

Sustaining Character Neighborhoods.

VISION: NEIGHBORHOOD SUSTAINABILITY.

A sustainable neighborhood has its physical, economic and social spheres of activity in balance. The neighborhood's natural system is preserved and used to provide economic value through enhanced property values. The physical features offer efficiency by using natural systems to collect and dispose of stormwater, improve water quality and enhance community aesthetics. Household and construction wastes are reduced, recycled or reused. Infrastructure expenses for capital and operations are reduced while the quality of life increases.

Neighborhood-based visions drive everything.

Neighborhood plans based on a consensus vision of a sustainable future can use the vision to determine the strategy that will direct every action.



1. The neighborhood's **community-driven vision** outlines the residents' expectations for services and facilities.
2. The "Complete Neighborhood" approach is the **vision-driven strategy** that further articulates expectations and directs actions.
3. **Action plans** are programs and budgets that defend and enhance the neighborhood.

PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINING NEIGHBORHOODS.

The neighborhood plan is the vehicle for residents to use to establish a sound working relationship with their host city. The planning process is also a great way to solicit resident participation, support and commitment to a shared vision. Fundamental principles are:

1. **A clear declaration from the city that neighborhoods matter** expressed by adopted neighborhood and housing policies.
1. **Primacy.** The city's demonstration that its primary responsibility is to protect the homes and neighborhoods of its citizens.
2. **Safety.** The city's commitment to addressing the arising array of natural, social, broadband, social media and transportation dangers in addition to traditional criminal activities.
3. **Wealth generation.** Generally recognize that residences of all types are, or should be, appreciating assets creating wealth for owners and the city.
4. **Social cohesion.** Acknowledge that strong neighborhoods build community sociability and leverage economic and physical assets to advance social objectives.
5. **Organizational emphasis.** Neighborhood Associations, working with their host cities, are the front-line defenders of their neighborhoods.
6. **Community and institutional trust.** Understand that as cities constantly change, the citizen base evolves, new relationships emerge and the tenets of community trust are continuously tested. Supporting "complete neighborhoods" builds trust.
7. **Plant trees!**

STRATEGY: “COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS”

Development of a “complete neighborhood” is a basic and compelling strategy for achieving the vision of a sustainable neighborhood. The idea of “complete neighborhoods” is that neighborhoods are more than a collection of houses or apartments.

A “complete neighborhood” has single family homes, apartments or a mix of both with all the services and facilities residents need in their daily lives. Schools, parks, shops, streets and organizations complete the features needed to benefit residents.

ACTIONS: NEIGHBORHOOD-LEVEL ACTIVITIES.

City regulations, budgets and communication programs are directed by the city’s vision-driven strategy. Active neighborhood associations can influence programs, regulations and infrastructure projects for the benefit of the neighborhood.

Participate in the system. Participation in public workshops, hearings and the construction of community dashboards are activities that inject neighborhood interests into city action plans. Specific neighborhood activities are:

Express a resource conservation attitude. “Reduce, re-use, recycle” can become the mantra of the neighborhood residents with systems support from the city, the utility providers and the waste collectors.

Insist on pollution management. The neighborhood must work at preventing or eliminating sources of air and water pollution. The neighborhood association and the city can be both system implementers and resident educators.



Conserve energy. Lighting, security and community gathering places use energy. Conservation efforts supported by the electric utility provider can reduce community energy consumption.

Conserve water. Over half of a neighborhood's potable water is used for landscape irrigation. Education on water-saving landscape materials can be provided by the neighborhood association. Re-claimed water can be used where available. "Smart" drainage systems that re-charge stormwater runoff into the ground can be implemented for street and community facility drainage systems.

Reduce greenhouse gas emission. The neighborhood, apartment or condo association, with the city's support, can offer information to residents of activities that mitigate the emission of greenhouse gases [GHGs]. Education and emission monitor programs are available.

- About a third of all GHGs are generated by vehicles with internal combustion engines. Retro-fitting personal residences for electric vehicles would be useful.
- The second major source of GHGs, about a third, is generated by building construction. Resident support for city programs requiring better construction methods are useful.

Practice neighborhood sociability. The social aspect of reducing pollution and conserving resources comes from neighborhood conversations that address the situation. The city, the neighborhood association and individual residents can create a constructive social and civic attitude.

Pursue increased economic value. Two different avenues lead to economic progress.

- First are activities that protect and enhance property values. Code enforcement, infrastructure maintenance and public safety programs are part of the package.
- Secondly, pollution management, resource conservation and GHG reductions require both attitude and money. As we know, the monies spent to prevent problems are negligible compared to monies required to fix problems. The city and the neighborhood residents can enact meaningful funding programs.

Strengthen neighborhood economics.

Neighborhood associations have only a few sources of revenue. Dues, contributions and grants form their revenue stream. A neighborhood association business plan will enable the association to plan expenditures based on reasonable projections of revenue. City grants to neighborhoods are an important source of revenue in many cities.

Assist city hall in constructing a community dashboard. Technology and social media offer ample opportunities for city administrations to organize and share information about city plans, programs, regulations and budgets. Real-time, interactive data enables transparent communications both to and from city hall. Neighborhoods benefit immensely by knowing the status of various city and neighborhood programs, regulations and budgets.

Enact neighborhood-level mobility programs and policies, including safe streets, prolific bike/ped paths, convenient and safe connections to schools, parks, shops and transit.

Support neighborhood and housing policies.

Neighborhood associations can help cities develop regulations and capital budgets to preserve and enhance established neighborhoods, plan new neighborhoods and enable affordable housing.

Cross-leverage physical and economic assets.

Neighborhood associations can use their physical assets and their economic strength to promote sustained social engagement within their neighborhood and the city.

Activate a neighborhood association.

Neighborhood associations can partner with other organizations in nearby neighborhoods to promote city policies and programs for the benefit of residents.

CONCLUSION.

Character neighborhoods depend on neighbors. Residents, working with their neighborhood association and the city, can protect and enhance their living environment as a sustainable place that values, balances and cross-leverages its economic and physical assets to achieve neighborhood sociability. Neighborhoods can be interesting, pleasant and prosperous places.

Character is a value judgement. Character neighborhoods require completeness. They require an equitable balance of the neighborhood's economic, physical and social resources. But character neighborhoods require more, they need commitment to humanistic values that provides the emotional basis for the community; soul if you will. Character neighborhoods exist because people of good will work to build and sustain community virtues that engage best qualities of their fellow citizens.