

NeighborhoodInfo DC Business Model Canvas

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ABOUT THE URBAN INSTITUTE

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Executive Summary

Housed at the Urban Institute (Urban), NeighborhoodInfo DC works to support community organizations, foundations, neighborhood leadership and residents, and government as they work to improve the quality of life for people throughout the District of Columbia and the Washington region. We do this by “democratizing data”—making information about local communities available and accessible to a wide range of audiences, particularly those who have lacked those resources in the past and who will use them to bring about positive community change. Since NeighborhoodInfo DC began its work, dozens of “customers,” including government agencies, community-based nonprofits, funders, media, and citizens have made use of our data and expertise to inform thinking about challenges facing the city and the region and to craft responses to those challenges.

NeighborhoodInfo DC staff have taken the opportunity to reflect on our first ten years and to map out how we would like to continue to develop and move forward. Although local and national “open data” efforts have resulted in much more data being publicly available today than when we started a decade ago, NeighborhoodInfo DC plays an important role by creating actionable information from raw data and by helping our customers understand and use this information effectively. Nevertheless, NeighborhoodInfo DC is at a crossroads in its development, with recent changes in the local funding landscape challenging our ability to continue our work in a robust and credible manner. We need to refresh our organizational structure, upgrade our technology, and raise more funds, all of which will help ensure our sustainability and allow us to take better advantage of new opportunities.

Reflecting on our role, challenges, opportunities, and desired impact, we have documented our approach to our work using a lean planning tool called a business model canvas. The business model canvas centers on our *value proposition*, which describes what NeighborhoodInfo DC brings to its “customers” (i.e., the people and organizations we serve) and what distinguishes us from other projects and organizations:

Through policy expertise and the ability to transform data into actionable information, NeighborhoodInfo DC seeks to build the capacity of residents, community organizations, foundations, and local government to use data for decisionmaking, program planning, and advocacy to improve the quality of life for low-income neighborhoods and residents in the District of Columbia and the Washington region.

To fulfill our value proposition, as well as our ultimate mission to improve the quality of life in low-income neighborhoods and residents in the District of Columbia and the Washington region, we believe the following activities are essential:

- Collect, transform, and regularly update administrative data across a range of topics; process and standardize for the data warehouse. (See Appendix A for a detailed data inventory.)
- Analyze and interpret data for a range of inquiries, from quick questions to in-depth research projects.
- Disseminate data and analyses to address questions and pressing concerns facing customers.
- Build customer capacity to use data by responding to inquiries, by holding convenings to share data addressing specific issues and foster collaboration, and by providing technical assistance around data use and public policy.

Appendix B gives examples of projects that NeighborhoodInfo DC has undertaken and the types of work that each involved.

In addition to describing NeighborhoodInfo DC's key activities, the business model canvas outlines customer segments and relationships, channels for reaching customers, key resources, key partners, costs, and revenue streams. The process of developing this business model canvas, as well as information gathered in 2014 on how Urban is viewed in the Washington region, allowed us to identify opportunities and challenges for NeighborhoodInfo DC. Among the opportunities, we noted the following:

- Both locally and nationally, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and funders are increasingly using data and evidence to inform their work, make decisions, and assess progress. NeighborhoodInfo DC is uniquely positioned to meet this growing demand and assist customers not only by providing easier access to a variety of community-level data but also by lending our expertise in how to analyze, interpret, and communicate this information.
- NeighborhoodInfo DC has partnered with the Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED) to organize and support the DC Preservation Network. CNHED is continuing to work with us and to fundraise for this important initiative, and we

are exploring other opportunities for partnership, such as on a census of the local economic development community.

- A new mayor and executive administration, several new council members and transitions in the nonprofit sector present new opportunities to engage the leadership and inform the policy debates. This is particularly true in the areas of affordable housing and public education, where NeighborhoodInfo DC already has a track record of quality work.

In addition, we identified several key challenges, among them:

- NeighborhoodInfo DC has found it challenging to secure significant general support in recent years which has limited its community outreach capacity and ability to be responsive to quick-turnaround projects and smaller requests from local nonprofits.
- A now outdated website, lacking in modern functionality, may also prevent potential customers from accessing the critical information NeighborhoodInfo DC provides.

We believe that there is an immediate need to reinvest (both with internal and external resources) in four key activities and capabilities that make NeighborhoodInfo DC unique and valuable to the community.

1. ***Maintenance and expansion of the data warehouse.*** The data warehouse (our repository of local data sets) is critical to NeighborhoodInfo DC's success and is a unique resource for the community. Developing and maintaining the warehouse has been supported by both limited general funding and by leveraging project funding for specific topics. But such support has not been consistent and does not allow us to explore and develop data sources for currently unfunded topic areas (such as employment or health).
2. ***Expansion of community engagement activities.*** Over the past few years, NeighborhoodInfo DC has not devoted much resources to developing our community engagement capabilities but this activity is key to both increasing our impact and raising additional resources. Following the lead of other NNIP Partners, we would like to expand our capacity to work with the community, including having one or more staff persons dedicated to the community engagement role.
3. ***Strategic communications and branding.*** In coordination with Urban's Communications staff, NeighborhoodInfo DC needs to develop a strategic communications and branding plan to bring awareness to current and potential customers as to the services we offer and how to access them.

We also need to better communicate the value of our work to funders by tracking results and outcomes.

4. ***Overhaul the NeighborhoodInfo DC website.*** An overhaul of the website would include the installation of a content management system to support the site’s back-end management and a redesign to better deliver content and provide an enhanced user experience.

Our business model canvas defines staff roles and commitment levels that we believe are necessary to support a robust NeighborhoodInfo DC. Staff include a director, a deputy director, a data manager, communications and community engagement specialists, and project directors, for a total of between 1.2 and 2.15 full-time equivalents. We estimate that we would need to raise between \$305,000 and \$619,000 annually to carry out the activities described in this business plan and to be proactive in exploring new opportunities. This range is within the historic revenue levels that NeighborhoodInfo DC has achieved in the past, but well above our current funding.

