



Asset mapping: Finding the good stuff

Asset mapping is a way of taking inventory of the strengths and resources within a community. A community's strengths come in all shapes and sizes! People, services, organizations, businesses, institutions and even spaces can all be important resources.

Often people take for granted the assets their community possesses. For example, you might easily identify institutions and businesses but have a harder time thinking of people or services. It can be helpful to reframe the definition to include anyone or any group that helps to improve the quality of community life. Can you think of a person or group that empowers others? Is there someone you know who organizes block parties and community events? Who is the person who reaches out to families and friends in times of need? Is there someone who seems to know everybody and remembers each person's name?

When you thought about it differently, you were probably able to identify lots of people. These people may or may not have official titles or positions, but they are still community leaders and possess valuable skills. It's important to remember that everyone (including you) has the potential to be a community asset. Everyone in the community has strengths, talents, skills, expertise and knowledge. Everyone can be a force for community improvement.

Similarly, spaces in a community can be seen in terms of their potential! With the right skills and effort, a weed-filled, garbage-strewn lot could be transformed into a community playground or picnic area. Being able to see the potential in people and places is important because seeing something as an asset can make it possible to turn it into one.

Take a moment to list out all the assets you can whether human, cultural, institutional and physical. Try to name as many assets as possible for each category even if you aren't quite sure you'll use them. It can be helpful to use different colored post it notes to write down your ideas and display them in one place. You might find that you'll continue adding to your list over the next weeks as you meet new people and explore new spaces.

Food for thought: According to American activist, Majora Carter "Race and class are extremely reliable indicators as to where one might find the good stuff, like parks and trees, and where one might find the bad stuff, like power plants and waste facilities." Do you believe this is true is of your neighborhood? Why or why not?