

Overview

Introduction

This is a demographic study of the volunteers and financial supporters of Western Wayne County Habitat for Humanity. The purpose of this study is to identify areas of support for Western Wayne County Habitat for Humanity, develop a profile of volunteers and financial supporters, identify new opportunities for courting volunteers and financial contributors as well as locating areas in Western Wayne County where needs are not being met. Using city-level data from the United States Census Bureau and other sources, this demographic analysis creates a picture of the need for basic housing in Western Wayne County - met and unmet - and the sources of support for addressing these issues - realized and unrealized.

This study is performed at a zip code level, using only the city of residence of individual (not corporate) volunteers and financial contributors. Zip code data was combined with city-level economic data from the United States Census Bureau to develop a profile of Habitat for Humanity supporters and the kinds of neighborhoods where they are found in Western Wayne County. As a zip-code level study, no consideration for differences between individual donors (beyond the city where they live) was possible or desirable. No personal information beyond address and no financial information of any kind were supplied. No private information has been or will be disclosed at any time.

In order to provide more stable results actionable in the long term, the socio-economic data from the United States Census Bureau utilized in this study is from 2007, before the recent and likely transitory economic downturn.

The author of this study, David Corliss, is a statistical scientist based in Plymouth, Michigan. With degrees in mathematics and physics, he serves as a senior statistician for Marketing Associates LLC, primarily for Ford Motor Company performing statistical evaluations of marketing campaigns and demographic studies. Additional studies and analysis have appeared in publications including *Crain's Detroit Business*. He is a member of several charitable organizations in Southeast Michigan, presently serves as President of the Plymouth Goodfellows and regularly contributes pro bono statistical / demographic studies and scientific analysis of fundraising efforts. He has volunteered on projects for Western Wayne and Washtenaw Habitat for Humanity as a construction crew member, crew chief, working with Thrivent and serving as the volunteer coordinator for a build in 2001. His most recent pro bono research project was the design, execution and analysis of a membership survey for long-term planning at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Livonia, Michigan.

Quantification of Affluence and Need

In the course of this study, two model scores have been developed to assess and summarize quantifiable socio-economic factors in communities. An Affluence Index quantifies the ability of the individual residents of a community to support charitable organizations, while a Need Index expresses the need of individuals in a community for

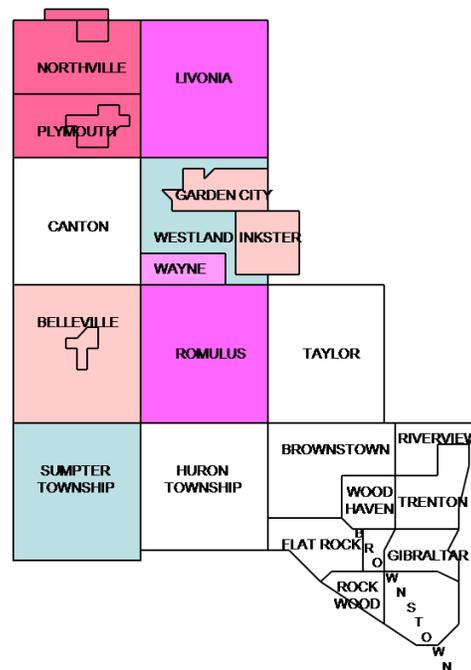
this support. The components of the Affluence Index and the Need Index are taken from United States Census Bureau, making them widely available for areas throughout the United States. As the cost of living will vary significantly between different regions of the country, the components of the Affluence and Need Indices should not be used to compare widely separated communities. Within the communities of Western Wayne County, with a fairly uniform cost of living, the Affluence and Need Indices can support a wider understanding which communities are most able to provide charitable support and where it is most needed. This can empower the charitable organization in making better decision regarding the allocation of limited resources and help to direct efforts to recruit volunteers and donors.

Community Profiles

Donor Communities

Affluent communities with a strong pattern of charitable giving may be termed *Donor Communities*. While a common perception of Donor Communities is simply as a source of revenue, many essential donations beyond the monetary will be found there as well. These communities are primary sources for skilled volunteers in management, finance, marketing, fundraising, project planning and logistics. Small business owners are able to provide skilled construction services and donations in kind such as building materials. Business executives residing in these communities can provide connections to corporate donors.

