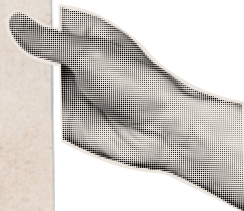


POWER WALK

A FIELD GUIDE



WHAT IS A POWER WALK?

A Power Walk is an intentional stroll through a place that matters to you. It's a way to explore how that place came to be the way it is — and how you could take the steps to change it.



This Field Guide helps you begin a process of exploring, questioning, and uncovering.

You don't need to know anything in advance. Not knowing is part of the magic. You just need to be curious.



The New York Times
Headway

This guide was created by Citizen University in collaboration with from the Headway team at The New York Times.

To print out copies of this guide, visit
[CitizenUniversity.us/PowerWalk](https://citizenuniversity.us/PowerWalk)

WHY WALK?

Most people move through familiar places without really seeing them. But when you turn up your attention, you'll start to notice constant change, and the potential for more.

A Power Walk is an activity you can do by yourself or with others. As you walk, you'll observe what's around you, notice what's changing, and ask why.

Think of it as an act of everyday citizenship — not as a legal status, but as an activity. Practicing noticing is one of the daily habits of people who show up.

As you get more curious about where you are and how it's changing, you can begin to embrace your role in what happens next.



BEFORE YOU WALK

Civic power is the capacity to influence the decisions that affect the community at large and to participate meaningfully in public life.

Civic power flows in predictable patterns.

1 Power **concentrates** in the places it has already been before. Think about how wealth compounds, or already-viral social media posts get more likes.

2 Power **justifies** itself, creating narratives about why the status quo is the way things ought to be. Think about the way people once believed women didn't have the temperament or mental capacity to be voters.

3 Despite these first two patterns, a third remains true: power is **infinite**. When you gather with others to work towards shared solutions, you create new power where it didn't exist before.

Your Power Walk is a chance to see these first two patterns in action, and take advantage of the third.

BEFORE YOU WALK



How powerful do you feel where you are?

Mark on the line where you land.



LEAST

MOST

As you explore the place that matters to you, you'll notice many things that only exist because someone — or a group of people — decided things should be that way.

The goal of this walk is to more clearly see those decisions and their effects in the world around you.

Consider your route.



You might already have a route in mind — or you might be joining a walk that someone else designed. If not, identify a nearby area that is meaningful to you. Choose a place you can access easily and move around on foot.

If walking in this area is difficult because of physical limitations, infrastructure, weather, or other safety concerns, consider driving or observing along a local bus route.



This is an adventure, not a marathon — pick somewhere you can explore for about an hour.

You might choose the neighborhood where you live, a place you grew up, or another location that you know well.

Where will you walk?

Write down the common name for this place or come up with a special name of your own.

BEFORE YOU WALK

Consider the area you've chosen and write a few reflections before you begin.

How well do you know this place?

How safe and comfortable do you feel here?

What do you assume or believe about this area?

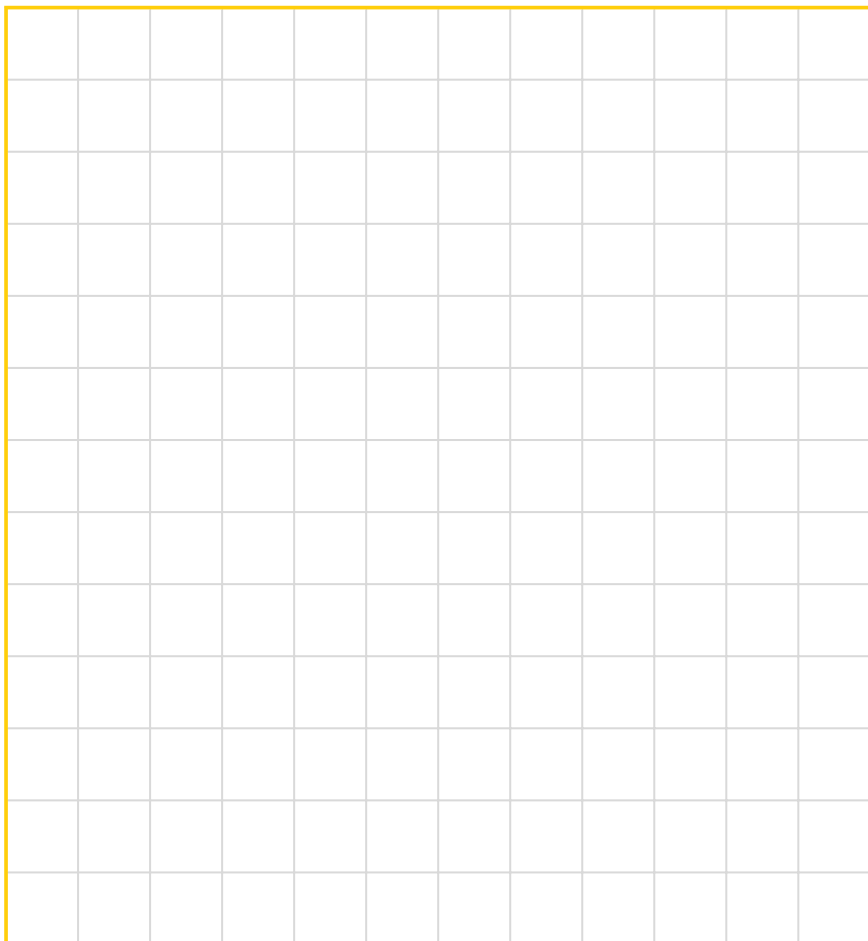
Where do people gather? Where do they avoid?