Throughout the coming months we will seek new funding to support these key activities and help move NeighborhoodInfo DC forward to make the next ten years as productive and fulfill our value proposition to better serve the District of Columbia and the Washington region.

NeighborhoodInfo DC Business Model Canvas

Housed at the Urban Institute (Urban), NeighborhoodInfo DC works to support community organizations, foundations, neighborhood leadership and residents, and government as they work to improve the quality of life for people throughout the District of Columbia and the Washington region. We do this by “democratizing data”—making information about local communities available and accessible to a wide range of audiences, particularly those who have lacked those resources in the past and who will use them to bring about positive community change. Since NeighborhoodInfo DC began its work, dozens of “customers,” including government agencies, community-based nonprofits, funders, media, and citizens have made use of our data and expertise to inform thinking about challenges facing the city and the region and to craft responses to those challenges.

NeighborhoodInfo DC staff have taken the opportunity to reflect on our first ten years and to map out how we would like to see NeighborhoodInfo DC continue to develop and move forward. Although local and national “open data” efforts have resulted in much more data being publicly available today than when we started a decade ago, NeighborhoodInfo DC plays an important role by creating actionable information from raw data and by helping our customers understand and use this information effectively. Nevertheless, NeighborhoodInfo DC is at a crossroads in its development, with recent changes in the local funding landscape challenging our ability to continue our work in a robust and credible manner. We need to refresh our organizational structure, upgrade our technology, and raise more funds, all of which will help ensure our sustainability and allow us to take better advantage of new opportunities. With further investment to expand our existing capabilities, NeighborhoodInfo DC

can play a larger role and have greater influence in the District of Columbia and the Washington region to better fulfill its existing mission.

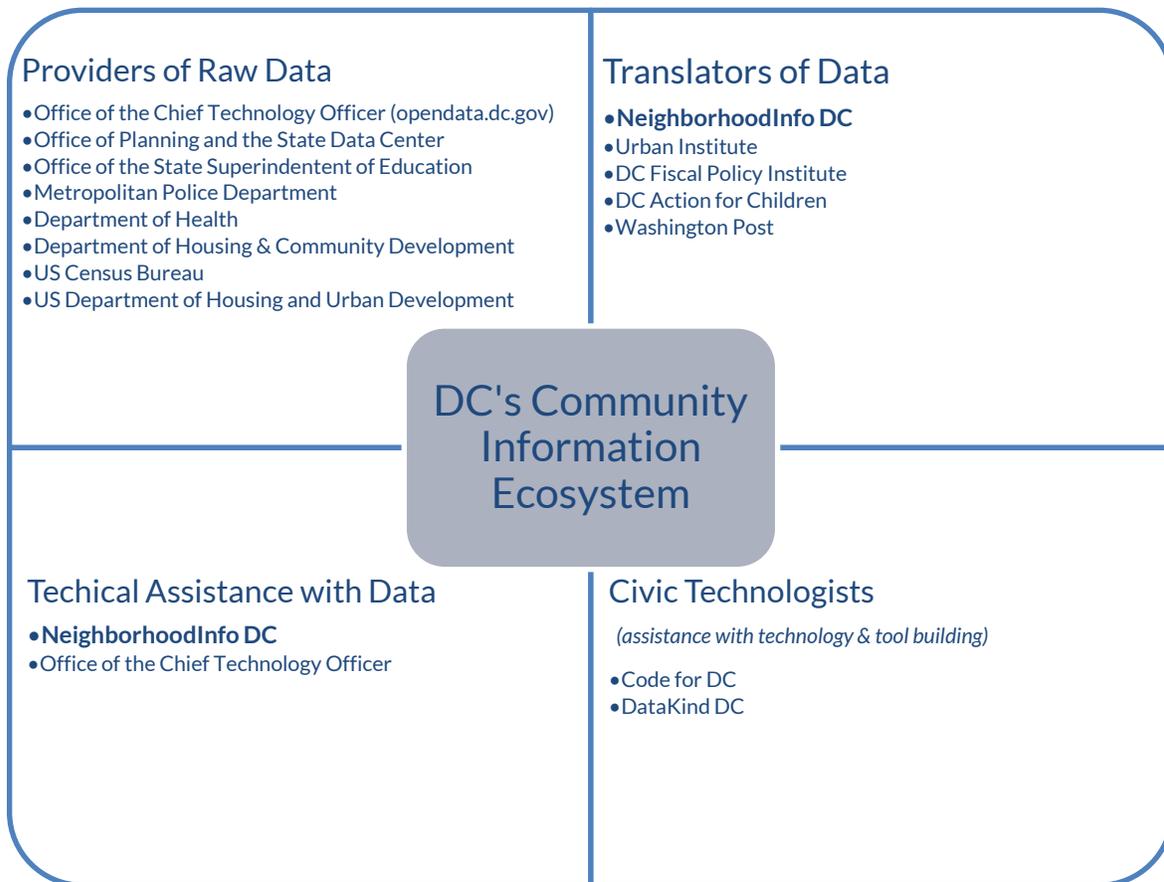
This document starts with a summary of NeighborhoodInfo DC's business model canvas, a lean planning tool, and our plan to implement this model.¹ At the center of the business model canvas is the *value proposition*, which distinguishes what is unique about NeighborhoodInfo DC and what it offers its "customers" (i.e., the people and organizations we serve). The model also addresses key activities, customer segments and relationships, customer channels, key resources, key partners, cost structure and revenue streams. After we have laid out our business model, we will explore the next steps needed to implement the model and propose necessary changes.

Value Proposition

Through policy expertise and the ability to transform data into actionable information, NeighborhoodInfo DC seeks to build the capacity of residents, community organizations, foundations, and local government to use data for decisionmaking, program planning, and advocacy to improve the quality of life for low-income neighborhoods and residents in the District of Columbia and the Washington region.

