

COMMUNITY BUILDING

MAPPING COMMUNITY ASSETS

Ideas for Action

Recruit volunteers, including youth, to form a working committee. Communicate the need for volunteers throughout the community. As more people become involved, the greater likelihood of success. Try to get sponsorship from a civic organization or town government.

At the first meeting, address important factors such as:

- ❖ the asset mapping process and purpose for doing it
- ❖ how to carry out such a process in the community
- ❖ how the information will be kept and updated, once collected
- ❖ what should be on capacity inventories for individuals, local organizations and local institutions (see Kretzmann and McKnight).
- ❖ a plan for how information will be used to build networks, relationships and problem solving, and
- ❖ how the committee will keep the community informed

Schedule the next meeting and ask everyone to come with names of individuals, organizations, and institutions key to the community's future.

At the second meeting, develop the list of individuals, organizations and institutions. Decide how to conduct the capacity inventories for each category - either in person or through a telephone interview. Spread the work evenly throughout the volunteers. Involve a variety of people - high school students, college interns, or seniors - to collect information. Constantly communicate to the community about the asset mapping project so they know what's going on and why.

Gather all the information collected into a Community Resource Directory or Community Skills Bank. If possible, enter the information into a computer database, if not, compile completed capacity inventories into a three-ring binder. Make copies and place at the library, town offices, community center, post office, and in other public places. Make the information readily available to institutions, organizations or groups working on community projects. Keep the information visible and refer to it often so it becomes a well-used resource for planning any community project.

Design a way to get feedback on how you collected the information and the final product. This helps to improve your process in the future and ensure the product is useful. This could be done through a survey, a public forum, or through focus groups (small group discussion). Celebrate the completion of the project and say thank you to volunteers and contributors.

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer. UNH, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and New Hampshire counties cooperating.



Make sure you have a system to keep information updated. This could be done through an annual update. This includes collecting new information as well as keeping information current.

Track how the information is used and if possible, at the time of the annual update, publish how the information helped the community.

Resources:

How to Get the Help Your Town Needs. Heartland Center for Leadership Development Kretzmann, John P and John L. McKnight. Building Communities from the Inside Out, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, 1993.