

## Jim's Tool Box

### A Great Discovery Tool in MissionInsite



MissionInsite is the new resource for leaders in congregations in the West Ohio Conference to use for demographic information about the neighborhood around their church or in an area they are targeting for ministry. Click [HERE](#) for information about how to register to use MissionInsite. The service is free to all congregations in the West Ohio Conference (it is another example of your apportionment dollars at work).

I have written two other articles about MissionInsite. They are available on the Tool Box archive page on the website. You can find them by clicking [HERE](#) if you want to learn more about many of the features of MissionInsite.

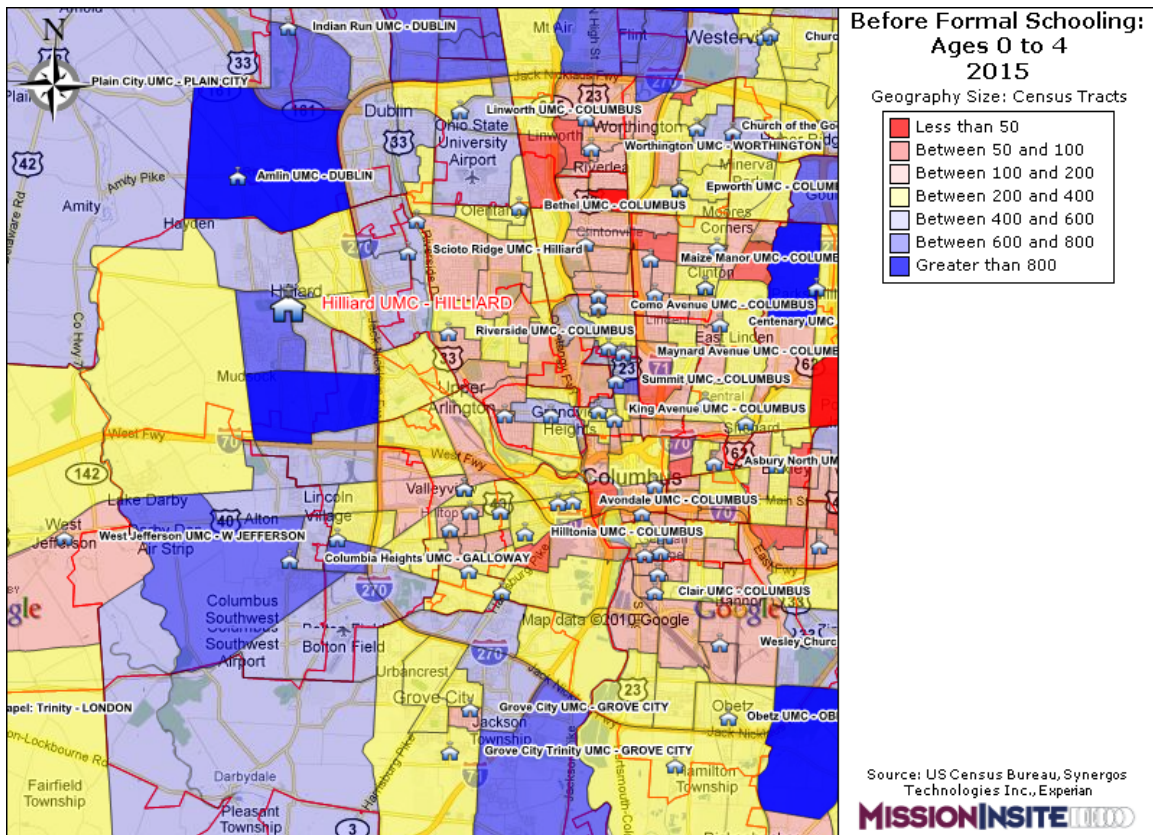
In this article that is the last in a series on MissionInsite, I want to focus on the **Theme Map** tool in MissionInsite. The folks at MissionInsite talk about how their product helps leaders in “mission discovery.” The Theme Map tool is a mission discovery tool in which a number of different demographic descriptions can be laid out on a map of a metropolitan area (like Columbus) or in the target area for a ministry or in the church’s neighborhood or community. There are more categories for Theme Maps than I can detail here. Here are a few categories:

- Population Trends
- Primary Mosaic (lifestyle) Group
- Over age 15 never married and single
- Singles and Young Families, ages 25-34
- Household by income levels
- Families with income below the poverty level
- Family households: Married couples with children
- Family households: Single Fathers (or Mothers) with children
- Population diversity showing groups such as Hispanic or Latino: Cuban origin, Hispanic or Latino: Mexican origin, Asian: Asian Indian, Asian: Cambodian
- Housing units
- Viewpoint – for example the number of folks that would say “My faith is really important to me.”

