Session 2: Wednesday 10/22/2015, 2:45-3:45pm

Location: Jackson

Session Title: Beyond ACS: Monitoring neighborhood change

Organizer: Kathy Pettit/Erica Raleigh

Primary Notetaker: Katya A.

Participants: John Killeen, Kathy Pettit, Geoff Smith, Bernice Butler, Salma Abadin, Lisa Pittman, Meg Merrick, Jeff Matson, Liza Morehead, Jessie Partridge, Chris Whitaker, Susan Millea, Noah Urban, April Urban, Andrew Bowen, Liz Monk, Brian Karfunkel, Megan Johanson, Mary Buchanan, Richard Price, John Manieri

Kathy: Originally, this started as a discussion about measuring displacement for a cross-site project and it was really hard to come up with the neighborhood data to talk about gentrification in legacy cities, for example. As we talked more about it, it was more about how do we monitor neighborhood change on more than a five year ACS basis. There was also a discussion to put parameters around this giant set of fears about power, could be around economics like business or resident changes, so there are many pieces to it that have all of those questions. There’s a data piece about what we have available that we can get on a quarterly basis, ideally on a nightly basis to detect change in neighborhoods. The second question is about engagement and how you structure engagement and conversations. That connects to the politics and language around using the gentrification word. There’s a new site in Detroit called “Say the G word”.com. It’s inflammatory on the communications side.

Lisa: In Miami, we have a neighborhood that is historically black but people are saying it’s not gentrifying because there is so much vacant land there, but it sounds ridiculous. Just because there’s a lot of vacant land in the area doesn’t mean it’s gentrifying.

Kathy: We could talk forever about what gentrification means, but if we’re talking more neutrally about neighborhood change, we can talk about physical and cultural displacement.

Brian: I would like to hear from the data side how people are measuring displacement. People are getting priced out, does that count as being displaced? They made a lot of money from their house.

Chris: The things we’ve seen that show people are moving out are school attendance numbers because you can see people are just vacating. Chicago’s downtown is the fastest growing in the country as far as actual residents, but there are few families moving downtown.

Kathy: Also, people have purchased the USPS address database.

Jessie: What is the difference between the paid and the vacancy database?

Kathy: The USPS is an address to address record level piece, like this person moved here.

John M: I came across a dataset with interactive maps and reports n different tiers of displacement or exclusion and that’s a big picture look. Mostly, it was administrative data from ACS. From the NJ perspective, it was possible to look at how the sales of homes went, whether they were third party investors, and in one project we looked at the prevalence of investor/buyers. In one neighborhood in Trenton, NJ, 100% of the buildings were bought by investors/third party buyers.

John K: Some of that you can get from HMDA data, what the purpose of the building will be, what their household income is. One of the peripheral things to the actual household, is if you have access to property tax values historically, you could look at how property taxes have changed. I can do that probably because I have a municipal database in my hand. Also looked at MLS data where you can see really rapid 400/500% change that really helps explain some things but that doesn’t give a wider trend of the surrounding effects. It points to how the tax data will help, but it takes along time series to use it.

Jessie: We have data that tracks whether owners do condo conversions.

Bernice: We have a dataset that looks at where section 8 units turn over and where vouchers end up across the city. Even aggregate numbers of housing choice vouchers would help, and you could get that as soon as housing authorities are willing to give it to you.

Noah: When tax credits come up for renewal, are people re-applying for them? we could track that on the property-based side.

Geoff: There’s a project in Chicago designing analysis of the effect of putting a park in a disadvantaged neighborhood, displacement effects. The nature of the building stocks is that there are a lot of smaller unit buildings in that area and will look at whether they will be bought and sold soon after to try to track what happens to those. There’s a contractor looking to get owners of those buildings to participate in certain affordable housing rental programs to allow owners to activate voucher based affordable housing in that neighborhood.

Brian: One of the things we’re also looking at is for building permits (in NY a lot of gut renovations). We’re also looking at how two thirds of the population are renters and we’re just starting to get some building-level rent data. If we could get something like the AHS tracking the same units over time, that would make the research a lot easier. With the ACS it’s hard to tell what happened with those units, if someone was living in a unit over time and then left so the rent spiked significantly.

Kathy: We did a random sampling process in DC call and do a representative study collecting our own data of rental units.

Jessie: I was going to ask are people starting to use qualitative questions in this kind of survey work?

Kathy: Ours was about rent levels, so we didn’t get the people side. On the other side, we did get people who have moved in (Bob in Pittsburgh) but that’s because you already know where they are.

John K: We want to know why people are moving because we want to know that economic metrics are improving for certain people, not that it’s just a totally new group of people. Looking at schools data might be better because you can look at the same families through the schools. That might the best you could do.

