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## Groups seek Detroit data

### Skillman, Kresge fund \$1.9M effort to centralize information so leaders can make better choices.

Mike Wilkinson / The Detroit News

Two area foundations are underwriting a \$1.9 million effort to collect and analyze data on topics as varied as health, education, crime and recreation in an effort to help neighborhoods and communities make positive changes in Metro Detroit.

Grants from the Kresge and Skillman foundations will allow the nonprofit City Connect Detroit to start up the data center with the help of Kurt Metzger, a demographer formerly of the United Way of Southeastern Michigan. The goal is to take data typically collected and stored with multiple agencies and bring it together.

"We need to be able to bring that data together so we can make better decisions," said Geneva Williams, president and CEO of City Connect.

For instance, the group could study whether there's a connection between low academic performance and high levels of lead in neighborhood homes. It could help target where lead-abatement resources would have the most impact, she said.

The creation of the Detroit Area Community Indicators System Center is the evolution of an idea that's been bouncing around Detroit for a few years. It is the direct heir to the Detroit Data Partnership, which provides data through an online portal ( [www.datadetroit.org](http://www.datadetroit.org)) and was also funded in part by the Skillman Foundation.

Skillman spokesman William Hanson said the foundation believes D-ACIS (pronounced: D-Access) will help leaders at all levels make the proper decisions.

"It's going to help us be smarter with the work we do in Detroit," Hanson said. "It's harder to help people if you don't know the lay of the land."

Williams said the information will be taken from a broad range of sources and organized geographically.

The goal is to aid not only civic leaders but neighborhood leaders, too, she said.

She gave the example of a neighborhood concerned about recreational activities for youth. D-ACIS could help by showing an age breakdown of the region, allowing the group to tailor its efforts to activities that are age-appropriate, while showing where parks, athletic fields and courts already exist.

The information would, she said, answer the question "what does my neighborhood look like?"

"It's really putting the information in the hands of people," she said. "We know money helps but it's people who solve problems."

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