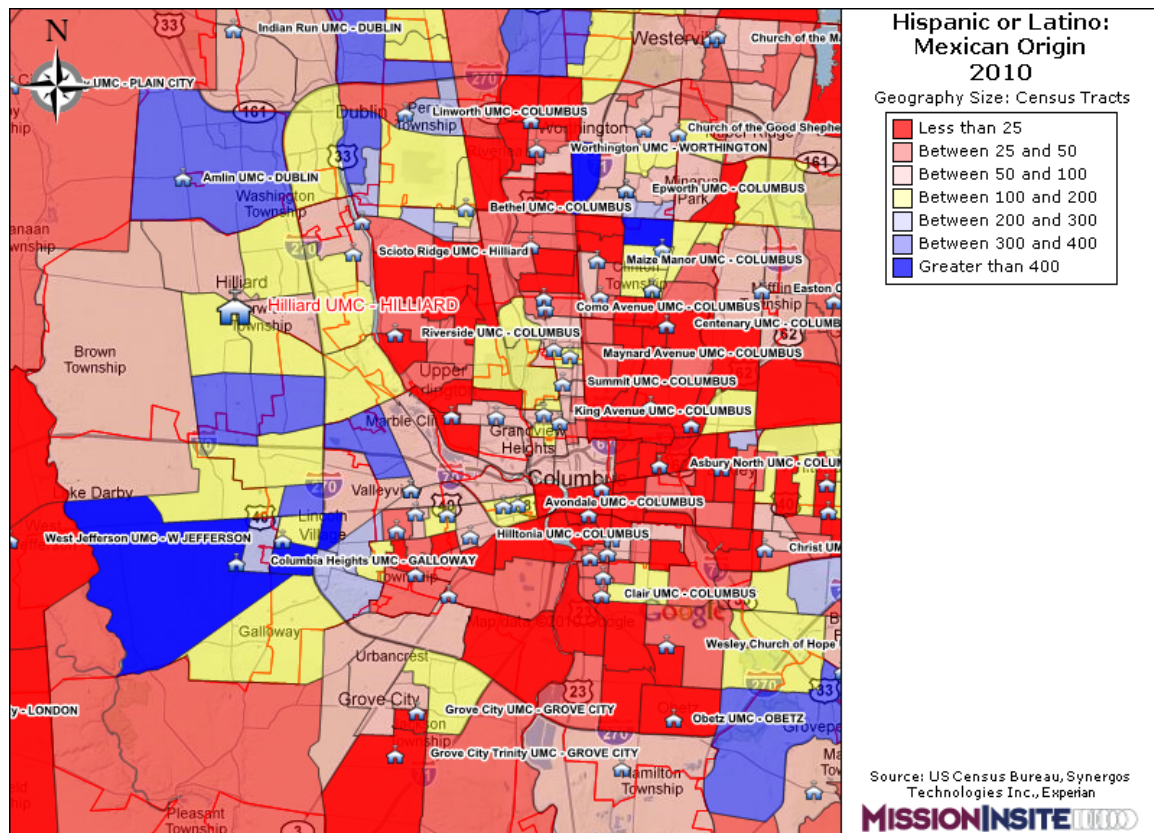
Maps can be drawn up for most of these categories that show the numbers or percentages in 2000, 2010, or projected in 2015, or even 2019. It is possible to see the numbers, percentages, or the percentage change in the categories, too.

It is best to use the Theme Map tool while looking at a metropolitan area of city or the entire area of a smaller town. Most of the trends and information available under the Theme Maps show up at the census tract or census block group size. Larger areas such as counties or states should be examined at the zip code level.

Here is a map that shows the projected number of children between birth and four years of age in 2015. The map shows these numbers in census tracts in the Columbus metropolitan area. While the map is too small to see much detail, you will note that the dark blue areas show the highest concentration of where these young children will be found in 2015. What are the implications of this information for congregations as they plan for the future? On the west and northwest side of Columbus, you will see two census tracts on the west side that are expected to have more than 800 of these young children in 2015. There are certainly implications for ministry for congregations located in or near those census tracts if they were to plan for the kinds of ministries to children and families that would reach the families of these children. That is one example of the mission discovery possible through the Theme Map.



Here is one more example of a Theme Map topic. This map shows the number of Hispanic or Latino population in census tracts in the Columbus metro area for 2010.



Again the dark blue areas are the areas where the highest number of Hispanic persons of Mexican origin are found in the Columbus area. For a church or for a district seeking to target a ministry to Hispanic persons this information can be very helpful.

One of the powerful features of the Theme Map is that the key that accompanies the map (it shows the variation in numbers by different colors) can be edited. The numbers can be increased to show more of the variation found in the census tract or zip code that is being shown on the map. This can be done by clicking on “edit values” on the Legend of the map.

And just as I have imported these maps into this article, it is possible to export an area of the map and save it as a picture or image. The picture can then be inserted into a document such as an article or a report. The image can also be placed in a PowerPoint presentation.

There is a very helpful video about the Theme Maps under the “Help” menu on the MissionInsite website. It demonstrates in a much more graphic way what I have been attempting to describe about the power of this tool.

I would encourage you to try out this powerful feature as you explore mission opportunities and mission discovery in the neighborhood or community around your church. You might be surprised at what you find. Your congregation might find new ministry opportunities that you never knew existed!