

Evaluation Framework for The New Communities Program

Summary

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Introduction

The New Communities Program (NCP) is an ambitious ten-year initiative in 16 communities in Chicago. Started in June 2002, it is sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation and managed by the Chicago office of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (Chicago LISC). NCP uses a comprehensive neighborhood planning process and local collective efforts to nurture and support healthy, diverse communities. NCP funds 14 community-based “lead agencies” to convene groups and residents to plan a better future for their neighborhoods. This “quality-of-life” planning entails development of comprehensive community revitalization strategies, including education, employment, community organizing, youth development, safety, and economic and affordable housing development. NCP provides seed grants to further local projects, and lead agencies are charged with facilitating their completion.

The MacArthur Foundation has engaged MDRC to evaluate the NCP initiative.¹ In developing this research design, MDRC was faced with a range of methodological challenges common to most evaluations of community initiatives. Rather than a single intervention, NCP represents a series of complementary processes and investments, encompassing a wide range of efforts, from commercial district revitalization to housing preservation, from the formation of new organizations to address new challenges to community viability to the development of greater alignment and concerted action to address commonly perceived priority issues. As a result of the complexities inherent in this range of the program strategies and the many influences that are always at work within communities, the research is limited in the extent to which it can conclusively speak to the role of NCP in any observed community-level changes. It will, however, capture the implementation of NCP, describe trajectories of neighborhood change, and draw valid inferences for Chicago and beyond.

The first phase of evaluation is from 2006 to 2008, with the possibility of longer-term follow-up through the end of 2011.

Evaluation Approach

Building on interviews with the MacArthur Foundation, LISC officials, and staff of the 14 local lead agencies, MDRC has developed a comprehensive research approach to support the

¹Created in 1974 by the Ford Foundation and a group of federal agencies, MDRC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan education and social policy research organization with headquarters in New York City. MDRC is partnering with three national experts on this evaluation: Rob Chaskin at the University of Chicago; George Galster at Wayne State University, and Garth Taylor at the Metropolitan Chicago Information Center.

knowledge development agenda of NCP. This summary describes the research agenda, which is structured around six primary lines of inquiry.²

1. **Building the capacity of neighborhood intermediaries.** Is it feasible to create or strengthen the capacity of Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to function as neighborhood intermediaries? How do CBOs facilitate comprehensive community development? What strategies are associated with effective planning of comprehensive community initiative and with implementation of their component projects?
2. **Evolution of institutional networks.** What types of interorganizational dynamics lead to better outcomes within community initiatives? How does the institutional network of NCP organizations change or evolve over time in selected neighborhoods, and what role did NCP have in this change?
3. **Strategic investments and visible improvements.** What can comprehensive community development initiatives accomplish? What investments and improvements occurred as a result of NCP? What types of NCP strategies lead to greater investments? Do different strategies work better in different community and organizational contexts?
4. **Stakeholder motivations, perceptions, and behavior.** How do resident and institutional stakeholders perceive neighborhood change, and which changes are most important to their investment behavior and their long-term commitment to communities?
5. **Understanding neighborhood trajectories.** What paths do NCP neighborhoods take over time, and what variables may set neighborhoods on different trajectories? How do NCP's efforts align with these changes?
6. **Exploratory impact analysis.** Is it plausible to assess the independent effects of NCP on target neighborhoods? Do the observed patterns of neighborhood changes support the hypothesis that NCP efforts have improved trajectories of target neighborhoods from what they would have been in the absence of the intervention?

²For a copy of the full document, please request one from MDRC Vice President Craig Howard at craig.howard@mdrc.org.

