Indianapolis nonprofit agency uses SAVI to make data-informed decisions about the best location for a new "one stop shop" for social services.

PARTNER

Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc. (MCCOY)

OVERVIEW

MCCOY, Inc. is an Indianapolis-based nonprofit organization with the mission to champion the positive development of youth through leadership and community support. It coordinates an Early Intervention and Prevention Initiative (EIP) to reduce the number of children entering the county's child welfare and juvenile justice systems by improving the coordination of youth services in Marion County.

As part of its EIP strategic plan, MCCOY initiated a project to create a neighborhood-based center that would offer multiple social services at a single location for the convenience of the community. This co-location of services will increase community access to services and promote innovative local partnerships.

The Polis Center joined the multi-organizational task force to help MCCOY reach data-informed decisions about the best location for the center and the services it should offer. SAVI provided comprehensive data at key decision points throughout the process to determine 1) neighborhoods with greatest need, 2) location and availability of existing resources, and 3) potential partners and sites. The Polis Center used data to inform MCCOY's planning process by:

1. Defining the focus question
2. Identifying the appropriate data to answer the question
3. Conducting a detailed gap analysis of needs and assets
4. Developing visualizations to analyze the data
5. Interpreting the results

Ultimately, with Polis's support, MCCOY determined the Near Westside neighborhood as the area most in need of a co-location of services site.

SAVI
Information for Communities

SAVI is a free resource to help you make data-informed decisions. It provides data about Central Indiana communities, tools to analyze and visualize the data, and training to build your capacity to use it effectively.

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THE PROCESS

Defining the focus question

Data can be overwhelming. Where do I start? Which data do I use? What questions should I ask? There are a number of neighborhoods in Marion County where a co-location of services site would be valuable, but in which area would the center prove most impactful?

In order to determine the best location for the center, MCCOY had to understand each neighborhood's needs and existing resources. Every community has needs, which may include transportation problems, lack of health care facilities, inadequate child care services, and limited recreational programs. But it also is important to note where communities have available assets, such as programs and services of local organizations that could help address their needs.

