departments to outline strategies for implementing the Mayor's priorities. There are some who criticize the Mayor for a narrow focus on centralized city government and economic development and a move away from neighborhood and community priorities. They find the strong mayor approach difficult to accept, given Seattle's reputation as a city with a political culture of process, inclusiveness, and consensus. On the other hand there are those who believe the new political culture has increased efficiency and performance. For examples of local media commentary on these issues, see Appendix C.

This brief introduction to the changing culture of Seattle government is relevant to our project in several important ways. The political shift, coupled with several rounds of budget cuts, has left in its wake a power struggle among city departments in their fight for funding and relevancy. For example, in 2004 budget, our most prominent partner for this grant, the Department of Neighborhoods, experienced significant budget cuts (almost 7%) and a reorganization which eliminated its neighborhood preservation & development division – the entity responsible for implementing neighborhood priorities across multiple city departments. While these changes have been disappointing, we have worked hard to understand the political landscape and strategically align our work with multiple city departments, priorities and initiatives. The process is ongoing.

Building Interest – Horizontally and Vertically

Much of the first year of the grant has been spent building awareness and support for our work across multiple city departments and at the various staff levels. We met with staff, whose job is to interface with citizens about city service delivery, Managers or Directors, whose interests are primarily focused on the delivery of a set of city services or programs, project-specific staff overseeing cross-departmental initiatives, and high-level staff to discuss how the neighborhood indicators project could spur or support systemic changes within city government.



In order to develop a comprehensive list of conditions to be tracked with ComNETsm in Seattle neighborhoods, we communicated with staff from some 15 different agencies.² These meetings served multiple purposes: to introduce the ComNETsm project, to map the relationship between neighborhood conditions and responsible agencies, to identify the most appropriate terminology to use in tracking neighborhood conditions, and to hear from city workers the kinds of neighborhood-level data that would be useful in their work. This included DON Neighborhoods District Coordinators, whose role is to support citizen-based efforts to build community and improve neighborhoods and customer service workers for city service delivery with agencies such as SDOT, Seattle City Light (SCL), and Seattle Public Utilities (SPU). While some of the service delivery staff was initially suspicious of systematically collecting street and sidewalk conditions, personal meetings helped to alleviate their fears of not being able to manage citizen expectations and build interest in how this information could actually be useful to city staff. We pitched the project as an opportunity. The current system for addressing neighborhood concerns is fairly ad hoc; there are no existing means for understanding community priorities. We explained that ComNETsm is one way to systematically collect data neighborhood by neighborhood. It provides citizens an opportunity to reflect on a broad set of findings and prioritize near- and long-term actions.

We also made sure that not just programmatic staff at the city bought into our project. We met with high-level management from most city departments to similarly introduce the project, learn about department-specific goals and priorities, and strategize how our work could further their objectives. On the whole, most high-level staff found our project exciting and full of potential. Through these conversations we formed an interdepartmental advisory committee to help better integrate our efforts into department-specific activities and broader citywide initiatives.

Committee members include:

- Brent Crook, Director, Community Building, Department of Neighborhoods
- David Keyes, Manager, Community Technology Program, Department of Information Technology
- Richard Gelb, Office of Sustainability & Environment
- Ron-Harris White, Manager, Community Services Division, Seattle Public Utilities
- Sid Sidorowicz, Director, Office of Prevention, Department of Neighborhoods
- TJ Moore, GIS Specialist, Department of Neighborhoods
- Tom Hauger, Manager, Department of Planning & Development

The first quarterly meeting was held on January 27th, with the third scheduled for July 20th. These meetings have been useful in soliciting feedback on project work and identifying additional contacts or projects within the city that would nicely align with our goals to use neighborhood-level data and performance measurement to better align policies, resources, and actions with citizen priorities. Some of these city initiatives are highlighted below.

² King County Metro (Countywide transit agency), Seattle Animal Control, Seattle City Light, Seattle Department of Information Technology, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, Seattle Department of Planning and Development, Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs, Seattle Office of Economic Opportunity, Seattle Office of the Mayor, Seattle Office of Policy & Management, Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment, Seattle Parks Department, Seattle Police Department, Seattle Public Utilities



Clean Seattle

Clean Seattle is a mayoral effort housed at SPU to engage citizens and city staff in making Seattle more livable by strategically aligning departmental and community resources in neighborhoods through rotating neighborhood clean-up events. Each month, city staff works with citizens from a neighborhood to identify neighborhood concerns/priorities. A number of these issues are then addressed through interdepartmental action (nine city agencies) and citizen volunteer efforts. Sustainable Seattle has attended several Clean Seattle meetings about the possibility of integrating ComNETsm technology into the Clean Seattle effort. Our first collaboration will occur in August, when Clean Seattle targets Capitol Hill, one of the neighborhoods included in our May ComNETsm survey. We have shared the list of 313 street and sidewalk conditions with the Clean Seattle team and have asked the city to report back about any ComNETsm conditions resolved through Clean Seattle.

Environmental Equity Assessment

The Office of Sustainability & Environment (OSE) is evolving an effort to improve environmental service delivery to Seattle's diverse communities. The initiative is a direct response to a mayoral focus on social justice and equity. The objective of OSE's program is to understand how perceptions and actual measures of key environmental services and conditions vary by geography, income, and ethnicity, and then to develop appropriate city responses to address inequity. The scope of services includes water, transportation, energy, solid waste, public safety, pollution, open space, and accessibility to health care and other services. Data and indicators collected throughout this multiyear process will help inform the Mayor's Environmental Action Agenda http://www.seattle.gov/environment/Action_Agenda.htm. Students from the University of Washington recently assisted OSE by conducting inception surveys of some 300 residents from three Seattle neighborhoods. This information will be used to help develop internal measures that can help improve service delivery across the city. During the second year of our project, we will be exploring further connections between this initiative and our neighborhood indicators work.

