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SELECTED GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES FOR THE CITY OF SYRACUSE:

COMPARISONS OF THE SIX RESIDENTIAL TNT SECTORS IN THE AREAS OF CRIME, FIRE, STREETS, TRASH AND PARKS

JUNE 1998

THE MAXWELL SCHOOL

COMMUNITY BENCHMARKS PROGRAM
MAXWELL SCHOOL OF CITIZENSHIP AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
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William D. Coplin received his BA in Social Science from John Hopkins University in 1960, and his MA (1962) and Ph.D. (1964) in International Relations from American University. He has published more than fifty books and articles in the fields of public policy analysis, international relations, political risk analysis, and social science education. He is currently Professor of Public Affairs and Director of the Public Affairs Program of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

Astrid E. Merget was the first Louis A. Bantle Chair in Business and Government Policy at the Maxwell School and now serves as Chair of the Department of Public Administration and Associate Dean of the School. A fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, she was elected a trustee of the Board, then Vice Chair and Chair. She also was President of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration. She has served on many boards including Independent Sector and the U.S. Comptroller General's Research and Education Advisory Board. Dr. Merget received her BA from Mount Holyoke College (1967) and then went on to earn her MPA and Ph.D. from the Maxwell School.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Crime, Fire, Streets, Trash and Parks
Prepared by the Community Benchmarks Program
June 1998

This report describes the results of a series of studies conducted by the Community Benchmarks Program of Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. It was initially prepared for the participants and staff of the mayoral initiative Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today (TNT), a program that established eight geographic planning sectors with individual resident councils developing community priorities. This report was also prepared with several other audiences in mind, including elected officials, city employees, and the general public. The following map depicts TNT sector and census tract boundaries for the city of Syracuse.
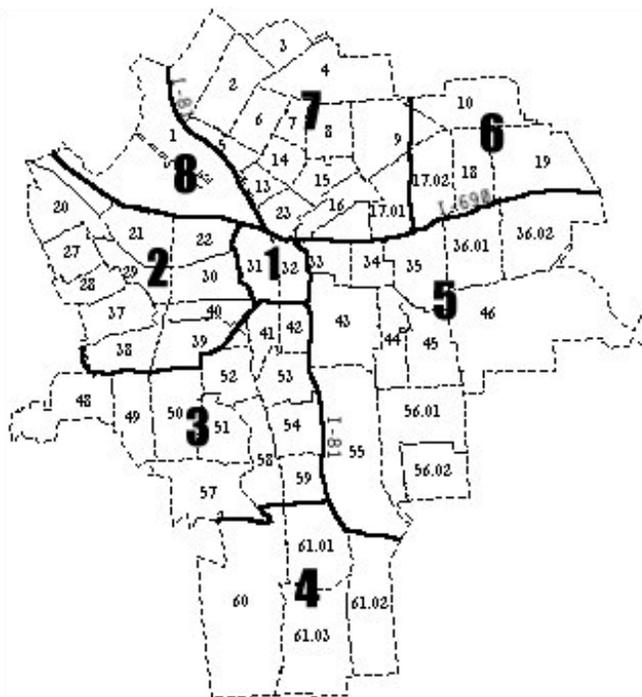
The report describes data compiled between January 1997 and March 1998 and suggests follow-up studies and actions. It also explains how benchmarks can be used to both improve government services as well as to provide a framework for community problem-solving in the areas of: 1) crime control, 2) fire protection, 3) park safety and maintenance, 4) street maintenance and snow removal, and 5) waste collection.

Four studies, undertaken over the past 18 months, serve as the basis for this report:

      I.   1996 Syracuse Criminal Offenses and Calls for Residential Areas
      II.   1995-97 Syracuse Fire Incidents and Alarms for Residential Areas
      III. 1997 Syracuse Physical Community Conditions for Residential Areas
      IV. 1997 Citizen Survey Comparing Syracuse TNT Sectors

Table 1 highlights the major findings from each of the four studies.

Table 1: Major Findings from All Studies

Title of Study	*Major Findings*
I. Syracuse Criminal Offenses and Calls for Residential Areas	• Sector 2 had the highest number of criminal offenses and calls to police for 12 out of 20 categories, or 60%. • Census tracts 30, 33, and 41 were three of the four census tracts with the highest number of both total offenses per 1,000 persons and calls to police per 1,000 persons.
II. Syracuse Fire Incidents and Alarms for Residential Areas	• Census tracts 33, 35 , and 41 were three of the four census tracts with the highest number of both structural fires and false alarms per 100 households. • Sector 3 had the highest rate of structural fires at 2 per 100 households. • Sector 5 had the highest rate of false alarms at 12 per 100 households
III. Citizen Survey Comparing Syracuse TNT Sectors	• Respondents residing in sector 2 rated services below average the highest percent of the time at 74%. • Respondents residing in sector 4 rated services above average the highest percent of the time at 67%.
IV. Syracuse Physical Community Conditions for Residential Areas	• Observed areas in sector 2 were rated lowest in 63% of all categories. • Observed areas in sector 4 were rated highest in 50% of all categories.

Patterns Across All Studies

Through a TNT sector ranking analysis conducted for all variables, it is clear that TNT sector 2 exhibits the worst community conditions and residents in this area are least satisfied with government services. Residents in sector 4 are most satisfied with government services, and as expected, conditions in this sector are among the best.

