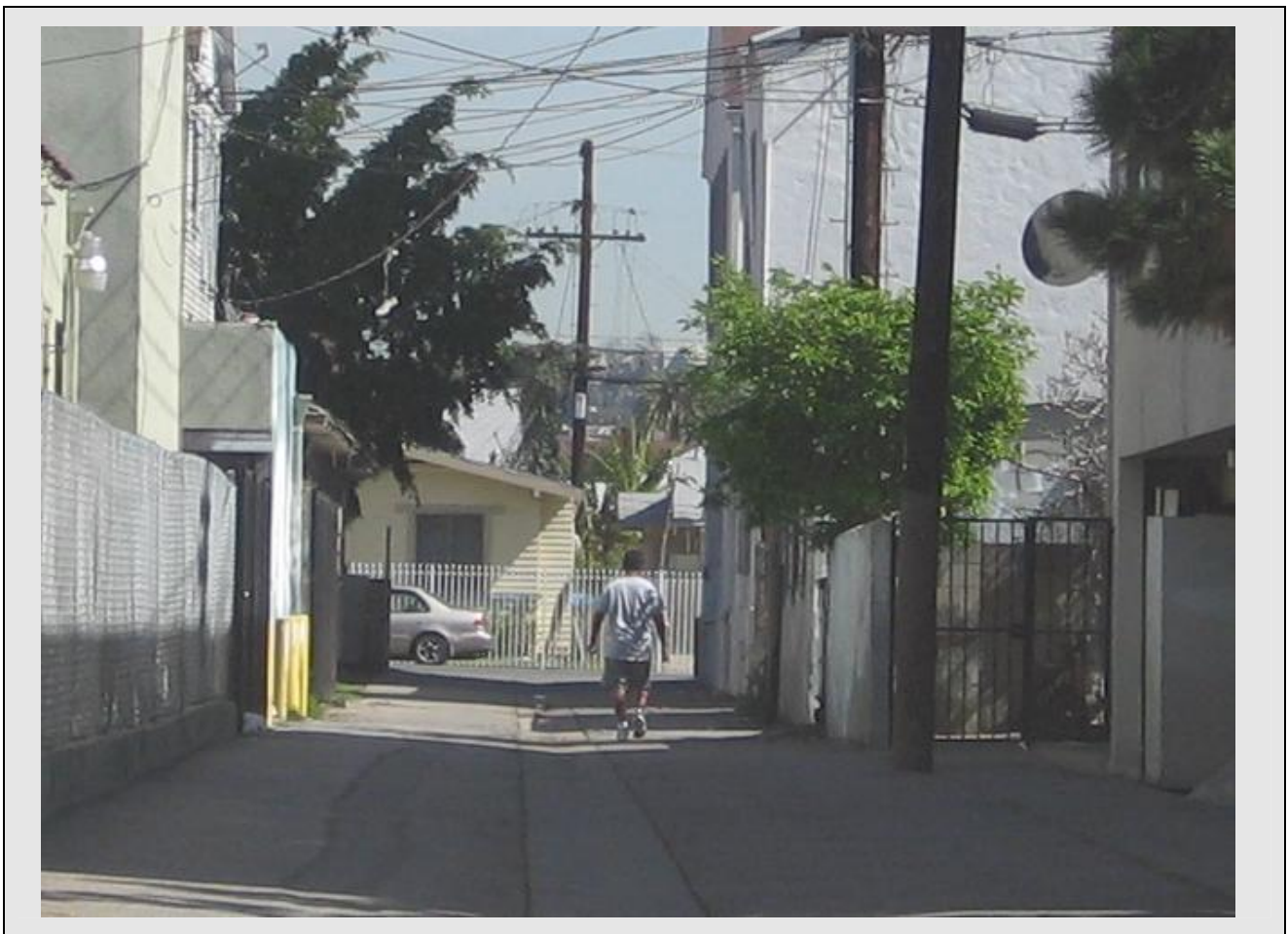


Alleys Behavioral Observation Manual

Instruction Manual and Audit Form



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Section 1 Purpose of the Manual

This manual is designed as a guide for auditors on the Back Alley LA project. The project was born of the realization that the thousands of alleys in the City of Los Angeles represent a major untapped land resource for the metropolitan region, and could be transformed to provide new open space and parkland, promote physical activity among nearby residents, absorb and clean polluted runoff, and reduce crime and blight through redesign and neighborhood involvement. Project goals include assessing social, behavioral, and use aspects of alleys; determining the extent of soil pollution in alleys and the viability of phytoremediation strategies; and forging an understanding of institutional issues in alley transformation and maintenance. Some of this information will inform the design of a rigorous longer-term comparison of demonstration (greened, improved) and control (unimproved) alleys.