Each line of inquiry examines a key component of the initiative's theory of change, shown in Figure 1. The research starts at the intervention by LISC, MacArthur, and the lead agencies; examines other neighborhood organizations and the ties that NCP attempts to foster among them; explores tangible improvements that occur as a result of planning; considers how stakeholders beyond NCP view these improvements; and documents changes in broader neighborhood trajectories. The research integrates qualitative and quantitative efforts in a three-tiered approach. Across all of Chicago, quantitative research will describe trends in key community indicators. The goal of this Chicago-wide analysis is to present NCP trends in context. Across the 16 NCP neighborhoods in Chicago, researchers will document key outcomes related to the implementation of projects. Finally, within a subset of six NCP neighborhoods, MDRC and its partners will conduct in-depth studies, interviewing multiple staff, implementation partners, and external stakeholders to understand processes in detail (see the Appendix for an evaluation design summary table).

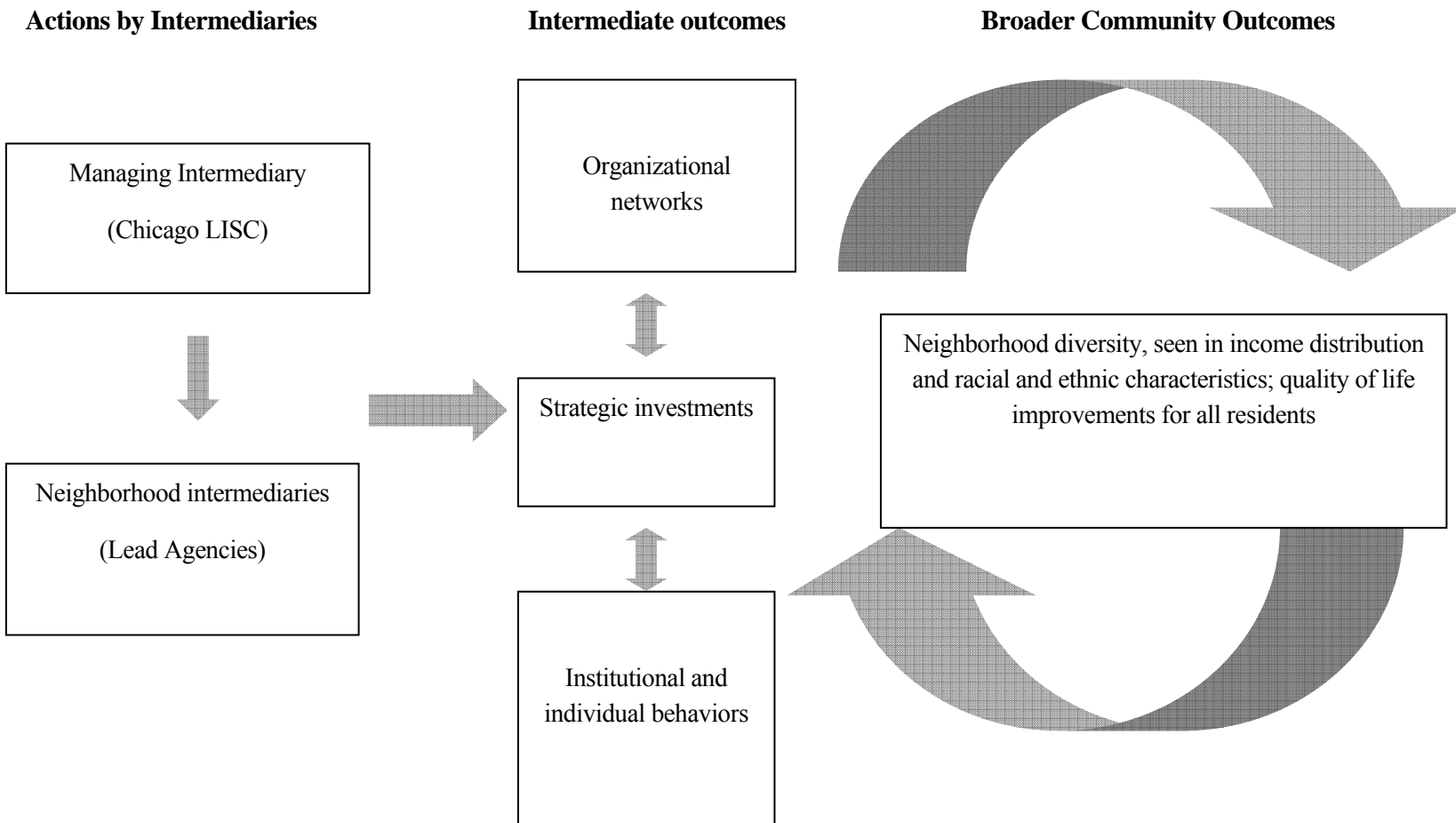
The NCP Neighborhoods and Lead Agencies

The 16 NCP communities vary along a number of important dimensions, including housing market and labor market conditions, population demographics, residents' social and economic circumstances, and the capacity and tenure of lead agencies. These communities were selected for NCP in part to capture some of this diversity. Other considerations included the availability of a neighborhood infrastructure for carrying out the NCP vision and strategic calculations by Chicago LISC and MacArthur about places where their existing relationships with local groups could be strengthened through the initiative. Within each target neighborhood, candidates for the lead agency slots underwent a review process to determine whether they were a good fit for the model — for example, whether they aspired to advance community change or preservation along a model of comprehensive, participatory development and whether they enjoyed a high level of trust and credibility among local stakeholders. Not all lead agencies were well-established entities. In some neighborhoods, the organizations were newly formed to take advantage of the initiative.

Research Timetable

The interim evaluation spans from 2006 to 2008, with work unfolding in two phases. Phase 1, which included much of 2006, was used to build a consensus among MDRC, the Foundation, and other key partners on the goals and expectations for the evaluation and to assign priorities for particular elements of the study and to particular neighborhoods. Phase 2, which covers the remainder of the interim evaluation period, covers the first-stage data collection and analysis and preparation/dissemination of interim findings, plus design and launch of

Figure 1
Simplified Schematic, NCP Theory Of Change