Neighborhood Business District Strategy

http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Neighborhood_Business_District_Strategy/index.asp

This past year the City has had a focus on improving the health and livelihood of its neighborhood business districts. These business districts are critical to the life of a neighborhood and are a key element of the City's urban village strategy, which promotes the vision of pedestrian-friendly neighborhood business districts that serve the needs of nearby residents, thereby decreasing automobile trips and congestion. The health of neighborhood business districts is also a strong theme in the neighborhood plans of our pilot neighborhoods and an important quality of life issue for most citizens. The Mayor has asked the Department of Planning & Development (DPD) to work with citizens to improve neighborhood districts through pedestrian and transit orientation, job creation, increased housing opportunities, and better compatibility with surrounding residential areas. This strategy was developed to ensure that Seattle's mixed-use neighborhood centers continue to evolve as desirable places to live and work. To this end, the City has sponsored several public meetings, which have helped generate ideas about metrics that could be used to track neighborhood business district health. Sustainable Seattle recently presented its ComNETsm work to several DPD staff members to help inform a neighborhood-level data collection effort they plan to begin this summer to documents conditions across Seattle's neighborhood business districts. There is potential that



Sustainable Seattle may customize its ComNETsm work to assist the City with this initiative (fee for service).

Seattle's Urban Forest Initiative (Green Seattle)

http://www.seattle.gov/environment/green_seattle_initiative_pressrelease.pdf

In April, Mayor Nickels announced his Green Seattle Initiative to help protect Seattle's urban forests, stop the spread of invasive species, increase trees and greenery in Seattle neighborhoods, and provide youth employment opportunities. The City is currently partnered with the Cascade Land Conservancy, a local non-profit, to carry out these activities. There are a number of opportunities for our neighborhood indicators work to enhance and inform this effort. We have already met with city staff to outline how a number of our ComNETsm indicators could be used to track greening opportunities in neighborhoods (Appendix D). Just this month, we worked with community members in the Greenwood-Phinney Ridge neighborhood to develop a \$20,000 proposal to "green" the neighborhood through improved tree pits and removal of weeds and invasive species. Tree and tree pit issues were the second largest problem identified through the ComNETsm survey there. As Green Seattle unfolds, we will continue to strategically align our neighborhood indicators to inform and report on city and citizens actions.

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan: 10-Year Update

<http://www.seattle.gov/dclu/planning/comprehensive/CPupdate.htm#Overview>

The City of Seattle is in the process of updating its 1994 Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan), which is required by the State's Growth Management Act. Updating the Comp Plan includes revising growth and employment projections in addition to changing some of the land use, economic development, and environmental policies that guide growth. Over the past year, Sustainable Seattle has participated in a number of public meetings to discuss proposed changes to the Comp Plan, one of which specifically addresses monitoring and reporting on the progress of the Comp Plan's urban village strategy. City staff has proposed developing more robust performance measure to monitor the quality of life in the city's urban villages, while Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck has proposed developing a set of sustainability measures for the City. Our Project Manager attended several public hearings to petition the City to create a public task force to develop a good set of indicators. Our Executive Director has been involved in high-level discussions with Councilmember Steinbrueck and a number of other organizations about sustainability indicators for Seattle's Comp Plan. We will be co-sponsoring several events towards this end later this summer. We also submitted formal comments to the City and the City Council on enhancing Comp Plan performance measures (Appendix E). Over the next year, we will continue to participate in this process to develop better performance measures for this important policy document.

The Citizens Service Bureau

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/CitizenService/about.htm>

The Citizens Service Bureau exists to help citizens get information, solve problems, or resolve complaints regarding any City of Seattle department. The service offers a one-stop phone number (684-CITY) for all City questions. There is also a web site for easy access to the information and service, which includes an on-line request form. However, because most citizen relations still happens on a department by department basis (there are currently 27 call centers in the City of Seattle), the Citizen Service Bureau receives only 130 calls a day and



tends to offer more personalized service rather than documenting and tracking citizen complaints. The Manager of the Citizens Service Bureau, along with several other city staff recently visited the City of Baltimore to learn more about Baltimore's Citizen Relations Management (CRM) system, which, unlike Seattle, automates the intake of service requests and responses. As described below under [Seattle Performance Measurement](#), there is real interest in transforming the Citizen Service Bureau to function more like the CRM system in Baltimore, but the shrinking city budget is the primary hurdle.

Community Statistical Areas

One of the core issues that arose early in this project is the fact that there are no formal neighborhood boundaries for the City of Seattle. This issue will be discussed in greater detail under the *Indicator Development & Collection* section of this report. As part of the Mayor's focus on social equity, he is asking city departments to analyze service delivery by neighborhood. Similarly, Sustainable Seattle has been speaking with various city staff about using neighborhood-level data to better understand quality of life in Seattle and to engage citizens in monitoring and improving neighborhood health. Our Project Manager shared a number of national examples of neighborhood-level indicator movements, which has helped coalesce citywide interest in following the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance model of developing community statistical areas.³ These boundaries will be used to report and analyze data across the city. Most likely the city will develop "community statistical areas", which will be community areas that aggregate three to four neighborhoods. Data and information for these areas will be incorporated into a web-based public application (see below). This project is just in its infancy, but we hope to be a key resource and partner as the effort moves forward.

