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## An Attitude Survey of Residents of Omaha's Neighborhood Housing Services Program Area

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AN ATTITUDE SURVEY OF  
RESIDENTS OF OMAHA'S  
NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING SERVICES  
PROGRAM AREA

by  
R.K. Piper



Center for Applied Urban Research  
University of Nebraska at Omaha



January 1983



"AN ATTITUDE SURVEY OF RESIDENTS OF OMAHA'S  
NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING SERVICES PROGRAM AREA"

Background/A Comprehensive Needs Assessment Approach

In the Omaha Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) program, as in the planning and policymaking stages of any revitalization project, a realistic and comprehensive understanding of the targeted area is an essential element and a logical starting point.

In order to target subareas for concentrated program effort within the larger NHS area and thereby produce the greatest and most visible impact, a refined and accurate description of the physical characteristics of the area was obtained through field inspections conducted by staff from the Center for Applied Urban Research during the spring and summer of 1982. The physical conditions inventory describes the housing stock, environmental factors, and public facilities (including streets, sidewalks, sewers, parks, recreational facilities, etc.) in the area.

To provide a more complete understanding of the area and its needs, knowledge of residents' attitudes and priorities for improvements was also required. In order to obtain this information and to provide a vehicle for increased citizen participation in the project, a survey instrument was constructed and distributed by community volunteers and via mailings. In addition to providing an opportunity for citizen participation in the program, the survey process also served to advertise the presence of the NHS program in the

area through the attachment of a cover letter to the questionnaires. This letter contained information concerning the location, phone number, and services of the NHS office. Also included was a form that residents could fill out and return to NHS to indicate their interest in working on committees or obtaining NHS program services.

### Methodology

The initial door-to-door distribution of questionnaires was accomplished by volunteers from subareas B, C, and K (see map 1) working in their respective subareas. Approximately 600 questionnaires (250 in B, 185 in C, and 165 in K) were distributed in this manner. Subarea B received the largest number of returns (28), but only a total of four questionnaires were returned from subareas C and K.

Due to the low rate of return and inclement weather conditions, approximately 300 questionnaires with postage-paid return envelopes, were mailed to owner/occupant residents in subareas F and G. Twelve questionnaires from subarea F and 31 from subarea G were returned, for a total of 75 questionnaires out of some 900 distributed or a response rate of about 8 percent. While this rate was too low to be representative, the survey process and its results provide some interesting and usable information about the area, its residents, and their perceptions.

### Survey Results/Demographics

This report summarizes the findings of the combined responses from residents of subareas B, F, and G, which were

the three subareas selected for concentrated program effort by the NHS targeting committee.<sup>1</sup> Survey respondents who indicated that they currently owned or were buying their homes totaled 95 percent. In addition, 42 percent said that they had lived in the area for 15 or more years, 26 percent between 10 and 14 years, 8 percent between five and nine years, 16 percent between two and four years, and 7 percent less than two years.

