Building Communities from the Inside Out:

Asset Inventories

by

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Introduction

Asset mapping is a philosophy released by John P. Kretzmann and John L. McNight in their book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets*. (Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois). The authors view two different paths toward supporting communities. The first path is one which focuses on a community’s needs, deficiencies, and problems. The second path is quite different in that it begins with a clear commitment to discovering a community’s capacities and assets.

According to Kretzmann and McNight there are four basic components to the assets of a community. They include:

1) **Individuals** - every single person has capacities, abilities, and gifts.
   A) Individual skills information
   B) Community skills
   C) Enterprising interests and experience

2) **Associations** - groups of citizens working together (collective action).
   A) Associations can be formal or informal
   B) Use newspapers, directories, and other printed sources, local institutional representatives such as, at churches, parks, etc., or conduct a telephone survey of local residents.

3) **Institutions** - the formal representation of many associations.

4) **Economic Assets** - those dollars generated by local and regional economic activities.

The key to discovering a community’s assets is a system which is asset-based, internally focused, and relationship driven.

**Asset-Based Community Development**

Every community has things it does not have (needs), and things it does have (assets). A strong community is built upon identifying, and then mobilizing, its assets. This development work starts with a “treasure hunt.” What do we want to do (our goals)? What do we have to do it with (our map of assets)?

A community has assets in individuals and families; local associations; local institutions of business, of non-profits, and of government; and economic assets. Additionally, every community has natural resources of space and physical resources, and recognizing these assets - What do we have?

Building a stronger community is about bringing these various assets into relationship. When assets are connected, their capacities can be contributed. Fundamentally community building is about relationships among people. Mobilizing assets requires organizing relationships within a community. Who or what can do it? How do we get them to do it?
These four organizing questions are at the center of mobilizing assets...What do we want to do (our goals)? What do we have to do it with (our map of assets)? Who or what can do it? How do we get them to do it?...The vehicle for doing the work is a local table of people, associations, and institutions who, together, organize the community so it is better connected to contribute its assets. The foundation for this work is this local “table” of people who are committed to the same vision or purpose. The members of the table create a vehicle to carry forward the work. Local residents, associations, churches, are the inner circle of decision makers. Local businesses, local government, local non-profits, and outside resources are a second circle of supporters.

Four strategies are helpful in mapping assets. “Capacity Inventories” are a way to gather information about individuals’ gifts and talents. Every person has many gifts such as skills, civic interests, artistic abilities, teaching skills, and enterprise experience and ability. Gifts that are not given are not gifts. A strong development organization identifies gifts, and gets them given. Two questions are the guide. What are their gifts? Where do we plug them into our community?

Capacity inventories of individuals have been used for economic purposes to create new enterprises, to connect skilled residents to employers, for new employment, and to identify market gaps through consumer spending data. Capacity inventories have been used for community building purposes to create a “skills bank”, to institute a “learning exchange”, to connect residents to local associations for care and mutual aid, and to mobilize cultural and artistic skills. The key to capacity inventories is remembering it is about people and relationships, not data. The primary result is that people are more connected for any purpose. Inventories are basically used two ways; for a personal connection, or for a pool of talent to address an issue.

A second asset mapping strategy is “Association Inventories”. Associations and churches offer a great power of organized relationships ready to act. Associations are the voluntary organizations of people in every community where people come together as neighbors to act on issues. They are characterized by consensus, care, and citizens’ power. Associations are usually not recognized fully as resources to community building. Associations are organized to identify individuals’ gifts, and get them mobilized.

Associations can be discovered through personal interviews. Three questions to ask are: What do you do now?; Tell us what you do that helps people other than your members?; What are you willing to do that you are not doing?. Associations can have a much larger role in economic community building, and in health promotion and care. The “table” asks itself, “Where do we plug in this association asset in terms of our purpose?”.

A third asset mapping strategy is “Institutional Inventories”. Institutions usually see their only purpose as fulfilling their mission. Institutions have a much larger possibility. For example, hospitals can offer a community much outside helping sick people get well. Institutions often think more like fortresses rather than community treasure chests. Businesses can be interviewed about local purchasing, local hiring, local banking, local youth training, local volunteer efforts by
staff, local investment. Non-profits or government can be interviewed about local hiring, local purchasing, training local people (especially youth), local investment, local control of the institution, and leveraging outside resources. The “table” asks itself, “How can this institution become more community serving?”.

Economic assets are those dollars generated by local and regional economic activities. An economic flow map provides information about the economy of a community. By linking skills, associations, and institutions, the economic flows can be changed, creating and retaining local dollars.

Once assets are identified and mapped, the key is mobilizing these assets. Community building is finally about relationships, relationships, and more relationships!! Gifts and assets must be identified, connected, and contributed. Asset-based community development is simply a call to remember what we already know about care and democracy. Real health, prosperity, and well being comes through people and relationships.

Building A Strong Local Economy

A strong local economy is one where local people are working, where local people own businesses, where local people purchase in local stores, where local people and businesses invest in the community, where dollars and energy re-circulate within the connections among people in the community.