Seattle Performance Measurement

After attending the Sloan-sponsored conference last winter in Connecticut, we began to disseminate information about CRM and performance measurement to various levels of Seattle city government. Sustainable Seattle helped coordinate a March visit to Baltimore of two high-level Seattle staff: Mary Jean Ryan, Director of the Office of Policy & Management (OPM) and Tim Ceis, Deputy Mayor. The primary purpose of the visit was to learn more about Baltimore's performance measurement system, CitiStat, and its 311 CRM system. In May, there was a second follow-up visit to Baltimore and the New York City Department of Corrections by additional city staff: Michelle White, Manger, Citizens Service Bureau; William Schrier, Director, DOIT; and Bob Scales, Senior Policy Advisors, OPM. The Mayor is very interested in developing a more effective system for managing the activities and outcomes of city departments. While the city would like to eventually invest in a 311 system, such an extensive program is not financially feasible in the near future; the city will soon be facing \$25 million in budget cuts. However, in the near-term, the City is pursuing two performance-related projects:

Performance Measurement Pilot

In July, Seattle's Mayor decided to pilot an enhanced performance measurement program with two city agencies: Seattle Police Department and Human Services Department. While department heads currently develop accountability agreements with the Mayor, these agreements tend to be activity-based and fall short of documenting effective strategies and

³ The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicator Alliance is a non-profit organization in Baltimore that coordinates a number of data partners to foster well-informed decision-making for building healthy neighborhoods and a thriving city (www.bnial.org).



outcomes. Furthermore, there is a general feeling that city departments are not effectively using data to monitor progress and drive decisions. To improve these techniques, OPM staff will be working closely with these two departments to assemble data currently being collected, analyze activities and outcomes, develop additional data and information that can better assess progress, and generate a department report to share with the Mayor, the City Council and the public. The City will be reassigning existing staff to carry out this program.

Web-Based Interactive Data

Another effort underway is to develop a web-based database of community-level information for citizens, government staff, and other entities. The hope is to use the community statistical boundaries discussed above as a way to share data and statistics about Seattle's quality of life and the City's performance. The City is currently looking at the PortlandMaps <http://www.portlandmaps.com/index.cfm> and New York City's *My Neighborhood Statistics* http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/html/mns/my_stats.shtml websites as models. In addition to an array of community-level data, Seattle plans to share performance measurement data developed through the pilot effort described above. While DOIT will be making a budget request to the City Council to support this effort, the City is looking to match public dollars with private funds. They estimate the project will need \$200,000. Sustainable Seattle will be an active partner throughout the development of this project.

Other Collaborations/Partnerships

In addition to engaging citizens and city government, we have been striving to build collaborations with other entities that could enhance our activities. Over the course of the last year we have met with dozens of groups interested in improving the quality of life in neighborhoods, the city, and the region. Several of these organizations are highlighted below.

Feet First

Feet First is a Seattle-based non-profit organization which seeks to foster walkable and livable communities. The organization advises citizens, neighborhoods, and government agencies on a range of pedestrian issues. Through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Feet First is connecting walking to health through targeted efforts in five Seattle neighborhoods. Two of these neighborhoods overlap with our neighborhood indicators project and we have been partnering on a number of neighborhood activities. Sustainable Seattle has participated in two of Feet First's pedestrian walks, where citizens and city officials walk neighborhoods to assess "walkability" and develop short- and long-term actions for improving the pedestrian environment. The Executive Director of Feet First participated in our North Beacon Hill ComNETsm survey, and we plan to partner with Feet First in the future to develop a neighborhood walkability indicator.

University of Washington

<http://www.aaronlo.net/comnet/index.html>
<http://students.washington.edu/mwarrenw/nici/>

Sustainable Seattle has met with three faculty members of the University of Washington to discuss research collaboration and student involvement in our project. We successfully partnered with a Geography course to implement our neighborhood indicators work. Eight students (two teams) were trained to be field assistants for our ComNETsm surveys, conducted interviews with key community members and city staff about the ComNETsm work, and conducted research into crime, quality of urban space, and access to neighborhood destinations using Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis. This summer we will be discussing a



future project with students and faculty from Community and Environmental Planning, an interdisciplinary program of Urban Design & Planning. This is the same group that worked with Seattle's OSE to conduct neighborhood perceptions surveys.

City Neighborhood Council

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/neighborhoodcouncil/>

The City Neighborhood Council (CNC) is a citizen-led advisory group authorized by a City Council resolution. Its purpose is to provide citywide coordination for neighborhood planning, policy, and funding. The group is comprised of representatives from Seattle's 13 neighborhood districts. Sustainable Seattle has attended a number of meetings of the neighborhood planning subcommittee of the CNC and has met extensively with the co-chairs of this subcommittee to discuss CNC collaboration with the neighborhood indicators project. The co-chair of the neighborhood planning committee participated in our spring ComNETsm work.

Communities Count

<http://www.communitiescount.org/>

Sustainable Seattle is a member of the Communities Count steering committee, which includes representatives of the City of Bellevue, City of Seattle, King County Commission, Seattle-King County Public Health, and United Way of King County. Communities Count is a partner of the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP), a collaborative effort to use neighborhood-level data to support policy and decision-making <http://www.urban.org/nnip/>. Sustainable Seattle played a technical assistance role in the original development of Communities Count indicators, which have historically been focused on social and health issues. With prompting (and potential funding) from The Seattle Foundation, Communities Count is currently in the process of expanding its indicators to include arts, culture and the environment. We are currently assessing our role in this program expansion.

The Seattle Foundation

Sustainable Seattle met with the Seattle Foundation on two occasions this past year. The first was to update them on our work and explore opportunities for future funding and collaboration. We were then invited to participate in a focus group to explore environmental indicators could help inform their work and investments. The Seattle Foundation is interested in developing a set of county-wide indicators to assess progress towards their mission and core goals for the region. This coming year we plan to submit an application for funding to support our indicator efforts.

Performance Measurement

In addition, a visit from James Fountain of the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) spurred Sustainable Seattle to convene a performance measurement meeting with key individuals from our Board, the City of Seattle, King County, and the University of Washington. Attendees including Michael Jacobson (performance measures lead for King County Department of Natural Resources), Bill Schier (Chief Technology Officer for Seattle), Larissa Benson (Director of Executive MPA program at University of Washington Evans School of Public Affairs), Richard Gelb (Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment), as well as several Sustainable Seattle staff and Board Members, including our newest board member Leslie Breitner, an economist who specialized in performance standards and is Senior Lecturer at University of Washington Evan School of Public Affairs.



