Creating an Asset Map with Google Map: A Toolkit for Visualizing the Results of Mapping Community Assets

This toolkit will help you create an interactive map, once you have collected data. To learn more about the entire asset mapping process, please see the asset mapping tools on our [Resources from Our Partners page.](#)

"Revitalize communities by focusing on assets and strengths, not deficits and needs... Communities can only be built by focusing on the strengths and capacities of the citizens who call that community home... An Assets Map points to one way of thinking about the basic kinds of building blocks that exist in every community. At the center of the map, and of the community building process, lie the "gifts" of individual residents – their knowledge, skills, resources, values, and commitments."

John P. Kretzmann - September 1, 1995

Asset-mapping is an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) practice for discovering community assets and creating an inventory that can be drawn upon for strengthening a community. It is a map of a community's value that helps to build a vibrant community based on its strengths. By helping a community look at itself from a place of strength, the community is better able to leverage assets to build and improve its future. This asset mapping toolkit is based on the concept that community members are the experts about their community. By involving community members in identifying their individual and community assets, community members come together to build a shared awareness of their community's strengths and help make connections around shared assets. The process serves as a catalyst for everyone to contribute to building a community from the inside out.

Example of a complete asset map.
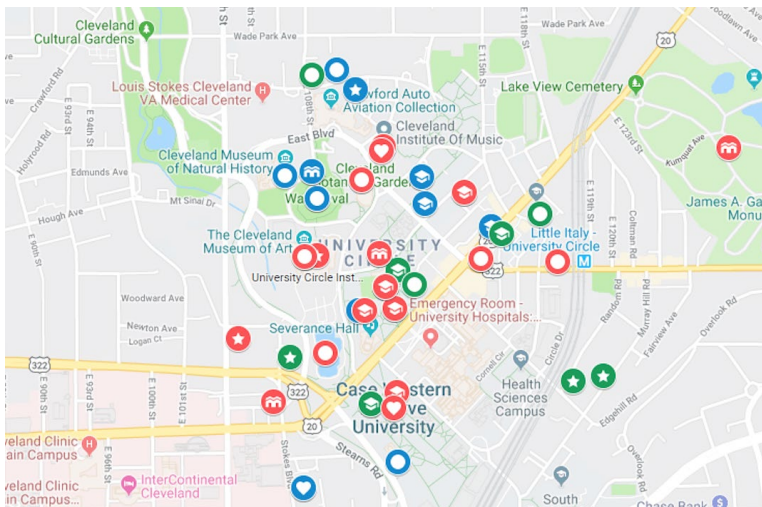
2018-2019 Foundations of Community Building participants asset maps:
6 participants:
2 Community-based Organizations (Blue)
2 Neighborhood Resident (Green)
2 University Circle Institutions (Pink)

In the 2018-19 Foundations of Community Building (FCB) program, the Community Innovation Network (the Network) team conducted an asset mapping research project with the program participants. All the program participants were from Cleveland's University Circle or the surrounding neighbor- hoods and

included residents and representatives from institutions and community-based organizations. We are using the 2018-19 FCB program as an example throughout this toolkit. To illustrate the asset map process, six 2018-19 FCB participants were selected, including two neighborhood residents, two community-based representatives, and two university circle institutions representatives.

How do you create an interactive map once you have mapped the assets?

Collect Data on the Assets

1. Think about your Asset Mapping purpose and develop objectives that will guide your research.

The objectives of the 2018-19 FCB Participants Asset Mapping research project were:

- To make this asset map as a useful tool for the FCB program participants;
- To identify and recognize the assets of individuals and communities of the FCB program participants;
- To use this asset map as one of the steps of uniting the strengths and resources of our communities;
- To promote community involvement and build connections with one another.

2. Think about the types of community assets that you need to learn about.

There are five core categories of assets in a community: individual, voluntary associations, institutions, physical/ economic and culture/stories. Based on the objectives, six research questions were developed for the 2018-19 FCB Participants Asset Map- ping research project:

a. Where do you work?
b. What are 2~3 places where you connect with others in University Circle or your surrounding neighborhood?
c. What are 2~3 assets you use on Case Western Reserve University campus?
d. What are 2~3 assets that you use within the broader University Circle?
e. What are 2~3 assets that you use within the surrounding community?
f. What are 2~3 of your personal gifts or skills?

3. Choose a method and tool to collect information about assets.

The Network chose to create a Google form with the six questions above, which was sent to participants via email (example). Some of the participants chose not to use the Google form link, so the Network team members collected data by phone to record the assets and then entered the data manually (example).

*Please note: Question a~e require a specific address or place for each asset in order to properly import data later.

For the purpose of privacy protection, you can code participants with numbers or only use their first names, as this identifier will show up on the final map. Alternatively you can remove this identifier from the map entirely.

Create a map

- On your computer, sign in to Google My Maps with a google account to create a new map (instructions).
- Click "Untitled map" and give your map a name and description (example).

Add places to your map

1. Download the responses in CSV format
One advantage of using Google forms to collect data is that it allows you to view all responses in a spreadsheet (instruction and example).

2. Organize all the responses
After downloading the response spreadsheet, then create six new spreadsheets for each question (example). Please note: since Question 6 is asking for individual assets, we used the same addresses in Question 1 (example).

3. Add layers to the map
Once you have created a My Map, you will be able to add layers. You can edit the layer's name by clicking the "Untitled layer" (example). The Network added six layers and renamed the layers based on the six research questions (example).

4. Upload the spreadsheets to the layers
After creating the six layers, click the Import button under each layer and select the corresponding response spreadsheet (example). The map page will pop up a menu and ask you to choose the columns to position your placemarks, please select all (example). And then it will ask you to choose a column to title your markers. The Network chose to use the location (example). Feel free to select other options.

There might be some circumstances where the data you upload cannot be shown on the map, such as different spelling, wrong zip code, or extra suite number. If any of these circumstances happen, a prompt box will pop up (example). Click the open data table button, the issue will be highlighted in red (example). You can revise the address by editing the table (example). If you want to rename the address, click the pencil button to revise the information (example).

5. Make the map easy to read

- Code participants identity (e.g. resident) in different colors and the layers with different icons (e.g. assets you use on CWRU campus).
- Please make sure the layer is in Individual styles (example). Click the Painting button, you can choose the color and icon to present the data category.

Since the 2018-19 FCB program participants were sorted into three different identities, three specific colors were selected to represent neighborhood residents (blue), community- based organizations representatives (green), and university circle institutions representatives (pink) in University Circle. And each layer should be coded by a specific icon to represent types of resources (example).

In some circumstances, two or more participants may identify the same valued asset. In this case, there will be two icons at the same location (example). If they are overlapping, simply click on the icon and drag it to the side (example).

6. Repeat steps 1~5 to create the rest of the layers.

An Asset Map is Done! (Example)

- Click the preview button, you will get an asset map (example)!
- Click the search icon you find the asset you are looking for (example)!

Remember, asset mapping is a process for engaging the community to discover and connect with its own assets. Creating a map is a tool for visualizing and accessing what the community has learned. The map should not substitute for engaging the community themselves in discovering their assets.