Patterns across census tracts were identified through a quartile ranking analysis for the following seven variables: criminal offenses and calls to police; fire incidents, false fire alarm calls, and fire rescue calls; and direct observation of streets and property conditions. Those census tracts appearing in five or more of the first and fourth quartiles were rated "worst" and "best" respectively. The map below depicts those "worst" and "best" tracts.
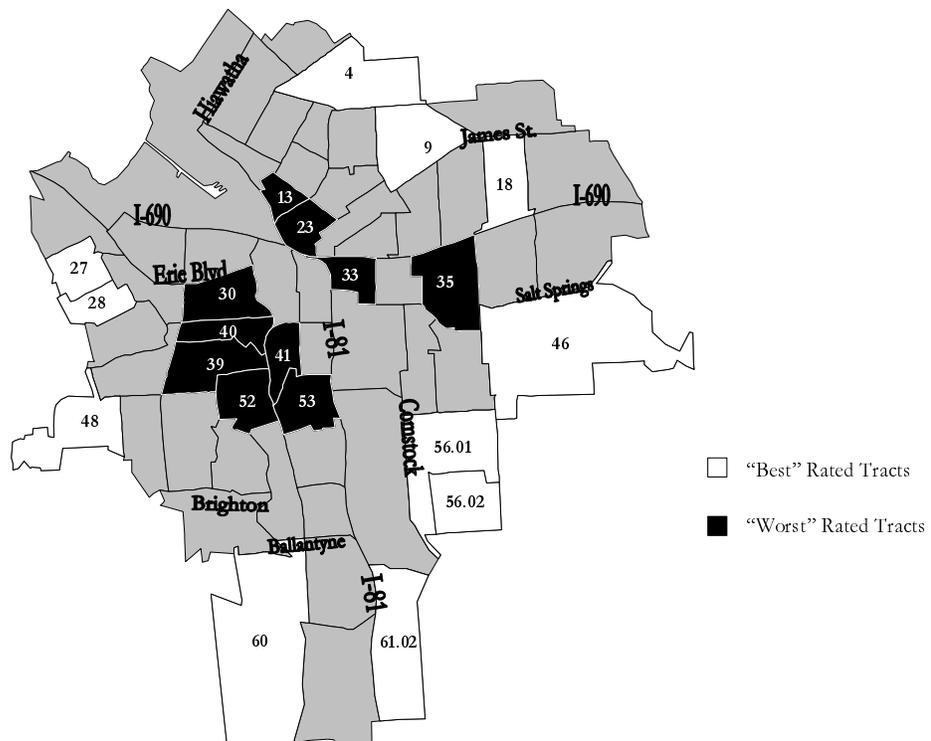
Conclusions

The findings suggest the need to build a process in which conditions as well as government performance are first measured by quantitative data on a systematic basis and then used to help key stakeholders to work together to develop solutions. The government, by necessity, plays a limited role in ameliorating most of these conditions; citizens, business organizations and non-profit agencies must also play an important role.

Through our discussions with TNT participants, it became clear that code enforcement encompassed several quality of life concerns felt by residents across sectors, such as vacant and abandoned lots, absentee landlords, and severely neglected properties. Therefore, a systematic analysis of code enforcement services and outcomes will be the primary focus of the next stage of the benchmarking project in Syracuse. After initial data on several indicators (e.g. inspector workload, code violations by type, violation complaints by type, cases referred and settled by corporation counsel) are collected, the Benchmarks Program will convene TNT participants, code enforcement staff, and other stakeholders to address areas needing improvement.

For more information about the Community Benchmarks Program or this report, contact Carol Dwyer at (315)443-3934 or via email: cdwyer@maxwell.syr.edu.

INTRODUCTION

The Community Benchmarks Program of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University was formally established in June 1996 as part of the new Alan K. Campbell Public Affairs Institute. It is jointly supported by staff and students of the Public Administration and Public Affairs programs and by project funding from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation. The program's mission is to collect and disseminate information which describes community conditions, encourages citizen participation, and provides a basis for the public, private, and non-profit sectors to improve the quality of life within Onondaga County.

Parts of this study were provided previously to the citizen participants in the Mayor's initiative called Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today (TNT). TNT was formed to establish a process that would involve residents, businesses, and organizations in developing planning priorities for their neighborhoods. TNT segments the city into eight geographic areas: six residential sectors, Downtown, and the Lakefront. A map of the TNT sector and census tract boundaries for the city of Syracuse can be found on the following page. Each of the TNT sectors has an established planning council made up of residents, business owners, and representatives from local non-profit and government organizations that meet on a monthly basis to develop goals and action plans to work towards reaching those goals.

Although TNT participants have reviewed preliminary components of this report, they and the TNT staff have not participated in the writing of this report. Additional information on TNT can be obtained by contacting Peg Stroman, Division of Neighborhood Planning for the City of Syracuse.

Data for this report were taken from four studies undertaken by the Community Benchmarks Program over the past two years. Parts I through IV of this report present the findings from each of the four studies. The first three parts describe community conditions government services seek to improve in the areas of crime control, fire protection, and street and property maintenance. The fourth study examines citizen attitudes toward those services. Part V looks at the patterns across the four parts and Part VI provides conclusions and suggests future research.

Findings are presented for the six residential TNT sectors (sectors 2-7). Results for sectors 1 and 8, the Downtown and Lakefront areas respectively, were not included in this report due to low survey response rates and small populations which skewed per 1,000 population and per 100 household findings. Raw data listings and all survey instruments used are included as appendices in the last section of this report.

The data presented in this report establish a baseline for future studies and a framework for improving government services and societal conditions in the city. Variations of performance throughout the city are key in developing a benchmarking process because it is assumed that there should be as little variation as possible among different neighborhoods in the city in striving for the best services and conditions.

MAP 1: TNT SECTOR BOUNDARIES AND CENSUS TRACTS FOR THE CITY OF SYRACUSE