PROFILING A CITY: INFORMATION RESOURCES ON CHICAGO'S 77 COMMUNITY AREAS

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Abstract — Urban areas are often considered to have distinct qualities and characteristics, for example, Chicago is the "City that Works" and Philadelphia is known as the "City of Brotherly Love." Whether or not these cities are accurately described by such labels is a question that may be answered by looking at the "cities within the city." These distinctive communities are often studied by researchers in the fields of sociology, geography, criminal justice, and urban planning; by city managers for allocations of funds and services; and by citizens interested in relocating to or starting a business in a particular area. This article provides background about the 77 community areas of Chicago, describing information resources available for compiling such profiles. Many similar resources are available for urban areas nationwide.

Keywords — Community areas, Urban studies, Chicago, Profile

The modern metropolis is a city of cities. It is a mosaic of little worlds, an aggregate of local communities, each undifferentiated from the others by its characteristic function in the total economy and cultural complex of life.

Dr. Louis Wirth
Local Community Fact Book, 1938

INTRODUCTION

The nation's cities, as noted by Wirth, comprise many smaller communities existing within the city boundaries. Each of these has distinct social, economic, and cultural characteristics that define that community. From New York City's Greenwich Village to Pittsburgh's Southside and Los Angeles's Watts district, each of these cities and their respective communities have developed over time to represent something unique—whether it is ethnic and cultural qualities or urban decay. These distinctive communities are often studied by researchers in the fields of sociology, geography, criminal justice, and urban planning; by city managers for allocations of funds and services; and by citizens interested in relocating to or starting a business in a particular area. This research may involve the use of publications from a variety of sources—federal, state, and local governments; private publishers; and community organizations. As a result,

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compiling the information into a useful profile of the community area can be a time-consuming task. Basic data such as population, race, and income can be combined with data on schools, crime, and health to form a profile of the area. The following article discusses community research related to the city of Chicago.

**HISTORY**

The city of Chicago currently comprises 77 community areas. These areas are not official places—meaning they do not have their own governing bodies or separate services such as sanitation or police. Many of these community areas developed independently of the city, outside city boundaries. The "Great Fire of 1871" destroyed much of what was then within the corporate boundaries of the city. The smaller villages and towns that had developed outside the city boundaries became a refuge for persons displaced by the fire. Some of these villages and towns, such as Hyde Park and Lakeview, were thriving towns with their own governments. Others, such as Austin in the west, were little more than barren prairie, inhabited by few. After the fire, the population of these areas grew, as did business, industry, and the railroads. The city itself recovered quickly from the fire. It began to grow at such a rate that many of these small towns were annexed between the late 1880s and 1900. The result was a large diverse city with numerous ethnic and social enclaves that continued to thrive as such, despite annexation. These ethnic and social enclaves were, in a true sense, communities. Their lasting contribution is evidenced by the existence of 77 community areas within the city of Chicago.

The delineation of the community area boundaries began in the early part of the twentieth century. The boundaries were based primarily on the economic and social characteristics exhibited by their inhabitants. Researchers at the University of Chicago, local government agencies, and the U.S. Bureau of the Census used the following to define the boundaries of the community areas: "the settlement, growth, and history of the area; the local identification with the area; local trade area; distribution of membership of local institutions; and natural and artificial boundaries" [2]. The original boundaries have remained constant with only two exceptions: the addition of O'Hare and the split of the Uptown community area into two areas, Uptown and Edgewater. The constant nature of these boundaries has facilitated comparisons of community development from census to census.

Examples of the development and change can be found in the far southside community areas of Pullman and Hyde Park. George Pullman created the Pullman area in the 1880s and made it a company town for his workers at the Palace Car Company. It was hoped that the town would be totally self-sufficient, and to achieve that end, Pullman established a farm to provide food for the villagers [3]. The characteristics of this area were representative of the workforce of the Pullman Company until the turn of the century when the Illinois Supreme Court determined that the Pullman Company was "exceeding the rights of its charter in owning and managing the town" [4]. It was after George Pullman removed his influence from the town that it began to change. The first half of the twentieth century saw the influx of European immigrants into the country and into Pullman. In the second half of the century, Pullman became a destination for the northward migration of blacks from Alabama and Mississippi, many of whom came as the result of the Illinois Gulf Central Railroad line. From 1950 to 1980, the composition of the population of Pullman changed from 100 percent white to 76 percent black [5].

