



START A STORYTELLING EXCHANGE
IN YOUR COMMUNITY

**"The
problem with
stereotypes is
not that they
are untrue, it
is that they are
incomplete."**

-Chimamanda Adichie

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Perceptions of marginalized communities often form from single media sources. All you see on the news is the violence, drugs, and poverty. But there are many positive stories that exist in these communities. Stories that need to be heard.

The Neighborhood Postcard Project fosters community connection through storytelling exchange. Residents fill out a postcard with a positive personal story of their community. That postcard is then mailed to a random person in that city to create a stronger connection between people and communities.

The Neighborhood Postcard Project is a worldwide initiative sprouted from the SF Postcard Project in San Francisco, CA.

I began the project in April of 2013. When I was working with the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Civic Innovation, I worked with youth in Bayview to create a challenge for ImproveSF, an online platform where San Franciscans submit ideas to solve neighborhood challenges. The youth went out and talked to the community and asked them what they wanted to improve in their neighborhood. They heard about gang violence, unemployment, and drug use — but they finally came back to us and said what they really wanted to do was change other people's perception of Bayview. I found that extremely powerful. They had this huge platform in the Mayor's Office to try to end violence or unemployment in their neighborhood, but they said no all we want is for people to look at us and not assume we are poor or dangerous because we live in Bayview. So I set out to find a way to help them and change perception of San Francisco's marginalized neighborhoods.

Eight months later, the project continues to expand and I'm happy to say that other people want to do the project in their city. I have created this toolkit to help others start the project in their community and start breaking down social barriers and stereotypes. I hope that this project continues to inspire people from different backgrounds, cultures, and neighborhoods to build relationships. Ronald Reagan said it best: "A lot of trouble in the world would disappear if we were talking to each other instead of about each other."

-Hunter

OVERVIEW



Identify neighborhood

Is there a certain neighborhood where you would like to do the project? Is there a neighborhood that has a negative reputation but that you know has lots of positive stories just waiting to be heard?



Print the postcards

Design your own postcard or use the provided toolkit files. You can send the files to a print shop or print them yourself at home. Print on thicker 80 lb or 110lb paper or cardstock.



Collect postcards

Take your postcards and some pens and coloring materials to the neighborhood you want to collect postcards. Identify a popular public place, event, or organization where you can set up a station or table. Having an event or organization to work with is helpful because you can leverage their community to collect postcards. Put up a sign to attract curious people. Let people approach you as much as possible, but also feel free to ask passersby if they want to share a positive story of the neighborhood. Keep in mind that not everyone will want to participate and that's ok!



Document and Share

Once you have postcards that have been filled out with stories, take a picture of them or scan them. Post them on social media with #neighborhoodpostcardproject. You can also upload them to the Neighborhood Postcard Project website. For simple instructions on how to do this, email hunter@neighborhoodpostcardproject.com.



Send postcards

Once you have documented and shared your postcards, it is time to help change neighborhood perceptions by sending them off to unsuspecting strangers. Use a phonebook or whitepages.com to find random addresses. Buy some postcard stamps and send the postcards off in the mail. You can also get some friends together and go drop them in mailboxes yourself!



Name: *LAURENCE TOUITOU*

Address:

I love the Tenderloin because:

The people. They are struggling, living on the streets. I admire their ability to persevere living such a difficult and precarious life. People talk about stability and security. Most of these people don't know what tomorrow will bring. In many ways they are more alive.

Name: *ERIC*

Address: *IN TRANSITION*

I love the Tenderloin because:

BECAUSE LIKE THE TENDERLOIN I'VE BEEN STABLE AND THROUGHT NO FAULT OF MY OWN I'VE BEEN CAST IN A BAD LIGHT, BUT LIKE THIS NEIGHBORHOOD I HAVE A GOOD, STRONG HEART AND WILL CLIMB BACK INTO THE LIGHT





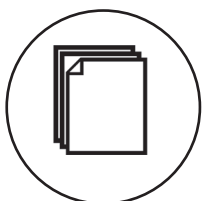
CREATING POSTCARDS

The first step is to create the postcards! You can design your own postcard or use the files in the toolkit pack. You can either have these printed at a print shop or print them yourself. If printing yourself, try to use thicker paper. 80lb or 110lb paper weight works well and is available at most office stores. Print out as many copies of the postcard front file as you need.

Once that page has printed, flip it over and put it back in the paper feeder and print out the same number of copies of the postcard backs. Now you should have a front and back that you can cut out to make the full postcard!

Use scissors or a paper cutter to cut out the postcards.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



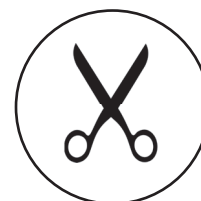
Paper



Printer



Postcard template



Scissors/paper cutter



COLLECTING POSTCARDS

Now that you've got your postcards, it is time to collect some stories! There is no wrong way or place to collect postcards. The following tips are intended to help make it easy and fun to collect stories. However, you can adapt the project to fit your neighborhood, idea, or cause.

Is there a certain neighborhood that gets a bad reputation in your city? Is there a certain neighborhood that you think has some great stories that people should hear? Start there! Find a public place where there are a lot of people. A park, a local craft market, or community event are all good places.

Setting up at an event or partnering with a community organization makes it easier to collect stories. People that attend a community event or are part of a community organization are more likely to engage with the project than random passersby.

Set up a table if possible, but if you don't have access to a table you can use a low wall, clipboard, or other object for people to write on.

