



Healthy Environments Partnership Neighborhood Observational Checklist

The *Healthy Environments Partnership* (www.hepdetroit.org) was established in October 2000, as a part of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences “Health Disparities Initiative.” The Healthy Environments Partnership (HEP) seeks to expand the knowledge base of how social and economic inequalities are linked to disparities in cardiovascular health among residents of Detroit. The Healthy Environments Partnership is a project of the Detroit Community-Academic Urban Research Center (www.detroiturc.org). The partners are: Boulevard Harambee, Brightmoor Community Center, Detroit Department of Health and Wellness Promotion, Detroit Hispanic Development Coalition, Friends of Parkside, Henry Ford Health System, Southwest Solutions, Southwest Detroit Environmental Vision, University of Detroit Mercy, and the University of Michigan School of Public Health, School of Nursing, and the Institute for Social Research. The HEP project is funded by a grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, # R01-ES10936-01.

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Contents

Healthy Environments Partnership Neighborhood Observational Checklist	
Section 1: Block and Observer Descriptive Questions	2
Section 2: Questions about the Block Face	3
Section 3: Questions about the Street	10
Section 4: Questions about the Entire Block	12

For additional information about the Healthy Environments Partnership Neighborhood Observational Checklist, please see:

Zenk SN, Schulz AJ, House JS, Benjamin A, & Kannan S. 2005. Application of community-based participatory research in the design of an observational tool: The neighborhood observational checklist. In BA Israel, E Eng, AJ Schulz, E Parker (eds): *Multiple Methods for Conducting Community-Based Participatory Research for Health*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. Forthcoming.

Acknowledgements:

In addition to focus groups with Detroit community residents, the Healthy Environments Partnership Neighborhood Observational Checklist drew upon several previously developed instruments, including:

1. *Systematic Social Observation instrument from the Chicago Community Adult Health Study*. See Morenoff, J., House, J. S., & Raudenbush, S. (2004). Systematic social observation by survey interviewers: A methodological evaluation. Manuscript in preparation.
2. *Brief Observational Measure for Urban Neighborhoods*. See Caughy, M. O., O'Campo, P. J., & Patterson, J. (2001). A brief observational measure for urban neighborhoods. Health & Place, 7, 225-236.
3. *Community Action Against Asthma Environmental Checklist*. See Farquhar, S. A. (2000). Effects of the perceptions and observations of environmental stressors on health and well-being in residents of eastside and southwest Detroit, Michigan. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
4. *Block Environment Inventory*. See Perkins, D. D., Meeks, J. W., & Taylor, R. B. (1992). The physical environment of street blocks and resident perceptions of crime and disorder: Implications for theory and measurement. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 12, 21-34.

The Healthy Environments Partnership Neighborhood Observational Checklist

SECTION 1: BLOCK AND OBSERVER DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

Please enter your Observer ID number: _____

What mode of transportation are you using?

1. Walking
2. Driving (only when necessary for safety)

Are you working with a partner?

1. Yes
2. No

What is your partner's name? _____

What are the current weather conditions?

1. Sunny, 85+ degrees
2. Sunny, 65-84 degrees
3. Sunny, <65 degrees
4. Partly sunny, 85+ degrees
5. Partly sunny, 65-84 degrees
6. Partly sunny, < 65 degrees
7. Cloudy, 85+ degrees
8. Cloudy, 65-84 degrees
9. Cloudy, < 65 degrees
10. Rainy

Enter the Block ID number: _____

Referring to the diagram on the block description sheet, how many streets adjoin the block?

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3 streets (triangular)
4. 4 streets (rectangular)
5. 5
6. 6
7. 7
8. 8
9. 9
10. 10

SECTION 2: QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BLOCK FACE

Based on street-level frontage, how is the land used on this block face? ^a

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Residential (not vacant)
- 2) Commercial, business, professional (not vacant)
- 3) Industrial, warehouse, manufacturing (not vacant)
- 4) Institutional (e.g., school, church, medical care facility) (not vacant)
- 5) Parking lot
- 6) Vacant lot or open space
- 7) Vacant residential house/building
- 8) Vacant non-residential building
- 9) Park or playground
- 10) Waterfront
- 11) Expressway

What type of residential housing is on the block face? ^a

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) High-rise public or private apartment or condominium building (6 stories or more)
- 2) Low-rise public or private apartment or condominium building (less than 6 stories)
- 3) Detached single family house
- 4) Two or four family flat
- 5) House converted to apartments
- 6) Row house, townhouse or duplex
- 7) Housing unit attached to commercial storefront