James Fountain presented the latest GASB report *Reporting Performance Information: Suggested Criteria for Effective Communication* and led a discussion on Managing for Results (MFR), where attendees shared their efforts to enhance performance measurement and reporting. As a follow-up to this meeting, we are hoping to convene a broader performance measurement round table in the coming months.

Indicator Development & Collection

There are two primary types of indicators Sustainable Seattle is developing for its neighborhood indicators program: data that describe street and sidewalk conditions (ComNETsm) and data that describe social, economic, and environmental conditions of each neighborhood. Because there are two very different methodologies for developing these two types of data, they will be discussed separately in this section.

Street & Sidewalk Conditions (ComNETsm)

Sustainable Seattle worked with the Fund for the City of New York (FCNY) to pilot its ComNETsm program in three Seattle neighborhoods. In early December, we spent two days in New York with the FCNY to learn more about ComNETsm and begin planning our work in Seattle. In early 2004, we made presentations at numerous community meetings to build local support and involvement for implementing ComNETsm. We secured a partnership with existing organizations for each neighborhood. In Greenwood-Phinney Ridge we are working with the Greenwood Community Council, the Phinney Ridge Community, and the Phinney Neighborhood Association. Subsequently, the Greenwood-Phinney Ridge Chamber of Commerce has expressed interest in the ComNETsm work and is partnering with us to secure funding to address ComNETsm survey findings. The President has asked us to make a presentation to the Chamber Board at their next meeting. In Capitol Hill we are working with the Capitol Hill Chamber of Commerce and the Capitol Hill Community Council. In North Beacon Hill we are working with the North Beacon Hill Community Council.

Data & Routes

Once we secured our community partners, we attended several community meetings in each neighborhood to outline the project, select the data that each neighborhood wanted to track, and determine the priority areas to survey. In talking with community members about this work we utilized examples from other Alfred P. Sloan grantees using ComNETsm or ComNETsm-like programs. These examples helped illustrate the kind of data typically collected, the analytic and reporting capabilities, and potential uses of the data. As described previously in the *City Engagement* section of this report, we also met with city staff over the course of several months in order to develop a Seattle list of features and conditions that would be meaningful to both citizens and city government. Our Seattle list includes 63 different features with 473 possible feature-condition combinations. We used the New York City list as a baseline and included suggestion made by citizens and agency staff. There were a number of New York City features clearly not relevant in Seattle (e.g. subway entrances issues) and we adding a number features that were important to Seattleites (e.g. bike lanes, bike racks, historic structures, public art, planting strips, public toilets, traffic circles). Both city staff and citizens were also interested in tracking assets in their neighborhoods, rather than just deficits. We did incorporate a few assets (bird nests in trees, historic structures, and public art) but emphasized that ComNETsm is one of many tools for tracking neighborhood conditions. The list of Seattle features and conditions is presenting in Appendix F). Similarly, the routes surveyed for each of the three neighborhoods is found in Appendix G).



Training & Survey

April and May were very focused on implementing and completing ComNETsm surveys in Greenwood-Phinney Ridge, Capitol Hill, and North Beacon Hill. On April 24th we conducted the Greenwood-Phinney ComNETsm survey and on May 22nd we conducted the Capitol Hill and North Beacon Hill surveys. The FCNY flew out to Seattle to assist with our first ComNETsm survey in April, while Sustainable Seattle conducted the May training and surveys.

On April 23rd we conducted a "train the trainers" training to prepare our volunteer field assistants for the community ComNETsm surveys. Each of the trainees served as a team leader during the actual community surveys. Eight students from the University of Washington, Department of Geography attended the training, which covered a brief introduction to Sustainable Seattle and the FCNY and then primarily focused on terminology of street and sidewalk conditions, operating the handheld computer and camera, and using the ComNETsm software.

On April 24th and May 22nd (before each survey) we held community trainings to prepare volunteers for their neighborhood survey. Two staff members from the FCNY conducted the April trainings in Greenwood-Phinney, while Sustainable Seattle staff conducted the May trainings for Capitol Hill and North Beacon Hill. Sustainable Seattle has fully adapted all FCNY training materials to be Seattle-specific and has incorporated them into its neighborhood indicators project.

For the most part, all three neighborhood surveys went extremely well. We had nice weather during the April Greenwood-Phinney survey but unfortunately saw rain during the May surveys in Capitol Hill and North Beacon Hill. However, community members were committed and withstood the rain to complete the survey. We had approximately 25 community members that participated in the three surveys, in addition to volunteers and UW students. David Levinger, Executive Director of Feet First, participated in our North Beacon Hill survey and Tom Whittemore with DON observed a North Beacon Hill team to assess if ComNETsm could be used in his work to engage citizens with disabilities. All in all, most community members found the process fun and worthwhile. In June, each participant was emailed an electronic evaluation form (Appendix H), along with a summary of the data collected in the three neighborhoods (Appendix I). To date we have received 17 out of 36 emailed evaluation forms (a 47% response rate). Most respondents said their participation in ComNETsm stemmed from an interest in working with other community members to improve the neighborhood. For the most part they thought the survey was useful and believed that the detailed list of features and conditions would help community members prioritize findings and generate a city response. Most participants commended the training in preparing them for the survey. Most respondents felt that the electronic documentation of



University of Washington Geography students attending the Field Assistant Training



May 22nd Survey Training conducted by S2 for Capitol Hill and North Beacon Hill at Seattle Central Community College