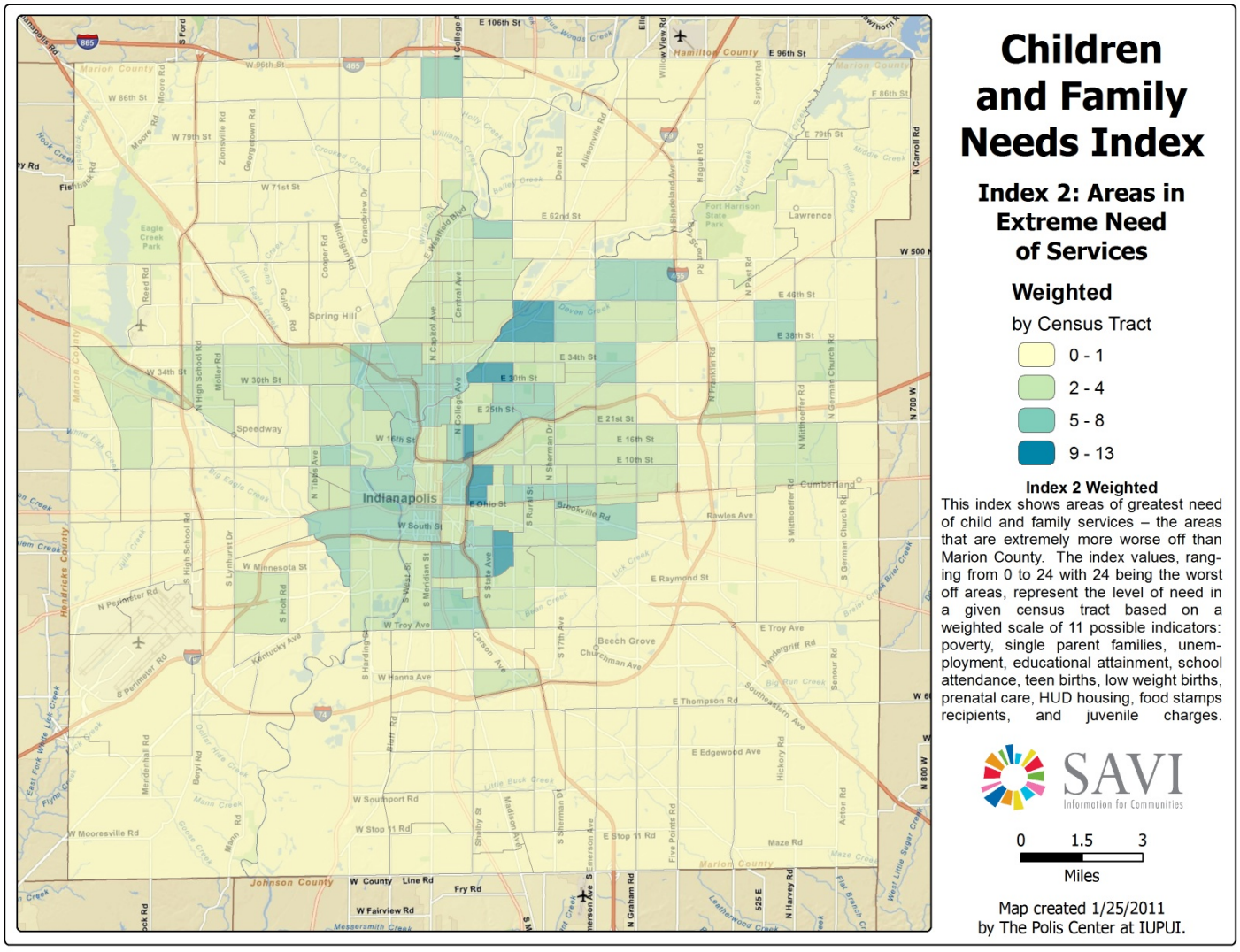
Through SAVI's wealth of community needs and assets data, Polis guided MCCOY in defining the focus question.

In which Indianapolis neighborhood would a co-location of services center prevent the greatest number of at-risk children from entering the child welfare and juvenile justice systems?

DEFINING THE FOCUS QUESTION

Identifying the appropriate data to answer the question

In order to answer this question, Polis used input from social workers, practitioners, and planners on the committee to understand factors that put a child at greatest risk for entering the welfare and juvenile justice systems, such as living in a single parent family, in poverty, and in a neighborhood with high crime rates. Polis used data in SAVI to represent each of the 12 selected indicators related to demographics, economy, education, health, housing, public assistance, and public safety. It worked with the advisory committee to assign a risk-based weight factor to each indicator and used this information to develop a children and family needs index value for each census tract[1] in Marion County. This allowed the committee to visualize and identify areas in greatest need. The following map shows the areas in extreme need of services (the darker the color, the greater the need).



[1] A census tract is a small, relatively permanent statistical subdivision of a county used by the US Census Bureau for tabulating and reporting statistics and contain between 1,200 and 8,000 persons.

