Built Environment and Social Environment Audit

This audit is an informal evaluation of your community to help you identify ways that the community supports eating healthy foods and being physically active and ways that the community hinders healthy eating and physical activity. If this audit is done in conjunction with the "Programs, Services, Policies, and Environment Survey" you will have a broad and deep understanding of the resources and the environment in your community as related to nutrition and physical activity. The sample survey on the next few pages is based on emerging research of the impact that the built environment and social environment has on a population's health. The survey has been used in communities, but it has not been tested by the academic/research community.

How to conduct a Built Environment and Social Environment Audit

1. Decide who will be involved in administering the audit including the lead contact for this work.

2. Develop a survey. See the "Built Environment and Social Environment Audit Sample Survey" on page 4 for guidance.

3. Decide how to conduct the audit. Some options are listed below.

    o One person very knowledgeable of the community could answer the questions.

    o Several people could answer the questions and then compile the answers.

    o Someone could interview people who would be knowledgeable about the issues raised in the sample survey.

4. Record relevant findings in the "Community Resources and Environment Log" tool.

5. Generate a summary report highlighting areas that support healthy behaviors and areas that discourage healthy behaviors.

The notion to assess the environment of a community or the environment of a particular sector in the community, such as schools or worksites, is becoming commonplace. As a result, assessment tools are developed, tested, and made available to practitioners regularly. See the list below for some of the currently available assessment tools. This worksheet is updated regularly, so check www.MovingtotheFuture.org for updates to this section.

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Other Tools to Assess the Environment

- Pedestrian and bicycle transportation systems. The Federal Highway Administration, Office of Natural and Human Environment conducted a study to share information about existing data collection efforts and provide the results to practitioners who want to collect pedestrian and bicycle data in their communities. A case study approach was chosen to profile and evaluate different types of data collection efforts so that their successes and lessons learned could be shared with other communities. This report provides in-depth information about 29 different data collection efforts from local, regional, and state agencies in all parts of the United States. Each case study describes the history, purpose, methods, and lessons learned from the data collection project. The study provides information such as methods and optimum timing for pedestrian and bicycle data collection; emerging technologies that can be used to gather and analyze data; and benefits, limitations, and costs of different techniques. For more information go to www.walkinginfo.org/rd/planning.htm#data for a link to the report.

- Walkable community. Walkable Communities, Inc. was established in the state of Florida in 1996. It was organized for the express purposes of helping whole communities, whether they are large cities or small towns, or parts of communities, i.e. neighborhoods, business districts, parks, school districts, subdivisions, specific roadway corridors, etc., become more walkable and pedestrian friendly. Walkable Communities, Inc. provides technical assistance to communities wanting to make their environment more pedestrian friendly, and they sell publications and CDs to educate people on this concept. For more information go to www.walkable.org

- Preschool environment. The North Carolina Division of Public Health partnered with several in-state organizations to develop the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self Assessment for Child Care (NAP-SACC) program. The program is aimed at improving nutrition and physical activity environments and practices in child care centers. Child care centers use the NAP-SACC self assessment tool to evaluate their center's eating and physical activity environment, and Division of Public Health child care health consultants provide training and technical assistance to help centers make positive changes in those environments. For more information go to www.napsacc.org/

- School environment. There is a research-based tool for use by schools called the School Health Index (SHI). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed the SHI, which is a self-assessment tool and planning guide for schools. The SHI will provide structure and direction to a school's efforts to improve health and safety policies and programs. School staff, partners, or parent volunteers can use the SHI. It is free, easy to use, and completely confidential. There is an online tool and a paper form. For more information go to the SHI webpage at http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/

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- School environment. The Healthy School Action Tool (HSAT) was developed to help schools assess whether their school environment offers consistent messages about the importance of healthy eating, physical activity and a tobacco-free lifestyle and whether their school environment offers opportunities for students to make healthy choices. Completing the HSAT is one major step toward creating a healthier school environment. The HSAT was adapted from CDC's School Health Index and the Changing the Scene Healthy School Nutrition Environment Improvement Checklist from U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Team Nutrition. For more information go to the HSAT website at www.mihealthtools.org/schools/

- School environment. FamilyCook Productions is a multi-media organization offering creative programming across a wide spectrum of media. Their focus is on fresh food and families. FamilyCook Productions advocates an assessment process that involves students and adults and uses photos to document the issues around food in the school community. Communities and organizations across the United States have used their toolkit. For more information go the FamilyCook Productions webpage with the school community food assessment toolkit at www.familycookproductions.com/familycook.html