an embedded random assignment study. Pending Foundation approval, this latter evaluation might be extended through 2011.

There will be intense interest to learn from the evaluation as this initiative unfolds. MDRC proposes to produce materials for both internal and external audiences, including internal documents and observations memos, papers, and reports designed for a broad audience of policymakers, program planners and managers, and researchers. Key products for the interim evaluation phase include:

1. **The Evaluation Framework for the New Communities Program (due first quarter 2007).** This evaluation design paper specifies in detail the full research plan for the overall evaluation and a strategy to carry it out, building on the work that the Foundation, LISC, and its partners have already begun. (This document is the summary of that longer paper.)
2. **An Early Look at Community Change (due fourth quarter 2007).** This internal document will provide an early look at trajectories of NCP communities.
3. **Periodic Observations Memos (at varying points in 2007 and 2008).** Over the course of research, team members will produce memos summarizing observations and findings from field research activities and quantitative analyses.
4. **Mid-Course Assessment of the NCP (due fourth quarter 2008).** This report will draw on both the qualitative and quantitative data sources to examine the topics and questions described in the following pages.

Key Topics for the NCP Evaluation

Topic # 1: Building the Capacity of Neighborhood Intermediaries

NCP was developed as a partnership between the MacArthur Foundation and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) of Chicago. In this partnership, LISC serves as a “managing intermediary” that provides support to NCP lead agencies in each neighborhood, enabling these agencies, in turn, to carry out the functions of “neighborhood intermediaries.” LISC funds work of the lead agencies and acts as a broker to influential institutional relationships, to varied financial resources, and to critical sources of information. In turn, NCP agencies serve parallel roles as “neighborhood intermediaries,” by leading a comprehensive, community-based, collaborative planning process, by brokering relationships and resources, by conducting capacity-building, and by facilitating the implementation of diverse projects.

This line of inquiry attempts to understand how core principles of NCP were put into practice; what it took on the part of the main organizations to achieve this; and what challenges and accomplishments occurred along the way. The study addresses various strands in the literature around community planning and community development, including examining the feasibility of CDCs and CBOs functioning as intermediaries; assessing how CBOs facilitate comprehensive community development; understanding strategies associated with more effective planning and implementation of comprehensive community initiatives; and understanding how organizations change to better support community capacity-building.

