

# Street addressing and the management of cities

In most industrialized countries, having a physical address is something that we take for granted. In many developing countries and in some emerging economies, physical addresses do not exist outside the centers of major cities and there is no countrywide comprehensive system of street and property numbering and mapping. In the last decades, the vast urban growth has led to situations where nobody knows who and what is located where. This has a detrimental impact on the provision of public services and it affects the ability of businesses to operate efficiently. It also denies millions of people the right to become citizens. Addresses and mapping are a key infrastructure for the social and economic development of a country and are fundamental for people, governments and businesses.

Street addressing provides an opportunity to (a) create or update a map of the city that can be used by different municipal units, (b) conduct a systematic survey that collects targeted information on the city, its services, businesses and population and (c) set up a database on the built environment that is, too often, unavailable. Information collected is associated with an address, thus making it easily locatable. This database is key in countries with rapidly growing urban areas where local authorities have lost control of the urbanization process.

Street addressing has several applications:

- For the public, it creates a sense of citizenship and civic identity and it makes the city more user-friendly by (a) enabling people to get around the city more



easily, (b) facilitating the delivery of emergency and other services, (c) locating urban facilities.

- For local governments, it helps (a) to spatially locate infrastructure, services, public facilities and municipal assets and facilitate the programming of recurrent maintenance (e.g. solid waste management, street maintenance), and the planning of new investments and (b) to improve local tax collection. It is also a key component of upgrading projects. An address system can help define occupancy and give residents in squatters a sense of intermediate rights based on occupancy rather than ownership, engendering more substantial property improvements and economic development as well as better integration into the urban fabric.
- For the private sector, it enables utility concessionaires to manage their networks more effectively in terms of service maintenance and fee collection. It has also proved to be very effective for business development.

## Our program

Based on the World Bank publication *Street Addressing and the Management of Cities*, WBI Urban Practice has developed an e-learning product. This course provides (a) an introduction to street addressing, (b) discusses the various practices and applications for city management, such as resource mobilization, land management, service delivery, and utility management and (c) provides a detailed methodology on how to design and implement a street addressing program at the city level. Designed for local government officials, private operators, and training institutions, the course is operationally oriented and hands-on.

The course includes four “how to” modules.

- Introduction to street addressing
- Street addressing applications
- Designing a street addressing program
- Implementation and maintenance

Its content includes step-by-step methodology, case studies, video interviews, web discussion forums moderated by experts, basic web tools for mapping, and real-life application activities. The course is delivered through the Internet, offering 30 hours of on-line instruction distributed over 6 weeks. It requires a dedication of approximately 6 hours per week and is open to city managers and practitioners.

## Partners

- **Training institutions:** Monterrey Tec Mexico translated the course in Spanish for a delivery in Latin

America. Other partnerships are under development in Asia, Africa, Middle East, and Balkans.

- **Professional organizations:** Universal Postal Union, Addressing the World Program, Associations of Local Governments

## Timeline

The e-learning course was piloted in December 2009 for participants from Gaza, Ghana, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Albania, Mongolia, India, Pakistan, Colombia, Mexico, El Salvador, and the United States. It was offered again in April 2010 to 200 participants from all regions of the world.

The course will be offered twice a year through the World Bank’s e-Institute. Offerings will also be proposed through regional partners.

## Related Link

e-book: *Street Addressing and the Management of Cities* (available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese)

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