

Tool #29: Mapping the Community

Get or make a detailed map of your community of ministry. Add symbols for the key components of community life, such as:

- **Landmarks:** Significant physical objects (like prominent buildings or a big mural) ▲
- **Arteries:** Major traffic routes —
- **Gathering places:** Centers of activity, main meeting spaces (like a YMCA or popular pizza joint) ●
- **Public spaces:** Places open to the public (like parks or libraries) ◆
- **Businesses:** Major businesses or industries that serve as economic anchors for the community (like a factory or much-used check cashing place) \$
- **Schools:** From elementary schools to universities ✱
- **Government agencies:** Public service centers (like the police station or welfare office) ★
- **Service agencies:** Private nonprofits (like a day care or rescue mission) ♥
- **Congregations:** Other houses of worship (including non-Christian) †
- **Districts:** Areas of recognizable character □ (Draw lines around the district and label it)

You can add your own symbols to represent specific concerns of your church — like youth-oriented places, drug corners, or senior housing.

Now color code the map, using three different colors (highlighters, markers, stickers) to highlight symbols or areas that fall into these categories:

- **Assets:** Things that residents like and that enhance the quality of life in the neighborhood (like a good school or bike path). Note which assets are largely under neighborhood control (like community-based nonprofits, cultural organizations and small businesses), and which assets are largely controlled by outsiders (like rental housing, chain restaurants, and public schools).
- **Problems:** Things residents don't like and that detract from the quality of life in the neighborhood (like an abandoned house or trash dump). Note which problem sites are largely under the control of people or institutions within the neighborhood, and which are largely controlled by outsiders.
- **Potential partners:** Individuals, institutions, or associations that the church could work alongside in ministry collaborations (like a block leader, public school, or garden club).

Adapted from *Establishing Public Value: A Tool Kit* (p. 21), a resource for churches seeking to show the value of their buildings and structures as community assets and to identify potential partners and supporters. Available from Partners for Sacred Places, www.sacredplaces.org. Original source: *Neighborhood Assessment Workshop Participant Workbook*, FOCUS Kansas City, Kansas City Planning and Development Department. See also John L. McKnight and John P. Kretzmann, *Mapping Community Capacity* (Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University, 1990).