

## Data Memo

In our reading and analysis of neighborhood plans from the most recent Seattle neighborhood planning process, we observed wide variation in the usage of data by plan authors. Some neighborhoods employed a broad range of facts and figures while others used factual information to a more limited extent. The neighborhoods were free to use data to the degree that they saw fit; however, the City provided each neighborhood with a basic set of data relating to the following subject areas: demographics, zoning regulations, employment, development capacity, health, and capital facility projects. Overall, data used most consistently by the neighborhoods included information pertaining to demographics, employment, housing, zoning, and transportation. Data used most infrequently included information pertaining to capital facilities, utilities, and cultural resources.

For the upcoming round of neighborhood and/or sector planning, the above categories of data will still be useful to the neighborhoods. However, the City should consider providing the following additional information:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Type of Data</b>
Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Median income</li> <li>• Population growth estimates</li> </ul>
Urban Village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing / Future open space</li> <li>• Urban Village / Urban Center definitions</li> </ul>
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing zoning classifications and regulations, land use, historic districts and landmarks, critical areas</li> <li>• Proposed land use</li> <li>• Green streets policy</li> </ul>
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transit ridership (e.g. origins and destinations)</li> <li>• Commute information (travel times and modes, origins, and destinations)</li> <li>• Existing/Planned bike, pedestrian, transit routes, sidewalk inventory</li> <li>• Safety and collision statistics</li> <li>• Road capacity</li> </ul>
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing housing quality/condition</li> <li>• Affordability statistics (e.g. median rent, median house value)</li> <li>• Current/Future densities</li> <li>• Residential buildable lands analysis</li> </ul>
Capital Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed new or expanded facilities</li> <li>• Forecast of future need</li> </ul>
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surface permeability percentage by parcel</li> <li>• Average consumption of City utilities by neighborhood</li> <li>• Forecast of future demand</li> </ul>
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobs by industry, employment rates, number of businesses, number of jobs, regional and City job share, and growth projections</li> <li>• Percent of residents employed according to sector and neighborhood</li> <li>• Commercial buildable lands analysis</li> </ul>

Neighborhood Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous neighborhood plans</li> <li>• Explanation of goals, objectives, and roles of neighborhood plans in relation to City’s comprehensive plan</li> <li>• Description of previous processes (i.e. who was involved, how plans evolved, and timeframe)</li> </ul>
Health and Human Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statistics (e.g. Health/Fitness, Homelessness, Food Security, and Crime)</li> <li>• Freeway Air Pollution Sheds (i.e. areas affected and air quality levels)</li> <li>• Food systems</li> </ul>
Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historic buildings and criteria for designation</li> <li>• Inventory of arts community, churches, cultural and community centers</li> <li>• Education data (number of schools, children, school performance, graduation rates, and student demographics)</li> <li>• Local history</li> </ul>
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stormwater, sewage and waste generation data</li> <li>• Street tree inventory</li> <li>• Definition of critical areas</li> <li>• Carbon footprint of neighborhood</li> <li>• Topography</li> <li>• Freeway Air Pollution Sheds</li> <li>• Natural hazards</li> </ul>
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City budget information, funding streams, and constraints</li> <li>• City assistance programs (e.g. Neighborhood Matching Grants, tax incentive programs, and the Neighborhood Traffic Circle Program)</li> </ul>
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definitions and examples of emerging concepts such as sustainability, New Urbanism, and Smart Growth (e.g. LEED standards, Seattle Green Streets, and Sustainable Seattle Indicators)</li> <li>• Information on other City plans such as the Climate Action Plan and Wastewater Systems Plan</li> </ul>
Concurrency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State-level policies and ordinances (e.g. State Environmental Policy Act and Growth Management Act)</li> <li>• Regional plans (e.g. Puget Sound Regional Council’s Vision 2040)</li> <li>• Existing citywide infrastructure plans (e.g. Seattle Transit Plan, Transportation Strategic Plan, Bicycle Master Plan, and Pedestrian Master Plan)</li> <li>• Policy overviews on the different regulatory codes (e.g. zoning, land use codes, and design guidelines)</li> </ul>

In general, the plans that used data in developing their goals and objectives tended to provide a more convincing argument and basis for their recommended action plans. In order to ensure that data are successfully utilized in the neighborhood planning process, the City should consider the following measures:

- Provide approachable data summaries in multiple formats: visual diagrams, presentations, approachable written summaries, etc.;

- Demonstrate how certain data may help planning to meet overarching City goals (e.g., sustainability);
- Advise neighborhoods on the importance of consistency with City and regional plans;
- Help neighborhoods determine what data sets are necessary to use before and during the planning process;
- Assist neighborhoods gather additional data (especially neighborhood-specific data) as necessary by either gathering the data or providing methodological support;
- Ensure that data sets are current and sources are transparent (e.g. offer web-based databases to provide up-to-date access);
- Explain technical information so that it can be understood by a lay audience;
- Translate data summaries into languages other than English when necessary;
- Ensure that data provided to the numerous neighborhoods are consistent and universal;
- Advise neighborhoods on how to use data effectively, especially for drafting current condition reports and formulating goals;
- Give examples of other neighborhoods' successful use of data;
- Offer to evaluate the neighborhoods' interpretation of data for technical accuracy;
- Encourage neighborhoods to explicitly cite data in the support of goals or policies; and
- Provide a data checklist to ensure neighborhoods have considered all data (this may also be useful in determining what data are useful in future planning processes).

Planners who are assisting with community-based plans should act as a facilitator and advisor— whose job is to aid community members in interpreting, accessing, and appropriately utilizing data. Strengthening communication between the City and neighborhoods as well as involving different communities in an ongoing process of determining useful data will help to improve the next phase of planning. Planners, active citizens, and city staff can all play a key role in actuating an effective planning process.