

Association of Scottish Community Councils



# INVENTORY

Information Gathering Tool Kit

# Introduction

Before we can decide what to do, we need to know what is there. That is the purpose of an inventory. An inventory should focus just on those places and things that make a community special and meaningful or that threaten and impact an area. All too often we have seen inventories become unwieldy, too exhaustive, too detailed. The ultimate test of the value of an inventory is how the information is used.

## Definition

A systematic gathering of information about or related to a resource or community.



# Essentials

Inventories document natural, historical, cultural, archaeological, recreational and scenic resources; public services; population and socioeconomic characteristics; facilities and transportation patterns or other



information that affects the intrinsic value or negatively impacts a resource. An inventory is a combination of existing information, such as planning and zoning documents and study and research reports prepared by government agencies, universities and corporations. It also includes new information that is collected through interviews, field trips and surveys.

At the completion of the inventory, there should be a series of photographs and descriptions of important resources, maps that illustrate the location of those sites and statistical data on issues such as use, growth or socioeconomic trends. Conclusions need to be supported and documented. Good inventories bring credibility to a project or effort. Points to consider:

- There should be a valid purpose or rationale for every item inventoried.
- There needs to be a clear plan to address what happens to the resources that are identified, how they will be managed, how their stories will be told.

# How to Use It

## 1. Identify the area and record findings

Mark on a map the area that will be included in the study. The best maps for this purpose are from O.S. While O.S. maps come in several scales, select the largest one possible so sites can be labelled and clearly read, but do not make the map so large that it becomes unmanageable.

Then start collecting information. Are sites or structures listed on an historical register? Is there documented habitat for any endangered or rare species? What is the water quality in a stream? What is the use of a park? These types of questions exemplify what needs to be asked.

As material is collected, consider inputting all information into a computer database. This can be an efficient means for storing, accessing, ordering and replicating information gathered.

## 2. Get folks involved

Recruit volunteers to work on the inventory both gathering information and reviewing it. Universities can often provide information and even students to help. One good assignment is to have volunteers take photographs while on walks or bike or car trips. Provide people with maps so they can mark the locations of their photographs for future reference. These pictures may also be used later in audiovisual presentations to educate and engage more people.

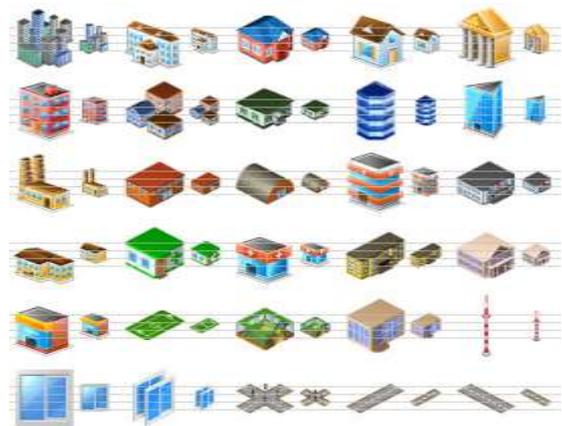
## 3. Get the work out

Once the work is done, it cannot remain on a shelf forgotten. The inventory

must be used to help people get to where they want to be in the years ahead. Creatively used, an inventory can be a powerful public involvement tool. Here are few ideas:

- Create posters with an illustrative map of the area or a large photograph that captures the place and a synopsis of the information in narrative. Sometimes these posters can be used as a bonus to new members of an organization or sold for fundraising.
- Produce a high-quality booklet with excellent photography, good illustrations and narrative explanations written for a non-technical audience.
- Develop audiovisual presentations targeted to different age groups and interests. Groups are often looking for speakers and will welcome a presentation at a meeting, whether slides or video.
- Publish findings and photographs on a web site.

- Organise an event such as a tour in the area that was inventoried. Point out significant findings and summarise highlights. The people who need to support a project may not be familiar with the location; take them to it.



It may be necessary to complete a detailed document especially for large and complicated projects or to satisfy legal requirements. If financial resources allow, there should also be an eye-catching, easy-to-read summary to share with the community.

## **Use It If.....**

- You are looking for something to attract people to your cause or organisation. Publishing results of an inventory can give you positive exposure and provide a community with educational information that interests them.
- You need to develop a vision and you want it based on the resources that are important to that community or resource.
- You want to create a database of information about a community or resource that can be continuously updated serving many different purposes.

## **Not Recommended If....**

- You do not have an identified scope of what information should be collected. Without a clear scope, inventories can quickly become unwieldy in terms of the level of information being collected, the time it takes and the money it costs.
- You cannot get cooperation from resource experts in government agencies or universities. Experts are needed to help interpret data and add validity to results.
- You find that not having a finished inventory is a roadblock to making other decisions and taking action.

