Dear Matthew Bloch, Shan Carter, and Alan McLean

I am writing to offer some feedback and suggestions for your interactive visualization project - “Mapping America: Every City, Every Block” (link) that was provided in the New York Times. First and foremost, I thought this project was a very succinct, clear display that any person could easily process and understand. There were certain elements that made it easy for the viewer to create immediate connections from the information offered, and the sheer volume of these different data sets really made exploration of your project a delight. There are certain aspects that were well done, and others that I hope to make some suggestions for future applications.

One of the strengths in this project is really the color blocking and distribution of information. Because the colors chosen are bright and varied, it is easy to identify trends and patterns in the dots.

The navigation mechanism through the different sets of data available is another great strength. For instance, the drop down box is intuitive and easy to navigate. It also controls the amount of information the reader has to consider when viewing the project. By dividing this information, the reader was able to consider only what they valued as most important and relevant to their interests.

There are, however, some suggestions I would like to make: For example, the visualization starts with New York City as the default display, at a resolution such that each data point represents a set of 200 people. When the user searches for a map of any other city, the scaling readjusts without any warnings or notifications so that each data point represents a set of 500 people. While this can be manually adjusted to a consistent scaling chart, it is a change that the reader could easily overlook. I suggest keeping the scaling consistent between searches and cities so that this information can be intuitively compared without unnecessary interference.

A similar suggestion for congruity is that there were sometimes regions of the map that contained colors that were not noted on the legend. While it was obvious that the white areas were regions where census information was not obtained, it should be included on the legend for the sake of consistency.

Finally, the tool that allows users to zoom in and out of the map view also controls the scaling of the data points. In the future, it may be beneficial to allow for separate manipulation of these variables; the reader can then draw more connections between the data given, population density, racial distribution, and other such variables.

Overall, your project is a great, thorough interactive visualization. The color choices allowed for a fast pattern recognition. The navigation not only prevented the reader from being flooded with too much information, but was also simple to use and understand. While there are some changes that can still be made, this was a strong, informative project. Thanks for your time,

Sincerely,

Christine Lu