Conducting a Detailed Gap Analysis

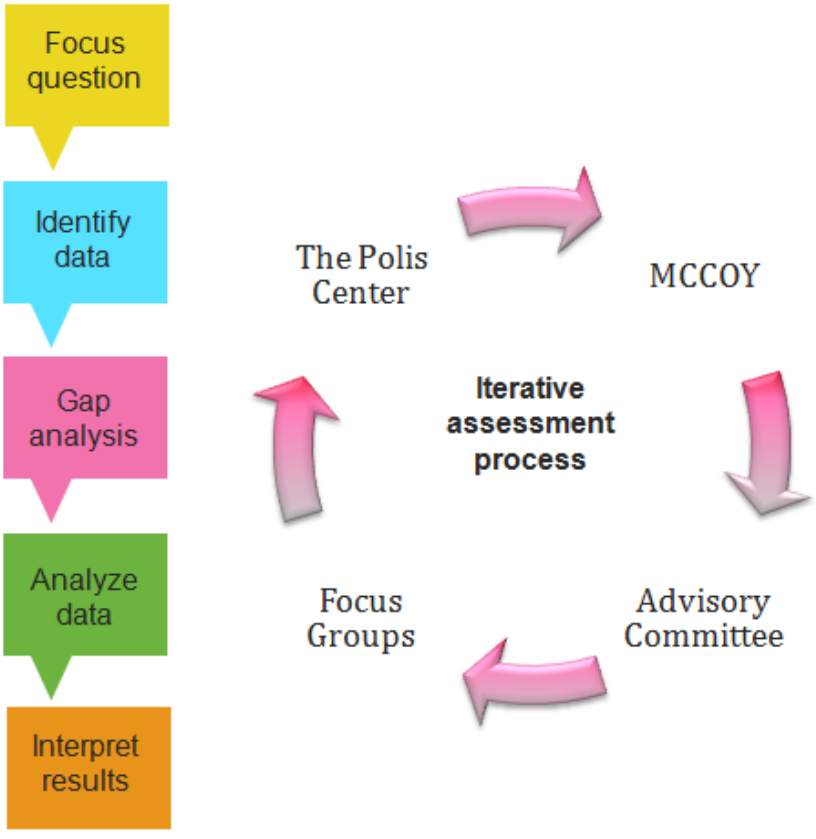
The next step was to conduct a gap analysis to determine which of the high-needs neighborhoods also lacked the programs and services needed to support MCCOY's target population. SAVI identified each community's existing service providers and mapped those on top of the needs index to identify where gaps exist.

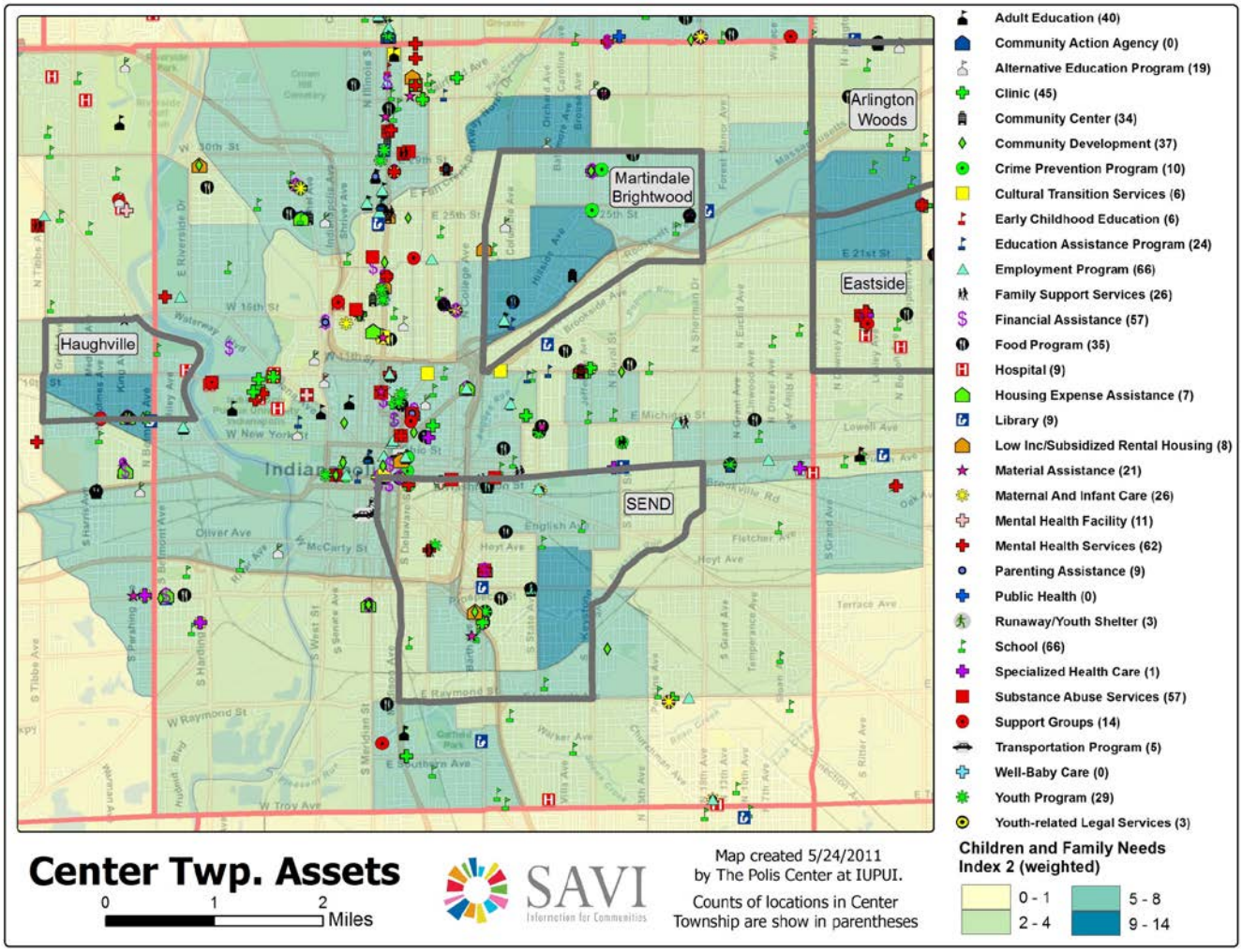
The gap analysis to narrow the results was an iterative process. Polis worked closely with MCCOY and its advisory committee to provide data and help interpret it at key decision points throughout the project. For example, after Polis developed the needs and assets map (below), the advisory committee chose five neighborhoods to consider and then requested additional data, e.g., bus routes, be added to the maps. The additional transportation data allowed the project team to determine travel time, connectivity, and accessibility of resources. It became clear that individuals living in high-needs areas in need of multiple services are challenged with accessing those resources, with long bus rides to visit multiple locations outside of their neighborhoods.