Understanding the nature of City of Los Angeles alleys entails, among other data-gathering exercises undertaken in this project, observing and recording the activities and behavior of alley users. This kind of data informs an understanding of alleys as functional public and semi-private spaces, used by a variety of people and animals for a multitude of practices – such as city workers collecting garbage, joggers exercising their dogs, drivers seeking shortcuts, drug dealers making sales, cats sleeping in the sun, residents returning home from work, and children playing ball. Systematic observations paint a picture of alley usage over the span of days and weeks, allowing researchers to look for use patterns in a single alley, across alleys in one neighborhood, and between neighborhoods.

This document is both a training manual and a reference manual for auditors. It is to be used in the training stage of the project prior to the commencement of fieldwork, and is the first source that auditors should consult should they experience any uncertainties during the course of fieldwork. The manual consists of guidelines and procedures to be followed while in the field, detailed instructions on how to answer the observation form questions, and the observation form itself. Auditors must be thoroughly familiar with the contents of this entire manual to ensure that they complete fieldwork safely and successfully.

Section 2 Fieldwork Guidelines

As research assistant on the Back Alley LA project, you will be going into the field to evaluate alley usage in the City of Los Angeles using the assessment form included in this manual (see Section 4). Your first responsibility is to become completely familiar with the assessment form and with the detailed instructions that accompany it (see Section 3). Conducting fieldwork without a full understanding of the form and instructions will result in the collection of inaccurate and unmeaningful data, which in turn will compromise the integrity of the study. Before you perform fieldwork, you will extensively review the assessment form and instructions with a supervisor, and will spend time in the field with the supervisor learning to complete the assessment form accurately.

Fieldwork for this project revolves around **observation of human and animal activities** that occur in the alleys selected for this project. To collect data for this segment of the project, you will visit each alley multiple times, on different days and at different times of day, and record onto a form (see Section 4) all activities you observe in and directly surrounding each alley. These activities may include children's play, jogging, or forms of passive recreation. The following subsection discusses fieldwork guidelines for observing alley usage.

Observation of activities

Preparing for a site visit

Before each field day, you will be assigned to a team of two and will be given the location of the alleys you are to observe. Expect to be given the locations of around four alleys that are located fairly close to one another. You will likely visit this same set of alleys for two to three days in order to collect a greater volume of use data.

You are expected to plot out a route to and between each site before departing, using online mapping services (e.g., Mapquest) and/or a paper copy of the Thomas Brothers Guide. In the interest of time, travel routes should take into account rush hour traffic (a glance at Sigalert.com on a weekday morning and evening will help to elucidate Los Angeles traffic patterns).

When packing for observational fieldwork, be sure to bring the following materials.

- Data forms – enough to complete the sites you will visit, plus extras
- Pens
- Clipboard
- Thomas Brothers Guide
- Digital camera

- At least one cellular phone per team
- USC Identification card
- Supervisor’s business card

- Water and food
- Sunscreen and hat
- Sweatshirt or jacket
- Rain jacket and umbrella – check weather forecast before departure
- Comfortable, closed-toe shoes

Some of these items are vital to the fieldwork itself. You must bring the data collection forms, pens, and a clipboard. The Thomas Brothers Guide will come in handy should directions from the internet fail. A digital camera will allow you to take photographs of activities that may be helpful in the future for presentation purposes. Cellular phones are a required item so that your supervisor can reach you if need be, and so that your team can comply with scheduled check-ins with your supervisor. You may be asked by residents, police, or security officers to identify yourselves while observing an alley, and presenting your USC ID and the project head’s card is the best way to help explain that you are conducting field research for a local university. Other items are listed for your comfort and safety, as you may be in the field for up to 7 hours per day, doing observational work as well as work using the SPACES for Alleys instrument. Staying hydrated, fueled, and protected from the sun or unexpected cool weather will help you to execute higher-quality fieldwork. Though you likely will not exit your car while conducting behavioral observations, since we intend for you to observe activities without disrupting them, you may on occasion need to exit your car to achieve a better view of the alley. Thus, an umbrella is necessary should you conduct fieldwork in the rain, in order to keep your data forms dry. Closed-toe shoes are *mandatory*, as there may be broken glass and other hazards at your field site, and comfortable walking shoes will help you to navigate the cracked asphalt, mud, and drug paraphernalia that you may find in your alley site should you exit the car.