Greenwood-Phinney community members participating in the April ComNETsm survey



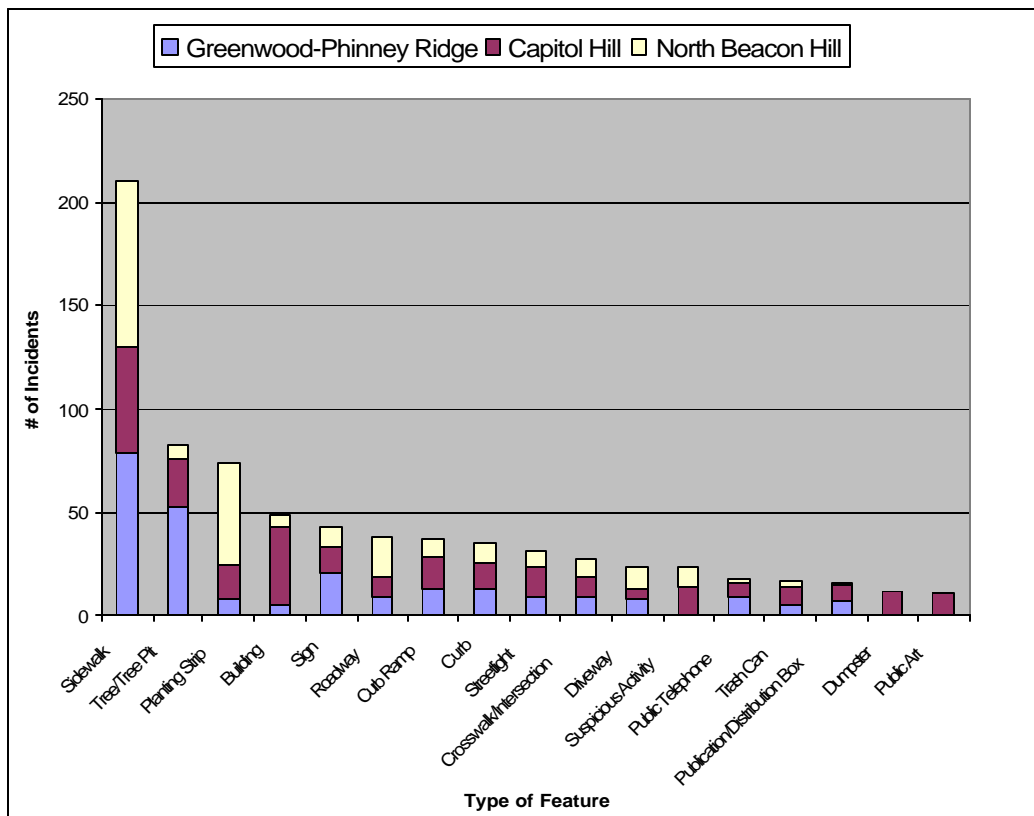
conditions far exceeded handwritten surveys and, for the most part, they found the software easy to use.

Findings

Findings from the first year of Seattle's ComNETsm surveys reflect common and distinct issues facing each of the three neighborhoods. For the purposes of this report, we will present a few summary charts of the most prevalent features with problems and the most common issues. We have developed several PowerPoint presentations with more detailed analysis and findings that we are using in presentations to community organizations and city staff. These presentations will be available on our website this summer.

As Chart 1 illustrates, of the 63 street/sidewalk features, **sidewalks** had the most commonly recorded problems in all three neighborhoods, with **trip hazards** being the most frequent issue. Both the Greenwood/Phinney Ridge and Capitol Hill surveys revealed a number of **tree/tree pit** problems including **root heave**, **pavers uneven**, and **weeds**. In North Beacon Hill, findings showed that many of the **planting strips** are currently covered in **asphalt or concrete** rather than vegetation. Another interesting finding in North Beacon Hill was the **suspicious activity** category, where a number of **alcoholic beverage containers** were observed and recorded.

Chart 1: Most Frequently Recorded Features with Problems - All Neighborhoods

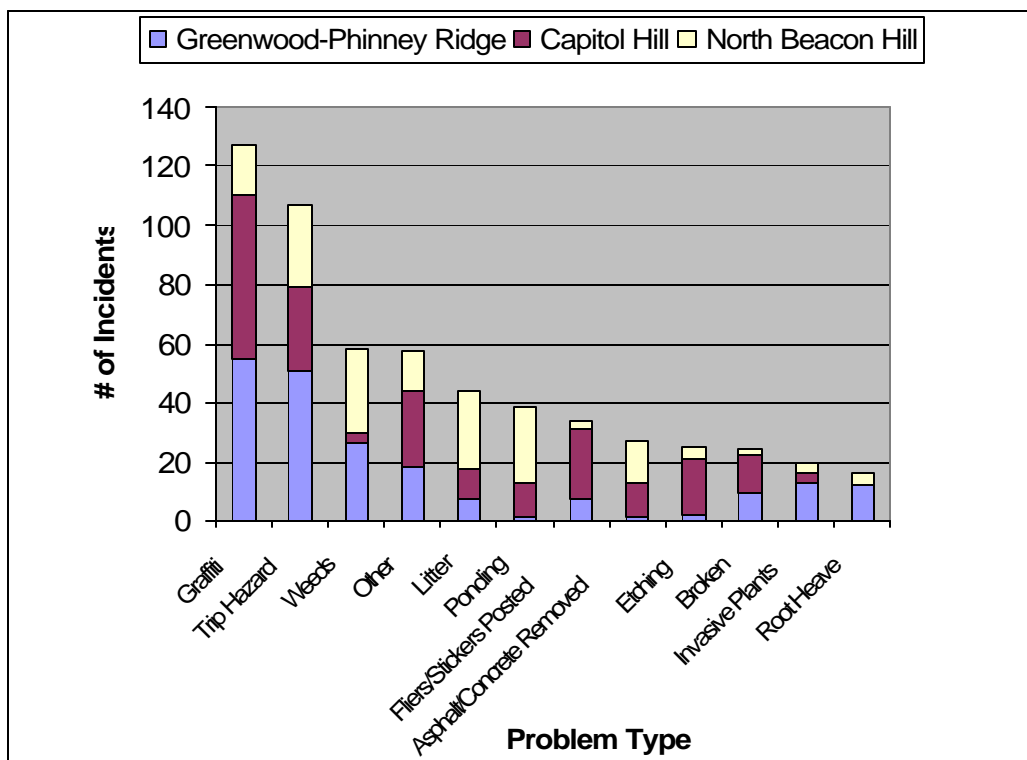


It is also useful to look at the data from a purely “problem” perspective. Conditions like **graffiti** can occur on a number of different features – a mailbox, a trash can, or a building. As Chart 2 illustrates, **graffiti** is the most frequent issue recorded across the three neighborhoods, although



