

<http://www.planning.org/greatplaces/neighborhoods/characteristics.htm>

Characteristics and Guidelines of Great Neighborhoods

Description of the Neighborhood

It is important to identify the geographic, demographic, and social characteristics of the neighborhood. Tell us about its location (i.e. urban, suburban, rural, etc.), density (i.e. dwelling units per acre), or street layout and connectivity; economic, social, and ethnic diversity; and functionality (i.e. residential, commercial, retail, etc.). We also want to know whether a plan or specific planning efforts contributed to or sustained the character of the neighborhood, or if the neighborhood formed more organically and not through a formal planning process.

Neighborhood Form and Composition

How does the neighborhood ...

- Capitalize on building design, scale, architecture, and proportionality to create interesting visual experiences, vistas, or other qualities?
- Accommodate multiple users and provide access (via walking, bicycling, or public transit) to multiple destinations that serve its residents?
- Foster social interaction and create a sense of community and neighborliness?
- Promote security from crime is made safe for children and other users (i.e. traffic calming, other measures)?
- Use, protect, and enhance the environment and natural features?

Neighborhood Character and Personality

How does the neighborhood ...

- Reflect the community's local character and set itself apart from other neighborhoods?
- Retain, interpret, and use local history to help create a sense of place?

Neighborhood Environment and Sustainable Practices

How does the neighborhood ...

- Promote or protect air and water quality, protect groundwater resources, and respond to the growing threat of climate change? What forms of "green infrastructure" are used (e.g., local tree cover mitigating heat gain)?
- Utilize measures or practices to protect or enhance local biodiversity or the local environment?

Great Neighborhoods – Characteristics and Guidelines for Designation

A neighborhood can be based on a specific plan or the result of a more organic process. Neighborhoods of different kinds are eligible — downtown, urban, suburban, exurban, town, small village — but should have a definable sense of boundary. Neighborhoods selected for a Great Neighborhood designation must be at least 10 years old.

Characteristics of a **Great Neighborhood** include:

1. Has a variety of functional attributes that contribute to a resident's day-to-day living (i.e. residential, commercial, or mixed-uses).
2. Accommodates multi-modal transportation (i.e. pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers).
3. Has design and architectural features that are visually interesting.
4. Encourages human contact and social activities.
5. Promotes community involvement and maintains a secure environment.
6. Promotes sustainability and responds to climatic demands.
7. Has a memorable character.

Description of the Neighborhood

1. When was the neighborhood first settled?
2. Where is the neighborhood located: in a downtown, urban area, suburb, exurban area (i.e., on the fringes of a metropolitan area), village, or small town? What is the neighborhood's approximate density (e.g., in dwelling units per acre, or other)?
3. What is the neighborhood's location, its physical extent, and layout? What are the boundaries of the neighborhood? Are these boundaries formal, defined by an institution or jurisdiction (i.e., wards or other political boundaries, neighborhood associations, other entities) or is the neighborhood defined informally?
4. How large a geographic area does the neighborhood encompass (number of blocks, acres, or other measurement)?
5. What is the layout (e.g., grid, curvilinear) of the streets? Is there street connectivity; is it easy to get from one place to another by car, foot, or bike within or beyond the neighborhood without going far out of one's way?

6. What is the mix of residential, commercial, retail and other uses?
7. What activities and facilities support everyday life (e.g., housing, schools, stores, parks, green space, businesses, churches, public or private facilities, common streets, transit, etc.)?
8. Is there diversity amongst the residents, including economic, social, ethnic, and demographic? Describe the neighborhood's homogeneity or heterogeneity in those terms.
9. How has a plan or planning contributed to or sustained the character of the neighborhood? Or did the neighborhood form more organically and not through a formal planning process?

Guidelines for Great Neighborhoods

1.0 Neighborhood Form and Composition

1.1 Does the neighborhood have an easily discernable locale? What are its borders?

1.2 How is the neighborhood fitted to its natural setting and the surrounding environs?

1.3 What is the proximity between different places in the neighborhood? Are these places within walking or biking distances? Does walking or bicycling within the neighborhood serve multiple purposes? Describe (access to transit, parks, public spaces, shopping, schools, etc.). How are pedestrians and bicyclists accommodated (sidewalks, paths or trails, designated bike lanes, share-the-road signage, etc.).

1.4 How does the neighborhood foster social interaction and promote human contact? How is a sense of community and neighborliness created?

1.5 Does the neighborhood promote security from crime, and is it perceived as safe? How are streets made safe for children and other users (e.g., traffic calming, other measures)?

1.6 Is there consistency of scale between buildings (i.e., are buildings proportional to one another)?

2.0 Neighborhood Character and Personality

2.1 What makes the neighborhood stand out? What makes it extraordinary or memorable? What elements, features, and details reflect the community's local character and set the neighborhood apart from other neighborhoods?

2.2 Does the neighborhood provide interesting visual experiences, vistas, natural features, or other qualities?

2.3 How does the architecture of houses and other buildings create visual interest? Are the houses and buildings designed and scaled for pedestrians?

2.4 How is local history retained, interpreted, and used to help create a sense of place?

2.5 How has the neighborhood adapted to change? Include specific examples.

3.0 Neighborhood Environment and Sustainable Practices

3.1 How does the neighborhood respond to the growing threat of climate change? (e.g., local tree cover mitigating heat gain)?

3.2 How does the neighborhood promote or protect air and water quality, protect groundwater resources if present, and minimize or manage stormwater runoff? Is there any form of "green infrastructure"?

3.3 What measures or practices exist to protect or enhance local biodiversity or the local environment?