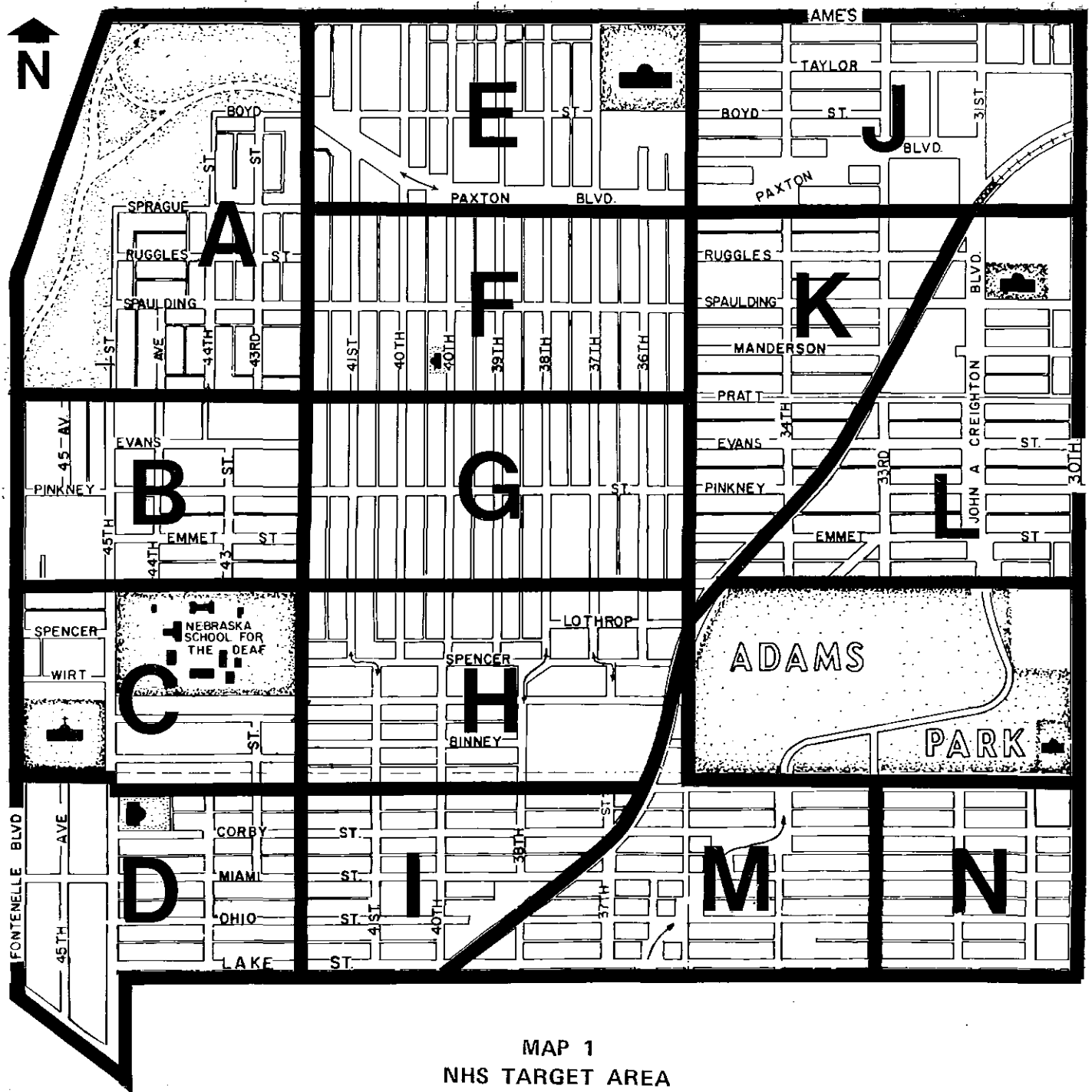
More females (53 percent) than males (47 percent) were heads of households. About half (51 percent) had one working adult, 23 percent had two working adults, another 23 percent had none, and 4 percent had three. About half (51 percent) of the households had annual incomes of less than \$10,000, 32 percent had incomes ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000, 12 percent were between \$20,001 and \$30,000, 4 percent fell in the \$30,001 to \$40,000 category, and 2 percent were more than \$40,000.

#### General Attitudes Toward the Area

A large majority (88 percent) of the respondents indicated that they thought that people in the neighborhood were friendly and neighborly while only 12 percent thought they were not. Two-thirds (67 percent) felt that the area had a few maintenance problems, but that they were not serious, while 30 percent said the area had serious problems, and 4 percent felt that it was well-maintained.

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<sup>1</sup>Survey results were tabulated based on 28 questionnaires from subarea B, 23 from subarea G, and eight from subarea F.



MAP 1  
NHS TARGET AREA  
(14 Subareas A - N)

Exactly half of the respondents indicated that they believed that the neighborhood was in worse condition now than it was five years ago, while 43 percent felt that it was about the same, and 7 percent thought it was better. Looking toward the future, 44 percent said that they believed that five years from now the neighborhood would be in about the same condition, 41 percent said it would be in worse, and 14 percent said it would be in better.

When asked to consider all aspects of their area and state their level of satisfaction with the neighborhood as a place to live, 54 percent said they were somewhat satisfied, 36 percent were very satisfied, and only 11 percent were not satisfied. A summary of survey results is presented in the Appendix.

#### Rating Neighborhood Conditions

Residents were asked to rate neighborhood conditions as either excellent, good, fair, or poor in 19 categories. This section highlights these results and identifies those categories that seemed to indicate that a consensus existed among residents about other generally good or poor conditions.

