

COMMUNITY LISTENING SURVEYS

A survey is a systematic way of gathering information about the neighborhood. Surveys are best conducted door-to-door by pairs of church members. This creates opportunities for your congregation to develop relationships and name recognition in the process. If most church members are not from your community of ministry, it is a good idea to pair a church member with a local resident who knows the people in the community.

Although the primary purpose of the survey is not evangelistic, you can be sensitive to the spiritual and personal needs of the people you contact. If people have immediate needs, you can ask how the church might be able to help. If you offer prayer or aid, however, be sure that you follow up and keep your promises! Enlist volunteers to pray for the needs revealed by the survey.

After finishing the survey, you can give people a brochure or card from your church, with information about programs and worship services. One option is to coordinate the timing of the survey with a special fun event — like a church picnic or concert — and give the people you survey a flyer inviting them to participate. Later, follow up with a thank-you note to residents who completed the survey to show your appreciation for their time.

On the next page is a sample survey. The questions are open-ended, with space for survey-takers to write in people's responses. You can adapt or add questions as appropriate.

Community Survey

Hello, my name is and I'm with church. We are talking with residents to help us learn more about this community. The information will be used by our church to plan how we can be involved in positive ways with the neighborhood.

Name: _____ Address: _____

Length of time lived in this community: _____ Ages of children at home: _____

Congregation (if any): _____

Local clubs, groups or organizations your family participates in: _____
(for example: sports league, parent-teacher association, Boy/Girl Scouts, Neighborhood Watch)

1. What do you like best about this community? What makes this a good place to live?

2. What are up to three changes you'd like to see that could make life better in this community?

3. Our church wants to be involved in a positive way with this neighborhood. Do you have any suggestions?

4. Are you currently involved in any volunteer work, or are you interested in volunteering? What skills, hobbies or interests do you have that you might like to share for the good of the community?

5. Is there any way we as a church can specifically pray for you?

Would you like us to follow up with you about working together to serve the community? _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Thank you very much for your time and information!

NETWORKING INTERVIEWS

The purpose of networking interviews is to learn from people who are knowledgeable about the community, and to make connections that can lead to fruitful ministry partnerships and long-term relationships.

Interviewing is best done in pairs. It's helpful if one person takes notes while the other person asks the questions. Begin the interview by identifying yourself and your church. Explain the purpose for the interview (e.g., "Our church is exploring new ways of serving the community, and we're interested in learning more about the community and about your role here."). Afterwards, follow up with a thank-you note to show your appreciation for people's time.

Be sensitive to the spiritual and personal concerns of those you contact. Be on the lookout for hidden "family" -- brothers and sisters in Christ working for secular organizations. As it seems appropriate, offer to pray for or with people.

The following questions are suggested for meetings with government officials and leaders of nonprofit agencies, schools, police, churches, civic clubs, neighborhood associations, or other groups. Also seek to identify and contact "unofficial" community leaders like long-time residents, community activists, and "block mamas". Use the Networking Log on the next page to keep a record of your contacts, opportunities for partnerships, and follow-up ideas.

Questions for community contacts:

1. What are the greatest assets and strengths you see here? What gives you hope when you think about this community and its future?
2. What are your main concerns about life in this community? What do you see as the major social, economic, cultural or spiritual challenges here?
3. What kinds of changes have you seen in the community? Overall, are things getting better or worse?
4. Finish the sentence: "The most important thing for people to know about this community is ..."
5. Finish the sentence: "This community will be stronger and better for everyone when ..."
6. How have you and your organization been working to improve life in the community?
7. Our church is considering ways to serve this neighborhood. Do you have any suggestions? Are there ways we might support the work of your organization or partner with your organization to serve the community?
8. Can you recommend two other people or organizations that we should talk to, to help us learn more about this community?