After further analysis, the committee narrowed the choices to two neighborhoods: Near Westside and Southeast. MCCOY conducted focus groups and meetings in both neighborhoods to validate the findings, gauge interests, and identify existing synergies to build on. More detailed asset mapping followed these meetings.

This collaborative process not only provided MCCOY with valuable information regarding needed services and community perceptions, but it also established a sense of community ownership of the project.

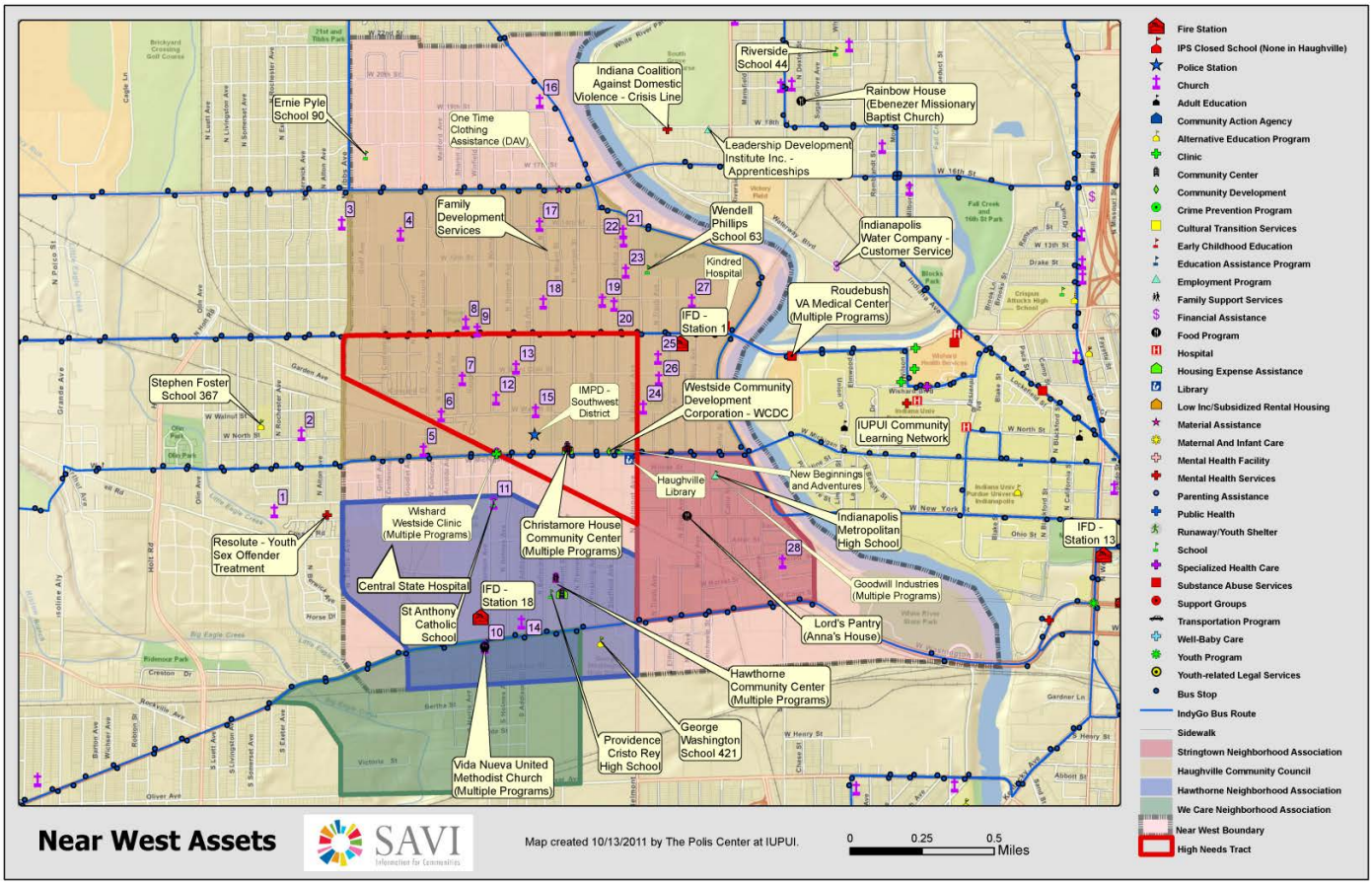
PLANNING PROCESS





Developing visualizations and analyzing data

The gap analysis revealed two neighborhoods—Near Westside and Southeast—as those with the greatest service gaps. The maps on the following page illustrate the detailed asset mapping that helped MCCOY to identify potential partners, tenants, and sites to house the co-location of services center.



Near West Assets

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Map created 10/13/2011 by The Polis Center at IUPUI.