Control of stray pets in the area was rated as poor by 58 percent, and 54 percent said that the maintenance of vacant lots and alleys was poor. Another 33 percent said this latter aspect of the neighborhood was only fair. Slightly less than half (49 percent) rated the availability of family restaurants as poor, and 47 percent rated the control of pests (rats, mice, insects, etc.) as poor. Ratings of fair



were given to the condition of the housing by 58 percent; supervision of youth, 51 percent (in addition to 27 percent who said it was poor); condition of sidewalks, 50 percent; and street conditions, 48 percent. On the positive side, the following categories were rated as excellent or good: garbage collection, 75 percent; street lighting, 65 percent; and the availability of grocery stores, 59 percent.

#### Priorities for Improvement

After rating various aspects of their neighborhood, residents were next asked to list those areas that should have the highest priority for improvement. The condition of the housing stock was listed the greatest number of times (27), followed by maintenance of private property (25), maintenance of vacant lots and alleys (22), control of stray pets (19), control of pests (rats, mice, insects, etc.) (15), police protection and crime prevention (13), and snow removal (13). Table 1 shows the responses for all categories.

#### Household Repairs

Residents were next asked to list those repair items they felt would most improve their houses. Repairing or replacing windows, storm windows, doors, or screens, and repairing porches or steps were listed the greatest number of times (25 each). Other categories frequently cited were improving the driveway or garage (21), painting or wallpapering the interior (18), fixing the plumbing (15), adding insulation (14), updating weather stripping (14), repairing or replacing gutters (14), and installing siding (14). Table 2 shows the responses for all categories.

TABLE 1

## Neighborhood Conditions of Highest Priority for Improvement

Neighborhood Condition	Number
Condition of the housing	27
Maintenance of private property	25
Maintenance of vacant lots and alleys	22
Control stray pets	19
Control of pests (rats, mice, insects, etc.)	15
Police protection of crime prevention	13
Snow removal	13
Condition of streets	10
Control parked or junk cars	10
Youth supervision	9
Availability parks, recreation facilities	4
Condition sidewalks	4
Overgrown vegetation	4
Traffic control	3
Availability grocery stores	3
Litter	2
Friendliness of neighbors	2
Street lighting	1
Garbage collection	1
Availability shopping opportunities	1
Cleaning storm sewers	1
Noise control	1
Odor control	1
Increase parking	1
Total	192 <sup>a/</sup>

<sup>a/</sup>This represents the total number of times an item was listed as a priority for improvement, not the number of respondents.

Residents were also asked whether they felt their homes were in need of more exterior or interior improvement. About one third (35 percent) said that the exterior needed more improvement, 33 percent said the interior needed more, and another 33 percent said the need for improvement was about the same for both.

When asked to rate the overall condition of their houses, 49 percent rated them as good, 39 percent as fair, 10 percent as poor, and only 2 percent rated them as excellent.

## Repairs Which Would Most Improve House

Repair	Number
Repairing/replacing windows, storm windows, doors, or screens	25
Repairing porch or steps	25
Improving driveway or garage	21
Painting or wall papering interior	18
Fixing the plumbing	15
Adding insulation	14
Updating the weatherstripping/caulking	14
Repairing/replacing gutters	14
Installing siding	14
Updating electrical wiring	12
Painting the exterior	12
Repairing plaster or drywall	11
Solving foundation problems	11
Repairing/replacing the roof	9
Landscaping, yard improvement	5
Add rooms	4
Repairing/replacing the heating system	3
Total	227 <sup>a/</sup>

<sup>a/</sup>This represents the total number of times a repair item was mentioned, not the number of respondents.

Loans for Improvements

Residents were next asked how willing they would be to borrow money to improve their properties if loans were available at below market interest rates. Two-thirds (66 percent) said they would be very willing, 16 percent somewhat willing, and 18 percent were not willing to borrow money.

When asked if they had borrowed money for home improvements in the past, 72 percent indicated that they had not, and 28 percent indicated that they had.

Of those who had not borrowed, 29 percent said they did not because such a loan was unnecessary, 20 percent said they couldn't afford it, 17 percent said that interest rates were too high, and 24 percent indicated that they had not been

able to or did not feel they could obtain a loan for various reasons including lack of credit other financial considerations, or a lack of procedural knowledge.

