

An aerial map of a neighborhood with a grid of streets. Several properties are highlighted in green, and others are outlined in red. Street names visible include Friendship Ave, S Evelyn St, S Atlantic Ave, Harriet St, Corder Way, Liberty Ave, S Winfield St, S Archer Way, S Sallen Ave, and S Van Ness St. The map is overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow banner at the top.

# Knowing Your Neighborhood

Tackling Vacant Properties by  
Improving Access to Data

# Presentation Goal

- Identify effective strategies for successfully collecting data
- Introduce different sources of information about vacant property



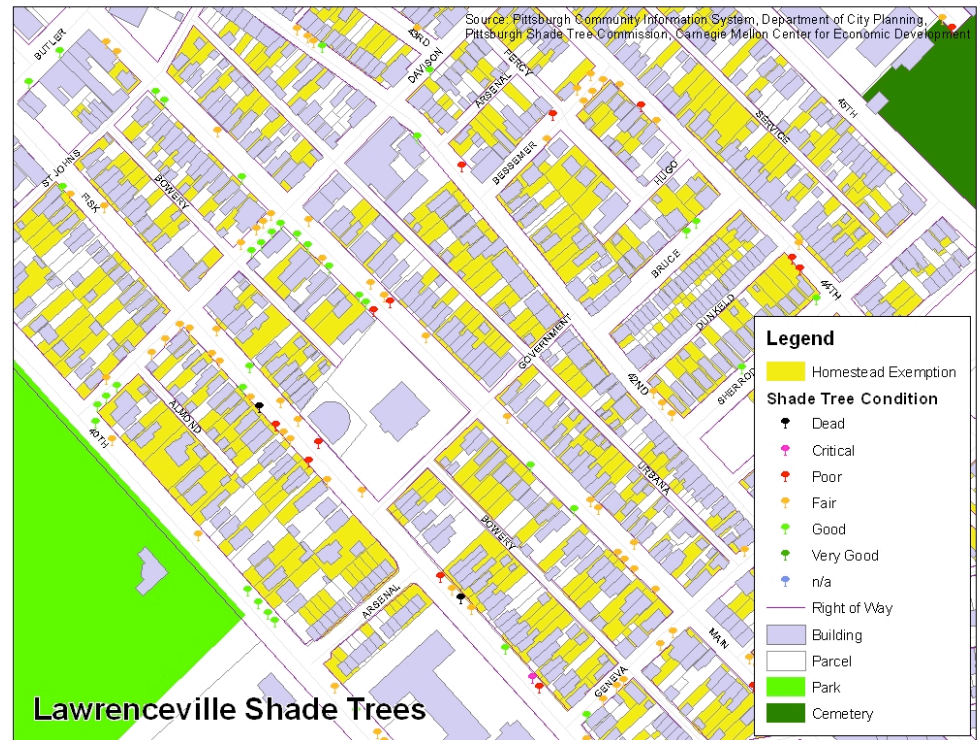
# Pittsburgh Neighborhood and Community Information System

- Collect **integrated information on community conditions**, and provide it to local stakeholders
- Use **address-level data** collected from multiple data sources on an ongoing basis
- **Empower community leaders** through the regular, direct use of information on a wide array of topics and issues



# Before You Start, Some Questions to Consider

- Why do you need information?
- What data will best relate to your key issues?
- Who has the information that you need?
- How are you going to use the data to make an impact?