more prevalent in Capitol Hill and Greenwood-Phinney Ridge. North Beacon Hill suffers from more from **litter** and **trip hazards**. It is clear from the chart below that problems are not uniformly distributed across neighborhoods. One thing to note is that **ponding** is primarily found in Capitol Hill and North Beacon Hill because those surveys were conducted in the rain, while it was sunny and warm during the Greenwood-Phinney survey.

Chart 2: Most Frequently Recorded Problems – All Neighborhoods



Social, Economic, & Environmental Conditions

In addition to the street and sidewalk data collected through ComNETsm, Sustainable Seattle is working with its partners to develop neighborhood-level social, economic, and environmental indicators. Our theory is that data at the neighborhood-level (as opposed to citywide or countywide) will be more meaningful to the average citizen and engender greater ownership and accountability. As described in the *Citizen Engagement* section of this report, Seattle citizens are burnt out from community meetings, visioning, and goal setting. Furthermore, we did not want to engage citizens in a series of indicator discussion prior to fully understanding what kinds of data were even available at the neighborhood scale. Thus, we devised a several prong approach for advancing our indicators work: we engaged citizens around concrete action (ComNETsm), attended community and citizens meetings to better understand neighborhood concerns, and conducted research to assess the kinds of data available at the neighborhood-level.

Understanding What Matters to Citizens

As mentioned above, our strategy for understanding what matters to citizens was to attend local community meetings to primarily listen to concerns. We also attended a series of citywide



citizen meetings about particular topics such as updating the city's Comp Plan, improving neighborhood business districts, and the neighborhood planning process. We also spent time reviewing the City's Comp Plan for its stated goals and visions (which were developed through a participatory process), along with each neighborhood plan of the three targeted neighborhoods. Some of the key concerns we documented through these efforts include:

- Adequate parking
- Affordable housing
- Concurrency – adequate services to meet growth
- Density
- Design standards
- Education
- Healthy neighborhood business districts
- Living wage jobs
- Open space & community facilities
- Pedestrian-friendly infrastructure / accessibility
- Preservation of community & historic assets
- Public safety – safe neighborhoods
- Transportation/congestion

It was extremely useful that many of the goals and visions for healthy neighborhoods we heard expressed in community meetings are reflected in the City's Comp Plan. While it is critical that our neighborhood indicators matter to citizens, it is as important that they can be easily linked to existing policies, goals, and priorities of city government.

Determining Neighborhood Boundaries

What do we mean by a neighborhood? This became a critical question as we started having more serious discussions with city government and citizens about neighborhood-level data. Unfortunately, there are no official neighborhood boundaries for the City of Seattle. It is estimated that there are some 100 Seattle neighborhoods, all defined in different ways by different stakeholders. Our project is focused on those neighborhoods that were designated as urban villages during the Comp Plan process, of which there are 38 neighborhoods. However, the boundaries for Seattle's urban villages were drawn based on existing zoning, which means that many of the boundaries follow commercial areas and exclude what many think of as the neighborhood. Table 1 below outlines several options for determining appropriate neighborhood boundaries:



Table 1: Neighborhood Boundaries Considered

Boundary	Positive (not exhaustive)	Negative (not exhaustive)
urban village Boundaries	Recognized by GMA, Comp Plan, and citizens	Determined by zoning (mixed use) so often does not include residential areas; many areas of the city not included
Neighborhood Planning Areas	Locally-determined by citizens, recognized to some extent by City	Areas of overlap; does not include the entire city; follow streets, not census boundaries
Community Council	Recognized by City, District Councils and Community Councils; target area for a neighborhood political body	Areas of overlap; does not include entire neighborhood in some cases; does not cover the entire city, only areas targeted by community councils, follow streets, not census boundaries
Neighborhood Atlas	Effort by the Seattle City Clerk's office to derive neighborhood areas for the city that do not overlap	Lack of consensus/process within city/neighborhoods to derive boundaries; follow streets, not census boundaries.

This information, along with maps illustrating the various boundaries (Appendix J), was emailed to community leaders for consideration. The boundary issues were also discussed with City staff, who are also now in the process of discussing appropriate community-level boundaries for reporting and sharing city data. Feedback from community members helped determine the boundary to be used in this project:

- Capitol Hill: urban village/Neighborhood Planning Area boundary (they are the same)
- Greenwood-Phinney Ridge: Neighborhood Planning Area boundary (encompasses both the Greenwood Community Council boundary and the Phinney Ridge Community Council boundary)
- North Beacon Hill: Community Council boundary

Assessing Available Data

An important step in developing neighborhood-level indicators is understanding the kinds of data that can be analyzed at a neighborhood scale. Some data are available by census tract or block group, some by zip code, and others only by much larger geographies. Often, obtaining data at small geographies can be difficult due to confidentiality concerns. In order to understand the range of data readily available for our neighborhood indicators work, we reviewed local indicator efforts to assess which existing indicators were feasible and meaningful at a neighborhood scale. These indicator efforts included: Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, Sustainable Seattle's Indicators of a Sustainable Community (1998), Seattle's Environmental Action Agenda, King County Benchmarks, and Communities Count. We also examined indicators used by the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance. Most of these programs



collect and analyze data at a city or county scale, but we were able to identify a number of indicators feasible for neighborhood-level analysis.