What type of residential housing occupies the most space on the block face? ^a

(MARK ONE)

- 1) High-rise public or private apartment or condominium building (6 stories or more)
- 2) Low-rise public or private apartment or condominium building (less than 6 stories)
- 3) Detached single family house
- 4) Two or four family flat
- 5) House converted to apartments
- 6) Row house, townhouse, duplex
- 7) Housing units over commercial storefront

Are any of the vacant lots or open spaces (not fenced in):

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) In good condition (well kept)?
- 2) In poor condition (poorly kept)?
- 3) Equipped with playground equipment?
- 4) Used for gardens?
- 5) Set up with chairs or furniture for socializing?
- 6) None of the above

Do any of these institutions on the block face face this street? ^a

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Church or religious center
- 2) Medical care facility (e.g., hospital, clinic)
- 3) Community-based organization, social service agency, or community center
- 4) Public indoor recreational center or facility
- 5) None of the above

Do any of these businesses on the block face face this street? ^a

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Bank
- 2) Check cashing service
- 3) Second hand store/pawn shop
- 4) Drug store/pharmacy (prescription)
- 5) Gas station with convenience store
- 6) Fast food/take out place
- 7) Other eating place/restaurant
- 8) Bar/cocktail lounge
- 9) None of the above

Condition of the sidewalk (MARK ONE)

- 1) Good (NO holes, sizeable cracks, or crumbling or uneven pavement)
- 2) Fair (Holes, sizeable cracks, or crumbling or uneven pavement along SOME of the sidewalk)
- 3) Poor (Holes, sizeable cracks, or crumbling or uneven pavement along MOST or ALL of the sidewalk)
- 4) Under construction
- 5) No sidewalk present

Which of the following are present on the block face? ^a

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) "Undriveable" car
- 2) Empty beer or liquor bottle/can or alcohol packaging
- 3) Cigarette or cigar butt or discarded tobacco package
- 4) None of the above

Is there strewn garbage, litter, broken glass, clothes, or papers on the block face? ^a

(MARK ONE)

- 1) Heavy
- 2) Moderate
- 3) Light
- 4) None

Are there any piles of garbage or dumped materials on the block face?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Are there trees along the block face between the sidewalk and the street? ^a

(MARK ONE)

- 1) On 100% (all) of the block face
- 2) On 50-99% of the block face
- 3) On 1-49% of the block face
- 4) On 0% (none) of the block face

Is there graffiti on the block face (e.g., on buildings, signs, walls, the sidewalk)? ^a

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Is there evidence of graffiti that has been painted over? ^a

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Are there any murals/paintings on the block face? ^a

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Which of the following sayings, symbols, or murals are visible on the block face (excluding on businesses or institutions)? (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Mexican or Latino identity or pride
(e.g., display of green/red/white colors, Mexican/Puerto Rican/Cuban flag)
- 2) African American or African identity or pride (e.g., display of red/ black/green, Black Pride sticker, South African flag)
- 3) Religious (e.g., statue of the Virgin or Lady of Guadalupe, cross, sign with religious theme—e.g., Jesus lives here)
- 4) None of the above

Is there a bus stop?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Are any of the following advertisements visible on the block face? ^{a b}

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Sign advertising tobacco product
- 2) Sign advertising beer, whiskey, or other alcohol (not labeling for business)
- 3) Sign advertising fast food (not labeling for business)
- 4) None of the above

Are any of the following signs visible on the block face? ^{a b d}

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Neighborhood watch, business watch, or crime watch sign
- 2) Security warning sign
- 3) Beware of dog sign or see/hear large dog in residential property
- 4) No trespassing, no loitering, private property, keep out sign, no solicitation, or no handbills
- 5) None of the above

Are any of the following signs visible on the block face?

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) No dumping sign
- 2) No commercial vehicles sign (e.g., picture of truck with line through it)
- 3) None of the above

Are any of the following signs visible on the block face? (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Home with FOR SALE or FOR AUCTION sign
- 2) Home with FOR RENT sign
- 3) Business or commercial/industrial building with FOR SALE sign
- 4) None of the above

Are any of the following signs visible on the block face?