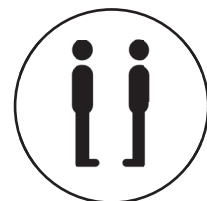
WHAT YOU WILL NEED



Writing materials



Writing surface



Other people!

TALKING TO PEOPLE

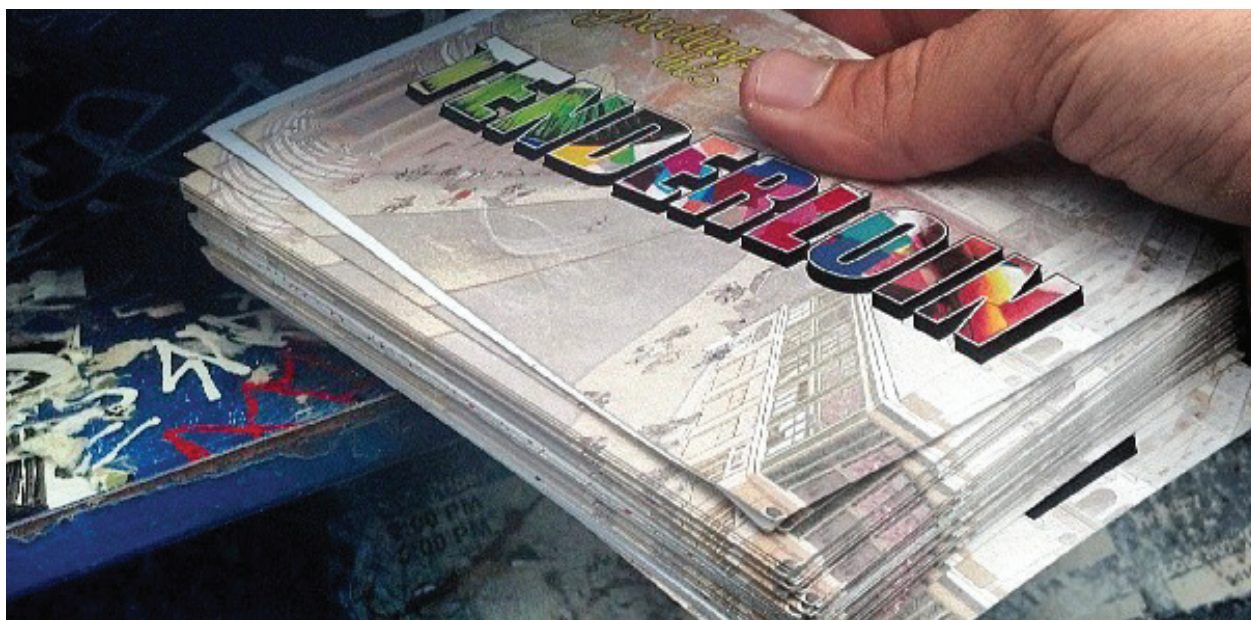
Sometimes it can be tricky to talk to people and engage them in the project. If possible, let people come to you. Set up a table or booth and some chairs, or find a spot near a bench so people have time to sit and write their postcard. Allowing people to come to you means that they are curious about the project and will be more open to sharing.

Set up a sign or banner that allows people to be drawn in. You can find sign files in the toolkit pack. Find a tree or wall near where you are set up to hang it. The more attention you are able to draw to what you are doing, the more people will take notice.

If you are having trouble getting people to participate, you can encourage participation by asking people walking by “Would you like to share what you love about the neighborhood?” or “I’m collecting positive stories about the neighborhood.” Once you have their attention, explain the project further. Try something like “I’m going to send these out to random people in the city so they get to see a different side of the neighborhood.”

Remember that not all people will want to participate, and that’s fine! People tend to be naturally hesitant to interact with strangers. You can get creative! Draw chalk on the sidewalk or tape up signs saying “Tell your story” or “Write a love note to the neighborhood” before people get to your station so they have a few seconds to think about it.





SENDING POSTCARDS

Before you send out the postcards, be sure to take a picture of them or scan them. Post them on the internet with #neighborhoodpostcardproject. You can also upload them to the Neighborhood Postcard Project website: <http://www.neighborhoodpostcardproject.com>. For simple instructions on how to do this, email hunter@neighborhoodpostcardproject.com.

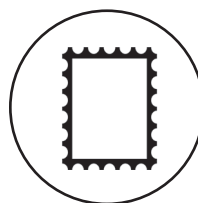
To randomly select addresses to send the postcards, use a phonebook or whitepages.com/reverse_address. If you are using whitepages.com/reverse_address, type in an address or street name and it will generate several addresses. Where you send the postcards is up to you. Try to think of what other neighborhoods in your same city might not get to experience or might not know very much about the neighborhood you have collected stories from. You can send them all to people in the same block, or a few people in every different part of the city. Resident names are not often updated, so just write "Neighbor" and the address on the postcard, affix a postcard stamp, and drop in a mailbox.

You can also get some friends together and walk through a neighborhood dropping the postcards in mailboxes, handing them out to strangers, or leaving them in public places to be discovered!

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



Address finder



Postcard stamps

CONNECT



www.neighborhoodpostcardproject.com



facebook.com/neighborhoodpostcardproject



[@Neighbormail](https://twitter.com/Neighbormail)



hunter@neighborhoodpostcardproject.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Toolkit icons courtesy of The Noun Project designers: Edward Boatman, John Caserta, Ethan Clark, Ryan Dell, Sascha Elmers, Irene Hoffman, Adam Mullin, Tom Schott, Pickin Studio