Key Questions

- **Characterizing the lead agencies.** Who are the lead agencies? What capacities important to NCP do they bring at the beginning of the initiative?
- **Characterizing organizational change.** How do agencies change over time, related to these defined capacities?
- **Characterizing new strategies and capacities.** What do the NCP groups do in practice? What do they define as critical for acting as successful neighborhood intermediaries during planning and implementation? Some possible topics include:
 - **Resident engagement:** Whom do lead agencies engage over the course of planning and implementation? What are leadership development practices among organizations?
 - **Understanding and addressing difference:** How do groups approach issues of difference, especially racial and ethnic difference, within their community-building work? What strategies are more effective in helping build consensus and addressing historic racial and ethnic tensions within neighborhoods?
 - **Building accountability.** How do lead agencies hold other groups accountable? How are coalitions sustained over the course of the initiative?
 - **Integrating planning with agency activities:** How do organizations integrate NCP's goals and collective processes into the overall work and mission of the agency? What types of activities undermine a comprehensive, coordinated approach to planning, and which facilitate it?

- **Building comprehensive, strategic plans.** How do NCP agencies coordinate among actors possessed of different strengths and assets to add value to their existing efforts?
- **Capacity-building strategies.** What strategies and informal practices did LISC and MacArthur undertake to build the capacity of lead agencies to act as convening, catalyzing, and “leveraging” agents?

These questions will be answered by relying primarily on longitudinal interviews with a subgroup of lead agencies; structured observations at NCP events and meetings; interviews with LISC and MacArthur program staff; focus groups; review of program documentation; and use of qualitative comparison. Within each of the sites selected for in-depth analysis, the researchers will seek to interview different staff, board members, key partners, and residents on a regular basis but alternate among participants so as to minimize burden.

It is important to understand how NCP plays out *in context*. Context can be defined in many different ways, but, in preliminary interviews, stakeholders expressed strongly that the substance of community change strategies vary in different *economic and demographic contexts* and that the *type of organization* that carries out NCP is also important for planning and implementation. To explore these aspects of context in depth, two variables are being used to inform the selection of the six communities for detailed data collection and analysis. Building on policy literatures that emphasize organizational form in efforts to foster collaboration, the typology below (see Figure 2) focuses on *the type of lead agency*. Building on literatures that emphasize economic and demographic forces in community development, the research will also focus on *extremes of economic context*, so as to make it more likely to show how these contexts inform NCP practice. However, a focus on extremes should not preclude collecting data from groups closer to the middle of the economic spectrum as well.

In the first months of formal field research, the research team will verify that these dimensions will draw the richest lessons about NCP for the broader field and develop a set of clustering groupings for MacArthur and LISC to consider.

Topic # 2: Evolution of Institutional Networks

Through community planning and implementation, the lead agency connects disparate groups and enhances existing relationships. In this way, the neighborhood intermediary builds or supports a stronger infrastructure of community organizations. With this greater strength, local organizations can advance their own separate projects and also build their collective capacities to pursue joint projects. In preliminary interviews, staff at all the agencies spoke about

Figure 2

Illustration of a Potential Clustering Typology for the Study of the New Communities Program

Type of Local Lead Agency	Starting Community Economic Context	
	Disinvested Community	Gentrifying Community
Housing-oriented CDC	<i>Community 1</i>	<i>Community 2</i>
Comprehensive community organization	<i>Community 3</i>	<i>Community 4</i>
Nascent agency	<i>Community 5</i>	<i>Community 6</i>

this aspect of “community capacity” as an important goal of their work. They also spoke of the importance of engaging neighborhood residents in planning and implementation. NCP’s architects espouse that neighborhoods with stronger ties among groups and individuals — or greater “tensile strength,” — will develop more cohesively over time, better withstand external shocks, and find more ways to capitalize on new opportunities.