NeighborhoodInfo DC, positioned outside of government, is a fair and credible source of information on a range of topics from housing and foreclosures to education and social services. NeighborhoodInfo DC's data holdings, built up over the last 10 years are comprised of largely administrative records that have been aggregated into standardized geographies and actionable neighborhood-level indicators. As the data are maintained, updated, and added to over time, NeighborhoodInfo DC's data holdings have become part of the community information infrastructure for the District of Columbia (figure 1). NeighborhoodInfo DC uses this collection of data to democratize information across a broad set of customers, by providing direct access to the information and by facilitating their ability to analyze and interpret the data. Where it fits within our capacity and overall mission, we also provide regional data and analysis, for example, to compare characteristics and trends in the District and other jurisdictions or study housing needs at the regional level.

Figure 1: DC's Community Information Ecosystem



Key Activities

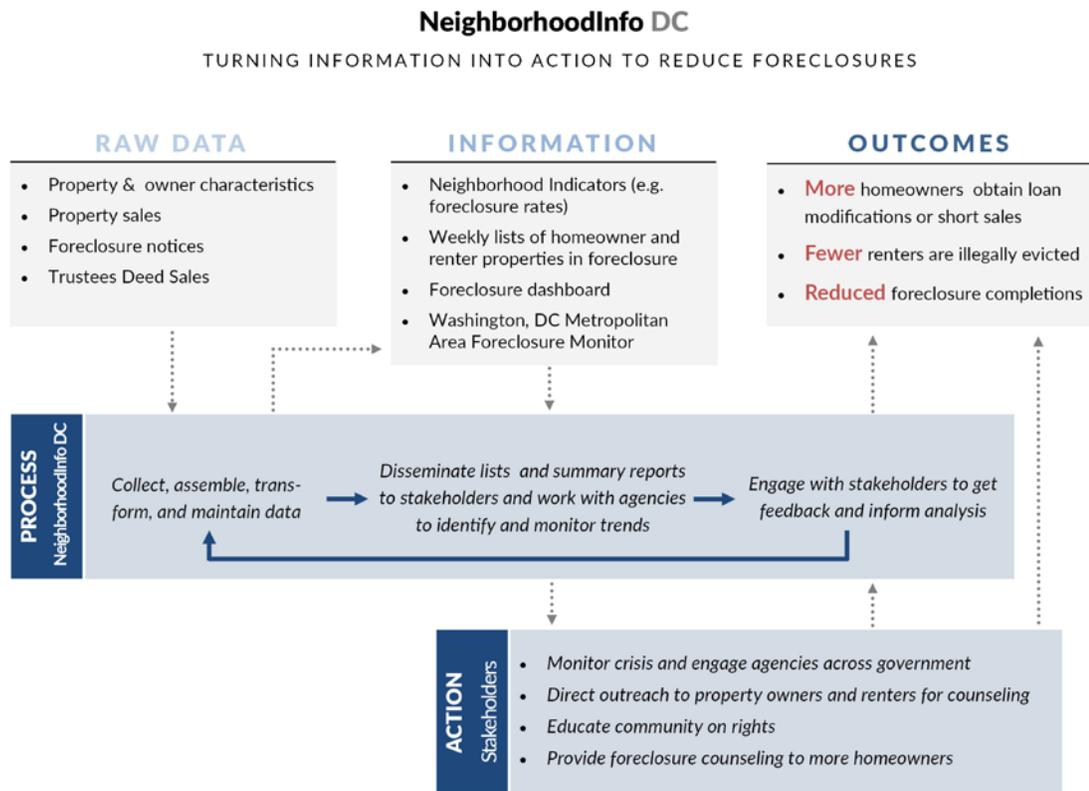
NeighborhoodInfo DC not only helps stakeholders access data, it serves as an educator for the community around data, assisting with interpretation and the application of information for planning and decisionmaking. To fulfill our value proposition, as well as our ultimate mission to improve the quality of life in low-income neighborhoods and residents in the District of Columbia and the Washington region, we believe the following activities are essential:

- Collect, transform, and regularly update administrative data across a range of topics; process and standardize for the data warehouse. (See Appendix A for a detailed data inventory.)

- Analyze and interpret data for a range of inquiries, from quick questions to in-depth research projects.
- Disseminate data and analyses to address questions and pressing concerns facing customers.
- Build customer capacity to use data by responding to inquiries, by holding convenings to share data addressing specific issues and foster collaboration, and by providing technical assistance around data use and public policy.

Figure 2 demonstrates how these activities build on each other for a given project and how, through NeighborhoodInfo DC, raw data is transformed and used to change outcomes for low-income residents and neighborhoods. This example stems from the work that we did during the foreclosure crisis to help local agencies, nonprofit housing counseling organizations, and others monitor the crisis and better target outreach to help homeowners save their homes and avoid foreclosure rescue scams. Appendix B gives additional examples of projects that NeighborhoodInfo DC has undertaken and the types of work that each involved.

Figure 2: Illustration of Turning Information into Action



Customer Segments and Relationships

NeighborhoodInfo DC has both direct clients and indirect consumers of its products and information. Customers include community-based organizations, including service providers, advocates and coalitions, local government agency staff and elected officials, foundations, residents, the media, and other researchers.

- Community-based organizations (nonprofits)
 - » Service providers
 - » Advocates
 - » Coalitions
- Local government agency staff and elected officials

- Foundations
- Residents
- Media (traditional and new)
- Other researchers
- Urban Institute (internal customers)
 - » Urban’s policy centers
 - » Urban’s Communications team

Direct relationships with clients, who pay us for specific work, span a spectrum of engagement from a more interactive partnership in the design, analysis, and dissemination of the work to limited interaction (e.g. defined scope of work and deliverables). In the past most of the work that we have done, aside from small ad hoc requests, has been on a longer time frame, typically about a year.