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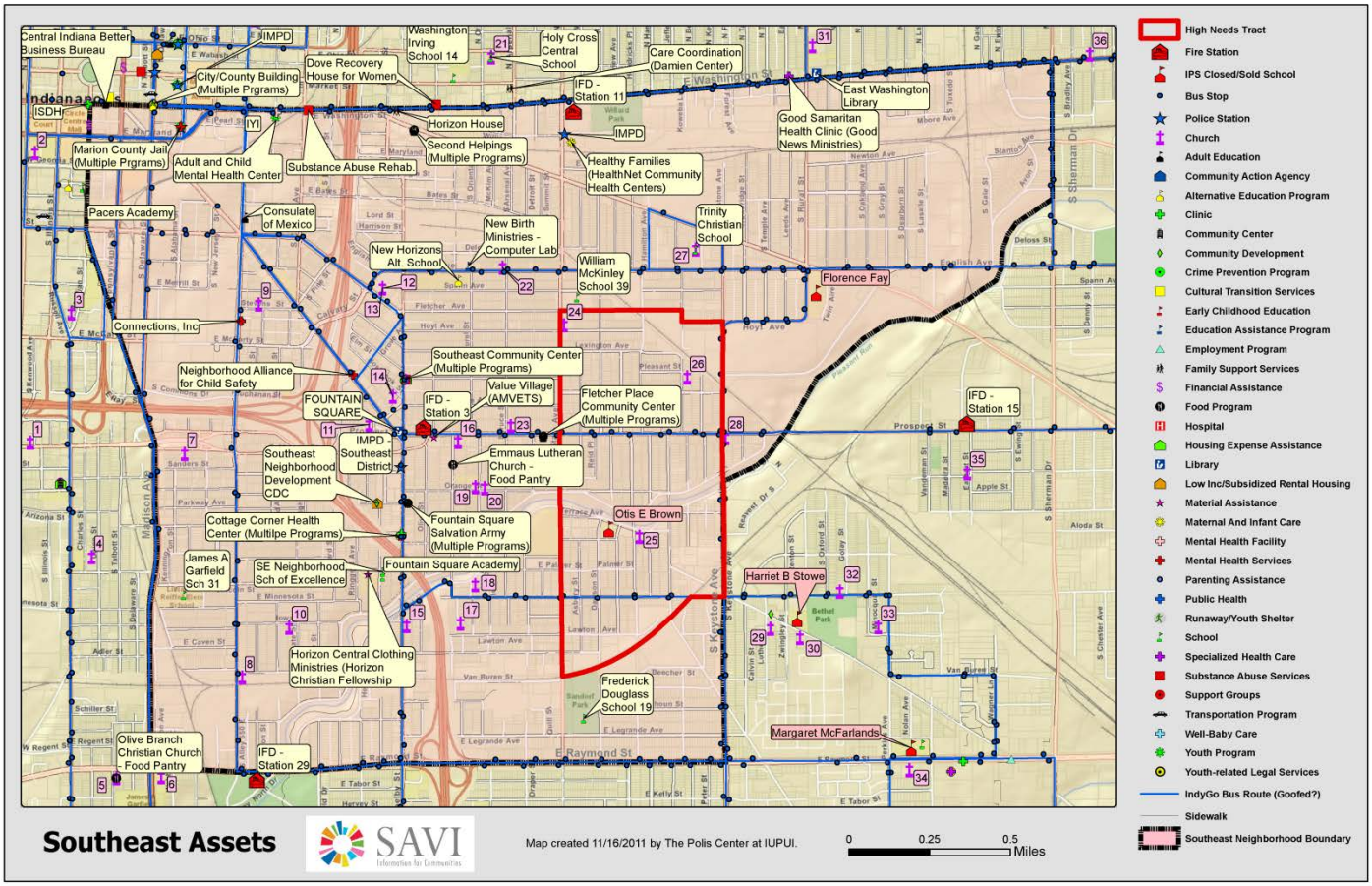

Southeast Assets

SAVI Information for Communities

Map created 11/16/2011 by The Polis Center at IUPUI.

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Interpreting the results

In addition to supplying the data and visualizing it for MCCOY, we worked with its staff to analyze the data and interpret it to identify potential neighborhoods and narrow the choices. The data from SAVI, combined with an in-depth market assessment to determine programs and services willing and able to co-locate in Near West or Southeast, as well as input from community organizations and the task force, ultimately led to MCCOY's selection of one of the neighborhoods.

OUTCOME

At the end of 2012, MCCOY selected the Near Westside neighborhood as the site for the center and is now prepared to begin the process of identifying real estate opportunities and funders to support the construction and implementation of the center.

For Shanna Martin, Director of the MCCOY EIP Initiative, working with The Polis Center and utilizing SAVI was the right choice. "The Polis Center's support was so helpful, and the SAVI visualizations made approaching funders much easier. Funders could see that we'd utilized a strategic process and used comprehensive data to support our reasons for choosing a neighborhood."

The Polis Center

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