Hyde Park has undergone many changes in its almost 150 years of existence. The community area known as Hyde Park today was, in the nineteenth century, part of a larger village of Hyde Park. Its population, primarily wealthy and white, inhabited large,
gracious mansions. By the 1920s, whites of German and/or Jewish background constituted the majority of Hyde Park residents. There were gracious mansions on tree-lined streets that surrounded the campus of the University of Chicago. Two of Hyde Park's most notorious residents, Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, brought the full attention of an angry nation to bear on the quiet community in 1924 [6]. The years following the Leopold and Loeb case saw a decline in the quality of life in Hyde Park. The mansions remained for some time but "the stretch of Lake Park between Forty-third and Fifty-fifth streets became a row of saloons and questionable rooming houses" [7]. The Hyde Park of today is a highly diverse and active community with a population composed of whites, blacks, and Hispanics. The University of Chicago still stands as a centerpiece in the community, although most of the elegant homes have disappeared or have been converted to multifamily units.

PROFILING

The study of community areas such as Pullman and Hyde Park can include the use of sources from all levels of government and the private sector. A profile of a community can be used to analyze needs, predict changes, or even find a place to live. In creating a profile of these communities, one can encounter vast amounts of information including population, housing, social, and economic statistics; business information; crime statistics; education and school data; health-related information and maps. This information is compiled for many different geographic areas: census tracts, zip codes, community areas, school districts, police districts, etc.

One of the problems encountered in creating a profile is that of applying data from various school districts, police districts, and other geographic delineations to the community area itself. For example, the Census Bureau does not compile information by community area for Chicago. However, the community areas comprise census tracts, and their boundaries coincide with tract boundaries. Therefore, information that is available by census tract can easily be organized by community area. Using census data alone can enable one to create a detailed picture of a particular community area. Other data are not so conveniently organized. An example of this is statistical information on crime in Chicago. A map of police districts can be applied to match the community area being studied to develop a profile of crime. Although the process can be time consuming, requiring the gathering of each piece of data separately, the end result is a clear picture of a community and its people, problems, and resources. The section to follow discusses basic sources that may be used in creating a community area profile. Although many of these sources are specifically related to the city of Chicago, some apply to other urban areas as well. A bibliography of some information resources that can be used in creating a profile is located in the appendix.

RESOURCES

A primary source in profiling community areas is the Local Community Fact Book. Originally compiled by the University of Chicago, the first Fact Book was published in 1938 and contained information on the then-75 community areas. A predecessor of the Fact Book was the District Fact Book published by the Chicago Department of Education. The current Local Community Fact Book (due out in late 1995), is published, in part, by the University of Illinois at Chicago, as were the 1970 and 1980 versions. The data available in the latest Fact Book include historical information on the community areas, population,
housing, economic, and social data and maps of the census tracts that constitute the areas. The source of much of the data in the Fact Book is the decennial census.

Another source of information is the Market Profile Analysis by Donnelly Demographics. This publication offers information on businesses, population, income and numerous other characteristics by census tract and zip code. The researcher can organize tract information into community areas using the community area maps found in the Local Community Fact Book.

The U.S. Census of Population and Housing provides the most extensive information. In order to apply the information to the community areas of Chicago, the data must be gathered by census tract. For historical research, census tract books for the Chicago area offer the researcher a vast amount of information including race, gender, and income. The 1990 U.S. census in CD-ROM format offers the researcher the opportunity to gather data by census tract or zip code. Two software packages are available from the Department of Commerce for use with the 1990 U.S. census CD-ROMs. One of these packages, GO software, requires no installation and is used directly from the CD-ROM. GO software is a menu-driven software package that presents a set of preconfigured data tables based on users' geographic specifications. EXTRACT software, a data extraction package, allows the user to create customized tables based on selections from a series of menus. Both EXTRACT and GO software can also be used with the 1987 and 1992 U.S. Economic Censuses. The most recent release of EXTRACT is available for downloading from the latest version of the 1992 U.S. Economic Censuses on CD-ROM. The Economic Censuses of 1987, version 1E, enables the researcher to find information on businesses, employees, and payroll. Since the U.S. Bureau of the Census does not compile data by community area, the user must gather data by census tract and then manipulate the figures and apply them to the area.

Both the city and state publish a number of documents that can be used in community area research. The city of Chicago’s Police, Health, and Planning and Development Departments all publish statistical information. Some of these publications are by community area such as the Planning Department’s various census reports and the Department of Health’s Community Area Health Inventory. Others are organized by departmental subdivisions such as the Police Department’s Annual Report of Crime by police district or publications from Chicago Public Schools, which gather data by school or school district. The Illinois Department of Public Health publishes statistics on cancer incidence by community area and the Department of Employment Security publishes an analysis of employment in Chicago. An abundance of historical information can be found in city documentation. Building permits on microfilm from the Board of Public Works, annual reports from city departments such as the Health Department or the Chicago Housing Authority, and the proceedings of the City Council all offer insights into the development of the city and the community areas.