Set a “Table” of Local People as a Local Development Partnership

1) Map the economic assets of local individuals, and mobilize their capacities. Do a “skills inventory” of general skills, and entrepreneurial interests and experience. The goal is to make connections among people, and to get an idea of a local “treasure chest” for economic development. What do we have to make our economy strong?

2) Map consumer expenditures and mobilize this capacity. Discover what people buy, where they buy it, and why. The purpose of this information is to re-circulate and multiply local dollars’ power. Mobilizing consumer capacity means connecting local buyers and sellers, developing new businesses and new products in existing businesses, as well as raising awareness to “buy locally”.

3) Map local business assets and mobilize their capacities. Discover what businesses are here, and what their activities are. Businesses can be connected to community economy in terms of local hiring, local purchasing, training youth, local banking, local volunteer involvement, market development, and business growth.

4) Map and mobilize local non-economic institutions (hospitals, police stations, churches, schools, parks, libraries, etc.). Institutions can agree to be a part of the local economy with local hiring, purchasing, job training, encouraging new local businesses to develop as vendors, skills training in the community, local banking and investments,
developing credit unions, developing physical resources, and attracting external resources and investment.

5) **Develop a local capital formation vehicle.** A locally resident-controlled way to finance business start-ups and business development.

6) **Mobilize outside resources** for hiring local people in larger businesses, training and skills development, markets for local products, technical assistance, and investment in the local economy.
Step 1: Create a Community-wide Individual skills inventory

To inventory the skills of community residents, several steps exist. First, develop a list of potential skills (see example enclosed). Students can hand deliver and pick up the skills inventory forms. Second, translate the skills. Third, publicize the information. The “treasure chest” of skills provides a base for development.
# INDIVIDUAL SKILLS INVENTORY

## Health

- Caring for the Elderly
- Caring for the Mentally Ill
- Caring for the Sick
- Caring for the Physically Disabled or Developmentally Disabled

Kind of care provided:

- Bathing
- Feeding
- Preparing Special Diets
- Exercising and Escorting
- Grooming
- Dressing
- Making the Person Feel at Ease

## Office

- Typing (words per minute)
- Operating Adding Machine/Calculator
- Filing Alphabetically/Numerically
- Taking Phone Messages
- Writing Business Letters (not typing)
- Receiving Phone Orders
- Operating Switchboard
- Keeping Track of Supplies
- Shorthand or Speedwriting
- Bookkeeping
- Entering Information into Computer
- Word Processing

## Construction and Repair

- Painting
- Porch Construction or Repair
- Tearing Down Buildings
- Knocking out Walls
- Wall Papering
- Furniture Repairs
- Repairing Locks
- Building Garages
- Bathroom Modernization
- Building Room Additions
- Tile Work
- Installing Drywall and Taping
### Construction and Repair (Continued)

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<th>Task</th>
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<td>Plumbing Repairs</td>
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<td>Electrical Repairs</td>
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<td>Bricklaying and Masonry</td>
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<td>Cabinetmaking</td>
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<td>Kitchen Modernization</td>
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<td>Furniture Making</td>
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<td>Installing Insulation</td>
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<td>Soldering and Welding</td>
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<td>Concrete Work (sidewalks)</td>
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<td>Repairing Chimneys</td>
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<td>Heating/Cooling System Installation</td>
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<td>Putting on Siding</td>
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<td>Tuckpointing</td>
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<td>Cleaning Chimneys (chimney sweep)</td>
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<td>Installing Windows</td>
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<td>Building Swimming Pools</td>
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<td>Carpentry Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roofing Repair or Installation</td>
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### Maintenance

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<td>Floor Waxing or Mopping</td>
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<td>Washing and Cleaning Carpets/Rugs</td>
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<td>Routing Clogged Drains</td>
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<td>Using a Handtruck in a Business</td>
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<td>Caulking</td>
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<td>General Household Cleaning</td>
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<td>Fixing Leaky Faucets</td>
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<td>Mowing Lawns</td>
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<td>Planting and Caring for Gardens</td>
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<td>Pruning Trees and Shrubbery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cleaning/Maintaining Swimming Pools</td>
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<td>Floor Sanding or Stripping</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood Stripping/Refinishing</td>
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### Food

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<th>Task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
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<td>Serving Food to Large Numbers</td>
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<td>of People (over 10)</td>
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<td>Preparing Meals for Large Numbers</td>
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<td>of People (over 10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clearing/Setting Tables for Large Numbers</td>
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<tr>
<td>of People (over 10)</td>
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</table>
Food (Continued)

Washing Dishes for Large Numbers of People (over 10)

Operating Commercial Food Preparation Equipment

Bartending

Meatcutting

Baking

Child Care

Caring for Babies (under 1 year)

Caring for Children (1 to 6 years)

Caring for Children (7 to 13 years)