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Sign or banner with neighborhood name
- 2) Sign with health message (e.g., antidrug message)
- 3) Sign for social, community, or cultural/ethnic event
- 4) None of the above

COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL/INSTITUTIONAL BUILDINGS

Does any business or institution feature an explicit display of colors (e.g., green/red/white), murals, or symbols oriented toward Latinos?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Does any business or institution have “Mexican,” “Latino,” “Cuban”, or a Spanish name or surname in the name or a name in Spanish?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Does any business or institution have a sign or advertisement indicating that they sell Latino or Mexican goods or provide services specifically for Latinos?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Does any business or institution have a sign or advertisement in Spanish (e.g., a “Se Habla Español” sign) on the building or property?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Does any business feature an explicit display of colors (e.g., red/green/black), murals, or symbols oriented toward African Americans?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Does any business or institution have “African,” “Caribbean,” or “African American” in the name?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Does any business or institution have a sign or advertisement indicating that they sell African or Caribbean goods or provide services specifically for African Americans?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

How would you rate the condition of most of the commercial, industrial, or institutional buildings on the block face? ^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) Excellent (new or newly fully renovated)
- 2) Good (near perfect, but may need a touch-up repair)
- 3) Fair (needs multiple minor repairs or one major repair)
- 4) Poor/badly deteriorated (needs multiple major repairs)
- 5) Abandoned, burned out, unusable

In general, how would you rate the condition of most of the commercial, industrial, or institutional grounds on the block face? ^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) Good
- 2) Fair
- 3) Poor
- 4) No commercial, industrial, or institutional grounds

Are any of the following on the commercial, industrial, or institutional properties? ^a (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) High mesh fencing with barbed wire or spiked tops OR At least six feet high metal or board fencing
- 2) Low fencing (under six feet)
- 2) Pull-down/pull-over metal security blinds/shutters or iron grates on the doors or entrances
- 3) Security bars/gratings on the windows
- 5) No fencing or security devices on doors or windows

What proportion of commercial, industrial, or institutional properties on the block face has security devices on the doors or windows? ^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) 100% (all)
- 2) 50-99%
- 3) 1-49%
- 4) 0% (none)

RESIDENTIAL HOUSING

How would you rate the condition of the best house/residential building on the block face? ^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) Excellent (new or newly fully renovated)
- 2) Good (near perfect, but may need a touch-up repair)
- 3) Fair (needs multiple minor repairs or one major repair)
- 4) Poor/badly deteriorated (needs multiple major repairs)
- 5) Abandoned, burned out, unusable (and vacant)

How would you rate the condition of the worst house/residential building on the block face? ^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) Excellent (new or newly fully renovated)
- 2) Good (near perfect, but may need a touch-up repair)
- 3) Fair (needs multiple minor repairs or one major repair)
- 4) Poor/badly deteriorated (needs multiple major repairs)
- 5) Abandoned, burned out, unusable (and vacant)

In general, how would you rate the condition of most of the houses/residential buildings on the block face? ^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) Excellent (new or newly fully renovated)
- 2) Good (near perfect, but may need a touch-up repair)
- 3) Fair (needs multiple minor repairs or one major repair)
- 4) Poor/badly deteriorated (needs multiple major repairs)
- 5) Abandoned, burned out, unusable (and vacant)

Are any of the houses/residential buildings currently being renovated?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

How would you rate the condition of the best residential grounds on the block face? (MARK ONE)

- 1) Good
- 2) Fair
- 3) Poor
- 4) There are no resident-kept grounds

How would you rate the condition of the worst residential grounds on the block face? (MARK ONE)

- 1) Good
- 2) Fair
- 3) Poor
- 4) There are no resident-kept grounds

In general, how would you rate the condition of most of the residential grounds on the block face? (MARK ONE)

- 1) Good
- 2) Fair
- 3) Poor
- 4) There are no resident-kept grounds

What proportion of residential properties has decorations in the yard, on the porch, or on the house/building? ^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) 100% (all)
- 2) 50-99%
- 3) 1-49%
- 4) 0% (none)

What proportion of residential properties has security bars/gratings on residential doors or windows or have fences at least 5-6 feet high, clearly intended for security purposes? ^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) 100% (all)
- 2) 50-99%
- 3) 1-49%
- 4) 0% (none)