In the field

All observational fieldwork will be conducted during daylight hours. You and your partner(s) will arrive at the first alley at the designated time of day and generally spend 5-10 minutes there looking for human activity in the target alley. Circle around the block to look into all ends of the alley, and record any activities. You may need to stop your car briefly to interpret what you are seeing. Circle up to three more times to gather notes on ongoing activities and to watch for new activities. After about 10 minutes, proceed by car to the second alley, follow the same methods for 5-10 minutes, and then proceed to the other alleys and do the same.

As mentioned above, taking photographs of activities you observe will be helpful for presentation purposes, including PowerPoint presentations and publications. However, you must adhere to the following: Do NOT take any photographs that capture subjects' faces, and do NOT take any photographs of activities that appear illegal or gang-related.

General observation form instructions

For this component, teams will fill out a set of forms similar to the one shown in Section 4. It is very important to fill out observation forms completely, legibly, and correctly. Since you are observing human and animal behaviors, it will be impossible to return to any alley site to confirm illegible notations or to collect omitted information. Extensive training before site visits begin should help to ensure that questions are answered correctly. If you are still confused or uncertain about the meaning of a question, refer to Section 3 for a more detailed explanation of the question. If you are still uncertain after consulting Section 3, ask your supervisor for further explanation.

Teams must fill out these forms on top of a clipboard or another sturdy surface, to prevent excessive folding, tears, and puncture marks that are likely to result from filling the forms out against car steering wheels or one's hand. Forms must be filled out using a black or blue pen, as pencil may smudge or rub away over time resulting in the loss of the data you have collected.

You will fill out a new set of forms each time you visit the same alley.

Be sure to fill out the following information at the top of the first sheet:

- Names of team members
- Date of observation work
- Time of the day that you begin AND complete the observations
- Site name

The second and third sheets are geared toward mapping, naming, describing, and timing the activities that you observe in the alley. You will be recording information on the type of activity, activity location, start and finish times, duration, number of participants, gender, race, and age. There is also room on the third sheet for additional useful information. More detailed instructions can be found in Section 3.

Troubleshooting

Occasionally, your team may experience a hitch in fieldwork. This will likely come either in the form of an unfamiliar or cryptic activity you observe, or in the form of interference from people in the neighborhood.

If your team is having difficulty identifying an activity you are observing, phone your supervisor and describe it to him/her – a discussion may clarify it. If you cannot reach your supervisor, take down a detailed written description in Notes and discuss it with your supervisor immediately upon return to USC.

Your observation activities may attract attention from curious or even suspicious residents, private security personnel, or passing police. The project staff will have informed local police

units and neighborhood watch groups that a USC research project is being conducted in select neighborhoods around the city. Even so, you may be approached and asked about your activities. Present your USC ID cards, and answer courteously that you are students at the University of Southern California and are conducting a research project on alley usage in the City of Los Angeles. Answer any questions they may have. If they appear concerned about your presence in or near the alley, it may be appropriate to let them know that the City, the LAPD, and the neighborhood watch are all aware of the project, each having been informed about the project in writing. If they continue to question you, present the project head's business card and inform them that they may contact this person for further information. If the person who has approached you demands that you leave, return to your car and drive to the next alley site. Phone your supervisor immediately to let him/her know about the situation. Your team, another team, or your supervisor will return on another day.

There is a chance that personal safety may become an issue during your observation work. Alleys are sometimes places of drug, gang, and other criminal activities. If there are suspicious individuals at your observation site, do not stop to observe their activities. Drive away immediately to another point in the alley to conduct your work, and note only what you were able to observe onto your observation form. If the entire alley you are to observe appears to be unsafe, phone your supervisor and inform him/her about the situation. You will either be instructed to observe another nearby alley or to continue on to your next site. In the latter case, your team, another team, or your supervisor will return and complete the observation work on another day.

