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# METHODOLOGY

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## Overview

In 2013, ProsperUS Detroit approached MCR to complete a commercial market analysis within three Target Areas (TAs) including Southwest Detroit, Cody Rouge, and the North End. MCR worked in partnership with ProsperUS and its community partners in each TA to develop a planning process to conduct the commercial analysis in 2014. ProsperUS community partners are community based organizations within a ProsperUS TA that help people access the training and resources they need to become business owners or entrepreneurs, as well as leaders in the revitalization of their neighborhoods.

Copies of the materials used during this process can be found in the Appendix.

Critical components of the planning process included:

- Community Partner Interviews & Feedback at ProsperUS Quarterly Convenings
- Selection of Commercial Study Areas (CSA) within each TA
- Design of Customer Questionnaire and Structure Survey
- Administration of Customer Questionnaire and Structure Survey in each CSA
- Focus Groups with Community Members and Business Owners in each TA
- Business Owner Interviews in each TA
- Data Entry and Analysis (quantitative & qualitative)

## Community Partner Interviews & Feedback

Recognizing the vital role that community partners play in each TA as well as the important and on-going planning and programming taking place, face-to-face interviews were conducted with community partners in each TA in January and February of 2014. The purpose of the interviews was to understand their current economic development and commercial revitalization activities. Feedback from

THIS RESEARCH WAS  
A COLLABORATIVE  
EFFORT BETWEEN  
MICHIGAN COMMUNITY  
RESOURCES AND  
PROSPERUS DETROIT

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### /GLOSSARY TERM/

**Target Area (TA):** a defined geographic area in which ProsperUS Detroit concentrates its programming.

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### /GLOSSARY TERM/

**Commercial Study Area (CSA):** a portion of one or more commercial corridors located within a Target Area; where Customer Questionnaires and Structure Surveys were administered.

| TARGET AREA (TA)   | COMMERCIAL STUDY AREA (CSA)                   |
|--------------------|---|
| Cody Rouge         | Joy Rd<br>Warren                              |
| Grandmont Rosedale | Grand River                                   |
| Lower Eastside     | Villages<br>Jefferson Chalmers                |
| North End          | Hope Village<br>Central Woodward              |
| Southwest          | Michigan Ave<br>Vernor/Springwells<br>Hubbard |

the community partners shaped the deliverables of this analysis in an effort to build on existing initiatives in each TA and address community partners' current programmatic needs. Community partners also identified the active commercial cores within each TA, which informed the selection of CSAs within each TA.

Recommended CSAs were presented to community partners for feedback at a ProsperUS Quarterly Convening in the spring of 2014. Following the convening, MCR and ProsperUS incorporated the feedback from the community partners to inform the final selection of CSAs within each TA. In addition to the feedback from community partners, external data sets like the 2010 U.S. Decennial Census and 2012 5-Year American Community Survey, Hoover's Business Data, and Detroit Future City employment centers and commercial corridor recommendations were also considered in CSA selection. A total of seven CSAs were chosen.

In the summer of 2014, ProsperUS added two additional TAs and expanded the scope of the commercial market analysis to include Grandmont Rosedale and the Lower Eastside. Discussions were held with the community partners in each new TA to determine appropriate CSAs for the analysis. Three additional CSAs were chosen for a total of ten CSAs.

Building on local plans and surveys previously conducted by MCR and others, as well as research of national case studies, MCR designed a Customer Questionnaire and Structure Survey to administer in each CSA. Drafts of both tools were presented to community partners at a ProsperUS Quarterly Convening in the summer of 2014. Feedback from the community partners was incorporated to finalize survey tools that were designed to be comprehensive and able to be administered quickly.

| CSA SELECTION |   |
|---------------|---|
| Step 1:       | Input gathered from community partners on the active commercial corridors within their Target Area during the community partner interviews.                     |
| Step 2:       | Draft CSAs presented to community partners for discussion at a ProsperUS Quarterly Convening.   |
| Step 3:       | Final CSAs selected by ProsperUS and MCR using feedback from community partners, as well as external data sets and the Detroit Future City Strategic Framework. |

## Administration of Customer Questionnaire & Structure Survey

Administered in the summer of 2014 within each CSA, the Customer Questionnaire was intended to gain feedback on the needs and expectations of residents and customers who shop in each CSA. The anonymous questionnaire contained eight questions regarding desired businesses, shopping frequency, business satisfaction, and customer demographics. The purpose of the questionnaire was to capture a snapshot of those shopping in each CSA, including both residents living within the TA and individuals from outside the TA coming to the CSA to visit businesses. It was not meant to be representative of the views of the entire neighborhood.

