

Activity: Community Investigating

Use For: Selection

Description: Participants go into the community, note needs and resources, and discuss ways that they can make a difference. Adapt this exercise based on the age of participants, number of chaperones available, and the safety of the neighborhood.

Time: 1 hour

Materials: paper, pens, clipboards, flipchart and markers

Participant Objectives:

- Identify needs in the neighborhood
- Identify possible resources
- Demonstrate an awareness of the causes
- Discuss solutions, immediate and long term

Procedure: Divide participants into four groups, each with a clipboard, paper and pen. Have them draw 2 columns, one labeled “needs” and one “assets,” then assign each group a direction: north, south, east, or west. Explain that they will be going through the neighborhood and marking down anything they notice that is a problem, like garbage, broken windows, uncut lawns, or un-raked leaves, etc. Remind them to also think about what is missing, like lack of playgrounds, street lighting, garbage cans, etc. They should also note potential assets, like churches, community organizations, safe playgrounds, etc. Have each group cover about 3 blocks and return within 15 minutes.

Reconvene, and have a member from each group put their findings into needs and assets columns on the flipchart. Facilitate a discussion covering:

- The number of needs compared to assets.
- The types of the problems and their causes.
- The changes they would like to see.
- What can be done to make these changes long term?
- How can the group help?
- How can they utilize the assets that are listed? For example, involve the local church in a block clean up or petition to start a playground. Find out what community-based organizations are doing and work together. They may be able to help with contacts for a project.