### Summary

An inventory of physical conditions and a survey of resident attitudes, including the identification of priorities for neighborhood improvement, were part of a comprehensive needs assessment conducted for the Neighborhood Housing Services program area. Of those responding to the survey, 95 percent were owner-occupants, 68 percent had lived in the area for 10 or more years, and only 7 percent had lived in the area for less than two years.

A large majority (88 percent) of the respondents thought that people in the neighborhood were friendly and neighborly, 36 percent said they were very satisfied with the neighborhood as a place to live, and only 11 percent said they were not satisfied.

Improving the condition of the housing stock was cited most often by residents as being the highest priority for improvement in the neighborhood. Others in order of frequency included maintenance of private property, maintenance of vacant lots and alleys, control of stray pets, control of pests, police protection and crime prevention, and snow removal.

Residents felt that repairing or replacing windows, storm windows, doors, or screens and repairing porches or steps would improve their homes the most. These were followed by

improving the driveway or garage, painting or wallpapering the interior, fixing the plumbing, adding insulation, updating weather stripping, repairing or replacing gutters, and installing siding.

About one-third of the residents indicated that their homes were in need of more interior repairs, another one-third thought more exterior repairs were needed, and the final one-third thought interior and exterior repair needs were about the same. About half of the residents rated the overall condition of their homes as good, 39 percent rated them as fair, and only 10 percent rated them as being in poor condition. About two-thirds of the respondents indicated they would be very willing to borrow money for home improvements if loans at below market rates were available, and an additional 16 percent said they would be somewhat willing to do so.

Appendix



Neighborhood Housing Services Attitude Survey

Subarea \_\_\_\_\_

As part of the Neighborhood Housing Services program, we are attempting to find out what residents think about the area. Your answers to the following questions would be very helpful to us.

1. Thinking about your immediate neighborhood, do you think people are friendly and neighborly? 88% (43) 12% (6)  
Yes — No —

2. Overall how would you rate the appearance of the area?

- 4% (2) a) the area is well maintained
- 67% (38) b) the area has a few maintenance problems, but they are not serious
- 30% (17) c) the area has serious problems

3. Do you believe that five years from now your neighborhood will be in better, about the same, or worse condition than it is now?

- 14% (8) a) better
- 44% (26) b) about the same
- 41% (24) c) worse

4. Do you believe that your neighborhood is in better, about the same, or worse condition than it was five years ago?

- 7% (4) a) better
- 43% (24) b) about the same
- 50% (28) c) worse

5. How would you rate the following aspects of your neighborhood?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
a) condition of the housing	<u>0 (0)</u>	<u>40% (21)</u>	<u>58% (31)</u>	<u>2% (1)</u>
b) friendliness of neighbors	<u>12% (7)</u>	<u>49% (28)</u>	<u>33% (19)</u>	<u>5% (3)</u>
c) availability of parks and recreation facilities	<u>6% (3)</u>	<u>28% (15)</u>	<u>32% (17)</u>	<u>34% (18)</u>
d) condition of streets	<u>2% (1)</u>	<u>29% (16)</u>	<u>48% (27)</u>	<u>21% (12)</u>
e) condition of sidewalks	<u>0 (0)</u>	<u>31% (18)</u>	<u>50% (29)</u>	<u>19% (11)</u>
f) maintenance of private property	<u>0 (0)</u>	<u>32% (18)</u>	<u>45% (25)</u>	<u>23% (13)</u>
g) maintenance of vacant lots and alleys	<u>2% (1)</u>	<u>11% (6)</u>	<u>33% (18)</u>	<u>54% (30)</u>
h) street lighting	<u>10% (6)</u>	<u>54% (31)</u>	<u>26% (15)</u>	<u>9% (5)</u>
i) garbage collection	<u>26% (15)</u>	<u>53% (30)</u>	<u>18% (10)</u>	<u>4% (2)</u>
j) snow removal	<u>0 (0)</u>	<u>40% (23)</u>	<u>35% (20)</u>	<u>25% (14)</u>
k) traffic control	<u>0 (0)</u>	<u>47% (25)</u>	<u>34% (18)</u>	<u>19% (10)</u>
l) police protection and crime prevention	<u>4% (2)</u>	<u>26% (14)</u>	<u>42% (23)</u>	<u>29% (16)</u>
m) control of stray pets	<u>0 (0)</u>	<u>22% (12)</u>	<u>20% (11)</u>	<u>58% (32)</u>
n) control of pests (rats, mice, insects, etc.)	<u>2% (1)</u>	<u>22% (13)</u>	<u>29% (17)</u>	<u>47% (27)</u>
o) youth supervision	<u>2% (1)</u>	<u>20% (11)</u>	<u>51% (28)</u>	<u>27% (15)</u>
p) control of parked or junk cars in the area	<u>3% (2)</u>	<u>43% (25)</u>	<u>29% (17)</u>	<u>24% (14)</u>
q) availability of family restaurants	<u>2% (1)</u>	<u>18% (10)</u>	<u>31% (17)</u>	<u>49% (27)</u>
r) availability of grocery stores	<u>23% (13)</u>	<u>36% (20)</u>	<u>32% (18)</u>	<u>9% (5)</u>
s) availability of other shopping opportunities	<u>4% (2)</u>	<u>30% (16)</u>	<u>37% (20)</u>	<u>30% (16)</u>