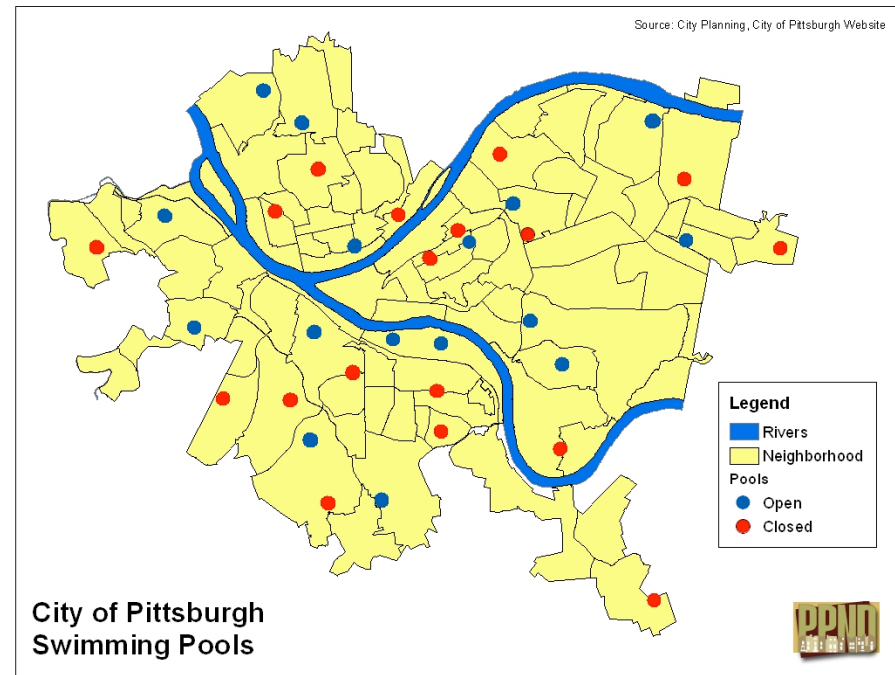
# Making an Impact with Information

- Target interventions
- Monitor local conditions
- Improve planning
- Evaluate impacts
- Advocacy



# Three Major Barriers to Sharing Information

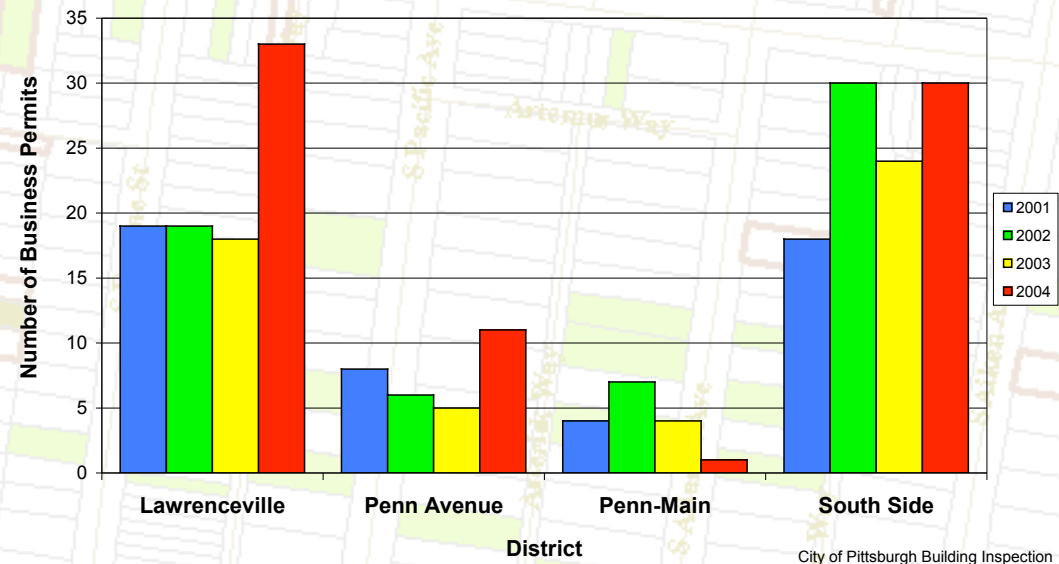
- Bureaucratic reluctance
- Lack of trust
- Perceived burden on data providers