Section 3 Detailed Instructions for Behavioral Observation Form

Behavioral observation data will be collected using a set of three documents (see Section 4). The first is a key, listing activities that may occur in an alley. The second is a simple map of the alley space you are to observe. The third contains ample space for written notes.

Sheet 1: The key presented on the first sheet of paper contains a list of activities that you may observe in an alley, and each activity corresponds to a letter. This list of activities contains activities common only to humans, activities common to humans and animals, and activities common to some animals only.

Sheet 2: There are two types of Sheet 2's provided – one for alleys that run between two streets, and one for alleys that run between a street and any kind of dead end.

When you observe an activity in the alley, you are to flip to the second sheet of paper and place that activity's letter onto the map. Place the letter in the location on the map that best corresponds to the alley location in which the activity is taking place. If the activity that is taking place is not stationary, draw a shape onto the map that corresponds to the whole area being used for the activity. Place the letter inside that shape.

Then, next to the letter, write down the number of the observation. For instance, you would write "1" for your first observation and "5" for your fifth observation.

All of the Sheet 2's that you take into the field will be blank – that is, they will not be labeled with cross streets. It is your job to label the cross streets, and also to indicate which direction is North.

Sheet 3: Finally, flip to the third sheet of paper, which contains lines for written notes. You will use this sheet to elaborate on the activity that you just observed. Begin by writing down the number of the observation you will describe. Then, list the following information:

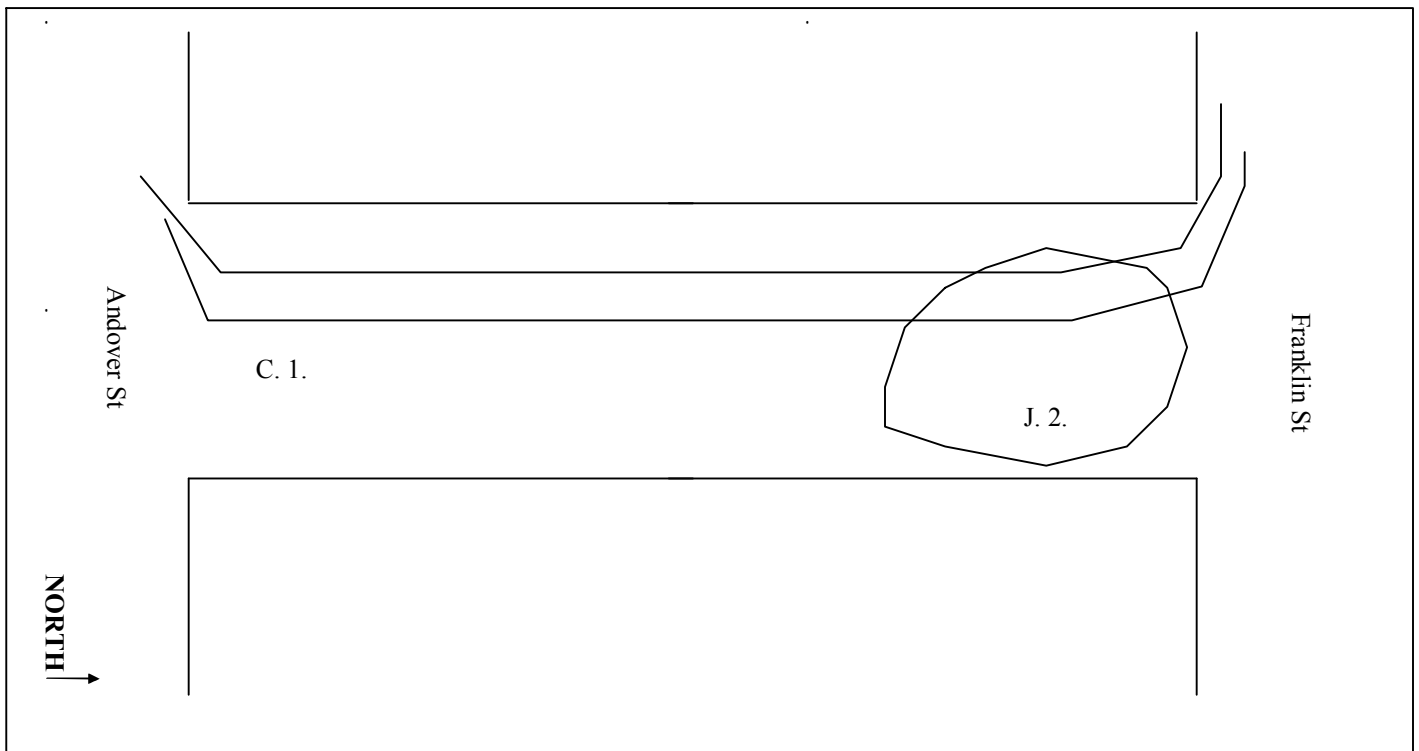
- Activity (in words)
- Number of people involved
- Gender of people involved
- Number and type of animals involved (e.g., cat, dog, squirrel, bird [name species if possible])
- Start and stop time of activity (Military time)
- Total duration of activity
- Race of people involved
- Ages of people involved
- Any other notes you see fit to include: e.g., about the nature of the activity, particularities about where in the alley the activity is happening (e.g., bird is sitting *on power line*), the participants, or any uncertainties you have about your data.