6. Of the above items in question 5, which three (3) do you feel should be the highest priority for improvement?

- a) See Table 1
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

7. Are there any other problems or needs which should also be a priority for improvement in your neighborhood?

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_



8. Considering all aspects of your area, how satisfied are you with your neighborhood as a place to live?

36% (20) a) very satisfied      54% (30) b) somewhat satisfied      11% (6) c) not satisfied

9. Do you rent or own your home?      5% (3) a) rent      95% (56) b) own

10. Below is a list of possible household repair items. Check the three which you feel would most improve your house.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <u>20% (12)</u> a) painting the exterior   | <u>20% (12)</u> j) updating the electrical wiring          |
| <u>22% (13)</u> b) installing siding   | <u>5% (3)</u> k) repairing/replacing the heating system    |
| <u>30% (18)</u> c) painting or wallpapering the interior                         | <u>25% (15)</u> l) fixing the plumbing                     |
| <u>15% (9)</u> d) repairing/replacing the roof                                   | <u>24% (14)</u> m) adding insulation                       |
| <u>42% (25)</u> e) repairing/replacing windows, storm-windows, doors, or screens | <u>24% (14)</u> n) updating the weather stripping/caulking |
| <u>17% (10)</u> f) repairing plaster or drywall                                  | <u>24% (14)</u> o) repairing/replacing gutters             |
| <u>42% (25)</u> g) repairing porch or steps                                      | <u>36% (21)</u> p) improving the driveway or garage        |
| <u>19% (11)</u> h) solving foundation problems                                   | <u>24% (14)</u> w) other, please specify _____             |

See Table 2

11. Would you say your home is need of more interior or exterior improvement?

33% (15) a) interior      35% (16) b) exterior      33% (15) c) about the same

12. How would you rate the overall condition of your house?      2% (1) a) excellent      49% (28) b) good  
39% (22) c) fair      10% (6) d) poor

13. Have you ever borrowed money for home improvements?

28% (16) a) yes  
72% (41) b) no

If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

14. At present, how willing would you be to borrow money to improve your property if loans were available at below market interest rates?

66% (37) a) very willing to borrow money to improve house and property  
16% (9) b) somewhat willing to borrow money to improve house and property  
18% (10) c) not willing to borrow money to improve house and property

15. Please indicate the age and sex of each member of your household:

	Age (fill in age)	Sex (circle one)	
Head of household	_____	47% (26) Male	53% (29) Female
Other adult	_____	Male	Female
Other adult	_____	Male	Female
Other adult	_____	Male	Female
Children	_____	Male	Female
Children	_____	Male	Female
Children	_____	Male	Female
Children	_____	Male	Female

16. Marital status:      14% (8) a) single      40% (23) b) married      24% (14) c) divorced  
22% (13) d) other

17. How long have you lived at your present address?      < 2      2-4      5-9      10-14      > 15  
7% (4)      16% (9)      8% (5)      26% (15)      42% (25)

18. How many working adults live in your household?      0      1      2      3  
23% (13)      51% (29)      23% (13)      4% (2)

19. What is the annual income of your household?      51% (29) a) less than \$10,000      32% (18) b) \$10,000-\$20,000  
12% (7) c) \$20,001-\$30,000      4% (2) d) \$30,001-\$40,000  
2% (1) e) over \$40,000

THANK YOU!

