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Creating a WhoData Application for “Smart” Public Participation

In the face of opposition against top down approaches, planning has begun to change its traditional approach to ensure public participation (S. Arnstein, 1969). Planning adopted bottom up approaches (E. Talen, 2000) and began to incorporate stakeholders’ opinions in decision making. To meet the complex demands of stakeholders, planners need to be well informed about neighborhood change using contemporary data and technological modern methods.

This aim of improving collaboration between planners and community residents, with the help of technology, is the motivation behind creating this demonstration project “WhoData Quality of Life Survey” Smartphone app. WhoData is a public participation geographic information systems (PPGIS) project that provides mapping analysis and community development tools primarily in the greater New Orleans area (Sieber 2006; Thompson, 2011).

This research aims to evaluate the experience of traditional data collection methods using pen and paper with that of using a Smartphone. UNO MURP 4081/5081 Information Technology for the Planning Profession students will conduct a traditional quality of life survey in the Uptown Triangle Neighborhood Association community with residents of the Black Pearl. Furthermore, the community-university team will use the data collection application and will to evaluate its efficiency, ease of use and accuracy. The type of data collected may include identification of blighted properties, building condition, potholes, and trash/tire dumping. By conducting this research, an assessment on whether this type of technology, through development, deployment and evaluation, becomes an effective and more accessible tool for collecting quality of life neighborhood data.