Because of their affluence, residents of Donor Communities are constantly courted by many different and worthwhile organizations. These residents will be acutely aware of the competition for charitable dollars and other resources, as many other excellent causes are constantly making their case to this same constituency. In courting donors, Western Wayne County Habitat for Humanity has both great advantages as well as significant disadvantages relative to other charitable organizations. Habitat for Humanity is universally known and respected. The excellent reputation of the organization opens doors to individual, small business, community-based Not-For-Profits such as schools and churches, and corporate donors. However, the common perception is of little need in *Western* Wayne County, with Detroit receiving much of the support that might otherwise go to address the local – and very real – need. Demonstration of this local need to the Western Wayne County constituency is of primary importance to this organization. It should not be overlooked that Detroit Habitat for Humanity receives much national support, while Western Wayne County does not. Further, our eastern neighbor has faced organizational challenges and issues, including a high default rate on mortgages. The



organizational strength and reliability of Western Wayne County Habitat for Humanity remains one of its greatest assets in developing support for its work.

In Donor Communities, most volunteers will also contribute financially at some level. Therefore, soliciting financial donations from volunteers will be effective. However, there will always be many financial donors who will not be able to volunteer. In these areas, time will always be the most valuable asset and volunteer hours will always be in short supply. Residents of Donor Communities who give this most precious asset will constitute an organization's strongest supporters.

In working with any volunteers, it is essential to solicit *Targeted Commitments*, where the task, requisite skills and time commitment are specified in advance. This is especially important for the residents of Donor Communities whose most precious commodity is their time. For example: asking a CPA for help without providing any specific parameters will often yield nothing. It would likely be much more effective to send a simple note to the President of a local community service and networking organization, requesting that it be announced at a meeting that Western Wayne County Habitat for Humanity is looking for a CPA to put in 8 to 10 hours helping prepare tax documents during the month of January. A visit in person to the meeting would be even more effective. Respect the commitment: don't plan anything else and make no other solicitation at the same time. If you go over the specific of the commitment stated in advance (in the example above, beyond 10 hours or past the 31st of January), find somebody else to help. A request for help made in this fashion - especially one made in person - is much more likely to generate positive results.

Balanced Communities

Balanced Communities will be less affluent than Donor Communities with some visible need. Balanced communities are characterized by having a *roughly equal* amount of charitable support as well as the need for that support. The local sources of support meet the local need. As a result, Balanced communities often do not show a large net outflow of charitable support to other communities, since there is visible local need. Balanced communities will tend to have high employment rates in largely blue collar jobs and High School level education will dominate. These are working, lower middle class communities regarded as poorer by residents of Donor Communities but *not by themselves*.

Despite the presence of some need in Balanced communities, charitable resources tend to be directed instead towards places where the need is still greater. Since there is no substantial flow of institutional charitable support flowing either in or out, Balanced communities can become isolated from many charitable organizations. The minimal presence of Balanced communities on either Donor or Client lists can cause these communities to be overlooked by charitable organizations when developing support.

It should be remembered that the self-perception of Balanced communities is not one of need. Since the residents of Balanced communities will generally see themselves as donors (within appropriate limits), willing to help and wanting to be courted, there is

great support to be found in Balanced communities. In addition to direct appeals for financial support, skilled volunteers may be sought in Balanced communities. Schools, churches and union locals may offer important points for rallying support.

Client Communities

Communities where the amount of need significantly exceeds available resources may be termed Client communities. While there is considerable need in Client communities, the most important identifying characteristic is a self-perception of being in need with an expectation of assistance. It is this characteristic that is critical in distinguishing Balanced communities such as Garden City, with their self-perception of being donors, with nearby Client communities Client communities such as Inkster. Purely economic factors may be among the less distinct characteristics of Client communities as sociological factors become more significant. The per capita income may not be that much lower than the lower end of Balanced communities, as Client communities are more characterized by a sharp increase in need rather than a dramatic decrease in resources. Client communities will tend to possess much higher percentages of single parent families and failure rates on standardized school performance tests. In our analysis, the most important single predictor of Client community characteristics is the difference the percentage of families and the percentage of children living below the poverty line. Measuring poverty among children in comparison to poverty in general, this factor derived from U. S. Census Bureau data represents the clearest measure of unaddressed need available in this study.