Within two neighborhoods with advanced networks, the study will seek to answer questions about the changed nature of relationships and what led to network-building. The line of inquiry will address several critical themes in the policy literature, such as how inter-organizational dynamics contribute to outcomes in community initiatives, how resident involvement shapes planning and community initiatives, and how to build community capacity.

Key Questions

- **Creating healthier community dynamics:** To what extent did a neighborhood organizational “infrastructure” emerge among groups as a result of planning and implementation? What relationships existed that did not exist before, why do groups come to the table, and what did it take to create a more functioning local network?

- **Developing more resident-responsive institutions:** How have relationships between local organizations and community residents changed as a result of NCP? How have other institutions changed as a result of NCP processes?
- **Filling holes and building new capacity:** How have organizational partners emerged as stakeholders capable of enacting positive improvements in underserved areas of local need?

Within two neighborhoods, the research team will interview stakeholders at various levels of engagement with the initiative: primary implementing partners, more passive plan participants, and key groups not involved in planning. These will be supplemented with longitudinal interviews with lead agencies, with LISC and MacArthur program staff, and with a review of program baseline data and ongoing documentation.

Topic # 3: Strategic Investments and Visible Improvements

Within NCP’s model of change, building collective capacity through inter-organizational relationships is not in itself seen as a sufficient outcome. Instead, both during the planning process and throughout NCP’s implementation period, collaborations are expected to result in tangible results. These improvements are most concretely envisioned in each of the NCP plans.

This line of inquiry attempts to characterize these investments broadly, throughout the entire initiative. For the policy literature, it addresses several important questions, such as: What can comprehensive community development initiatives accomplish? What additional investments can a seed-granting strategy “leverage” or attract? What types of improvements are most often seen in comprehensive community development initiatives? How often can effective collaborations form among community organizations at the project level?

Key Questions

- **Characterizing overall investments and NCP “leverage.”** From what diverse sources (for instance, banks, developers, or foundations) were resources applied to complete NCP plans, and how much did grants leverage?
- **Characterizing domains of improvement.** Given the diverse scope, deep ambitions, and multiple projects laid out in plans, in which content areas did projects see resources directed?
- **Additional focus on public resources.** How much in public investments were leveraged by NCP? In what domains of improvement did public resources tend to flow?

- **Analysis of collaboration.** To what extent were completed projects collaborative ventures? In which domain areas did completed projects spark the most collaboration?

This analysis will complement LISC’s Return on Investment (ROI) documentation. It will involve document review of program materials and of additional records about public resources leveraged through NCP. Because complete documentation of projects associated with NCP may be challenging for individual sites to accomplish, the research team will work with LISC to assess and promote validity of ROI reports.

Topic # 4: Stakeholder Perceptions, Motivations, and Behavior

NCP hopes that comprehensive action, taken by a broad set of community actors and resulting in a diversity of investments and improvements, will leverage additional resources and changes beyond the immediate scope of the plans. Neighborhood residents and other stakeholders are expected to observe neighborhood improvements and begin, sustain, or increase their own investments in community. In these ways, NCP may leverage change at a far greater scale than the sum of the projects it accomplishes. This line of inquiry examines such policy topics as how different stakeholders view neighborhood change and how these different views influence community planning; how planning can achieve greater local unity and consensus around issues important to the neighborhood; and what the relationship is between neighborhood perceptions and investment-related behavior.

Key Questions

- **Understanding diverse perspectives on change and motivation.** How do resident and institutional stakeholders perceive neighborhood change, and which changes are most important to their investment behavior and their long-term commitment to communities? How do perceptions vary by stakeholder groups? How, if at all, do patterns of perceptions vary across neighborhoods?
- **Assessing the implication of contending visions of change within NCP.** What are the positive and negative implications of different perspectives for the quality of plans and their implementation outcomes? Finally, do stakeholders move toward a more shared vision of their communities?

The research team plans on collecting data with three “circles” of participants, capturing perspectives of 1) core initiative participants; 2) those peripherally involved in NCP; and 3) unaffiliated residents, who will be recruited for focus groups. These focus groups will be conducted in a subset of neighborhoods that have been selected for qualitative research. Each panel will draw from a different group of potential stakeholders, such as renters, homeowners, busi-

ness owners, and recent movers to the neighborhood. Depending on the community selected, panels may also be defined by race or ethnicity.

