

Community Assessment

The following questions will help you identify stresses in your community. Rather than write the answers on your worksheet, use these questions only to spark your thinking as you decide what's not working well locally.

The outcome of this exercise is entirely up to you. Feel free to focus on stresses not covered by these questions.

Record your ideas in the "Community Stresses" section of the attached worksheet. If some tend to overlap with environmental or economic issues, that's okay.

1. Is volunteerism increasing or declining?
2. Is community decision-making open-minded? Does it encourage new ideas and alternative points of view? Are all kinds of people involved?
3. How is the quality of local leadership?
4. Is the community a good place to raise children?
5. How does safety in this region compare with other areas?
6. Are the region's communities dealing adequately with poverty?
7. Is quality of life for certain groups a lot worse than for others?
8. Do essential human needs remain unfulfilled? If so, for whom?
9. Is adequate health care accessible by all residents?
10. How does the cost of living compare among region's communities? How do those costs compare to state and national figures?
11. Is housing adequate?
12. Are any community assets, traditions, or activities declining?
13. What effect do the various local cultural traditions have on the region's quality of life?
14. Are cultural differences resulting in conflict or inequity?
15. Is local education sufficient? Is it being used to help business and labor?
16. Are local artistic and cultural activities sufficient?
17. What is the effect of the arts on the region?
18. Will any pending plans or proposals damage the region's communities?

Community Stresses

Regarding the local community, what is not working well?

Sources of Stress

What are the causes of the community stresses that were noted as priorities? What keeps these things from working well? What are the sources of the problems?

Community Assets

What local assets can help or serve the priority stresses and sources. What exists locally that will alleviate community stresses or address the causes of the problems?

Economic Assessment

The following questions will help you identify local economic stresses. Rather than write the answers on your worksheet, use these questions only to spark your thinking as you decide what's not working well in the local economy.

The outcome of this exercise is entirely up to you. Feel free to focus on stresses not covered by these questions.

Record your ideas in the "Economic Stresses" section of the attached worksheet. If some tend to overlap with environmental or community issues, that's okay.

1. What kinds of businesses, if any, are not doing too well?
2. Are certain geographic areas hurting more than others?
3. Does local economic success make housing more or less affordable in certain areas?
4. Is it unusually difficult to get a business or home loan here?
5. Do private investors tend to invest in or shun the region?
6. Are current patterns of community expansion helping or hurting business?
7. Are certain types of jobs or people being paid less than "living wages?"
8. Do businesses provide adequate employee benefits?
9. Given current trends, will job prospects improved or diminish for the next generation?
10. Are unemployed people receiving adequate job training?
11. How good is the match between job skills and job opportunities?
12. What types of jobs are hard to fill? Can residents fill them?
13. Do business people in the region feel they 're operating in a supportive business environment?
14. Do businesses tend to buy supplies locally or outside the community?
15. Does much money or resources "leak" from the local economy?
16. Does economic development tend to emphasize business recruitment or business retention and expansion? Which strategy is most beneficial?
17. How are relations between business and labor?
18. Do business people have the skills necessary to succeed?
19. Are public services and infrastructure adequate? (e.g. school, police, fire, sewer, and water)
20. Do the beneficiaries of public services and infrastructure expansions pay all the costs of those expansions? Or, are these costs paid by residents who didn't need the expansion?
21. Are some residents' taxes increasing to pay the costs of someone else's public services and infrastructure?
22. Can demand on infrastructure be reduced through efficiency improvements?
23. Is the community attracting new growth that will require the expansion of existing services or facilities? If so, who will pay the costs?

Economic Stresses

Regarding your local economy, what is broken or not working well?

Sources of Stress

What are the causes of the economic stresses that were noted as priorities. What keeps these things from working well? What are the sources of the problems?

Economic Assets

What local assets can help or serve the priority stresses and sources. What exists locally that will alleviate economic stresses or address the causes of the problems?

Environmental Assessment

The following questions will help you identify local environmental stresses. Rather than write the answers on your worksheet, use these questions only to spark your thinking as you decide what's not working well in the local environment.

The outcome of this exercise is entirely up to you. Feel free to focus on stresses not covered by these questions.

Record your ideas in the "Environmental Stresses" section of the attached worksheet. If some tend to overlap with economic or community issues, that's okay.

Everyone understands that living systems provide us with such necessary *resources* as wood and water. Less obvious is that ecosystems also deliver such *services* as flood control, soil fertility, and pest control.* These services are essential to doing business and life itself. Most are irreplaceable at any cost.

1. What is the condition of each of local natural resource?
2. What is the condition of each of the region's ecosystem services?
3. Are any local natural resources or ecosystem services being used up faster than they're being replenished?
4. Are there any problem sources of pollution?
5. Is waste being handled responsibly?
6. To what extent is the local economy dependent upon the health of local natural resources and ecosystems?
7. What is the long-term outlook for local natural resources and ecosystem services?
8. Are there ways in which resources were once used, but are no longer being used, to create jobs? Could these be tried again?
9. Have any natural resources been exhausted through unsustainable practices?
10. Have any local ecosystem services been depleted through unsustainable practices?
11. Given current trends, in what condition are your children likely to find the region's natural resources and ecosystem services?
12. What recreational opportunities are essential to business in the region?
13. What ecosystem services are essential to business?
14. Will any pending plans or proposals damage the region's natural resources or ecosystem services?

*Additional examples of ecosystem services:

- Cooling
- Recreation
- Animal habitat
- Noise abatement
- Sediment control
- Peaceful sanctuary
- Decomposition of organic wastes
- Storage, cycling and global distribution of freshwater
- Production of oxygen, grasslands, fertilizers, and food
- Climate regulation
- Biological diversity
- Waste detoxification
- Fixation of solar energy
- Purification of water and air
- Nutrient storage and recycling

Environmental Stresses

Regarding the area environment, what is broken or not working well?

Sources of Stress

What are the causes of the environmental stresses that were noted as priorities? What keeps these things from working well? What are the sources of the problems?

Environmental Assets

What local assets can help or serve the priority stresses and sources. What exists locally that will alleviate environmental stresses or address the causes of the problems?