A total of 18 volunteer surveyors including MCR staff, ProsperUS staff, and community partners administered the Customer Questionnaires. A training session was held for volunteer surveyors, providing them with a surveyor script and talking points, a matrix explaining the reasoning behind each question on the questionnaire, and a matrix explaining the terms used in the questionnaire.

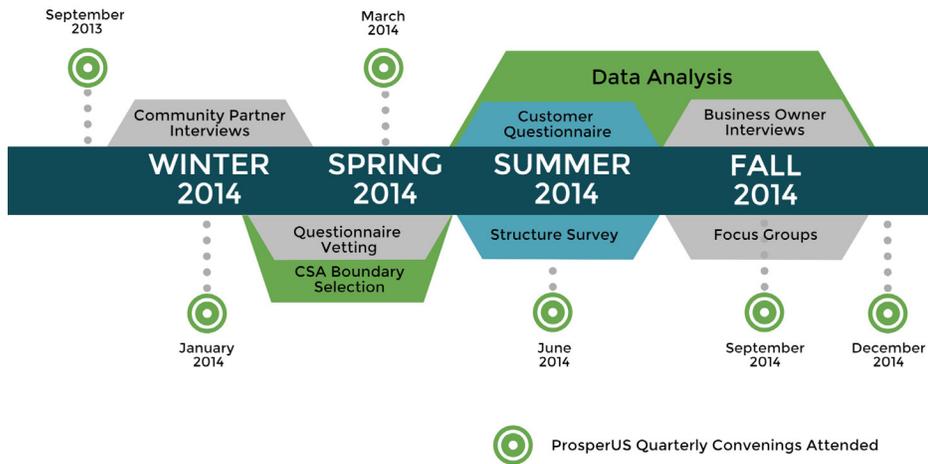
Prior to surveying in each CSA, letters were delivered in person to each business owner explaining the project and providing them with a copy of the questionnaire. Business owners were encouraged to contact MCR with any questions or concerns. Business owners were also informed results of the questionnaire would be shared with them upon completion of the analysis.

During each session of administering the questionnaire, volunteers were assigned to a team of at least two people and given a portion of a CSA to cover. In addition to

### /GLOSSARY TERM/

**Community Partner:** a community-based organization working in one of ProsperUS Detroit's five targeted areas (TA) that provides training locations and/or other resource support for entrepreneurs active in the ProsperUS Detroit program.

# PROCESS TIMELINE



Community Partners provide feedback through participatory exercises at ProsperUS Quarterly Convenings. **PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHIGAN COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

questionnaires in English and Spanish, each surveyor was given a map of the CSA, a copy of the surveyor script and talking points, the logic matrices from the surveyor training, and a copy of the letter given to business owners. Each team walked along the corridor and approached customers outside businesses as well as individuals walking on the sidewalks or waiting in gathering places like bus stops. A target goal of three questionnaires per business was used as a guideline for surveyors. However, the number of surveys collected per business varied depending on the level of customer traffic and whether or not businesses enforced no loitering or soliciting policies. In most cases, the surveyor filled out the questionnaire for the customer to ensure that all questions were completed accurately. In some instances customers completed the questionnaire independently based on their personal preference. Customers were asked to name a specific business that they had visited recently to keep in mind while responding to the questions. Surveyors recorded the name of that business on the questionnaire. An online version of the Customer Questionnaire was made available to customers as well. On average, the survey took 5 minutes to complete.

Over the course of seven weeks, 861 questionnaires were collected across all ten CSAs. Questionnaires were collected Monday-Friday between the hours of 9am and 6pm. Between 4-7 survey sessions were completed in each TA depending on the size of the CSAs, weather, and the number of surveyors available. Spanish speaking surveyors administered a Spanish language questionnaire in Southwest Detroit as needed.

