

Developing a Community Mapping Project

Community mapping projects can be a great tool to foster youth and adult partnerships in a community. Youth work with adults to map potential community problems or the location of important services offered within the community. This type of project can be used to develop important links between the Cooperative Extension Service, schools, community agencies and organizations, and government officials. By developing and completing a community mapping project, youth learn and develop skills such as responsibility, citizenship, leadership, sociability, and communication. Collaborative decision making skills have also been shown to develop in youth working on these types of projects.

Problems encountered with community mapping projects may include the size of the project may be too large for the group to complete. Transportation issues for the youth may also be encountered and adult leaders need to take this into consideration when planning meeting time and location. Adequate supervision of the youth and the expectations of community partners are unclear are other problems that may be encountered in a community mapping projects. Adults working with youth in these projects need to let the youth make decisions. Adults involved also need to be committed to the youth and the project in order for it to be successful. It is important to remember to let the youth have the same amount of say in the project as the adults.

Steps in completing a community mapping project:

- ♣ Gather group of interested participants (youth and adults)
- ♣ Discuss and determine the goals, wants, and needs of group
- ♣ Gather ideas and brainstorm potential projects:
 - Talk with local county officials, agencies, and organizations to see what their needs for this type of project are
 - Get community members to support the idea or project
 - Look at previous community mapping projects for potential ideas
 - Ask where are there problems in the community? What are they? Who are they affecting? How can a community map help with this problem?
- ♣ Look for grant/award opportunities (example: ESRI grant)
- ♣ Determine what “community” is and which “community” you are going to focus on
- ♣ Select a community mapping project
- ♣ Determine the desired outcomes and data collection procedures
 - Get training if needed for data collection and analysis
- ♣ Allow plenty of time to complete project and develop a timeline or schedule of activities
- ♣ Create a budget for any expenses
- ♣ Decide how to organize the data and the roles of participants
- ♣ Collect the data
- ♣ Analyze the data
 - Make maps and write narratives
- ♣ Evaluate the project and its results
- ♣ Present results and publish them
 - Newspaper, magazines, radio, TV, fair demonstrations

Key ideas to remember: Be open at all times to new ideas and future projects, keep it fun and interesting, and remember that it will be work to complete a community mapping project.