In addition, MDRC is considering adding a resident and local business survey. These surveys would be conducted in a subset of neighborhoods targeted for in-depth qualitative research. In addition to measuring critical issues around perceptions, motivations, behavior, and circumstances of neighborhood residents and businesses, these surveys would provide opportunities to open the “black box” of homeowner and investor behavior as it relates to issues of perceptions about neighborhood. Such a survey would provide critical feedback to Chicago (as well as other similar initiatives) about ways to frame community strategies that will resonate with key stakeholders and therefore leverage greater community-level change. Similarly, since individual communities are likely to define broad improvement goals differently — some neighborhoods might value violence reduction over affordable housing rehabilitation and new construction, for example — a survey would allow assessment of neighborhood-specific goals and the ways that residents believe them to be met, thereby reinforcing assessment of progress in different NCP areas.

Topic 5: Trajectory Change Analysis

Ultimately, NCP hopes to improve living conditions in targeted communities and preserve opportunities for lower-income people to benefit from these improved conditions. Therefore, the “trajectories analysis” will explore how conditions have changed in the NCP neighborhoods over a fairly long period of time, beginning prior to NCP and continuing well into the full-intervention period. In trying to characterize community change, this line of inquiry casts a wide net to capture direct and indirect outcomes of the multitude of forces acting upon a community. Casting a wide net is also important, given the diversity of improvement goals within NCP. For example, some neighborhoods may have residents largely valuing safety, with others largely valuing economic improvements.

The line of inquiry addresses several strands in the policy literature, including: What are new ways of assessing income diversity, housing diversity, commercial and investment diversity, and the general desirability of the neighborhood as a place to live and work? What indicators “lead” neighborhood change? Which tend to lag behind? How do different indicators of change cluster together? For example, what factors (flows of capital and people, vacancy rates, foreclosures) are associated with trends in income diversity over time?

Key Questions

- **Assessing trajectories.** What is the nature, extent, and pace of change in Chicago and within the NCP communities — starting from some years before the launch of NCP and extending for a number of years afterward?
- **Comparing trajectories.** How do trajectories of community change vary across the different types of NCP communities? How do they compare to changes observed in selected non-NCP areas and for the city of Chicago as a whole?
- **Assessing how NCP “fits with” community trajectories.** How were NCP efforts aligned with various other forces that appear to be affecting the targeted neighborhoods?

MDRC will work with MCIC to customize a database for the community outcomes analysis. Both MDRC and MCIC understand that this database will need to reflect both traditional indicators of community change as well as some of the newer “core” concepts reflected in the quality-of-life plans. Recognizing the critical data measurement and validation aspects of the research, MDRC and MCIC are committed to exploring the availability and quality of newer data to extend the reach of the analysis and to capture the types of changes and outcomes envisioned by NCP plans and processes.

The research team will be especially attentive to changes within demographic diversity, and understanding how other indicators correlate with income diversity (see Figure 3).

Topic # 6: Exploratory Impact Analysis

As noted in the introduction, the nature of the NCP intervention precludes drawing clear and credible cause-and-effect connections between its efforts and changes in community trajectories. Without a rigorous counterfactual — a firm understanding of what would have happened in the neighborhood in the absence of the intervention — it is impossible to distinguish the effects of NCP from those of many other possible forces contributing to changes in community outcomes (such as city-wide and regional trends in housing markets, labor markets, immigration patterns, population dynamics, and crime rates, as well as various federal, state, and city policy reforms).