Much of the influence that we expect NeighborhoodInfo DC to have is not through direct relationships with clients, however, but rather through customers exploiting information that we provide and disseminate freely. For example, a foundation may provide a contract for a study of housing needs that would inform their own philanthropic investments but distributing the results of the study may also influence other foundations and actors, including agency staff, advocates, and service providers (see figure 2 above as well).

NeighborhoodInfo DC also has internal customers within Urban who make use of our capabilities and resources to develop new research and projects in the District and the Washington region. For example, Urban scholars have made use of NeighborhoodInfo DC data to develop policy recommendations for the incoming Bowser administration.² And researchers in Metro Center make use of NeighborhoodInfo DC data to track progress of the DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative. See Appendix B for recent examples of NeighborhoodInfo DC’s work with local customers.

NeighborhoodInfo DC has fostered a sense of trust and respect among customers for providing reliable data and analysis that can inform key issues facing the city and its residents. Continuing to protect and build upon that reputation is a key goal for the future development of NeighborhoodInfo DC. Ideally, with more flexible funding or partnership arrangements, we would be able to reserve staff time to respond to more urgent, quick-turn around requests that cannot be easily answered with information we already make available.

SERVING THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND THE WASHINGTON REGION

NeighborhoodInfo DC began as an effort to organize national and local administrative data, to create indicators from those data, and to help customers use them to understand conditions in the District of Columbia and within its diverse neighborhoods. Over time, this work has expanded beyond the District to using national sources, such as the American Community Survey and the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, for all jurisdictions in the Washington region, as well as collecting and reporting selected administrative data for some suburban jurisdictions. Work at the regional level informs work in the District of Columbia, but there are also customers who want regional products and analyses and policy issues that have a regional scale. For example, we have partnered with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) in these efforts and have been regular participants in COG's Region Forward initiative.

The key activities of NeighborhoodInfo DC – transforming local administrative data and building customer capacity to use the data – are labor intensive efforts that require developing relationships with numerous data providers and end users and necessitates a serious and sustained commitment. As the Washington region comprises three states and the District of Columbia (with different legal restrictions, agencies, and procedures)—and more than 20 counties and localities—even collecting administrative data at that scale would be a gargantuan task, let alone being able to engage with the community and build essential relationships.

Given this, we believe that NeighborhoodInfo DC is best positioned to continue to focus on the District of Columbia and incorporate some regional data collection and analysis where appropriate and feasible. Indeed, some issues such as housing and economic development would benefit greatly from a regional as well as jurisdictional framing. As to working with local administrative data outside of the District, given our focus on improving low income neighborhoods and building capacity to use data, we believe that we could have the greatest impact by also working with Prince George's County, MD. We have begun building some of the necessary relationships over the past few years but would need additional staff and resources to ramp up these efforts to a more meaningful level.

Channels

NeighborhoodInfo DC has a number of channels to reach its customers, including direct channels with in-person interaction or a contractual relationship and indirect or passive channels that require customers and clients to seek out a connection with NeighborhoodInfo DC.

- Direct
 - » Convenings, meetings, phone calls, and email exchanges with customers (at various stages of the work)
 - » Phone or email exchanges requested via our virtual “help desk”
 - » Reports and publications developed under contract for a specific client
 - » Presentations to customers
 - » Testimony

- » NeighborhoodInfo DC email newsletter (subscription service)
- Indirect
 - » NeighborhoodInfo DC website (data, interactive maps and visualizations, and publications)
 - » Social media (primarily Twitter and blogs)
 - » Reports, publications, and data visualizations on Urban website
 - » Media coverage

Key Resources

Supporting the mission and value proposition of NeighborhoodInfo DC, our biggest key resource is the staff skills that we are able to tap into. In addition we also need physical and technical resources.

- People
 - » NeighborhoodInfo DC staff are committed to our mission
 - » Technical and analytic skills (includes research, data management and visualization, performance management, and strategic planning)
 - » Issue area expertise in housing policy, neighborhoods, and other areas
 - » Communications skills (includes writing, ability to translate technical information, public speaking, ability to interact with community organizations and clients of all types)
 - » Technological skills (ability to support website content and development)
 - » Management and business development ability
- Technical
 - » Data including administrative records, national surveys, and some proprietary sources that must be purchased. (See Appendix A for a detailed inventory.)
 - » NeighborhoodInfo DC website
 - » Statistical and data management software
 - » Geographic Information System software
- Physical
 - » Office space

- » Computers and data storage
- » Meeting space (for team and external convenings)
- Other
 - » NeighborhoodInfo DC occupies a unique space in the community (outside of government, ability to translate administrative data for action, work with customers of all types, neighborhood data warehouse etc.)

Key Partners

Key partners of NeighborhoodInfo DC include both organizations that we have working partnerships with and organizations and agencies that supply us with data. Though many of these groups are also consumers of the work of NeighborhoodInfo DC, because of their more significant relationship to us we would not label them as clients. (We have data from other agencies outside of the list; it is made available through the DC government's open data platform.)

