

## **Visual Engagement Experiment on a Residential Neighbourhood Street**

### **Score A: How well do you know the houses on your streets?**

#### **Variation 1: Scan the houses on your street**

##### **Base movement:**

Choose a short street segment ---- Stand at one end of the selected street segment(sidewalk) and walk back and forth between the end points of the selected segment. Use your regular walking posture and pace(X1). Cross the street and do the same on the other side. (X1)

##### **Procedure:**

- a) Stand in front of a house at one end of the selected street segment ---- Turn your head towards the house while your body is at a right angle to the house---- Maintain this posture and keep looking at the houses while walking forward---- Walk slower than your usual speed while looking continuously at the houses ---- Pay attention to the house frontage, spaces in-between the houses and other features etc. in their immediate surroundings. How far are the houses from each other? How are the houses connected to the streets? How do you feel as a pedestrian when walking by these houses? ---- Pause and explore if something interests you about these houses or their surroundings - Walk back and forth between the two ends of the selected street segment while maintaining this posture (X2).
- b) Go back to your base movement. How does your experience change when you go back to your regular walking?
- c) Cross the street ---- repeat a) – b)

#### **Variation 2: Houses on your street that catch your attention**

##### **Preparation:**

For this score, you will select at most 4 houses – 2 from either side of the street – that have interested you the most in Variation 1. In this score, for each of your selected houses, you will explore at least a total of 5 houses in a row– your selected house and four other houses adjacent to it.

##### **Procedure:**

- a) Face towards the house while your back faces the street ---- Walk sideways and back and forth between one end of the 1<sup>st</sup> house and the far end of the 5<sup>th</sup> house ---- Walk slower than your usual speed (X2) ---- Pay attention to the house frontages, spaces in-between houses and other features in their immediate surroundings ---- What about these houses that interest you? Are they harmonious, disharmonious in colour, shape, architecture? Do they fit with the rest of the houses on the street? Pause and explore if something interests you about these houses or their surroundings ---- Move to the next set of 5 houses on the same side of the street.
- b) Go back to your base movement. How does your experience change when you go back to your regular walking?
- c) Cross the street ---- Repeat a) – b)

### **Variation 3: Draw the house with your body (For curious movers)**

#### **Preparation:**

In this score, we will use the same houses we used for variation 2. For small houses such as townhouses, semi-detached houses, bungalows, you can do this score once per house.

#### **Procedure:**

- a) Choose a spot in front of the house. This spot can be at one corner of the house or at the assumed center of the house. ---- Stand at the spot. ---- Look straight ahead at the shape of the house segment in front of you. Start moving your body as if you are drawing the shape with your body. For simplicity you can use only your hands for creating the shape of the house segment.
- b) Choose a second spot and repeat a)
- c) Choose a third spot and repeat a)
- d) Repeat a) – c) process for all houses.
- e) Cross the street ---- Repeat a) – e).
- f) How does this act of embodiment make you feel about these houses?

### **Variation 4: View from the driveway**

#### **Procedure:**

- a) Stand at one end of the selected street segment ---- Start walking forward ---- When you reach the first driveway, stop and turn your body toward the street ---- Look across the street. Pay attention to the houses and their environments---- Pause for 10-15 sec ---- Is there anyone sitting on front porches or working in the garden or playing outside? ---- Start walking again ---- Stop at the second driveway and so on until you reach the end point.
- b) Cross the street ---- Repeat a) on the other side of the street.
- c) How does the physical environment of the houses on this street vary? Does each house present itself with a unique personality/characteristic?

### **Score B: Street Intersection – a Window to Your Neighbourhood**

**Preparation:** A residential street block usually has two street intersections – one at each end of the block– unless one end is a dead end. Intersections are windows to a neighbourhood street. Through them you can partially make sense of your neighbouring streets. Through them you meet ‘strangers’ who do not live on your streets.

#### **Procedure:**

- a) Stand at one corner of the intersection facing the street.

- b) Look at the intersection corner across the street. Observe what interests you there. Make a note of it. Is it a tree, a bench, a house, people or something else? Start walking. When you reach that corner, pause and walk close to the object that you made note of from across the street. If it is a fixed element, make a shape of it using your body; if it is a moving element, follow its rhythm and move with it.
- c) Repeat a)-b) for all four corners of the intersection. Repeat until you come back to your starting point.
- d) Repeat a)-c). This time imagine an activity that you would like to do at the intersection corner. Name the activity. Where would that activity be and why? Would you do that activity alone or with someone else? You do not have to imagine an activity at each intersection corner.
- e) Some intersections have mini roundabouts. If your intersection has one, walk there.
- f) Look at all four sides of the intersection.
- g) Pick a side that visually appeals to you the most. Walk that way. Why did it appeal to you?
- h) Repeat a) – h) at the second intersection.
- i) Compare your experience between the two intersections. Did one evoke more imaginations than the other? Why?

