

Minutes: Revitalizing Neighborhoods Committee Meeting  
June 16, 2009  
10:30 am

Members Present: Christine Helms-Maletic, Chris Thompson, Paul Haan, Gail Heffner, Russ Lewis, Kevin Wisselink, John Gussenbauer, Carol Townsend, Michael Raley

Paul Haan called the meeting to order. The discussion on the Neighborhood Indicators Project was continued, picking up with Indicator 2.3.

*Indicator 2.3: Economic Diversity*

Measure: Economic composition mirrors the County  
Method/Source: US Census Data

Carol noted that Belknap and Eastown are both rather mixed-income. 2010 census data must be examined in the future.

Paul added that the impact of infrastructure on the vitality of a neighborhood ought to be examined.

Christine noted that Heritage Hill has a good amount of rental, and that students like to live there.

Russ related that Eastown manages to maintain relatively high land values while still hosting low-income residents.

The indicator was upheld.

*Indicator 2.4: Housing is accessible*

Measure: Number of ZeroStep certificates awarded  
Method/Source: Disability Advocates of Kent County

Christine stated that the problem with this measure is that even handicap-friendly builders do not attempt to attain such certification.

Carol noted that ZeroStep is a relatively new program, and that the certification is hard to attain as of yet.

Russ added that the old topography of each neighborhood may pose problems.

Paul asked how a measurement of handicap access might be captured without ZeroStep certification.

Russ answered that building permits may yield some good information.

The indicator was determined to require more research.

*Indicator 2.5: Racial composition mirrors the City of Grand Rapids*

Measure: Racial diversity

Method/Source: US Census data, Community Research Institute (CRI)

Paul pointed out the error of classifying Hispanics as a race. He also suggested that data from public school districts rather than the Census be used.

The indicator was upheld, but it was determined that different data are needed.

### **GOAL 3: A Full Range of Transportation Modes Exist**

*Indicator 3.1: Public Transit is Accessible*

Measure: Every household is within a ¼ mile of a transit line

Method/Source: Google Earth

Indicator was upheld

*Indicator 3.2: Redevelopment is occurring around transit corridors*

Measure: Number of new/improved building permits every month

Method/Source: Count number of building permits issued by the City within ¼ mile of transit corridor and the amount of money involved

The indicator was upheld, but it was determined that the data used to measure it ought to be examined on a more longitudinal basis.

*Indicator 3.3: Every street has a complete sidewalk on both sides of the street*

Measure: Increasing number of streets with complete sidewalks on both sides of the street

Method/Source: Count the number of streets with complete sidewalks on both sides of the street and the total mileage of these streets

Carol noted that the student who examined this indicator did a very good job, and that he used the street view on Google Maps to count the sidewalks on each street in the examined neighborhoods.

Indicator was upheld.

*Indicator 3.4: Bike lanes are common*

Measure: Increasing number of streets with bike lanes

Method/Source: Count number of streets with bike lanes and the total mileage of these streets

Christine noted that the lanes need to be properly measured and identified

Kevin added that city-designated bike routes ought to be taken into account

It was determined that the measure for this indicator is unreliable.

*Indicator 3.5: Residents have become less car dependent*

Measure: Number of cars per household

Method/Source: [www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com)

Michael noted that it is a shaky measure, but that it is the best possible at the moment.

Carol added that if there is a way to know the miles traveled on average per vehicle, it would be a much better measure.

The indicator was upheld.

*Indicator 3.6: Residents with disabilities can access the entire neighborhood*

Measure: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards are implemented

Method/Source: Disability Advocates of Kent County (DAKC) documents accessibility, City Clerk, Engineering Department

The indicator has not yet been measured, but the committee agreed that it could be done.

The indicator was upheld.

**Goal 4: Neighborhoods are green and environmentally sustainable**

*Indicator 4.1: Residents support locally grown food*

Measure: Percentage living within 1 mile of market

Method/Source: Count on how many farmers market etc. are there

The committee agreed that there needs to be some other measure for residents' support of locally grown food.

The indicator was upheld, but the means of measurement are to be changed.

*Indicator 4.2: Green space is accessible*

Measure: All households are within a quarter mile of a park or natural area  
Method/Source: Count and map green spaces and measure distance to all households.

Paul noted that certain parks were absent from the data presented in the report.

The indicator was upheld, but the committee agreed that improvements must be made to the baseline data.

*Indicator 4.3: Street canopy reduces greenhouse gases*

Measure: 40% of neighborhood has tree coverage  
Method/Source: Annis Resource Institute

The committee determined that the indicator cannot be measured unless by some large undertaking.

The committee agreed that the indicator ought to be reworded.

**Goal 5: Empowerment, human connectedness, and social justice are prominent features in the neighborhoods**

*Indicator 5.1: Strong citizen-based organizations are active*

Paul stated that the goal should be defined as being on a macro or micro level.

The committee agreed that the indicator requires further development.

**Announcements**

It was announced once more that there is to be no July meeting.

**Meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am**