- External partnerships
 - » Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development
 - » DC Preservation Network
 - » Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
 - » DC Fiscal Policy Institute
 - » National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP) (see box below)
 - » Coalition for Homeownership Preservation in Prince George's County
- Internal partnerships
 - » Urban's Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center
 - » Other Urban policy centers
 - » Urban's Communications Group (COMM)
 - » Urban's Information Technology Services (IT)
- Data providers
 - » DC Office of the Chief Technology Officer
 - » DC Dept. of Health
 - » DC Income and Maintenance Administration

- » DC Recorder of Deeds
 - » Office of the State Superintendent of Education
 - » District of Columbia Public Schools
 - » District of Columbia Public Charter School Board
 - » Maryland Dept. of Labor and Licensing
 - » Maryland Dept. of Planning
 - » RBI Analytics, Inc.
- Other vendors
 - » Blue Ridge InternetWorks (web hosting)
 - » Look.net (email listserv)

NEIGHBORHOODINFO DC AND THE NATIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD INDICATORS PARTNERSHIP

NeighborhoodInfo DC has been a recognized member of the national peer learning network the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP) since 1999, when it joined NNIP as DC Agenda. Organized by the Urban Institute, NNIP is made up of organizations in about 30 cities around the country that, like NeighborhoodInfo DC, are dedicated to helping others use data to make better decisions and improve low-income communities. Participation in NNIP means that NeighborhoodInfo DC staff can learn from the successes and lessons of others around the country and share our work on the Washington DC region. Through NNIP, NeighborhoodInfo DC also has the opportunity to take part in nationally-funded cross-site projects, such as one on linking public school records to foreclosure records to see how students were being affected by the foreclosure crisis. More information on NNIP is available at www.neighborhoodindicators.org.

Cost Structure

NeighborhoodInfo DC's biggest costs are related to labor (and associated fringe and overhead expenses). Data processing, project management and reporting, research, data visualization, and communications are all labor-intensive tasks. Maintenance of the data warehouse (keeping data up-to-date and adding new data) requires dedicated staff and time. NeighborhoodInfo DC must include the standard Urban labor, fringe benefits, indirect, and general and administration rates on all of its projects (except for internal investments). In addition to these tasks, staff require training and regular staff turnover, primarily among research assistants and research associates, requires additional training (both skill-based and NeighborhoodInfo DC procedures). Business development also has associated

labor costs include writing proposals, meeting with prospective clients, and general outreach to the community to promote NeighborhoodInfo DC.

An advantage of the above arrangement is that NeighborhoodInfo DC does not have large fixed costs for office rent, technology, and other infrastructure, meaning that we can scale flexibly depending on current needs and resources. Direct costs for NeighborhoodInfo DC include web and email listserv hosting and some data purchases, as well as travel to NNIP conferences and selected important national convenings that allow us to showcase our work to broader audiences.

Revenue Streams

NeighborhoodInfo DC has been primarily supported through project-based work funded by contracts and grants (including both foundations and local government). Total past funding awards for NeighborhoodInfo DC averaged \$496 thousand per year between 2006 and 2014, ranging between \$252 thousand and \$1.0 million. In the past year, NeighborhoodInfo DC received a general support grant (\$35,000) from the Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation. Urban also contributes proposal development funds, some support for outreach activities, and enhanced support over the past two years for *Our Changing City* and developing an affordable housing preservation strategy for the District of Columbia. Occasionally, NeighborhoodInfo DC staff receive small honoraria for speaking engagements or data preparation that we deposit into our development fund.

Next Steps

In 2014, Urban's Executive Office contracted with Margaret O'Bryon to interview local customers and partners in the Washington region. Her work confirmed Urban's strong and positive reputation in the District of Columbia, but also reaffirmed NeighborhoodInfo DC's role as a key asset, both for Urban and the broader community. O'Bryon's report proposed that Urban can strategically leverage its reputation and assets for greater influence and impact.

In this section we outline the current opportunities for enhancing and expanding our role, the challenges that we presently face in taking advantage of these opportunities, and the recommended actions NeighborhoodInfo DC needs to take to enhance our ability to fulfill our value proposition and mission.

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities

- Both locally and nationally, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and funders are increasingly using data and evidence to inform their work, make decisions, and assess progress. The growing demand for support for these efforts provides a key opportunity for NeighborhoodInfo DC, which is uniquely positioned to assist customers not only by providing easier access to a variety of community-level data but also by lending our expertise in how to analyze, interpret, and communicate this information. Indeed, helping customers use data effectively has been a cornerstone of NeighborhoodInfo DC's work since our inception.
- NeighborhoodInfo DC is able to draw upon local work and policy expertise throughout Urban, such as in the areas of public safety, healthcare, taxes, and nonprofit performance. Staffing for NeighborhoodInfo DC currently is comprised entirely of researchers in Urban's Metro Center, however, which may limit the extent to which cross-center collaboration has taken place. There's an opportunity for DC-related projects lead by other centers to take advantage of NeighborhoodInfo DC's resources and to have those efforts contribute to building up NeighborhoodInfo DC's influence and capacity.
- Urban leadership is interested in expanding Urban's role in the Washington region and is actively pursuing ways to support locally-oriented efforts. NeighborhoodInfo DC would play a key role in that expanded capacity, such as by leveraging the connections we have built with local partners and by combining Urban's new data visualization expertise with our local data, as we did successfully with *Our Changing City*.
- Urban is seeking to organize its data assets internally and make some of the data available online—contributing to the “open data” movement. NeighborhoodInfo DC already maintains an extensive data warehouse and metadata system and makes data publicly available on its website. Given this track record and experience, NeighborhoodInfo DC could be a pilot for how Urban supports and promotes open data through its projects.
- The District of Columbia has a new mayor, new agency leadership, and several new city council members. The change in leadership presents opportunities to engage with the District government around data-driven decisionmaking. This is particularly true in the areas of affordable housing and public education, where NeighborhoodInfo DC already has

a track record of quality work. Indeed, we have already engaged with new leadership through the Talking Transitions project and separate meetings with agency and council staff on these issues.