Ancillary to the core trajectories analysis (topic 5), MDRC will consider the question whether it is plausible that NCP may have played a role, either in supporting positive changes or dampening negative trends. For example, if implementation of NCP within a community is responsible for the transformation of significant numbers of vacant parcels into a commercial or residential

Figure 3

**Sample Indicators for Community Change Analysis
of the New Communities Program**

Concepts	Potential Measures
<i>Key desired outcome</i>	
Demographic/income diversity	Much of this analysis will focus on trends surrounding “diversity,” as this is a valued principle and desired outcome of the initiative. This broad category refers to the characteristics and composition of individuals and households in a neighborhood, including race, education, employment, and income. By tracking population flows, the research will be able to describe the variation in — and distribution of — population groups residing in the neighborhood and the characteristics of those moving in (as in homebuyers). Changes in the demographics of a place could trigger other community-level changes.
<i>Potential correlates of desired outcome</i>	
Housing diversity	Characteristics of homebuyers (in-movers) Median property values Home sales prices Homeownership versus rental properties Residential building permits
Commercial and investment diversity	Capital flows — amount and source of public and private investments Number of business starts and expansions Types/diversity of retail and business services
Neighborhood attractiveness/appeal	Personal and property crime rates Amenities — types and quality of public services

strip, the development of a large transit-oriented development, the retention or expansion of local industry, or targeted infrastructure improvements, the research might extend beyond description analysis to explore whether NCP contributes to the observed community trends. This explanatory analysis will use the three-step methodology described below.

Key Questions:

- **Impact feasibility.** Is it plausible to assess the independent effects of NCP on target neighborhoods?
- **Establishing counterfactuals.** Can one establish a convincing counterfactual, and what approaches for creating a counterfactual are most promising?
- **Explore hypotheses.** If one were able to establish a convincing counterfactual, do the observed patterns of neighborhood changes support the hypothesis that NCP efforts have improved trajectories of target neighborhoods from what they would have been in the absence of the intervention?

A first step will be to identify locations in which there were significant investments as a result of NCP processes. The next step will be to identify neighborhoods or geographic areas that were very similar to NCP on a variety of characteristics in order to develop a reasonable counterfactual. Third, the research team will conduct a form of “interrupted time-series analysis” to compare trends of the target area with those of a comparison area. This time-series analysis will consider multiple years before and after the period of an intervention.

Conclusion

While grappling with the challenges inherent in evaluations of community initiatives, this document outlines a comprehensive and compelling research agenda for NCP. As an initiative with great significance within the Chicago community development landscape, it has equally important policy implications for the community development field as a whole. As a result, the research is designed to inform policy and practice at many levels and to advance the understanding of broad urban change processes. The study starts at the level of the lead organizations operationalizing the NCP model, broadens to include interorganizational networks, attempts to capture perspectives of key stakeholders beyond NCP, and hopes to document and understand community-wide changes. Unpacking the components and the processes embedded in NCP’s theory of change promises to provide unusually detailed insights into community planning and development into community cohesion and change and into determinants of neighborhood economic trajectories.

Appendix Table: Key Topics, Questions, and Scope for the Study of the New Communities Program

<i>Major area of inquiry</i>	<i>Policy relevance</i>	<i>Key questions</i>	<i>Subquestions</i>	<i>Data sources</i>	<i>Scope of inquiry</i>
Building the capacity of the neighborhood intermediary	<p>Is it feasible to create or strengthen capacity of Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to function as neighborhood intermediaries?</p> <p>How do CBOs facilitate comprehensive community development?</p> <p>What strategies are associated with effective planning of comprehensive community initiatives and implementing their component projects?</p> <p>How do organizations change to better support community capacity-building?</p>	<p>Who are the lead agencies? What capacities do they bring at the beginning of the initiative toward implementing the NCP model, and how do they change over time?</p> <p>What strategies did LIISC and MacArthur undertake to build the capacity of lead agencies to act as convening, catalyzing, and “leveraging” agents? What role over time did LIISC play in the direct implementation of plans?</p>	<p>How do NCP agencies leverage and coordinate among actors possessed of different strengths and assets to add value to their existing efforts? How do they address racial and ethnic difference?</p> <p>What are the various leadership and accountability structures NCP creates?</p> <p>How has LIISC responded to the challenges and demands of managing and implementing NCP?</p> <p>How do groups interact with elected officials and planning institutions to bring plans to fruition?</p>	<p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Structured observations</p> <p>Document review</p> <p>Specialized focus groups</p>	<p>Neighborhoods selected for in-depth study; see proposed clustering typology</p>
Evolution of institutional networks	<p>What types of inter-organizational dynamics lead to better outcomes within community initiatives?</p> <p>How do organizational network structures vary across different types of neighborhoods?*</p>	<p>How does the institutional network of NCP organizations change or evolve over time in selected neighborhoods, and what role did NCP have in this change?</p> <p>How are networks and alliances formed across neighborhood institutions?</p>	<p>What relationships existed that did not exist before, why do groups come to the table, and what did it take to create a more functioning local network?</p> <p>How have the relationships between local organizations and community residents changed as a result of NCP? How have other institutions changed as a result of NCP processes?</p>	<p>Individual interviews</p> <p>Structured observations</p> <p>Document review</p> <p>Specialized focus groups</p> <p>Organizational network survey instrument*</p>	<p>Among neighborhoods selected for in-depth study</p>