The last two pieces of information – race and age – call for your impressions.

If you leave the alley before an activity is completed, you may enter 'undetermined' as the activity stop time. For duration, indicate the length of time you observed the activity for, and use the > sign in front of your duration length to signify that the activity lasted at least that long.

EXAMPLES:

This is sheet 2, flipped on its side. It is filled out as though you are at an alley between Franklin and Andover Streets (you have provided these street labels), as though the alley runs north from Andover to Franklin (you have provided the directional label), and as though you have observed two activities in this alley during your observation period. You have seen a pair of women walking through the alley for exercise, using Andover Street and Franklin Street as entranceways/exitways. You have also seen a group of children playing soccer to the west of Franklin Street.



On sheet 3, then, you would write:

1. Walking (exercise). 2 participants. Both female. 15:18 – 15:20. 2 minutes. Caucasian, early 30's; Asian, early 20's. We think they were walking for exercise rather than for shortcut because they were wearing sweatsuits.

2. Soccer. 6 participants. All male. 8:40 – undetermined. >10 minutes. All Latino. All young kids, between 5-10 years old. Our observation period ended at 9am, so we left while the activity was still in progress.

Section 4 Behavioral Observation Form

Sheet 1

Observers' names _____
Date _____
Time of day observations were begun _____
Time of day observations were completed _____
Site name _____

Active

- A. Biking (exercise or play)
- B. Jogging/running
- C. Walking (exercise)
- D. Rollerblading/rollerskating
- E. Skateboarding (exercise or play)
- F. Calisthenics
- G. Yoga
- H. Martial arts
- I. Dance
- J. Soccer (American)
- K. Football (American)
- L. Baseball
- M. Dogwalking
- N. Miscellaneous active play by children
- O. Hunting/stalking (animals)
- P. Fighting (humans and animals)

Passive

- Q. Sitting/perching (humans and animals)
- R. Reading
- S. Socializing
- T. Birdwatching/wildlife watching
- U. Picnicking
- V. Napping/sleeping (humans and animals)
- W. Cardplaying/boardgames
- X. Barbequing
- Y. Eating/drinking (without the set-up of a picnic) (humans and animals)
- Z. Singing (humans and animals)

Transportation

- AA. Walking, using the alley as a shortcut (humans and animals)
- BB. Walking to access a property (home, business, etc.) along the alley (humans and animals)
- CC. Biking, using the alley as a shortcut
- DD. Biking to access a property along the alley

- EE. Driving in a car using alley as a shortcut
- FF. Driving in a car to enter/leave an alley-adjacent garage or property or to access a property
- GG. Skateboarding, rollerskating, rollerblading using the alley as shortcut
- HH. Skateboarding, rollerskating, rollerblading to access a home/business on the alley
- II. Flying within/into/out of alley (animals)

Domestic activity

- JJ. Cooking
- KK. Clothes washing

Illegal activity

- LL. Drug dealing
- MM. Drug use
- NN. Prostitution (soliciting)
- OO. Sexual activity
- PP. Alcohol use
- QQ. Tagging
- RR. Other vandalism
- SS. Dog- or cock-fighting

Municipal activity

- TT. Garbage or recycling pick-up
- UU. Meter-reading
- VV. Maintenance on sewer, municipal lighting, more