A Structure Survey was also completed in the summer of 2014 to track 11 characteristics including occupancy, condition, parking, walkability, bikeability, and others for each structure and appropriate parcels in every CSA. The survey was administered by MCR staff working in teams of at least two walking along each CSA. One surveyor served as the recorder across all CSAs for consistency. Business names and addresses were also recorded for every business within each CSA to provide a current map and roster of existing businesses. A total of 1,759 parcels were surveyed.

## /FACT/

Customer Questionnaires were available in both English and Spanish.

## Focus Groups with Community Members & Business Owners

In the fall of 2014, focus groups were held in every TA to provide additional insight and feedback on the data collected through the Customer Questionnaire and Structure Survey. In each TA, one focus group was conducted with community members and stakeholders within the TA and a second focus group was completed with business owners operating within or near each CSA. Each group was intended to have approximately five participants to ensure that everyone would have time to provide substantial feedback. A total of ten focus groups were conducted with 41 participants.

Community partners co-hosted the focus groups in each TA. The expertise of the community partners was used to determine the best location, time, and day of the week for optimal participation within their neighborhood. Each focus group was open to the public, but targeted outreach was completed for key stakeholders. Flyer invitations were created for each focus group and distributed by community partners. In addition, flyers were delivered in person to businesses within each CSA prior to the business owner focus group.

Both the community member and business owner focus group contained an introduction to MCR and ProsperUS; an explanation of the purpose of the focus group; a review of the data collected for the TA including a map of the CSAs, census demographic information, occupancy maps, and other structure data for each CSA; and a summary of the data collected through the Customer Questionnaire. Participants were then invited to ask questions regarding the data and share their initial reactions. Targeted discussions specific to each audience were then facilitated to vet trends in the data and identify potential biases in the survey methodology. Business owners were asked for their feedback on repeat customers and market area, customer satisfaction, and their needs as a business owner. Community members were asked to share their thoughts on transportation and pedestrian access as well as shopping habits and needs within the TA. Finally, participants were also provided with comment cards to share any written feedback they may not have been comfortable sharing with the group as a whole.

## Business Owner Interviews

In the fall of 2014, interviews were conducted with a total of eight business owners across each TA to capture more in depth feedback and learn more about their unique experience as a business owner. Interviewees were identified through the focus groups as well as canvassing the CSAs while surveying over the summer. Each interview consisted of ten questions regarding the business owner's background, business history, goals, challenges, and assistance received from others to sustain their business.

## Quantitative & Qualitative Data Analysis

Upon completion of collecting all data mentioned above, MCR began the process of analyzing data in the early fall of 2014. Analysis involved identifying trends in both customer responses and parcel data, including desired businesses and existing businesses, vacancy rates, and areas of opportunity for new small business owners and entrepreneurs.

At a ProsperUS quarterly convening in the late fall of 2014, community partners were presented preliminary analyzed data from MCR's commercial market analysis and were asked, "How can you, the community partners, use this data?" Community partners were given post-it notes to brainstorm and record their ideas. These ideas were then categorized according to five data use themes that emerged from their feedback – "Retail Attraction and Marketing for New Businesses," "Inclusive Training," "Public Shopping Guide," "Map or Mobile App," "Site Selection," and "Community Visioning." Each attendee was then asked to vote for the two data use themes that would be the most valuable to them. "Retail Attraction and Marketing for New Businesses" and "Inclusive Training" for entrepreneurs and community partners emerged as the top two themes. The priorities highlighted by the community partners further informed the data analysis.



Community members provide feedback during one of ten focus groups held across five Target Areas.  
**PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHIGAN COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

## Methodology Biases & Assumptions

Several potential biases exist within MCR's methodology. These include:

- **Questionnaire Collection Times:** Questionnaires were collected Monday-Friday between the hours of 9am – 6pm. This may have excluded shoppers who are more likely to shop at other times or on the weekend.
- **Questionnaire Collection Season:** Questionnaires were conducted in the summer. This methodology assumes that the shopping habits and customer profiles of respondents within the summer are applicable across all seasons.
- **Questionnaire Collection Method:** Questionnaires were administered while walking the corridor which may have led to over-sampling of customers walking to businesses or at gathering places along the corridor.
- **Age of Questionnaire Respondents:** A minimum age of 15 was established for customers completing the questionnaire, assuming that individuals begin to have purchasing power at that age.

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