



## **Neighborhood Assessments**

Having an overall sense of your neighborhood needs is vital to a neighborhood association. A good neighborhood assessment focuses on neighborhood characteristics, conditions, appearances, and other issues that are important to your organization. Information from an assessment will give you an overview of your neighborhood, which will help effectively address community needs and improve quality of life.

Neighborhood assessments can be accomplished from behind the windshield of a vehicle or by walking. Whether you're starting an all-encompassing campaign to address street lights in your community, or simply looking for good places to paint murals to stimulate community pride, a windshield or walking survey is a good way to begin your effort.

### **Neighborhood Needs**

One goal of a community assessment is to develop an informed understanding of the gaps or needs within your community and their impacts upon its community's members. In communities where pet owners want more park space but sports leagues want the same park space for playing fields, there is a need to balance competing interests.

Community needs can affect many of the community's members, or just a few. This may include families, individuals, youth, seniors, parents, and or businesses. If community needs affect a large number of people in the community, there will likely be more support for addressing those needs.

Sometimes community needs are referred to as "community problems." It's best to avoid this wording in community assessments. Framing a "need" as a "problem" immediately establishes an "us versus them" relationship that can prevent collaboration and community-building.

### **Neighborhood Assets**

Another goal of a community assessment is to develop an understanding of community assets, or resources, that currently exist in the community and can be used to help meet community needs. Community assets can include organizations, people, partnerships, facilities, funding, policies and community characteristics. Any positive aspect of the community is an asset that can be leveraged to develop effective solutions.

Two approaches that can be used to identify community assets:

1. **Highlight those characteristics that make your community unique.** This could include trees, sidewalks, history, diversity, and or location.
2. **Identify the resources within your community that are already available for supporting community needs.** This includes community organizations, churches, institutions, and individuals that currently provide services to community members or have provided financial support to address the need.

### **Why conduct a neighborhood assessment?**

- Assessments can provide an objective overview of the neighborhood.
- Assessments encourage community participation and engagement.
- Assessments help determine areas of focus for community projects.
- Assessment are a systematic method to collect data.

### **What to Assess**

- Housing (both occupied and vacant).
- The condition of -- or need for -- infrastructure, including streets, sidewalks, roads, streetlights, parks, etc.
- The presence or absence of functioning businesses.
- Location, condition and use of empty lots.
- The amount of activity on the streets.
- Various noise levels.
- Location and condition of public facilities.
- The location of churches or other non-profit agencies within your community.
- Use the form below to guide your efforts.

### **When to make an assessment**

- Consider how time of day, weekday versus weekend, and the season will affect your survey
- You may want to repeat your survey more than once in order to capture the differences in neighborhood conditions or activities.

### **Tips for a Successful Assessment**

- **Safety First - ALWAYS**
- Define the assessment area.
- Notify your neighbors of the assessment, include the purpose and time.
- Assign roles and routes.
- Go in assessment teams of 2 or more.
- Get acquainted with the questions and purpose of the assessment beforehand.
- Obey traffic laws.
- Be respectful of your neighbor's privacy. Leave the home/property inspections to the city's neighborhood conservation officers.
- Take notes as you go. You may also want to take photos to illustrate your findings.
- Have fun - engage with your neighbors.

### **After the Assessment**

- Organize the data collected.
- Discuss the findings. Topics could include;

- Strengths
- Gaps
- Opportunities
- Challenges
- Share the findings with your neighborhood. Transparency and communication are key components to community inclusion.
- Set priorities – Priority-setting can be challenging because it requires developing consensus among community members with different opinions and views on how community issues should be addressed. Actively recognize that there is strength in differing viewpoints. Don't place viewpoints in order of value. Organize your priorities into short-term and long-term goals.
- Create an action plan.
  - Build on existing strengths when possible.
  - Be specific and include deadlines.

*USE THE FORM ON THE NEXT PAGE TO GUIDE YOUR ASSESSMENT*



## Neighborhood Assessment Survey

Neighborhood Association \_\_\_\_\_

Active Neighborhood Watch? Yes  No

Date of Assessment \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Weather \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment conducted via windshield?  YES  NO

Assessment conducted via walking?  YES  NO

Team/Group Members \_\_\_\_\_

### Sidewalks and Streets

Street Name \_\_\_\_\_

Is this street a dead end or cul-de-sac?

Yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

No

Damaged Sidewalk(s)

Yes, specify damage and location \_\_\_\_\_

No

Damaged Street(s)

Yes, specify damage and location \_\_\_\_\_

No

Are street signs damaged?

Yes, specify damage and location \_\_\_\_\_

No

Are street lights functioning properly?

Yes, specify damage and location \_\_\_\_\_

No

Is public transportation available on this street?

Yes

No

*(continued on next page)*

## Homes and Land

Housing types on this street

- Single Family
- Apartments - Is there onsite management? Yes  No
- Townhomes/Condominiums

Occupied homes/units are on this street \_\_\_\_\_

Vacant homes/units are on this street \_\_\_\_\_

Homes/units are for sale on this street \_\_\_\_\_

Homes/units for rent on this street \_\_\_\_\_

Dilapidated homes/units on this street

- Yes, specify location \_\_\_\_\_
- No

Fire damaged homes/units on this street

- Yes, specify location \_\_\_\_\_
- No

Vacant lots on this street

- Yes, specify location \_\_\_\_\_
- No

Overgrown lots on this street

- Yes, specify location \_\_\_\_\_
- No

Are there any illegal dumping areas on this street?

- Yes, specify location \_\_\_\_\_
- No

Are there any commercial buildings on this street?

- Yes, specify location \_\_\_\_\_
- No

Are there any abandoned commercial buildings on this street?

- Yes, specify location \_\_\_\_\_
- No

*(continued on next page)*