Business activity

- WW. Trucks unloading or picking up merchandise

Other

- XX. [Name activity on Sheet 3]

Sheet 2

Street:

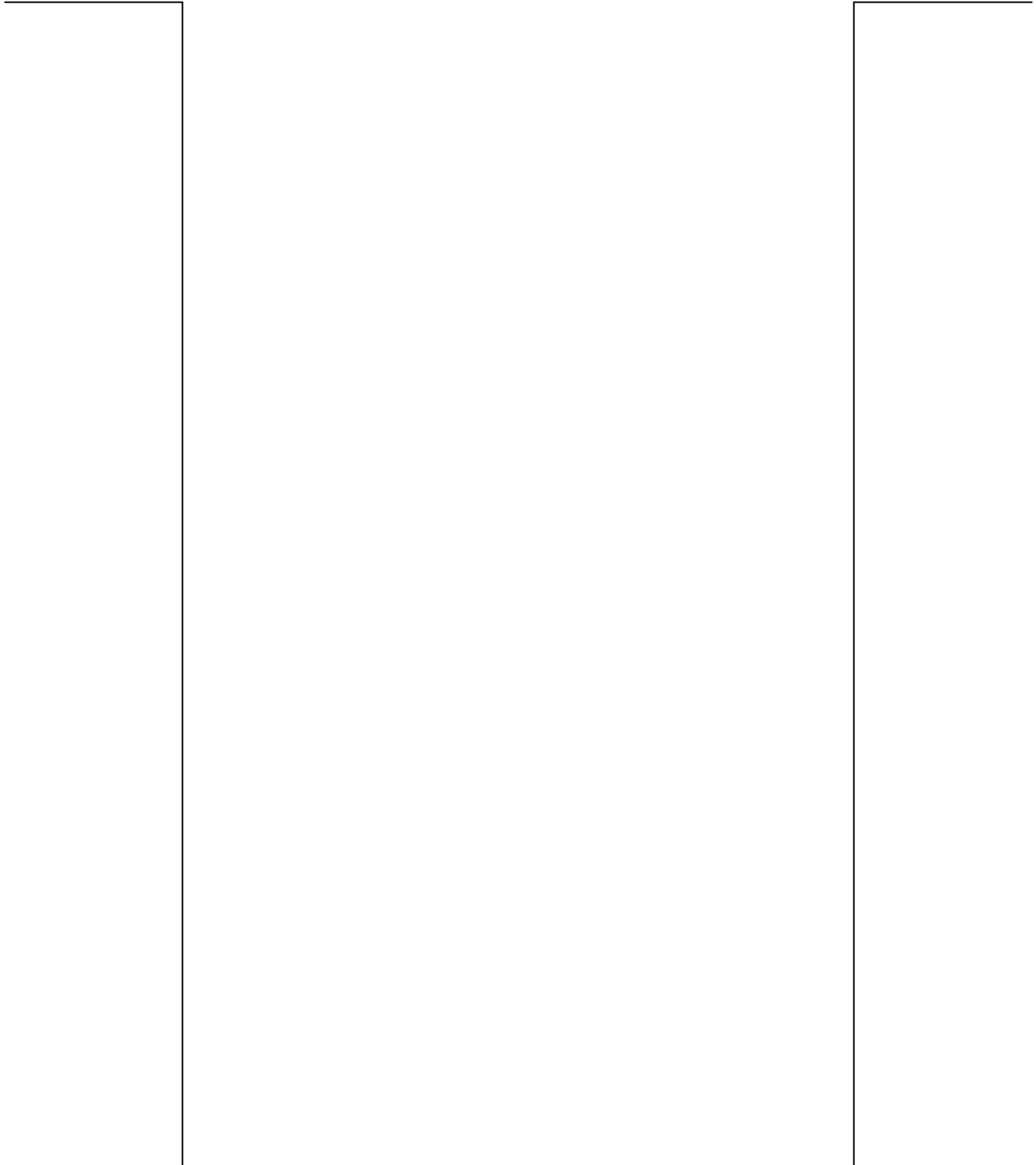
Blank rectangular area for drawing or writing, located on the left side of the page.

Blank rectangular area for drawing or writing, located on the right side of the page.

Street:

Sheet 2

Street:



[Dead end]