# Overcoming Bureaucratic Reluctance Requires Help and Communication

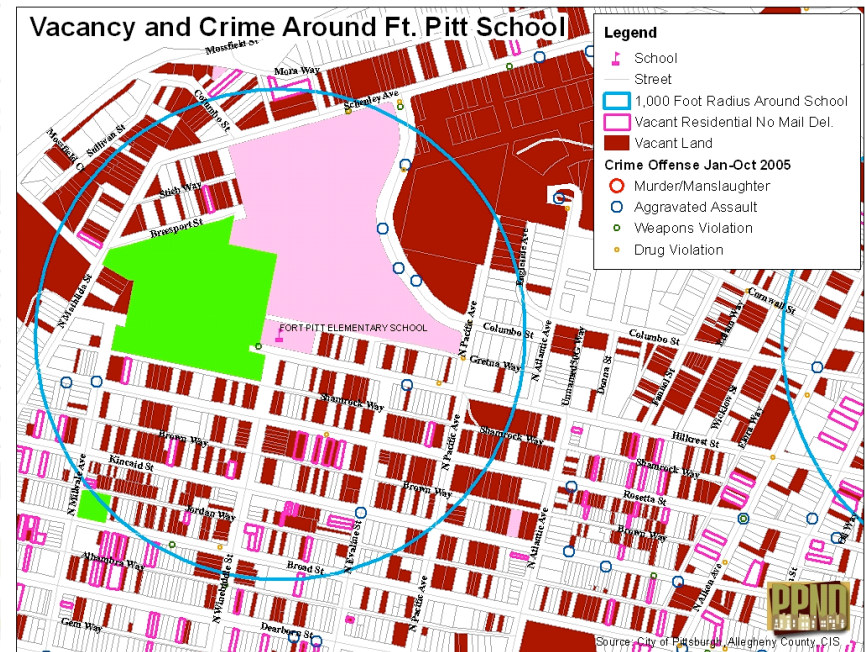
- Champions within the City and funding community were essential
- Responsibilities clearly defined through a data sharing agreement.

Number of Building Permits Issued  
2001-2004



# Building Trust Overcomes the Reluctance to Share

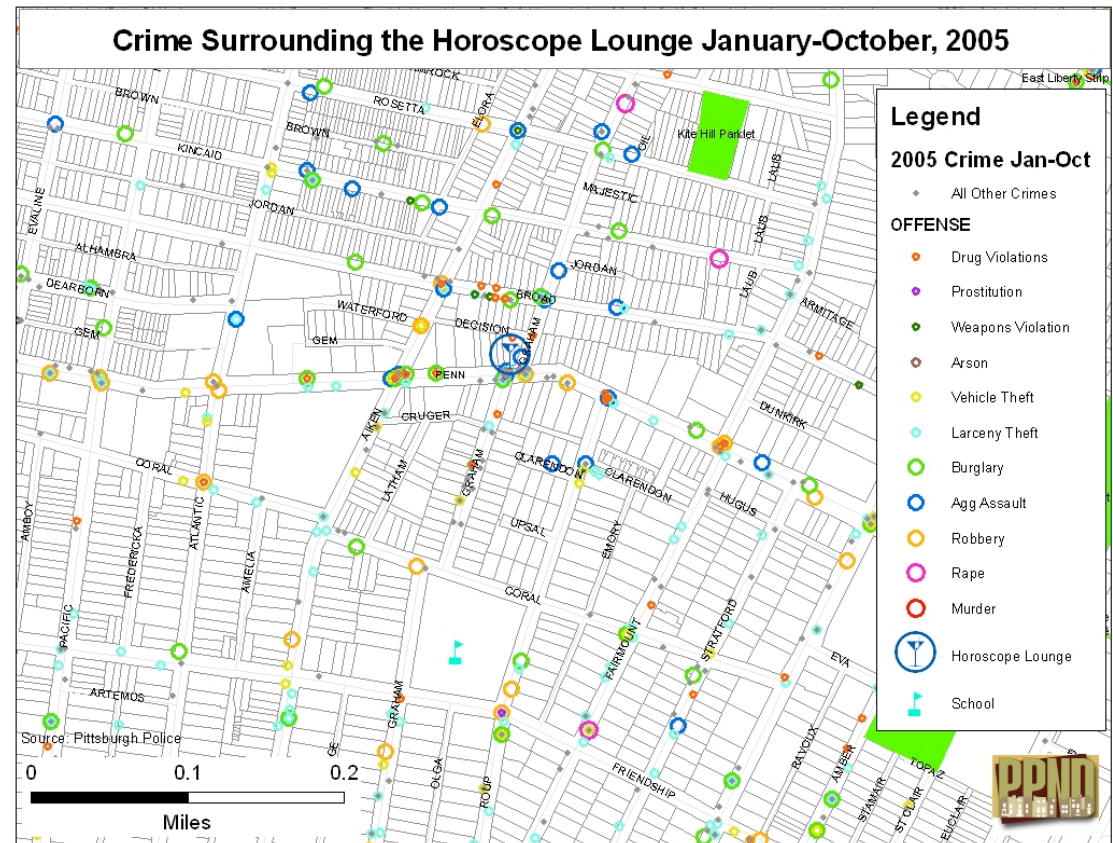
- Broad-based, respected project team
- Develop personal relationships at all levels of government
- Allow data providers to set terms of use