In contrast to Donor Communities, the residents of Client communities will find time cheap and money dear. As a result, volunteers will be easier to recruit than donors. If an organization focuses all of its attention on raising funds rather than donors, this can create a false impression of a lack of available support: Client communities should be actively courted as a source of volunteers.

Donors and Volunteers

Donor Profile

The financial contributors to Western Wayne County Habitat for Humanity bear a strong stamp of the affluent communities in the Northwestern corner of Wayne County, with two-thirds of donors residing in Northville, Plymouth, Canton and Livonia. Residents of these communities tend to be affluent, with a median household income of about \$75,000. This allows for considerable disposable income, enabling them to support favorite charities. While affluent, households in these neighborhoods are generally not independently wealthy. They could be described as the *Working Rich*: highly educated with white collar jobs, often in high tech, management or both with many hours spent each week on the job. Consequently, there are many available donors who will be able to contribute financially but will find it difficult to volunteer. Efforts to find donors, therefore, need to extend beyond the volunteer base into the community at large.

The median age in the primary donor communities for Western Wayne County Habitat for Humanity is 40, above the state (37) and national (35) medians. The majority of

donors will be from the “Baby Boomer” generation and the leading edge of “Generation X”. While the “Builder” generation – older than “Baby Boomers” and now fairly elderly – tend to respond to charities based on a sense of commitment and responsibility, the subsequent generations that make up the largest part of today’s donor and volunteer base are likely to consider and compare a number of charities and look for more clearly enunciated reasons for contributing to a specific organization. The reality of fund raising today is competition for the charitable dollar and, with many charitable dollars available in Northwestern Wayne County, potential donors are courted often. They will be aware of many charities and will respond best to those with a well-established reputation for successful accomplishment on behalf of their cause.

Volunteer Profile

On the basis of their demographics, volunteers may be divided into two categories: those that resemble financial donors and those that resemble clients. In this study, 71.6% of financial contributors had zip codes from Donor Communities while only 7.9% were from Client Communities. By contrast, 21.2% of volunteers came from Client Communities, surpassing the number from Balanced communities. While a decided majority of volunteers will come from Donor Communities, Balanced and Client Communities should not be overlooked when recruiting volunteers. While many organizational volunteers may come from donor communities, these represent only a small portion of the overall population. Those who recruit other volunteers may be inclined to recruit only within their own communities, significantly diminishing the organization’s base of support.

Balanced communities in particular may represent a very underutilized source of volunteer support. Within the Western Wayne County Habitat for Humanity communities, Garden City and Romulus warrant special attention. While Huron and Brownstown Townships along the southern edge of Western Wayne County have the characteristics of a Balanced community on a per-person basis, the small population and lack of city centers in these areas present less of an opportunity for development of support.

Going Forward

Finding More Donors and Volunteers

The constituency of Western Wayne County Habitat for Humanity reflects its traditional donor base on the northern edge of Western Wayne County much more strongly than its full geographic base. This study indicates that the Downriver communities within the Western Wayne County District may offer a great opportunity from development of the donor and volunteer base. The low poverty rates seen in Gibraltar and Woodhaven mark them in particular as Donor Communities that should be more actively approached by Western Wayne County Habitat for Humanity.

Placement Communities

In seeking location for building houses, the basics economics of the situation at hand: the least expensive lots meeting the physical requirements will likely be selected. However, these lots generally be found within Client communities. Given the socio-economic challenges these communities face, placing clients in these locations may be of questionable benefit.

In contrast, communities at the lower end of the Balanced community socio-economic segment - Belleville, Westland and Brownstown Township - may be termed *Placement* communities. These areas, with their somewhat stronger schools, city services and support structures provide additional benefits outweighing the higher cost of land acquisition.

Taking a family out of an apartment in a Balanced community such as Garden City and assisting them to acquire a house of their own in a very needy community such as Inkster, with over-burdened local infrastructure and failing schools, may actually increase the challenges the family must face. It is therefore recommended that Western Wayne County seek to acquire building sites in Placement Communities mentioned above, as the somewhat increased cost of the lots will be more than offset by the greater and more sustainable benefits to the client.