



SYSTEMS APPROACHES FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Community Walking Assessment Quick Guide

BACKGROUND

The Community Walking Assessment is a tool to engage partners or others in observing the assets and opportunities of a community related to food access, physical activity, and health. A team of University of Minnesota Extension Health and Nutrition staff developed the activity for health and nutrition professionals to practice assessing community environments and identifying how these environments support or hinder healthy lifestyles. This activity should be conducted using the *Community Walking Assessment Participant Guide*, which is based on an environmental assessment form developed in Minnesota.

This activity may be conducted individually, with a focus on identifying and documenting a community's assets and opportunities to positively impact the health of residents. This activity also may be conducted with a group of community members or stakeholders, where the focus is on understanding opportunities for systems-level work. Or, this activity may be conducted with members of an established group, such as a food network, in order to inform decisions and priorities.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After conducting a community walking assessment, participants will:

- Look at a community from a different perspective.
- Identify assets in a community.
- Identify opportunities in a community.

MATERIALS

As a facilitator, you will need the following materials for this activity:

- *Community Walking Assessment Participant Guide*
- *Community Walking Assessment PowerPoint Presentation*

PREPARATION BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

Complete the following tasks to prepare for this activity:

- Determine the community or communities in which you will be doing a walking assessment. If doing the assessment with community members, stakeholders, or other group, identify a central meeting place for an orientation to the activity. If necessary, prepare written directions, parking information, and other information for your group.
- If applicable, identify an agency or program in the community to visit (see PowerPoint slide 7).
- If applicable, identify partners to complete the assessment with you. As needed, communicate with them to schedule about two hours for the experience. (Time will vary based on size of the community, scope of the assessment, size of the group, and other factors.)
- Review the *Community Walking Assessment PowerPoint Presentation* in advance. Make any changes needed for your specific situation.
- Print copies of the *Community Walking Assessment Participant Guide* for everyone in the group.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

Follow these steps to conduct the activity:

- Use the *Walking Assessment PowerPoint Presentation*, modified for your specific situation, to prepare your group for the activity.
- Share the *Community Walking Assessment Participant Guide*, directions to and/or boundaries of the area to be visited by your group.
- If the whole group is going to one location, go with the group and help guide the experience. If the group is splitting up, consider staying at a central location and providing your cell phone number to group members for troubleshooting.

WRAP UP

Bring the entire group together for a wrap-up discussion. Ask questions such as:

- What did you observe?
- What stood out to you?
- What surprised you?
- What interested you most?
- What connections did you make?
- What does this mean for our work?

After the experience, compile responses to questions on the Guide(s), notes from wrap-up discussion, and photos taken by participants (if applicable). You may wish to create a summary report of the experience to share with the group. Consider holding a follow up meeting to review the summary and discuss next steps.

OPTIONAL VARIATIONS

To digitally collect the information from your community walking assessment, create an online survey version of the *Community Walking Assessment Participant Guide* and have participants fill it out after they finish the activity.

To create a visual representation of the experience, encourage participants to use Google Maps or another mapping tool to map out their route and post pictures.