Where do you feel wonder? Where do you feel worry?

MAP YOUR WALK

Map out your walk — get specific! Think of this as a treasure map. Instead of gold, the treasure is perspective.

Clearly mark your starting place and list 3–5 landmarks or points you intend to visit along your route.



You might want to plan a comfortable place to finish your walk. Somewhere you can rest and reflect like a library, café, or shaded park.

WHILE YOU WALK

Keep this page open while you're out and about! As you explore and especially when you arrive at each point of interest pause to observe and wonder. Take notes on what you notice.

What do you sense?

Note the major things you can see, then move beyond sight. Where is there noise or silence? What do you smell, touch, or taste?

What do you feel?

Anxiety? Belonging? Do you feel at home or out of place? Notice who else is in the space and imagine what they might be feeling.

Who is here? Who isn't? What's missing?

What seems like it belongs here? What is lacking or out of place? Do you notice litter or are there trash cans? Is there public art or graffiti?

What makes you feel confused or frustrated?

What questions are you starting to ask? What doesn't make sense?

WHILE YOU WALK

As you pause to wonder and observe, you'll begin to see your place with new eyes. As you take notes on what you notice, you'll begin to ask why? Why are things this way?

Lean into your curiosity! For now, the point is to ask questions, not to arrive at the answers.

For example: Why don't we have a park in our neighborhood? Why don't we have more streetlights? Why can't people who live here afford to shop here?

Write your own WHY questions here.



AFTER YOU WALK

Review your notes and questions.

Choose one of the questions you asked yourself on the last page.

Whatever you're wondering about, it flows through channels of civic power. Remember the three patterns of power we mentioned, and stay curious...

- 1 **Where is power — or the lack of power — concentrating around this question?**
- 2 **Are there stories being told to justify the way things are?**
- 3 **Are there ways people could act together to create change?**

AFTER YOU WALK

Now ask the central question of all civic power...

Who decides?

Ask things like... who decides where to put parks? Who decides what kinds of stores get to be in a neighborhood? Who decides how dense a residential neighborhood should be?



You won't know the answer to every question. The point of your Power Walk is to start asking, and to make note of what you need to learn to get to answers.

Who can you talk to about this question who knows more about the history of the issue?

Now it's time to imagine.

Consider what could change about this place? What could be introduced? What should be preserved?

Think about the question you've been investigating and try to envision a different way for things to be. You're not only imagining what could change, you're identifying why it's important.



WHAT IF... we built a new neighborhood park in this abandoned area? THEN... the kids in this neighborhood would have more freedom, and parents would have a place to meet each other.

WHAT IF...

THEN...

Reflect on how you might make your WHAT IF... **real**.

1 If power tends to get **concentrated**, what would it take to change the game?

Perhaps you've identified some people with a stake in the status quo, but who could you interest in change? Who could provide more resources? Could you find creative ways to play by the rules — or change them?

2 If power tends to **justify** itself, what would it take to change the story?

How can you tell a story that includes more people? Who can help you tell this story? Who needs to hear it? What creative mediums can you use to spread new narratives?

3 If power is **infinite**, what would it take to change the equation?

How can you imagine mutually beneficial solutions with needs of multiple groups in mind? How can you organize all those people to support the change you envision?



Write an action plan.

This is something you can hold on to as a guide as you continue reading power and bringing your WHAT IF to life.

After walking around in my community, I'm wondering

QUESTION FROM PAGE 10

I realized that

 and

WHO DECIDES

made it this way.

WHO DECIDES

I had an idea. What if...

VISION FROM PAGE 12

I think if that changed, then...

VISION FROM PAGE 12

I'm going to stay curious and work to make change.
My next steps are...