Community organizations in the Chicago area publish a number of highly useful resources. Some of these take the form of studies of individual community areas; others look at the city as a whole. For example, a publication from the Organization of the Northeast, Hope for the Future: Youth, Family, and Diversity in the Edgewater and Uptown Communities, looks at two community areas in Chicago. A publication from the Metro Chicago Information Center, Community Financial Needs in the Chicago Area, includes information on all 77 community areas.

Cartographic resources that can be used for profiling include both historical and current publications. For historical research, some of the best sources to use are fire insurance maps. Fire insurance maps were developed to provide information on the fast growing
number of potential fire risks in the form of commercial, residential, and industrial struc-
tures'" [8]. These maps, "through the use of colors, characters, and signs" provide a clear
picture of what structures were on a particular piece of property [9]. One of the earliest
fire insurance mapping resources covering the city is Robinson's Atlas of the City of
Chicago, published in 1886. The Sanborn Company is one of the most famous fire insurance
mapping institutions. The Sanborn company has mapped cities throughout the country
since before the turn of the century. The 7.5: minute topographic maps from the U.S.
Geological Survey (USGS) provide information on the physical and cultural features of
the area from approximately the 1920s to the present. For historical research, one can
use the 15 minute map series from the USGS. The 15 minute series has been entirely
replaced by the 7.5 minute series.

Aerial photographs also provide historical and current information on the development
of areas within the city and are available from several sources. The Chicago Department
of Planning and Development produced aerial photo quadrangles of the city. NIPC, the
Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, also produces aerial photo quadrangles that
include the entire metropolitan area. Maps based on 1990 census data may be created
using the TIGER/line CD-ROMs from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. TIGER (Topically
Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing) allows users to create a map of a specific
area, such as a group of census tracts, and apply basic census data to the area [10]. Other
mapping programs, such as ArcInfo or Atlas GIS, can be used to create more detailed
maps by using data downloaded from the 1990 census CD-ROMs.

CONCLUSIONS

As urban centers nationwide continue to grow, the study of the areas within these
centers will also continue to flourish. Through such research, it is possible to identify
problems facing not just the community or city but also the country as a whole. Gangs,
drugs such as crack cocaine, and problems related to education can be examined on the
micro level—the community. Solutions to these problems can be tested on the community
level as well, enabling researchers to examine the results and possibly apply the solutions
to larger geographic areas. The challenge of compiling information on these areas within
U.S. urban centers is daunting. The rewards, however, in applying that knowledge to
make communities and urban centers better places to live, make the task a worthy one.

NOTES

1. Margaret Furez and Louis Wirth. Local Community Fact Book (Chicago: Chicago Recreation Commission,
1938), 1.
2. Furez and Wirth, xix.
3. Furez and Wirth, 50.
4. Furez and Wirth, 50.
5. Chicago Fact Book Consortium, ed., Local Community Fact Book: Chicago Metropolitan Area (Chicago:
7. Furez and Wirth Local Community Fact Book, 41.
8. Helena Wright, "Insurance Mapping and Industrial Archeology," IA, the Journal of the Society for Industrial
9. Wright, 2.
10. Robert W. Marx, 'The TIGER System: Automating the Geographic Structure of the United States Census,'
APPENDIX

The following bibliography lists selected sources that can be used in creating community area profiles. Many of the U.S. federal publications, cartographic resources, and commercial publications are available for areas other than Chicago. The author has tried to include the most recent publications available in each area and those most suited to facilitate community area research.

U.S. Federal Government Publications

The greatest source of information for creating a community area profile is the 1990 U.S. Census. Using the information available in CD-ROM format is the most practical way to compile a profile. For historical research, one can consult the decennial census print volumes that provide data by census tract.

STF 1A has data on population, age, race, and gender. The census tract option should be used in creating a profile of a community area.

STF 3A contains data on employment, education, and income. The census tract option should be used to create a profile of a community area.

The 1987 Economic Censuses on CD-ROM contain information by zip code for manufacturing, retail trade, and services.

This publication contains data on loans by financial institution and metropolitan statistical area.

State and Local Government Publications

This is only a partial listing of the information that can be found at the state and local levels.

This state publication has information on workers in the Chicago metro area organized by zip code and district.

Statistical information by race, gender, and type of cancer by community area. This is the latest published report on this subject.
Includes statistics on infant mortality by community area and race.

Statistics on prenatal care, birth weight, and single or teen mothers for community area and race.

Covers infant mortality from teenage mothers by community area and race.

Information related to teen pregnancy including prenatal care, birth weight, and marital status.

Contains information on state aid by region, county, and school district. Data include pupil attendance, low-income pupils, number of eligible pupils, entitlement amount, and tax rate.

Contains data on receipts/revenues, total expenditures per pupil for state, expenditures/disbursements for school districts, and number of students and districts by operating expense per pupil.