Bernice: Someone in our neighborhood wrote a blog about her opinion of gentrification.

Kathy: We do need to incorporate the anecdotal side even if it’s not just data.

Brian: The AHS has some good questions about why you moved, but the sample is so small and inconsistently timed that the results are not useful other than for an MSA level. To get a baseline sense for national representative viewpoint, you could look at that.

Kathy: Someone was experimenting with 3-1-1 data because the idea is that when upper income move into a neighborhood, they have different expectations about what’s OK, so it’s not that the quality of the neighborhood improved, but that the people were complaining more to a higher standard. People were definitely convinced of the validity of that.

Lisa: You might look at the dog licenses to talk about gentrification.

John K: Dog mobility?

April: We could use IDS to get neighborhood level health indicators, so we couldn’t get a comprehensive indicator, but we could get a few key people through this project. The Fed had a really particular dataset around credit scores.

Brian: The Fed said that we could have their credit data. We could look at who has a credit score and we’re starting to explore that. They have access to that kind of data.

Susan: In Austin, we are doing address tracking for school children/families, and that serves (X number) of people. We did a survey of all parents of kindergarten students in the district. It asks what kind of childcare the child had before school entry and how many times the family moved before school entry? Had many instances where the child had moved four or five times before the child entered school. Could look across certain neighborhoods and summarize what the situation was like there. The other thing we’re looking at in Neighborhood Resource Centers is that there is no affordable housing left in central Austin. Families are moving out of the central area, but they come back to the central school-based resource center to keep ties to the communities. They created a sense of community.

John K: It’s interesting that the network is still there despite the neighborhood being changed. We often think about neighborhoods in place based strategy but often Network strategies are more powerful.

John K: Back to what Jessie said, I had a meeting with people from Coach (?) that discussed a longer dive back into student level records with all of the addresses associated with each student sometimes with dates attached. How does that data match up with other data and feed back into integrated systems that we don’t have access to but that are helping people on the front lines. We also have a lot of address-level patient history records, so you could plug this work into another organization that has the data that you don’t.

Kathy: Maybe they would have to do the analysis and feed it back to you.

Brian: One thing we have in NY state is that the medical school has an ongoing license with the department of population health and we piggy backed on their license for patient level data. A lot of public health researchers are probably working on this data already, but we want to know the neighborhood and we don’t like getting PII, that’s a lot easier to work with.

John K: Could also do a business survey and look at licenses or where businesses have moved.

Brian: When people are talking about gentrification, they’re talking about the coffee shop taking the place of the barbershop, and there’s no real way to look at the type of shop.

Jessie: Has anyone been able to buy data on commercial rents?

Geoff: Those are going to be for bigger commercial properties though. I think they're trying to grow their surveying to smaller type properties, but the data becomes much more spotty there.

Brian: Back on the residential side, you can get the API from StreetEasy that they update monthly. They’re owned by Zillow now, and they’re in a number of cities now where you can get the median and quarter percentile rents(?). It’s the actual rents what people are paying.

April: I think the people piece comes before the data piece because in our experience in this scenario, the concerns around gentrification are unfounded but still relevant. Our partner Cleveland Neighborhood Progress is listening to the CDC (organizers) saying gentrification wasn’t cool with them, and their big change was that the median sales price used to be the headliner for the neighborhood, but the poverty rate was made the co-headliner now.

Bernice: Having community groups that pull on stakeholders in community centers like faith based institutions to get out messages. Have also used those organizations & health data to host HIV testing, health programs, and also those organizations are working on crime workshops, etc.

Brian: Had a qualitative piece of work in NYC talking to residents in Chelsea public housing, they felt alienated even if they didn’t feel threatened that they were being displaced. They didn’t feel comfortable in their own homes. The grocery store that solved the “food desert” didn’t hold things that were relative to them, and that didn’t have price. How can you measure people’s fear about whether they will feel comfortable in their neighborhood and whether they belong? Just because we show that the things people think are happening are not or that the things they are connecting with gentrification are not, what does that matter if you can’t ensure that elderly woman gets to know her neighbors.

Susan: When you see affordable housing buildings going up, the units still may not be affordable to the original families, so how do we get the bedroom information to measure that? It was clearly never designed for a family with children to live there.

Kathy: In DC, we created student generation rates for kids living in condos, different types of rentals, so for each building we applied the rates of children that were generated to the building licenses to highlight the issue of closing families out to the people zoning. On the community building side, there are a lot of people who work on community building in mixed income neighborhoods and you could start building community. Looking at the action steps afterwards is maybe important to look at.