Local Area Data Analysis Using OnTheMap
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Recently, we’ve had the opportunity to present LED OnTheMap to groups of economic developers and data users. Classes like these allow us to share our knowledge of OnTheMap while at the same time learning more about its potential applications. Class participants ask wide-ranging questions, the answers to which can often be applied to a variety of real-life situations. The following is one example from the classroom of OnTheMap’s practical capability as a data-analysis tool.

Grant Applications

Grant applications typically require a certain amount of statistical data to support claims of the necessity of grant monies. For this example, we want to show how many low-income workers are living along a specific street to highlight the area’s need for economic improvements. OnTheMap provides data for several geographies down to the census block group, so first determine which geography will provide the data you want or if an advanced freelance selection is best. Freelance selections can be imprecise, whereas a selection based on layers (e.g., block groups) may more accurately pinpoint the desired data. To select a street, this example will use a layer selection to select all block groups along Central Avenue.

Here are directions to select the Central Avenue corridor in Albuquerque:

1. Go to lehd.did.census.gov.
2. Type in “87123” (a zip code along Central Avenue) and click Search.
3. Click on the Selection tab on the top left. If Route 66 (Central Avenue) is not visible, zoom in and drag the map to show it.
4. Click on Draw Line beneath Drawing Tools, and under Add Layer Selection, change the drop down box to Census Block Groups.
5. Using your mouse, draw a line along Route 66 from I-40 down to I-25.
6. Click Confirm Selection.

After the area selection is complete, select Perform Analysis on Selection Area from the results box that appears in the map. A work area profile will show how many jobs are in the area, and a home area analysis will show how many workers are living along that stretch. To show data about only low-wage workers, change the selection under the Area Profile to display the labor market segment $1,250 per month or less from the Analysis settings box. Following are results from an analysis of this area, which consisted of 461 census blocks. Your results may differ slightly, depending on the number of census blocks included within the line’s perimeter.

In 2009, there were 24,081 jobs in the census block groups along Central Avenue from Tramway to I-25, 25.6 percent of which were low-wage jobs paying $1,250 per month or less. There were 9,359 workers living in that area, with 30.4 percent earning $1,250 or less.

There were several areas in southeast Albuquerque along Central east of Louisiana that had large concentrations of low-wage workers. Albuquerque as a whole had only 25.6 percent of workers in that segment.

While OnTheMap does indicate the number of workers earning $1,250 or less in the area, it does not answer questions about poverty rates or show total income for housing units. LED’s OnTheMap data show wage earnings and not income for individual workers.

The key advantage of OnTheMap lies in the application’s ability to quickly generate a large amount of data for even very small geographic areas. In the example of a grant application, this information can then be combined with Census Bureau data on income and housing, for example, to facilitate a comprehensive analysis.