Data on occupants of Chicago housing projects by development.

An historical look at the growth and development of the city and its communities.

The budget for the Chicago Public Schools covers projected expenditures for programs and schools.

Data on enrollments, transfers, and dropouts by school.

Includes race and gender of school teachers, administrators, and clerical employees by school, school districts, and type of school.
Contains data on race (white, black, native American, Asian, Hispanic, and breakout of Hispanic) by school, type of school, and school district.

This unique survey includes photographs, maps, and illustrations of Chicago community areas. Serves as an excellent historical resource.

Contains statistics on disease and illness in Chicago by community area and type of disease.

Includes criteria for becoming part of the Head Start program.

The Capital Improvement Programs cover a five-year period. This Guide indicates what programs are planned and how those programs will be financed.

Information on the plan to expand and rejuvenate industry on the North Side of Chicago.

Plan to develop industrial growth on the West Side of Chicago. Includes sites for industrial parks and suggestions for expansions of older industrial parks.

Examines population, race, and age by community area, based on the 1990 Census.

Basic characteristics including ownership, rent, etc. by community area. Based on 100 percent counts from the 1990 census short form.

Development plan for various boulevards throughout the city. Includes maps.

Describes Chicago's central area, its growth, design, and future plans for the area.

   Includes suggested plans to redevelop the Uptown community and the problems involved in such plans.

   Proposes land use and development opportunities for areas in the central business district. Guidelines to preserve the historic characteristics of the central area are included.

   Profiles of the 77 community areas of Chicago including data on race, educational attainment, housing, income, and population. Includes maps.

   A detailed description to the Capital Improvement Program for FY 1993–1997.

   A construction summary of the seven Chicago Neighborhood Planning Districts.

   The *Annual Report* of the Police Department contains statistics on crime by type of crime and police district. Includes a map of police districts.

   Contains information on murder rates in Chicago and police districts.

**Community Organization Publications**

There are hundreds of community organizations, neighborhood groups, and citizens groups that publish information about the city and the community areas. This list includes only a few of these.

   The *Data Book* gives information on school districts, individual schools, and schools by community areas. Includes maps.
This atlas includes election results for recent elections by area in Chicago, as well as population information. Includes maps and charts.

An examination of attitudes of Uptown residents related to housing, diversity, and financial stability of the area.

This report examines the nature of businesses located in the Edgewater and Uptown community areas.

**Cartographic Resources**

The following is a partial list of cartographic resources that may be used for either current or historical research. Aerial photographs are produced by both the Chicago Department of Planning and Development and the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission.

This is a microfilm edition of Sanborn fire insurance maps.

Rascher's fire insurance atlas concentrates on the area of Chicago east of State Street to Lake Michigan between 39th and 87th streets. Also colored to show types of building materials.

This atlas shows the footprints of buildings and is colored to show the type of construction material used in building. Covers all of what was within the city of Chicago boundaries in 1886.

These fire insurance atlases on microfilm include buildings, storage tanks, and physical features in and around property. The maps are arranged alphabetically by name of town or city and then in chronological order within the town or city.

Tiger/line 1992 can be used to create maps of particular areas using census data.

U.S. Geological Survey. *7.5 minute series (topographic)*. Reston, VA. 192–.
The USGS topographic maps supply information on physical features, waterways, electrical and transportation lines. These are available for each state in the U.S. Date of
publication varies by area. The 15 minute series covers the period from 1900 to the 
1920s. The 7.5 minute series began replacing the 15 minute series around 1920.

U.S. Library of Congress. Geography and Map Division. Fire Insurance Maps in the 
Library of Congress: Plans of North American Cities and Towns by the Sanborn Map 
Company: A Checklist. Washington, DC.
The Library of Congress checklist includes a list of areas within states that are covered 
by Sanborn fire insurance maps.

Commercial Publications

The commercial publications listed below, with the exception of MPA and the Index 
to Current Urban Documents, are specifically related to Chicago.

The Chicago Fact Book Consortium. Local Community Fact Book, Chicago Metropolitan 

The Fact Book is a basic source for information on population, age, race, and income 
by community area. The data is based on census information. Includes maps. The first 
Fact Book dates back to 1938. One has been published approximately every 10 years.

Market Profile Analysis: Consumer and Business Demographic Reports. Chicago: Don-
nelly Marketing Information Services, 1989-. vp.

MPA focuses on business data and includes population, income, and race information. 
The data can be found by census tract and zip code.

Index to Current Urban Documents: A Guide to Local Government Publications. West-
port, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1972-. vp.
This index covers major cities across the U.S. There is a microfiche set of the publications 
to accompany the index.

The two major newspapers in the Chicago area, the Chicago Tribune and the Chicago 
Sun Times, are excellent sources of information on the community areas of Chicago.