- Multiple community settings. The Center for Advanced Studies in Nutrition and Social Marketing at University of California, Davis lists online several tools for measuring environmental change. The tools can be used to evaluate environmental factors such as availability of healthy food in grocery stores, social supports for diet behaviors, or organizational characteristics of a worksite. Several of these tools have been formally validated. Others have not been validated, but have been developed by experienced researchers and program planners, using tested questions of others, expert reviewers, and pre-testing to guide their development. For more information go to http://socialmarketing-nutrition.ucdavis.edu/Tools/somarktools.php

- Multiple community settings. The Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments has developed the Environmental Nutrition and Activity Community Tool (ENACT). ENACT is a hands-on assessment and planning resource for organizations, coalitions and communities interested in improving their nutrition and physical activity environments. The tool can be used on a yearly basis to evaluate past and current efforts around nutrition and physical activity improvements and offer new priorities for the year ahead. For maximum effectiveness, we encourage you to use ENACT with a broad range of partners, from community residents to businesses, from teachers to students, from government officials to healthcare professionals. For more information go to www.preventioninstitute.org/sa/enact/members/index.php

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Built Environment and Social Environment Audit
Sample Survey

Built Environment

To assess the community's built environment, or infrastructure, go through its neighborhoods, roadways, parks, and businesses and talk with people working in agencies that oversee these parts of your community and answer the questions listed.

Remember to edit any of these pages to meet your needs.

Neighborhoods

Are the neighborhoods designed to promote physical activity?

- Sidewalk safety (availability, lighting, etc.)

- Personal safety (violence)

- Neighborhood associations (types of requirements and restrictions, level of compliance among homeowners, level of cohesion among people living in area, etc.)

- Linkages to other neighborhoods, retail centers, parks, or recreation facilities

What are the growth plans for residential areas in your community?

Collect information on the oversight/regulatory agency and governing board.

- Contact person(s) in the regulatory agency

- Board/council/committee that establishes policy about neighborhoods

- Community involvement (history of people involved in decision-making, past successes and failures, etc.)

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Roadways

Are there bike and pedestrian pathways between residential and commercial areas?

❑ Safety (existing condition, quality of lighting, attitudes of drivers, etc.)

❑ Utilization

❑ Roadways without designated pathways (bicyclist safety, utilization, etc.)

❑ Connected bike and pedestrian pathways

What are the community's development plans? (new or refurbished roads, bike lanes, etc.)

Collect information on the oversight/regulatory agency and governing board.

❑ Contact person(s) in the regulatory agency

❑ Board/council/committee that establishes policy about roads

❑ Community involvement (history of people involved in decision-making, past successes and failures, etc.)

Parks and Other Community Recreation Areas

What is the status of recreation areas in your community?

❑ Parks (numbers, utilization, condition/appeal, safety, access by all the population, etc.)

❑ Outdoor trails and walkways (miles, condition, safety, utilization, access by all the population, etc.)

❑ Community Recreation Centers (numbers, utilization, condition/appeal, safety, access by all the population, etc.)

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What are the development plans for rehabilitation of existing public areas and/or for adding new areas?

Collect information on the oversight/regulatory agency and governing board.

- ❑ Contact person(s) in the regulatory agency

- ❑ Board/council/committee that establishes policy about recreation areas

- ❑ Community involvement (history of people involved in decision-making, past successes and failures, etc.)

Businesses and Retail Centers

Are business areas conducive to physical activity?

- ❑ Pedestrian-friendly design (adequate space for pedestrians on sidewalks; appropriate lighting, benches, and shaded areas; inviting storefronts and walkways; and pedestrian crosswalks that are clearly identified and safe)

- ❑ Location (businesses and retail areas within walking distance of other services)

- ❑ Stairwells (easily located and pleasant and safe to use)

What are the future growth and development plans in the business community?

- ❑ Downtown areas (conversion plans to pedestrian-friendly design, revitalization efforts, etc.)

- ❑ Industrial park areas

- ❑ Retail areas (new or remodeling plans of shopping centers)

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Collect contact information on the business community leaders (CEOs, community outreach staff, chamber of commerce leaders, etc.).

If you are targeting worksites, you could audit only the largest businesses in the community using some of the questions in this sample survey.

Social Environment

In *Moving to the Future* the social environment refers to policies, standard practices and other societal factors that influence people's ability to eat healthy and be active.

Businesses

What types of onsite wellness programs are available to employees of public and private businesses?

- ❑ Education services (materials, education sessions, etc.)

See the "Healthy Food and Beverage Tip Sheet" for some definition ideas

- ❑ Exercise facilities

- ❑ Exercise breaks or incentives to exercise (longer breaks for exercise, business memberships at local gyms, etc.)