- For the past several years, NeighborhoodInfo DC has partnered with the Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED) to organize and support the DC Preservation Network. The new CNHED executive director, Stephen Glaude, has expressed a strong interest in continuing to work with us and to fundraise for this important initiative. He also would like to explore other opportunities for partnership, such as on a survey of the local economic development community.
- The open data and civic tech community has a growing presence in the District, presenting an opportunity here to leverage and connect with them to better serve low-income neighborhoods. Additionally, the Talking Transitions convening on open data positioned Urban to be a convener going forward with this community and to help bring more coherence and alignment to DC's open data movement. At the convening some stakeholders were able to meet for the first time and those that attended have expressed an interest in continuing to meet regularly. NeighborhoodInfo DC could host these quarterly meetings. Hosting would both contribute to NeighborhoodInfo DC's reputation and maintain relationships with data partners.
- Additionally, through NeighborhoodInfo DC's involvement with NNIP, we have received a small planning grant from Living Cities and the MacArthur Foundation to work with the District government and Code for DC to develop a project that demonstrates how data and technology can be better leveraged to serve low-income communities. Although in the early stages, it is likely the project will focus on affordable housing preservation.
- Increasingly, "integrated data systems" or IDS—those integrating administrative data from multiple agencies at the individual level—are being implemented around the country at both the local and state levels. The District is developing some of this capacity at the Office of the State Superintendent for Education through the state longitudinal data system. An IDS could be a powerful tool for improving social service delivery and NeighborhoodInfo DC, with its expertise in administrative records, could potentially position itself as a research partner and push for expansion of current IDS efforts to cover more agencies and programs.

- NeighborhoodInfo DC can leverage past work examining the relationships between schools and neighborhoods to address key challenges facing the public education system in the District. For example, stakeholders need to better understand how future demographic changes will affect the demand for schools in different neighborhoods, analysis to which we could contribute. There also may be opportunities through a forthcoming evaluation of community schools and work on early education. We are also currently exploring opportunities to work further with others in this space, such as RaiseDC, the local collective impact initiative that has made use of data from OSSE to track outcomes for children, and the 21st Century School Fund, which promotes community revitalization through school building modernization.

- After the District of Columbia, Prince George's County is the local jurisdiction with which NeighborhoodInfo DC has worked the most. Since the start of the foreclosure crisis, we have partnered with the Coalition for Homeownership Preservation and gathered and reported on foreclosure notice data. Ongoing Urban efforts with the County include projects on schools and the Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative and a cross-jurisdiction policing study. NeighborhoodInfo DC should play a role in supporting these efforts through data and policy expertise.

Challenges

- NeighborhoodInfo DC's biggest challenges relate to funding. Two issues in particular stand out.
 - » ***Current low overall funding.*** NeighborhoodInfo DC received significant support from Fannie Mae (and earlier the Fannie Mae Foundation) over the last decade, with few restrictions placed on the use these funds. However, as of July 2014, our last funding from Fannie Mae has been spent and they have ceased grantmaking. In the past year funding for NeighborhoodInfo DC was limited to a \$35,000 grant from the Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, which ended in March and was reapplied for in July, and some internal investment from Urban, the amount of which varies from year to year. There is a clear need to expand and diversify our funding base. The nonprofit funding environment in the Washington region is challenging, however. The area lacks the presence of a major national foundation and many local funders make grants of limited size. Consequently, we would need

to obtain grants from many foundations to attain the level of funding that is need to support a robust NeighborhoodInfo DC.

» ***Historic lack of flexible funding.*** In the past, nearly all of NeighborhoodInfo DC’s funding has been tied directly to projects, often with very specific deliverables. General support grants accounted for less than 10 percent of the past year’s funding. In contrast, the median NNIP partner received almost a third of their funding as general support. The lack of sustained flexible funding constrains the ability of NeighborhoodInfo DC to take on quick-turn around projects, to engage more with the community, and to reserve staff time for developmental work and to respond quickly to opportunities for new work.

- The lack of racial and ethnic diversity among Urban (and NeighborhoodInfo DC) staff, as Margaret O’Byron noted in her report to Urban, poses a challenge both in engagement and relationships with the community and funders.
- When compared with certain NNIP Partners, NeighborhoodInfo DC lacks a robust community outreach capacity. Some partners, for instance, have regular trainings and outreach activities to help people learn how to use the data they make available. Others host annual “Data Days” as signature events. While we do interact with community-based nonprofits through our project work, NeighborhoodInfo DC is not proactively seeking out opportunities to deepen our community engagement as much as we could.
- Knowledge of NeighborhoodInfo DC (and its services) is more extensive in some circles in the District (such as in housing) than in others. Nonprofits and community organizations may not know how to access NeighborhoodInfo DC staff and resources.
- The currently outdated website adversely affects people’s perception of NeighborhoodInfo DC. A more modern website redesign also could be an opportunity to strengthen the brand, improve the design, functionality, and content for users, and reduce staff time for content updates.
- Other entities—nonprofits, universities, businesses, media outlets, and individuals—in the Washington region are also active in the collecting and disseminating data and information on a wide range of topics, such housing, education, child and family well-being, health, public safety, and economic development. On the positive side, this demonstrates that Washingtonians are keen data consumers. NeighborhoodInfo DC needs to differentiate

itself, however, from these other efforts and clearly establish and articulate its “value added” in the information marketplace.

- Other parties (locally and outside of DC) are interested in the development of integrated data system capacity in the District of Columbia. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education has already made some strides in integrating its own data with those of other agencies. Without involvement by NeighborhoodInfo DC soon in this space, an opportunity could be lost that would better position us, and the Urban Institute more broadly, to conduct policy research and program evaluation for the District in the future.

Reinvest in Key Activities

After ten years, there is an opportunity to revisit current our activities and consider making upgrades or updating processes to improve performance and efficiency and to increase our influence and impact. Specifically, we believe there is an immediate need to reinvest (both with internal and external resources) in four key activities and capabilities that make NeighborhoodInfo DC unique and valuable to the community.

In addition to the one-time investments listed below, we discuss in the next two sections the need to stabilize ongoing staffing and funding for NeighborhoodInfo DC to allow us to maintain these capabilities at a sufficient level.