Sustainable Seattle has contracted CommEN Space, a local firm that specializes in geographic information system (GIS) analysis to analyze a variety of census information by our three neighborhoods. Table 2 presents our initial list of neighborhood-level data:

Table 2: Initial List of Neighborhood-Level Indicators

Geography	Population	Housing	Transportation	Education	Economic Security
Neighborhood boundaries	Density	Households	Transit Access	Attainment	Employment status
Census boundaries	Race/ethnicity	Vacancy	Mode Choice		Median household income
Community assets (parks, schools, community centers)		Tenure			Per capita income
		Housing Affordability			Poverty status

This information will be featured on our neighborhood indicators website through an interactive mapping application. We will be conducting usability tests with neighborhood leaders, as well as getting feedback about additional indicators that will be helpful for monitoring the quality of life in Seattle's neighborhoods. It is important to note that is a first attempt at collecting neighborhood-level data. During the course of the next year we will be refining this work to include a range of information that broadly reflects social, economic, and environmental conditions.

In addition to the data presented in Table 2, Sustainable Seattle is also working with CommEN Space and its partners to develop two more analytic indicators: accessibility to open space and walkability. We are using GIS analysis to rate each of the three neighborhoods with respect to these two very important quality of life issues. These more analytic indicators will also be posted on our website this summer.

Data Dissemination & Action

Communicating neighborhood data and information widely to citizens, government agencies, and other organizations is fundamental to our success. We have been working diligently to promote our project through neighborhood and community publications, on the web, and through meetings and presentations. Similarly, coordinating action in response to neighborhood data is critical to project success. On all fronts, we have made strong headway and plan to continue to build on these efforts in the coming year.

Dissemination & Communication

Over the last six months we have promoted our neighborhood work through local publications and websites, meetings, and formal presentations. Most of our earlier efforts focused on spreading awareness about the project and generating community volunteers to participate in the ComNETsm surveys. Last fall, we updated our website to promote the neighborhood



indicators project. In January, the DOIT featured an article about our work in the January issue of *Brainstorm*, their community technology publication emailed to community technology centers, interested community members, Seattle schools, information technology instructors and librarians, city staff, and national community technology lists http://cityofseattle.net/tech/brainstorm_14/ (Appendix A). This article generated several calls from citizens and few city staff interested in learning more about the project. Similarly, our local community partners have featured the neighborhood indicators project in local newsletters and on their websites. In their spring, 2004 issue, The Phinney Neighborhood Association included an article about our project in their local paper, *Phinney Ridge Review* (Appendix K). This article helped recruit several volunteers for the Greenwood-Phinney ComNETsm survey. Our local partners have also included information about our project on their websites and sent out program information through community listservs (Appendix B).

Since completing our first round of ComNETsm surveys, we have presented findings and results at two local community meetings: The Greenwood Community Council and the Phinney-Ridge Community Council. We have also been asked by the Greenwood-Phinney Ridge Chamber of Commerce to make a presentation to their board in September. We will be presenting findings to the Capitol Hill Chamber of Commerce, the Capitol Hill Community Council and the North Beacon Hill Community Council this fall, as most community organizations do not meet during the summer months.

We have emailed a short summary of our ComNETsm findings to members of our city advisory committee and will be conducting an interdepartmental presentation to a broader range of city staff in late July. This is an opportunity to share results within the city and also generate some discussion around the best ways to integrate findings into city activities. Several city staff members have already requested ComNETsm data specifically related to their work. We provided a spreadsheet of all the findings to DON's Research and Prevention Office. They are interested in using these data to advance policies around creating Alcohol Impact Areas.⁴ Similarly, the Parking Coordinator at SDOT requested all ComNETsm data related to parking meters and signs. She has promised to notify Sustainable Seattle as these parking-related issues are resolved. We also provided the list of 313 problems identified during the Capitol Hill ComNETsm survey to Clean Seattle. These data are being used to inform the Clean Seattle team of community identified conditions and we have requested that Clean Seattle notify us of those conditions that are resolved as part of the Clean Seattle effort. As previously described under *City Engagement*, we presented ComNETsm data to a team of staff from DPD to help inform new city effort to collect street-level data in neighborhood business districts. We will explore possibilities of adapting ComNETsm software for this purpose. There is also potential interest in adapting our ComNETsm surveys to specifically focus on conditions that impact citizens with disabilities.

Sustainable Seattle's Website

Our most exciting effort underway is the redevelopment of our website. Our website will play a pivotal role in communicating information about our work to a range of audiences. We have contracted with two organizations, a web developer and a GIS analysis firm, to feature our work

⁴ Alcohol Impact Areas are areas designated by the Seattle City Council where local citizens, consumers and businesses reach agreement over business practices designed to reduce the adverse impacts of chronic public inebriation through limitations on sales such as restricting the hours of alcohol sales, removing high alcohol content/low cost beverages, and not selling single cans or bottles of alcoholic beverages.



on the internet and provide access to neighborhood data and resources for promote healthy and sustainable neighborhoods (e.g. grant opportunities, other organizations, examples of community actions). While we are currently in the design and content development phase of this work, there are two clickable prototypes for our new site:

- Neighborhood Indicators Area: <http://onw.iota.zettai.net/NeighborhoodIndicatorsProject>
- Main Sustainable Seattle site: <http://onw.iota.zettai.net/SustainableSeattle>

Please note that neither the content nor the design is reflected in either of these prototypes. They have been developed strictly for assessing navigational capabilities. We expect that our new website will launch in August, which will be broadly publicized through email listservs, press releases, and other means.