- ❑ Utilization and participation in program(s)

What is the nutritional quality of meals and snacks available to people while at work?

- ❑ On-site cafeterias or food courts (food choices, food quality, use of locally-grown foods, openness to modification)

- ❑ Restaurants close to large work and retail areas (food choices, openness to menu modification, etc.)

- ❑ Vending machines (beverage choices, snack choices)

- ❑ Worksite policy addressing nutritional quality of foods available at work

What kind of support is there for breastfeeding mothers in the business community?

- Availability of private breastfeeding and/or pumping rooms and refrigerator to store pumped breast milk

- On-site infant care centers so mothers can breastfeed their infant during a break

- Adequate break time for breastfeeding mothers

- Worksite policy supporting women who breastfeed

Collect contact information on the business community leaders (CEOs, chamber of commerce leaders, community outreach staff, etc.).

Food Retail

What are your community's grocery stores like?
- Large chains (food choices, quality of produce, etc.)

- Locally-owned (food choices, quality of produce, etc.)

- Convenience stores (food choices, quality of produce, etc.)

- Location (urban resident access to high-quality and reasonably-priced foods)

What types of restaurants are in your community?
- Chains (quick service/fast food, food choices, openness to menu modification, etc.)

- Locally-owned (types, food choices, openness to menu modification)

What is the support for locally-grown foods?
- Farmer's markets (location, hours, utilization, etc.)

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- Grocery stores (local grocers ability to carry locally-grown foods)

- Large scale food service (farm-to-school or farm-to-hospital programs)

- Commercial restaurants (use of locally-grown foods)

- Food policy council

Faith Organizations

Is the faith community concerned about people's physical health?

- On-site health services (education classes, screening, parish nurse, support groups, etc.)

- Printed materials (newsletters and/or bulletins) and opportunity to insert physical health information

- Food events (variety, nutritional quality)

- Policy that encourages healthy food choices at events
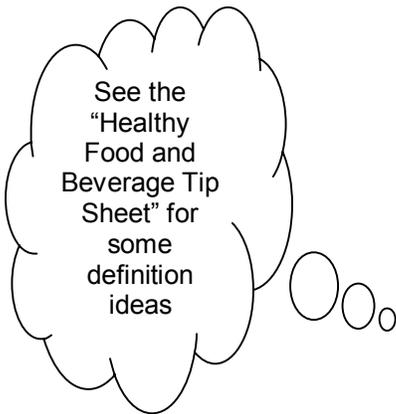
Collect contact information on the faith community (formal and informal leaders).

See the "Healthy Food and Beverage Tip Sheet" for some definition ideas

Service Clubs

Are service clubs concerned about people's physical health?

- Club-sponsored activities and fund-raising events (education classes, screening, walks/runs, support groups, etc.)

- Food events (variety, nutritional quality)

Collect contact information on the service clubs in your community.

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Health Care

Do the area health care systems support healthy lifestyle choices?

- ❑ Client education (health message campaigns, classes, print materials, etc.)

- ❑ Provider education and training (health promotion, anticipatory guidance)

- ❑ Health plan benefits (financial incentives to health plan members for healthy lifestyle habits, programs that motivate plan members to eat well and be active)

- ❑ Reimbursement (nutrition counseling, weight loss and weight maintenance counseling, screening for early detection of risk factors, health promotion and disease prevention counseling, etc.)

As employers, how do health insurance companies and health care providers support healthy eating and physical activity among their employees?

Obtain contact information on the health care systems (insurance and providers) in your community.

Philanthropic Organizations

Do local, regional, or state philanthropic foundations support nutrition and physical activity work?

- ❑ Funding (state- and local-level grants, funding priorities, special funding opportunities, awards, etc.)

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❑ Collaboration (area foundations working with and/or supporting multi-agency health promotion efforts)

As employers, how do philanthropic organizations support healthy eating and physical activity among their employees?

Remember to edit any of these pages to meet your needs.

Obtain contact information on the philanthropic foundations in your community.

Local Government

Do town, city, county, and/or regional governments support nutrition and physical activity?

❑ Funding (general funds used to support nutrition and physical activity related services, recreation funds supporting wellness programs)

❑ Programs and Services (participation in or promotion of health communication campaigns, employee wellness programs, community-based services, Maternal and Child Health, disease prevention)

As employers, how does local government support healthy eating and physical activity among its employees?

Collect contact information on the local governments in your community.

Schools

See the Other Tools to Assess the Environment section on page 1 for suggestions on tools to help assess the school environment.

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