# The Benefits of Sharing Outweigh the Burden

- Make a compelling case
- Streamline number of data requests
- Return improved data to the source
- Break down information silos

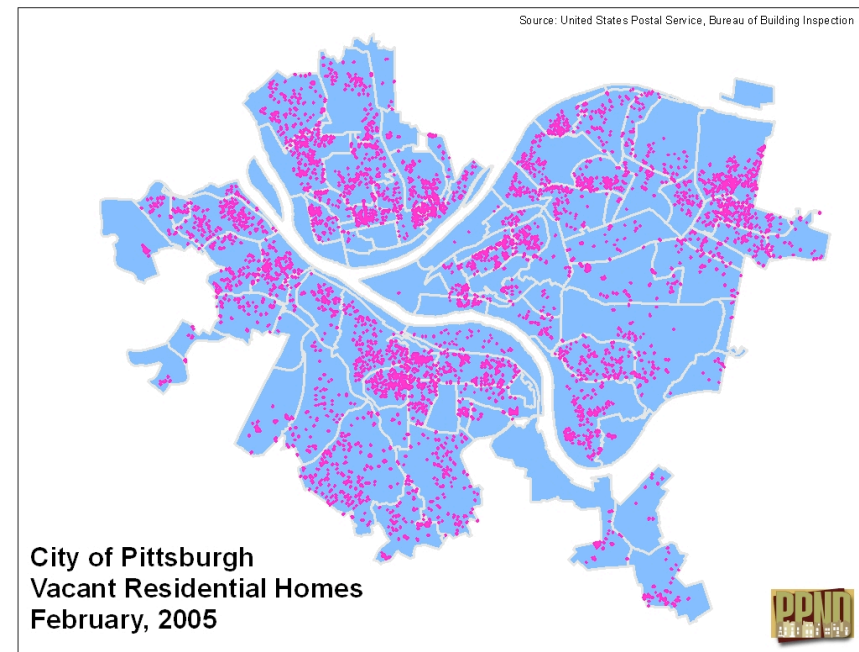


# Data Collection: Lessons Learned

- Have plenty of time and patience
- Build a broad-based, respected and capable team
- Personal relationships are vital
- Having a champion is a tremendous help
- Stay focused and flexible

# Two Major Methods of Collecting Information

- Follow the paper trail of administrative records
- Personal observation



# Administrative Paper Trails

Anytime there is an...

- Application
- Violation
- Permit
- Observation
- Report
- Payment (or non-payment)
- Legal Filing
- Utility Shutoff