Coordinating Action

As described above we have already begun coordinating action to address ComNETsm survey findings. In Greenwood-Phinney, we convened a team representing the Greenwood-Phinney Chamber of Commerce, the Greenwood and Phinney Ridge Community Councils, and DON to apply for a \$20,000 grant offered through the City's Office of Economic Development (Appendix L). The grant would provide funds and support to enlarge and enhance tree pits, provide greater natural drainage, and replace invasive plants with natives. The community is excited about promoting an "Adopt a Tree" program to sustain these efforts over time. This project was conceived in response to findings of the Greenwood-Phinney ComNETsm survey, where many conditions documented had to do with the health and condition of neighborhood street trees. Community members observed numerous examples of trees that were outgrowing their tree pits and of roots heaving towards the surface in search of water. There were also several situations of invasive species and weeds taking over both the trees and tree pits. The result is considerable strain on an important community asset, uneven pavement, broken curbs, trip hazards, and unsightly sidewalks. In fact, 44% percent of the 297 recorded conditions were directly related to trees, tree pits, and sidewalks. The project would also be a nice fit with the Green Seattle effort described earlier in this report.

Also in Greenwood-Phinney Ridge, the DON district coordinator is working with community members to use ComNETsm data to help reallocate Early Implementation Funding (EIF) that was allocated to the neighborhood during the neighborhood planning process. These funds can be used to address specific neighborhood issues and concerns. The DON District Coordinator has access to neighborhood data through ComNETsm Connection, the web database hosted by the FCNY.

We are also helping to coordinate action in Capitol Hill as part of the Clean Seattle event this August. As described earlier in this report, Clean Seattle is a city initiative to improve neighborhood quality of life through coordinated city and citizen action. We have provided the list of 313 conditions recorded on Capitol Hill to the Clean Seattle team. They will be verifying conditions and noting those that can be resolved through Clean Seattle. All neighborhood improvements made during Clean Seattle will be reported back to Sustainable Seattle and posted on our website. This will be the first test of a potential collaboration between ComNETsm and Clean Seattle.

In all three neighborhoods, we will be convening community meetings to discuss ComNETsm findings, prioritize the information, and devise citizen and city actions to address identified priorities. These meetings will also include city staff from relevant agencies. We also plan to meet individually with each city agency to present ComNETsm findings and strategize opportunities for addressing neighborhood priorities.



Lessons Learned

During the course of our first year, there were a number of key lessons learned that will help inform our work in the years to come.

Citizens and government are searching for new ways to increase local involvement and reach out to diverse constituents. We heard about the lack of civic engagement and the difficulty in getting new faces to community meetings from both city government and neighborhood leaders. Most people we spoke with also emphasized the difficulty in engaging diverse communities in civic activities. This lesson helped us readjust our thinking about what we hoped to achieve with the grant. While one of our goals is to get beyond the already active individuals, it became clear that working with already established groups made more sense than trying to establish separate steering committees in each neighborhood. Many of our neighborhood partners hope this project will help attract new members and generate excitement in the neighborhood.

Citizens are looking for concrete processes and actions – something beyond the community meeting. Most citizens we talked with expressed a reservation about organizing another community meeting. ComNETsm proved to be an important tool for engaging citizens in our work. Both citizens and city government view ComNETsm as something that is “new and different” and a potential way to involve those who shy away from meetings. This was another reason we did not immediately pursue the plan-do-act model in our three targeted neighborhoods. We witnessed some reluctance to attend additional meetings to discuss visions and goals for the neighborhood.

Most citizens (and even city departments) tend to be issue-driven. It is critical to tap into these specific interests. It was important to talk to both citizens and city government about our project from their specific frame of reference. For example, with SDOT we talked about how this work could help the agency better document sidewalk conditions for resource planning. When we spoke with community groups, we listened to their issues (e.g. crime, civic engagement, economic activity) and helped them see that our project could support their efforts towards addressing these specific issues. Our future challenge is to bridge these various interests and develop more sustainable and comprehensive approaches to analyzing and solving community problems.

Developing neighborhood-level indicators is not a straightforward process. There are a number of considerations as one begins to think about developing indicators at a small scale. Reliability, relevancy, and feasibility all become critical issues. Moreover, with no official neighborhood boundaries for the City of Seattle, it becomes necessary to first answer the question of “what is a neighborhood?” It is important to address as many of these issues as possible before engaging citizens in a participatory process.

Outreach and innovation are not only critical in communities, they are necessary for building support in city government. While it would be much more efficient to go straight to the Mayor or to one particular department in city government, unfortunately (or fortunately), the City of Seattle is not a well-oiled machine. There are many moving parts and a variety of stakeholders with different motivations and different interests. Outreach, relationship building, and the strategic alignment of interests are critical for identifying fertile ground for new ideas.

Next Steps

Over the next six months, our work will focus on integrating ComNETsm findings into city planning and actions, launching our website to communicate neighborhood-level data and



actions, and playing a leadership role in enhancing the City's use of community indicators to inform city policy, budget decisions, and action. Specifically, we will embark on the following:

- Present ComNETsm findings to interdepartmental team of city staff to build greater city involvement in utilizing this data and integrating findings into decision-making.
- Work with youth and elder immigrants in the International District (our fourth neighborhood) to collect and communicate data about neighborhood quality of life.
- Develop a set of analytic indicators (beyond census data) that speak to the quality of life issues important to citizens, government, and Sustainable Seattle (e.g. walkability, open space accessibility).
- Complete our website, conduct feasibility testing with citizens, and publicly launch the new site.
- Develop a process for selecting the remaining 4-6 neighborhoods.
- Convene community meetings in the fall to help groups prioritize ComNETsm findings and develop actions to address top concerns.
- Take a leadership role in helping the city enhance existing indicators to monitor the Comp Plan and measure progress towards building a more sustainable city.
- Organize and host a roundtable of experts to discuss strategies for further integrating sustainability into our neighborhood indicators work. These strategies will help us work with citizens and government to make sustainability more actionable at the neighborhood scale.
- Play a central role in the city's effort to develop community statistical areas and a web-based program for sharing data and information.
- Raise public and private funds to support our neighborhood-focused work as Sloan funding decreases.