### **Score C: Meandering Sidewalk**

**Preparation:** Choose a residential street block for this score. If the block is large, choose a small segment of the block to avoid wayfinding.

#### **Procedure:**

- a) Stand at one end of the sidewalk ---- Start walking as if the sidewalk is shaped like the body of a snake ---- Walk slowly and observe what is in the immediate environment of the sidewalk ----Walk until you reach the other end of the sidewalk ---- Turn around and walk back the same way until you reach your starting point.
- b) What did you learn about your sidewalks and its environment through this meandering walk?

### **Score D: Seeing the street by being a child again (For curious and advanced movers)**

**Preparation:** Choose the street block in front of your house. If the block is large, choose a small segment of it to avoid wayfinding.

#### **Procedure:**

- a) Start at one end of the sidewalk ---- Start crawling forward ----Crawl slowly and observe your surroundings mindfully ---- If something interests you, go close to it and use movements to help you observe it from different perspectives.
- b) Continue a) until you reach the end of the sidewalk segment.
- c) Repeat a)-b) until you come back to the starting point.
- d) How has this child-like activity changed your visual perception of the sidewalk right in front of your house?
- e) Try this activity on different types of residential streets/sidewalks : sidewalks with green environment buffer vs. sidewalks that are exposed to the streets with no green buffer zone

### **Score E: How does the ceiling of my street look like?**

#### **Procedure:**

- a) Choose a sidewalk that is surrounded by a tree canopy ---- Start at one end of it ---- Start walking forward ---  
- Walk slowly ----- Look above your eye level and continue your observation.
- b) Repeat a) on a sidewalk that has very minimal trees and/or is exposed to open sky.
- c) Repeat a) on a sidewalk that is surrounded by high-rise residential apartment buildings.
- d) How do these different ceilings influence your visual experience of the street?

### **Auditory Engagement Experiment with Acoustic Dimensions of Residential Neighbourhood Public Spaces**

#### **Score A: The Neighbourhood Street Soundscape Listening**

**Preparation:** You can blind fold yourself or walk with your eyes closed. Ask a friend or a family member to guide you during this blind-walking activity.

#### **Procedure:**


- a) Hold your friend/family member's hand and start walking on the sidewalk of your street with your eyes closed ----Walk slowly and listen deeply and mindfully to the soundscape of this street block ---- If a sound catches your attention, pause, listen and tell your friend what you heard. What kind of a sound is it – natural or man-made sound? How many kinds of natural and man-made sound have you heard on your street today? Or is silence the only sound that you hear on your street today?
- b) Repeat a) on two other neighbouring street blocks.
- c) What differences do you notice between the soundscapes of these three street blocks?
- d) Repeat this activity at different times of the day and listen to how the soundscapes of these street blocks change throughout the day.
- e) Repeat this activity on weekend vs. weekday and listen to how the soundscapes of these street blocks vary between weekends and weekdays.

#### **Score B: Walking in Search of a Human Sound**

Walk on your street blind folded or not  
Walk many times  
How many? I have no guesses  
Walk forward  
Walk backward  
Walk slowly though  
Listen deeply and mindfully  
Is anyone talking? Anyone laughing? Anyone crying? Anyone yawning? Anyone walking?  
No? Then keep walking.  
Tired already, are you?

Pause  
 Sit in front of a house.  
 Is there any living soul inside?  
 Any child crying, any music playing?  
 Nothing, eh?  
 But do not give up  
 Walk your day, walk your night  
 In search of a human voice by your side  
 Have you heard one? Not yet.  
 Walk on Abbey, walk on Halsey, walk on Madonna, walk on Rigby.  
 Do not give up.  
 There is always next day.  
 Have you heard one today? Where was it on your street? When was it?  
 How did it make you feel? Did it make the street tremble with life?  
 Remember this moment because it wasn't easily earned.

These are street names from my neighbourhoods. I used them for site-specific installations. They can be changed to reflect other neighbourhood streets.



### Score C: The Cultural Listening

**Preparation:** You will find more people in the park during summer months than in any other seasons in Canada. In summer months, many sports activities are also held in the neighbourhood sports field for the community.