(continued)

Appendix Table (continued)

<i>Major area of inquiry</i>	<i>Policy relevance</i>	<i>Key questions</i>	<i>Subquestions</i>	<i>Data sources</i>	<i>Scope of inquiry</i>
Strategic investments and visible improvements	What can comprehensive community development initiatives accomplish?	What investments and improvements occurred as a result of NCP? What types of NCP strategies lead to greater investments and leveraged resources? Do different strategies seem to work better in different community and organizational contexts?	Given the diverse scope, ambition, and multiple projects laid out in plans, in which content areas did projects see resources directed? From where were resources applied to complete NCP plans, and to what extent did grants leverage additional resources?	Document review, collaborative verification, analysis	All NCP neighborhoods
Stakeholder motivations, perceptions, and behavior	What is the relationship between residents' perceptions about diverse quality-of-life improvements and their decisions to invest and commit to neighborhoods*? How do community planning efforts best address issues of difference (interest, race/ethnicity, class) among local groups?	How do resident and institutional stakeholders perceive neighborhood change, and which changes are most important to their investment behavior and their long-term commitment to communities?	How do different groups (beyond NCP) view neighborhood change? How do perceptions vary by stakeholder groups? How, if at all, do patterns of perceptions vary across neighborhoods? Do stakeholders move toward a more shared vision of their community?	Specialized focus groups Individual interviews Structured observations Household and business survey instrument*	Among neighborhoods selected for in-depth study

(continued)

Appendix Table (continued)

<i>Major area of inquiry</i>	<i>Policy relevance</i>	<i>Key questions</i>	<i>Subquestions</i>	<i>Data Sources</i>	<i>Scope of inquiry</i>
Understanding neighborhood trajectories	Which indicators tend to lead to broader community changes (on a variety of dimensions), and which lag behind?	<p>What paths do NCP neighborhoods take over time, and what variables may set neighborhoods on different trajectories?</p> <p>How do NCP's efforts align with these changes?</p>	<p>What are the nature, extent, and pace of change in Chicago and within NCP communities?</p> <p>What are new ways of assessing income diversity; housing diversity; commercial and investment diversity; and broad neighborhood appeal?</p>	Database on varied neighborhood indicators	All Chicago; all NCP neighborhoods
Experimental impact analysis	What are ways of exploring the impact of community initiatives?	<p>Is it plausible to assess the independent effects of NCP on target neighborhoods? Can one establish a convincing counterfactual, and what approaches are most promising for doing so? Do the observed patterns of neighborhood changes support the hypothesis that NCP efforts have improved trajectories of target neighborhoods from what they would have been in the absence of the intervention?</p>	What are thresholds by which varied types of community improvements influence neighborhood trajectories?	Neighborhood indicators database; comparative interrupted time-series analysis	Areas where significant investments have occurred, to be determined over course of research

**Associated with household or organizational surveys not currently funded in core research.*