Taking Children on Field Trips

Transportation

Driving a Car

Driving a Van

Driving a Bus

Driving a Taxi

Driving a Tractor Trailer

Driving a Commercial Truck

Driving a Vehicle/Delivering Goods

Hauling

Operating Farm Equipment

Driving an Ambulance

Operating Equipment and Repairing Machinery

Repairing Radios, TVs, VCRs, Tape Recorders

Repairing other Small Appliances

Repairing Automobiles

Repairing Trucks/Buses

Repairing Auto/Truck/Bus Bodies

Using a Forklift

Repairing Large Household Equipment (e.g., refrigerator)

Operating a Dump Truck

Fixing Washers/Dryers

Repairing Elevators

Operating a Crane

Assembling Items
**Supervision**

Writing Reports
Filling out Forms

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**Supervision (Continued)**

Planning the Work of other People
Directing the Work of other People
Making a Budget
Keeping Records of all of Your Activities

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**Sales**

Operating a Cash Register
Selling Products Wholesale or for Manufacturer
  (If yes, which products?)
Selling Products Retail
  (If yes, which products?)
Selling Services
  (If yes, which services?)
How have you sold these products or services?
  (Check mark, if yes)
  Door to Door
  Phone
  Mail
  Store
  Home

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**Music**

Singing
Playing an Instrument
  (Which instrument?)

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**Security**

Guarding Residential Property
Guarding Commercial Property
Guarding Industrial Property
Armed Guard
Crowd Control
Ushering at Major Events
Installing Alarms or Security Systems
Repairing Alarms or Security Systems
Firefighting

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**Other**

Upholstering
Sewing
Dressmaking
Crocheting
Knitting

Other (Continued)
Tailoring
Moving Furniture or Equipment to Different Locations
Managing Property
Assisting in the Classroom
Hair Dressing
Hair Cutting
Phone Surveys
Jewelry or Watch Repair

Are there any other skills that you have which haven't been mentioned?

**Priority Skills**

1. When you think about your skills, what three things do you think you do best?
   a) 
   b) 
   c) 

2. Which of all your skills are good enough that other people would hire you to do them?
   a) 
   b) 
   c) 

3. Are there any skills you would like to teach?
   a) 
   b) 
   c) 

4. What skills would you most like to learn?
COMMUNITY SKILLS INVENTORY

Have you ever organized or participated in any of the following community activities? (If yes, place a check mark in the blank provided.)

- Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts
- Church Fundraisers
- Bingo
- School-Parent Associations
- Sports Teams
- Camp Trips for Kids
- Field Trips
- Political Campaigns
- Block Clubs
- Community Groups
- Rummage Sales
- Yard Sales
- Church Suppers
- Community Gardens
- Neighborhood Organizations

Other Groups or Community Work?

Read the list again. In which of these activities would you be willing to participate in the future?
Step 2: Create a Community-wide Associational inventory

Associations are citizens working together. They can be formal or informal. They include business organizations such as the chamber of commerce, charitable groups and drives, youth groups or events.

First, develop an instrument to collect information about the names of the Associations, the contacts, missions, and resources (see enclosed example). Second, map these associations. Third, publicize the map.
### Associational Assets

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name of Association</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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**Examples:**

- **Business Organizations:** Chamber of Commerce, neighborhood business associations, trade groups
- **Charitable Groups and Drives:** Red Cross, Cancer Society, United Way
- **Youth Groups:** Future Farmers, Scouts, YM/YWCA
- **Civic Events:** July 4th, art fair, Halloween
Step 3: Create a Community-wide Institutional inventory

First, develop a form for collecting information about Institutions (see enclosed example). Second, tabulate and map. Third, publicize the map and inventory.
### INSTITUTIONAL ASSETS

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<th>Name of Institution</th>
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**Examples:**

Health Care: Hospitals, clinics, physicians, etc.

Political: County government, state government, Nebraska Dept. of Health
First, collect specific dollar amounts generated from each sector of your economy. Examples include: manufacturing, retail, and agriculture (see example form). Data should include:

- Type of economic activity
- Dollar amount generated
- Dollar amount spent locally
- Dollar amount spent outside the community
- Data Source (for easy updating of information)
## ECONOMIC ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Dollar Amount Spent in Community</th>
<th>Dollar Amount Spent Outside Community</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
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**Examples:** Manufacturing, Agriculture, Retail
Step 5: Develop a Plan of Action based on community assets

Conduct a town hall meeting. Present the maps and inventories. Identify leadership for each area to maintain and opportunities on which to expand.
## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas to Maintain</th>
<th>Growth Opportunities</th>
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ECONOMIC FLOW MAP

Percent Leaving

Dollars Generated

Percent Retained

RURAL

TOWN
POTENTIAL PARTNERS

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS:
Hospitals,
Community Colleges,
Libraries

INDIVIDUALS:
Youth,
Artists,
Elderly

THE PRIVATE SECTOR:
Businesses,
Banks,
Corporations

ASSOCIATIONS:
Community Development
Corporations,
Community
Organizations,
Churches

PARKS