#### Procedure:

- Walk to neighbourhood park or the sports field during such events ---- Walk close to the audience area ---- Walk between people ---- Walk with people from an audible distance ---- Listen to the language they use for conversing among themselves.
- How many languages have you heard today?
- Repeat this activity in your neighbourhood streets on a summer long weekend, specifically Victoria Day weekend or Canada Day weekend when many people are outside working in their front gardens.

### Score D: Eavesdropping on the Youth

**Preparation:** Every neighbourhood in Toronto has a public secondary school. Find out two things – when it is on lunch break and when the school hours end.

#### Procedure:

- Take strolls on the street during the school lunch break. In my case, the secondary school in my neighbourhood is on lunch break between 10:30am and 11:30am ---- Students walk to the nearest plaza to buy lunch ---- Walk with them from a distance ---- Listen to their conversations---- They talk, they whisper, they laugh, they swear, they yell, they sing ---- You may not understand what they say but simply listen to the rhythm of their conversations ---- Do the streets feel alive with these youthful sounds?
- Repeat this activity when the school ends in the afternoon.

### Score E: The Soundbathing in the Neighbourhood Greenspace

**Preparation:** This activity takes place in protected forest conservation area or in ravine. If you do not have an easy access to such areas in your neighbourhood, try it in an open green space in your neighbourhood.

#### Procedure:

- a) Take a slow walk in the forest/ravine ---- Listen to different sounds that the forest offers you as you walk through it ---- Let go your constant analytical mind but keep the curiosity alive---- If you see a bed of tall grasses, walk close to it. Find a comfortable spot to stand. Close your eyes and listen to the sound of their movements. Move with that sound. Imagine you are one of the tall grasses. ---- If a tall, large, mature tree in the forest attracts your attention, lie down under it and stay for 10-15 minutes with your eyes closed. Imagine the tree leaves are talking. What are they saying to you and at what rhythm? ---- If you come across a water source such as a creek or a river in the ravine, first walk slowly along it and listen deeply to the sound of the water. Then stand at one spot, close your eyes and imagine you are the water. What kind of sound do you hear now?---- If you come across a valley in the ravine, walk there and start clapping or make a loud sound. Imagine you are calling your friend. Can you hear the echo of your sound?
- b) As the season changes, so does our natural environment. To develop a more awareness of your neighbourhood public green spaces, try this activity in different seasons by visiting the same places and noticing the changes in the acoustic environment.

### **Score F: Listening to Your Footsteps on the Street**

**Preparations:** Identify different kinds of natural and man-made materials that are readily found on public streets/sidewalks and in their immediate surroundings. ice, concrete, grass, pavement, heaps of pine needles etc. you can try this on any materials.

#### **Procedure:**

- a) Find a quiet street in your neighbourhood ---- Stand on the paved sidewalk----walk back and forth at your regular speed---Then stand at one spot---close your eyes----pretend to walk with your usual footsteps but don't change location ---- Can you hear your footstep?----open your eyes ----then stand on the grass boulevard next to the sidewalk----walk back and forth ---- stand at one spot---Pretend to walk but don't change location--- how does your footstep sound change?
- b) Repeat this activity on different textures of snow – fresh snow, ice, slush – that you cover your streets/sidewalks during winter months.

### **Score G: Dominant Sound Direction Walk in the Public Walking Trail**

**Preparation:** You will need assistance from a friend or a family member for this activity.

#### **Procedure:**

- a) Stand on one spot of the trail ---- close your eyes ----what is the dominant sound that you hear? which direction is it coming from? ---- name the source of the sound----Walk 5 steps towards that direction from your starting point ---- pause ----what is the next dominant sound that you hear? This could be same as the first one ----walk 5 steps towards the direction of that sound, name the sound source ----pause ----repeat this one more time.
- b) Your footsteps create 'sound direction walk tracks' on the ground. The person assisting you can use chalks to trace these footsteps on the trail.

- c) Repeat this activity at various locations on the trail. When finished, check if there is any trend for the dominant sound in your neighbourhood public trails or for the direction it is heard from.
- d) Repeat this activity at different times of the day to see how the soundscape of the public trail varies.

### **Score H: The Traffic Dance**

**Preparation:** Traffic sound is the most dominant sound in and around my neighbourhood. Try this during the rush hour in the morning.

#### **Procedure:**

- a) Stand at a street corner where the main street and your neighbourhood street meet ---- Keep your eyes closed ---- Create a movement with your body every time you hear a vehicle passes by ---- Ask a friend or a family member to film your 'Traffic Dance'
- b) Continue this for 15-20 minutes. How many times have you been bombarded by the traffic sound within this short period of time?