



Community Walk

A way to gain a new perspective of your community and deepen understanding.

This Community Walk Tool can help to better understand your local community from a new perspective. The Community Walk process can contribute to meaningful relationships with community partners as well as meeting new people. It can create awareness of hopes, concerns, gaps and what other information might need to be gathered to better understand the community. Utilizing a reflection process with the Community Walk will increase your understanding on whose perspectives, voices, lived experiences might be missing or invisible from your current data.



The Spirit, Science, Action, Return cycle of transformation is a part of the Science of the Positive Framework created by Dr. Jeff Linkenbach and [The Montana Institute](http://TheMontanaInstitute.com).



Spirit

The core purpose of a Community Walk is to understand your community at a deeper level. This will allow for more intentional work to occur through meaningful connections and relationships that honor all perspectives, voices, lived experiences.

“It is far better to see the same place through 100 pairs of eyes, than 100 different places through the same pair of eyes.” - Marcel Proust

As individuals we only notice so much; this Community Walk process is designed to be conducted in pairs or small groups. It is important to consider how to model respect as you explore different parts of your community. Being able to discuss ideas with another person helps us to be aware of our own biases, see things from another perspective, and learn from another's experiences and wisdom.

Where will you walk? Seek out familiar and new diverse places in your community to observe. A Community Walk gives us permission to slow down and intentionally notice to our surroundings. How does our community communicate that people are welcome and belong here?



Science

This process can be casual or very formal and can serve many purposes. At its simplest level, it gives us greater understanding of what life is like in different parts of our community.

The results of the Community Walk can include observational data as a narrative describing the experience along with photos and videos. This information can be utilized in a community assessment. It can help provide context when creating a communication plan by having opportunity to see how messages currently are and can be shared in the community. This process also creates awareness of and documentation of hopes, strengths, and concerns. It allows you to see gaps in your own knowledge and experience which can help you to know what other information might need to be gathered to better understand the community.

Prepare some prompting questions that align with your reason for using a Community Walk process. During the walk document your observations.

- Observation questions:
 - What do I see people doing?
 - What do I hear people saying?
 - What does the neighborhood look and feel like?
 - What resources are available?
 - Does it feel welcoming? Safe? Why?
 - What appears to be the values of this area? How do you know this?
 - How are they interacting with each other? With their surroundings?
 - What do I notice about myself as I interact with or observe people in my community? (My thoughts, feelings, physiological responses)
- Self-Reflections / Personal Check-in
 - What is my bias, stereotypes, assumptions in relation to what I am observing?
 - What are my experiences and feelings related to what I'm observing? How can I let go of them so I can be in the moment to observe without judgment?
 - What are my impressions of the community based on my observations?
 - What are my assumptions about the community and the people in the community based on my observations? What are my assumptions about their:
 - Values and beliefs
 - Needs and concerns
 - Social identities: Abilities, Ages, Race, Ethnicity, Nationality, Tribal or Indigenous Affiliation, Socioeconomic status, Sexual orientation, Gender identities, Religion/fait, Body Size/Type
 - What other information do I need to gather in order to better understand my community?

- Whose perspectives, voices, lived experiences might be missing or invisible from this community walk? How will I learn about and include them in meaningful ways?



Action

Time to go on a Community Walk! Have fun and notice something new.

Things to pay attention to:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| ■ Accessibility/transportation | ■ Advertising |
| ■ Business and Organizations | ■ Art |
| ■ Opportunities for recreation | ■ Construction /renovations/ repair |
| ■ Open spaces and parks | ■ Resources |
| ■ Gardens | ■ Abandoned buildings |
| ■ Signage (street signs, location identifiers) | ■ Graffiti |
| | ■ Litter/Drug paraphernalia |

Additional considerations for your walk:

Be an Upstander. If you see something, say something or seek help.

Plan for the weather and if you will be walking during daylight or evening hours.



Return

After the walk, take time to reflect on the walk as an entire experience and what information and insights were gained. Viewing your data from an evaluation lens to interpret and analyze what was observed and how it impacts the community is beneficial in helping to understand additional challenges community members are facing and opportunities available. It can highlight the strengths of your community and inspire new ideas to continue to grow what is good in your community.

Reflection questions:

What did you see?

Who did you meet?

What surprised you? What about this stood out?

What are the impressions of the community based on your observations?

What are your assumptions about the community and people based on your observations?

What other information needs to be gathered for a better understanding?

Whose perspective, voices, lived experiences might be missing? How can they be included?

What are your hopes and concerns?

Reflect on what would it be like in your community if changes were made?

What would have happened and how would it feel in those spaces?

Acknowledgements



The Spirit, Science, Action, Return cycle of transformation is a part of the Science of the Positive Framework created by Dr. Jeff Linkenbach and [The Montana Institute](#).

Consultation with Rebecca Slaby – [AMAZEworks](#) to adapt and update our original Community Walk handout and process in 2022.

Resources

Edutopia COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Community Walks Create Bonds of Understanding

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/community-walks-create-bonds-understanding-shane-safir>

Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union with Andra Tanase [Community Mapping tutorial](#)

Roots & Shoots [Activity Community Mapping 101](#)

[Community Mapping: A Tool for Community-Based Assessment and Skill Building](#)

Lindsey Anderson, George Washington University

[Community Mapping through Transect Walks](#)