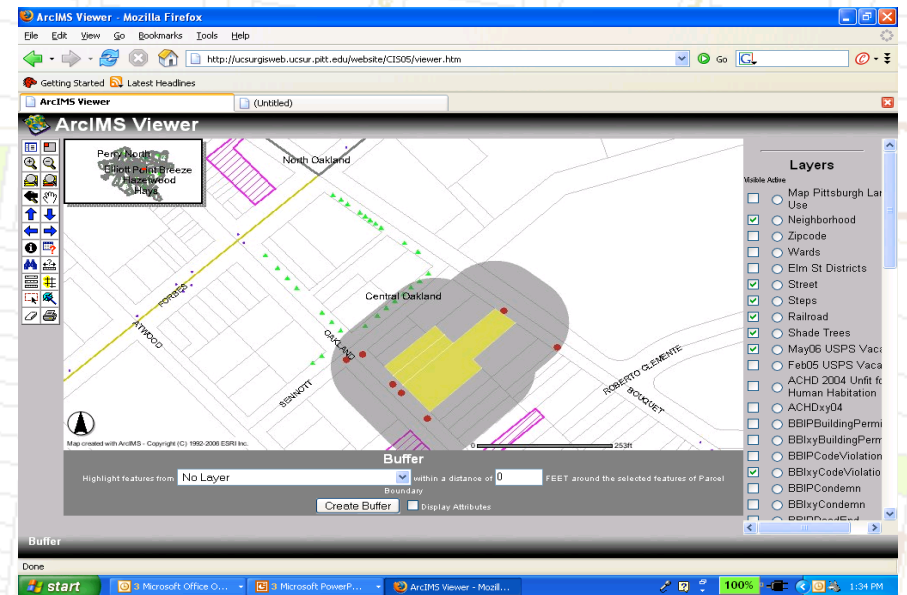
...there will probably be a record





# Administrative Data Challenges

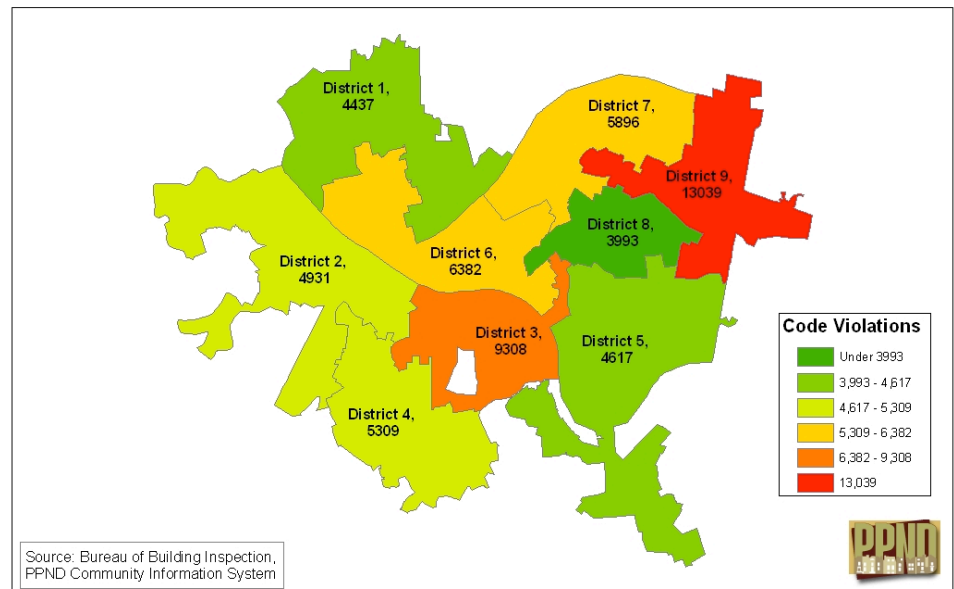
- Cooperation of data creators
- Confidentiality
- Data quality
- Data limitations
- Ability to understand, use, and interpret



# Personal Observation

- Collect data based on what is seen or observed
- Either experts or residents can collect information
- Collecting data can empower or organize residents
- Consider the needs of everyone

Building Code Violations by Council District  
City of Pittsburgh, June, 2001-September, 2004



# Challenges in Observation

- Organizing the community
- Standardizing metrics
- Objective collection (idiot-proof the instrument)
- Validation of data
- Training
- Data entry
- Ability to understand, use, and interpret
- Action-oriented intelligence



# Key Sources for Vacancy Data

## Administrative Sources

- Tax assessment
- Undeliverable mail
- Utility shutoffs
- Low utility use
- Building code violations
- Sealed properties
- Tax delinquency
- Social service records

## Observational Sources

- Visual Survey
- Resident complaints
- Trash not put out for collection



# For More Information

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