- ***Maintenance and expansion of the data warehouse.*** The data warehouse—our repository of local data sets built up over the past ten years—is critical to NeighborhoodInfo DC’s success and is a unique resource for the community. Developing and maintaining the warehouse has been supported by both limited general funding and by leveraging project funding for specific topics. For example, a contract for a housing study gives us the opportunity to update key housing data. But such support has not be consistent and does not allow us to explore and develop data sources for currently unfunded topic areas (such as employment or health).
 - » *Investment:* Bring warehouse data sets up to date. The ad hoc approach to funding warehouse maintenance has meant that some data have not been updated in quite some time.
 - » *Investment:* Explore alternatives to the current data warehouse technology and assess the costs and benefits to switching to more modern and flexible platforms.

While such changes may be costly in the short-term, they could improve efficiency and increase functionality, yielding savings in the longer-term.

- ***Expansion of community engagement activities.*** Over the past few years, NeighborhoodInfo DC has not devoted much resources to developing our community engagement capabilities but this activity is key to both increasing our impact and raising additional resources. Following the lead of other NNIP Partners, we would like to expand our capacity to work with the community, including having one or more staff persons dedicated to the community engagement role (see below). Activities could include trainings for customers on how to access and use data from NeighborhoodInfo DC and other sources, how to create informative graphics for websites and reports, and how to combine internal and external data for storytelling. In addition to more general community engagement, we believe that this activity could be more directly incorporated into research projects, including qualitative information gathering, convenings (both during the process and at the end of the project), and briefings on project results.
 - » *Investment:* Fund recruiting and initial support for one to two community outreach specialists to join the NeighborhoodInfo DC staff. These persons might be recruited internally from existing Urban staff or externally.
 - » *Investment:* Host a DC Data Day event. Other NNIP Partners have held such events in their cities and found them very valuable at generating awareness and enthusiasm for their work. This could be a first activity for the new community engagement specialists.

- ***Strategic communications and branding.*** In coordination with Urban’s Communications staff, NeighborhoodInfo DC staff need to develop a strategic communications and branding plan to bring awareness to current and potential customers as to the services NeighborhoodInfo DC offers and how to access them. We also need to better communicate the value of our work to funders by tracking results and outcomes.
 - » *Investment:* Develop a communications and performance measurement plan.

- ***Overhaul the NeighborhoodInfo DC website.*** The website’s last facelift was over five years ago and it is constructed completely of static HTML pages, as it was when it was created ten years ago. There is no search function on the website and very limited interactive data capabilities. An overhaul of the website would include the installation of a content

management system to support the site's back-end management and a redesign to better deliver content and provide an enhanced user experience.

- » *Investment:* Take advantage of Urban's website upgrade to improve the quality of NeighborhoodInfo DC's website. Urban has invested in new technology, including a Drupal content management system, and staff skilled in these technologies to improve the functionality of the Urban.org website, which was relaunched in April 2015. NeighborhoodInfo DC could make use of this new technology and expertise to improve its own website. We would need to explore further with the Communications and IT staff on how to bring this about, and it would undoubtedly require additional resources to support this work. We would also likely need to hire an external designer to help redevelop the site's look and user experience.

Define Staff Roles, Levels, and Competencies

To fulfill the mission of NeighborhoodInfo DC and have the impact we desire, we need to clearly define the staff roles, time commitments, and competencies that are required at each position. NNIP recently conducted a survey of its local partners, including NeighborhoodInfo DC, on finances and staffing. The staffing results indicate that NeighborhoodInfo DC operated in 2014 and recent years as a much smaller entity than many of the partners in the network, with 7 Urban Institute staff members representing only 2.0 full-time equivalents (FTE). The median response for NNIP partners was 3.0 FTE, with an interquartile range from 2 to 5.

Below we have defined the staff roles and commitment levels that we believe are necessary to support a robust NeighborhoodInfo DC.

- ***Director (0.25-0.5 FTE, Senior Fellow/SRA).*** This person would assume responsibilities equivalent to that of a chief executive officer, providing overall direction to NeighborhoodInfo DC and helping to set broad goals and objectives. The director would lead on business development and pursuit of strategic opportunities.
- ***Deputy Director (0.25-0.5 FTE, SRA/RA1).*** This person would assume responsibilities equivalent to that of a chief operating officer, overseeing business operations and relationships, both internal and external, and ensuring the long term sustainability and success of NeighborhoodInfo DC.

- ***Data Manager (0.25-0.5 FTE, RA1/RA2).*** This person would design and oversee data development and procedures, ensuring quality and uniformity of information processing and use. The data manager would also help train and guide staff on proper data handling and analysis methods.
- ***Community Engagement Specialist (0.25-0.5 FTE, RA2).*** This person (or persons) would directly engage with and support community members and customers around the use of data and NeighborhoodInfo DC resources. The community engagement specialist would help the management team and staff anticipate, identify, and provide for community information needs and would coordinate with the director and deputy director on communications strategy, including managing and producing accessible content on the website and social media.
- ***Project Directors (Variable FTE, Senior Fellow/SRA/RA1).*** Project directors would lead on specific projects and manage project teams.
- ***Research assistants (Variable FTE, RA).*** Research assistants would assist with data and analytic tasks, event planning and hosting, maintaining content on the website, and social media outreach.

Additionally, we anticipate needing support from the Urban Institute Communications and IT departments on web and tool development and data visualization.

Currently, many routine technical roles are partially filled by senior staff, whose expertise could be better used in other, higher-level activities, such as developing new sources of work and funding. This is an inefficient use of existing talents that could be improved if these new, more formalized roles could be funded and established. A key challenge in achieving this is that 1.2 to 2.15 FTEs listed above are for activities not necessarily directly related to specific projects, but which are necessary if the capacity of NeighborhoodInfo DC to develop and respond to expanding opportunities is to be achieved.

Raise new revenue

Based on the above staffing levels, we have developed three revenue scenarios (table 1) for NeighborhoodInfo DC to inform future fundraising goals and strategies. The “survival mode” scenario represents the minimum funding level needed to maintain bare bones functionality. This is the situation we find ourselves in today, with our current funding. It is obviously not ideal, as it provides for a very

minimal level of customer support and no opportunity for growth or development. NeighborhoodInfo DC cannot maintain a sustainable and credible presence for very long under this scenario.

