

COMMUNITY INVENTORY



CLOSEUP[®]
WASHINGTON DC

COMMUNITY INVENTORY



One of the most important things a person can do to engage with their community and make a positive change is develop a clearer understanding of the community itself. A common criticism of decision-makers is that they do not understand the realities of their communities, and they try to benefit them based on what they *think* the community needs rather than what it *actually* needs.

Making meaningful change is not only about the challenges a community faces but the strengths it already has. A community inventory can be an important first step to making change because the goal is to identify precisely what assets and issues are present in a community. Completing a community inventory can help changemakers identify what aspects of the community they can focus on to do the most good.

As you explore, take note of **businesses** operating in the community, the quality and availability of **housing**, the kinds of **organizations and public services** that are present, and any **issues or concerns** you notice or that residents are trying to bring to public attention.

Before you begin, review the inventory categories and the questions you might ask yourself about them.

Businesses

- What sorts of people use the services or products of the business?
- Are there more of certain kinds of businesses than others?
- Does each business improve the conditions of the community, worsen the conditions, or both?
- Are there certain types of goods or services that people in the neighborhood cannot easily obtain because there are no conveniently located businesses providing them?
- Are there enough competitive alternatives for neighborhood consumers to have choices about quality and price?



Residential Conditions

- Is there a mix of types of homes (single-family homes, townhouses, apartments, etc.) or is one type predominant?
- How diverse is the neighborhood (race, ethnicity, income level, etc.)?
- Are most of the residents renters or homeowners?
- What is the general condition of the properties you observe?
- Are there abandoned properties or properties that are poorly maintained?
- Are there things like parks, playgrounds, sidewalks, green spaces, public benches, etc.? (These are known as "amenities.")
- What are the conditions of the neighborhood amenities?



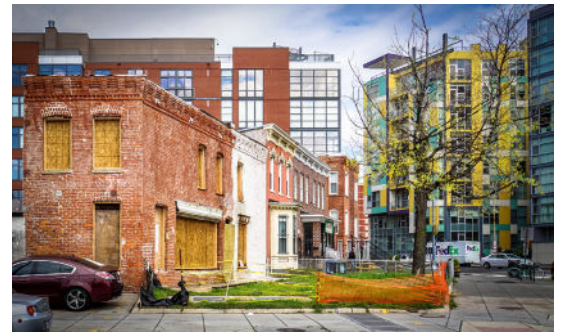
Organizations & Public Services

- What impacts do the various service providers and organizations have on the community (childcare centers, clinics, schools, senior citizen centers, shelters, etc.)?
- Are there more of certain kinds of organizations than others? (Take note of whether an organization is run by a local group, a larger nonprofit business, a church or religious group, or a department of government.)
- Are there organizations that advocate for the rights or needs of particular groups?
- Are there important or needed services that are not being provided?



Issues & Concerns

- Note the biggest concerns and issues you observed (street repair, condition of public facilities, litter, forms of pollution, drug-related concerns, crime, police issues, poverty, unemployment, etc.).
- Describe any concerns that did not fit into any of the other categories listed above.
- Think about evidence of problems or issues you cannot see directly as well as those you can. Things like posted flyers, murals painted on walls, graffiti, and public or private signs can provide clues to issues in a community.



Completing Your Survey

Use the Community Survey Chart to conduct your survey and record your observations. You should note which of the four categories you are recording (Business, Residential Condition, Organizations & Public Services, or Issues & Concerns). You'll use the information you gather and the observations you make to respond to a series of reflection questions. Taken together, your observations and your responses will form your Community Survey.

COMMUNITY REFLECTION QUESTIONS



1. In terms of providing a safe, healthy, and supportive environment for all residents of the community, what are this neighborhood's apparent strengths? Weaknesses?

2. What are the top three concerns you see that would need to be corrected for this neighborhood to ensure that all residents could enjoy a safe, healthy, and supportive environment? What is your reasoning for choosing the three that you did?

3. If you were to organize a campaign to persuade public officials to address one problem or concern in this neighborhood, what would be your top priority?

4. How did this activity help you see your community differently?

5. What did you learn about your community?