OUTDOOR PUBLIC RECREATIONAL SPACES OR EQUIPMENT

What kinds of outdoor public use recreational spaces or equipment are on the block face? ^a (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Park
- 2) Playground (e.g., slide, swings)
- 3) Sports/playing fields or courts
- 4) Sports equipment (i.e., goal posts, basketball nets, exercise stations)
- 5) None of the above

In general, how would you rate the condition of the public use recreational equipment on the block face?^{a b} (MARK ONE)

- 1) Good
- 2) Fair (e.g., peeling paint, needs minor repair, but usable)
- 3) Poor (e.g., needs major repair, unusable)
- 4) There is no public use recreational equipment

In general, how would you rate the condition of the public use recreational spaces or grounds on the block face?^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) Good (e.g., very little or no trash, grass cut, no broken glass)
- 2) Fair (e.g., moderate trash; grass somewhat overgrown or cracks or holes in some of court)
- 3) Poor (e.g., heavy trash; overgrown grass or cracks or holes in most or all of the court)
- 4) There are no public use recreational spaces or grounds

SECTION 3: QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STREET

Volume of traffic^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) Heavy (steady stream of cars, trucks, or motorcycles)
- 2) Moderate
- 3) Light (occasional cars, trucks, or motorcycles)
- 4) No traffic

Do you see any “semis”?^c

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Condition of the street^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) Good (NO sizeable cracks, potholes, or broken curbs)
- 2) Fair (Sizeable cracks, potholes, or broken curbs along SOME of the street)
- 3) Poor (Sizeable cracks, potholes, or broken curbs along MOST or ALL of the street)
- 4) Under construction

How noisy is the street?^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) Very quiet – easy to hear almost anything
- 2) Fairly quiet – can hear people walking by talking, though you may not understand them
- 3) Somewhat noisy – voices are not audible unless very near
- 4) Very noisy - difficult to hear a person talking near to you.

Is there a neighborhood block club sign or do more than 50% of the homes on the street have block club lamps?^c

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Do you see any stray or loose dogs? ^d

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Are there any people visible outdoors? ^a

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Who did you see? ^a (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Adults (ages 18 and up)
- 2) Teenagers (ages 13-17)
- 3) Preteens (ages 6-12)
- 4) Preschool children (ages 5 and under)

How were you regarded by the people? ^a

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Paid little or no attention by those around
- 2) Treated with suspicion
- 3) Friendly or helpful responses/greetings
- 4) Polite responses to your (observer's) questions
- 5) Asked about what you (observer) were doing in area
- 6) Verbally or physically harassed

What do you see adults doing? ^a

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Exercising or doing recreational activities
- 2) Gardening, doing home maintenance/yard work, working on the car
- 3) Talking with other adults
- 4) Sitting or standing on a porch or stoop or in a yard
- 5) Drinking alcohol or carrying alcohol (e.g., 40 oz)
- 6) Smoking
- 7) Walking, but not necessarily for exercise
- 8) Suspected illegal activity (e.g., drug dealing, prostitution)
- 9) Other
- 10) No adults present

What do you see teenagers doing? ^a

(MARK ALL THAT APPLY)

- 1) Exercising or doing recreational activities
- 2) Gardening, doing home maintenance/yard work, working on the car
- 3) Talking with other teenagers
- 4) Sitting or standing on a porch or stoop or in a yard
- 5) Drinking alcohol or carrying alcohol (e.g., 40 oz)
- 6) Smoking
- 7) Walking, but not necessarily for exercise
- 8) Suspected illegal activity (e.g., drug dealing, prostitution)
- 9) Other
- 10) No teenagers present

SECTION 4: QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ENTIRE BLOCK

To what extent did you experience any unpleasant noxious smells during your observation of this block? ^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) Quite a bit
- 2) Some
- 3) Not at all

To what extent did you experience unpleasant or noxious levels of dirt or dust in the air during your observation of this block? ^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) Quite a bit
- 2) Some
- 3) Not at all

To what extent did you experience any irritation in your mouth, nose, or eyes from the air on the street during your observation of the block? ^a (MARK ONE)

- 1) Quite a bit
- 2) Some
- 3) Not at all

Did you see any police officers or police cars during your observation of this block?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

^a Adapted Chicago Systematic Social Observation (Morenoff et al., unpublished material)

^b Adapted Brief Neighborhood Observational Tool (Caughy et al., 2001).

^c Adapted Community Action Against Asthma Environmental Checklist (Farquhar, 2000)

^d Adapted Block Environment Inventory (Perkins et al., 1992)