The “base” funding scenario represents basic levels of staffing according to the roles defined above, which would include expanding our capacity for data development, community engagement, and communication. This level of funding would allow NeighborhoodInfo DC to carry out most of the basic activities described in this business plan and be fairly proactive in exploring new opportunities.

The final “full scale” scenario builds upon the solid foundation of the base funding scenario and represents the ideal level of funding that would allow NeighborhoodInfo DC to be robust, proactive, and vigorously engaged in activities in the District of Columbia and the Washington region.

All three of the funding estimates are generally exclusive of additional funding for project-specific work. Ideally, the revenue scenarios would be met with *flexible funding* that would allow us to carry out the basic work of a successful data facilitator and educator in a responsive and adaptive manner. For example, earlier Fannie Mae grants were used in large part to support developing and maintaining the infrastructure of NeighborhoodInfo DC, as well as specific initiatives related to affordable housing and addressing the foreclosure crisis.

Table 1. NeighborhoodInfo DC Annual Funding Scenarios

Based on 2015 Cost Estimates

	Survival mode	Base	Full scale
Staffing			
<i>Director</i>	\$ 5,300	33,400	66,800
<i>Deputy director</i>	3,800	24,000	48,100
<i>Data manager</i>	0	13,200	26,400
<i>Communications</i>	0	10,000	19,700
<i>Community engagement</i>	0	11,500	23,000
<i>Research assistance</i>	3,300	8,700	21,600
<i>Support, fringe, indirect</i>	16,900	135,200	276,400
Travel to NNIP meetings	0	6,200	9,300
Data purchases	0	5,000	10,000
Web, listserv hosting	600	600	1,200
Other direct costs	1,500	11,400	23,600
General & administrative	5,600	45,800	92,900
TOTAL	\$ 37,000	305,000	619,000

Notes

1. See http://www.businessmodelgeneration.com/downloads/business_model_canvas_poster.pdf developed by Alexander Osterwalder.
2. See <http://www.urban.org/features/challenges-and-choices-new-mayor>.

Appendix A

NeighborhoodInfo DC Data Inventory

Over the past 10 years, NeighborhoodInfo DC has been collecting administrative records and survey data and turning that information into useable indicators aggregated to a standard set of geographies including Wards, neighborhoods and census tracts. The inventory below lists the accumulated data. It is our intention to find resources to continue to update and expand our data holdings so that NeighborhoodInfo DC can be ready to respond when policy issues heat up. One note, while some of the data are obtained through open data website, others like the vital statistics and education records are obtained only after negotiating with the agencies and signing a formal agreement that outlines acceptable use and describes how confidential and private information will be protected. NeighborhoodInfo DC carefully follows these protocols.

- American Community Survey: Tract-Level Summary Files (2005-09-2008-12); Microdata (2004-2011)
- Decennial Census (1980, 1990, 2000, 2010)
- Neighborhood Change Database (1970, 1990, 2000, 2010)
- TANF and SNAP enrollment (1998-2014)
- Vital statistics: Births (1998-2011); Deaths (1998-2007)
- Crime reports (1998-2012)
- Real property (sales, ownership, property taxes) (1995-2013)
- Foreclosure notices (1990-2013)
- Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (mortgage lending, borrower characteristics) (2004-2008)
- Real estate listings (2000-2014)
- CoreLogic Market Trends (mortgage lending and foreclosure activity) (2000-2014)
- Schools (locations, attendance) (2000-2013)

- Preservation Catalog (locations and characteristics of assisted and affordable housing)
- National Establishment Time Series (business establishments) (1990-2012)

Appendix B

Sample NeighborhoodInfo DC Project Descriptions and Activities

Maintaining Economic Diversity and Affordability – A strategy for preserving affordable rental housing in the District, prepared with the Preservation Network strategy working group. NeighborhoodInfo DC is a co-convenor, with the Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development, of the Preservation Network, which includes HUD, city housing agencies, nonprofits, and private developers working to preserve the city's affordable housing opportunities.
<http://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/dcpreservationcatalog/Preservation%20Strategy%20Dec2014.pdf>

Affordable Housing Needs Assessment – Reports written under contract to the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development to assess and make recommendations on the inclusionary zoning program and to quantify current and future affordable housing needs.
<http://www.urban.org/research/publication/affordable-housing-needs-assessment>
<http://www.urban.org/research/publication/affordable-housing-needs-assessment-district-columbia>

Housing Security in the Washington Region – A comprehensive study of affordable housing in the Washington region prepared for local foundations.
<http://www.urban.org/research/publication/housing-security-washington-region>

Making Data Accessible: Foreclosure Tracking in Washington, DC – Describes our work during the foreclosure crisis providing data on locations and characteristics of troubled homeowners to city agencies and nonprofits working to prevent loss of homes.
<http://www.urban.org/research/publication/making-data-accessible-foreclosure-tracking-washington-dc>

Our Changing City – A data visualization series highlighting changes in the District over the past decade. The first four chapters have addressed demographics, schools, housing, and public safety.
<http://datatools.urban.org/features/OurChangingCity/>

Challenge and Choices – Policy recommendations for the new Mayor that draw on research evidence and discussions with civic and community leaders. Data from NeighborhoodInfo DC helped frame the recommendations on housing and schools.
<http://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/washington-dc-research-initiative/projects/challenges-and-choices-new-mayor>

DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative (DCPNI) – Data from NeighborhoodInfo DC were used in the needs assessment for DCPNI's planning and implementation grant applications and are contributing to the ongoing progress monitoring of the comprehensive Kenilworth-Parkside-based initiative.

Pre-K Analysis - Data analysis prepared for Fight For Children on pre-kindergarten education enrollment by neighborhood cluster, including information on children, their households, and indicators of neighborhood safety and well-being.

