

## The “Complete Neighborhood”.

### THE IDEA OF “COMPLETE”.

“Complete” provides the physical elements of a character neighborhood. “Complete” conveys a specific meaning when used to address urban conditions. “Complete” means that one system includes all the factors that affect that system: its designers, its users, its managers and its owners. The “complete streets” idea described in the adjacent box anticipates “complete neighborhoods”.

The “**COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS**” idea builds on the idea that neighborhoods are more than a collection of houses. A complete neighborhood has single family homes, apartments or a mix of both and includes all the services and facilities that people need in their daily lives. People, especially families, depend on a wide variety of activities to support their health, safety and general welfare. Every neighborhood should strive for completeness.

### CHARACTER ADDS EMOTION TO THE RATIONAL “COMPLETE”.

“Complete neighborhoods” have access to all the physical assets necessary for daily life. Character is the social additive; the emotional essence of neighborliness. Neighborhoods require both elements to be the places where people want to live. Safety, sociability, learning and prosperity add character to the physically complete place.

#### The National Complete Streets Coalition Idea Has Direct Parallels to “Complete Neighborhoods”.

*“A Complete Streets approach integrates people and place in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of our transportation networks. This helps to ensure streets are safe for people of all ages and abilities, balance the needs of different modes, and support local land uses, economies, cultures, and natural environments.”*

<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/>



## The Primacy of Neighborhoods.

### RECOGNIZE CONTEMPORARY CONDITIONS.

American society has fundamentally changed in many ways since the post-WWII period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Racial, environmental and economic justice are each gaining evermore respect. Geopolitics has changed our world view. The digital revolution has created an immediacy of information and knowledge transfer. Climate changes are impacting individual lives. Artificial intelligence is creeping into society.

American society has stayed fundamentally sound in many other ways. Entrepreneurialism thrives. The desire for safe and decent homes and neighborhoods persists as affordability pressures grow. Mobility systems still need to accommodate individual trips to a variety of distinct destinations. Employment drives choices of education and training and, to a diminishing degree, the choice of where to live.

### NEIGHBORHOOD PRIMACY.

The first responsibility of every city is to protect citizens in their homes and neighborhoods. Creating and sustaining programs that build great neighborhoods is the primary job of every local government. Complete neighborhoods with character build civic pride, family stability and community wealth. Neighborhood preservation, protection and enhancement are critical activities for every city to be a prosperous and pleasant place to live. Neighborhood planning is the place to start.

**The first step in city planning is for the city to embrace the primacy of neighborhoods** and fully commit to creating great neighborhoods, residences, and secure places for people to live.



Neighborhood primacy is important because neighborhoods are where people live, raise their families, invest their savings and spend their time. Neighborhoods and homes must be valued and protected from:

- Crime and personal injury,
- Disease and health care issues,
- Declining property values due to lax code enforcement,
- Aggressive driving on neighborhood streets, poor transit service and the absence of bike/pedways,
- Drug and personal abuses, and
- Other obnoxious and threatening neighborhood intrusions.

The second reason for a neighborhood primacy policy is financial. Residences should be appreciating assets. Historically, home investment has been the major source of family wealth. And, neighborhoods are an important part of the city's tax base.

Finally, neighborhoods matter to business. Strong neighborhoods matter from the perspective of community economic development. Businesses decide, in part, where to locate based on the places where they and their employees will live.

Retaining and recruiting businesses depend on strong neighborhoods with a variety of housing to appeal to the full range of employee demographics.

**REAL-TIME, TRANSPARENT DASHBOARDS.**

A dashboard is a system that collects, organizes and reports information on a specific topic. In the case of a city, a dashboard can provide many benefits including reporting city administration actions, budgets, meetings and performance. With sensors distributed citywide, dashboards can report, at least, emergency service requests, traffic conditions, accident and flooding locations and facility outages.

The important features of a public dashboard are that it be transparent and real-time. Transparency instills confidence in the reports since the methods, data sources and management are visible to a wide audience. Real-time instills usefulness because the reporting is current. Today’s technology makes reliable and useful data readily available through civic dashboards and related systems.

**THE NEED FOR NEW “THIRD PLACES”.**

Neighborhoods have the opportunity to facilitate togetherness by providing a place attractive to a diversity of interests using Ray Oldenburg’s idea of the “third place”. “Third places” are important components of a complete neighborhood knowing that:

- Individual “third places” serve a great purpose and should be encouraged and preserved by neighborhood associations.
- Village and neighborhood centers can perform the same function. Programmed public and neighborhood spaces offer opportunities for neighbors to mingle.
- Casual design and demeanor are important.



**CIVIC PRIDE, HOMETOWN SPIRIT AND CITIZEN TRUST IN COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS.**

Cities are constantly growing, contracting, improving and deteriorating. As people, families, employees and businesses come and go, they lose connection with the city’s essence; its history, culture and spirit. Maintaining neighborhood values and civic engagement, over time, becomes an essential responsibility of community leaders.

Trust in community institutions is an important reason for the primacy of neighborhoods and residents. From the city administration’s perspective, it is enlightened self-interest. Residents must trust city leaders to protect their neighborhoods. Until accomplished, resident fear of change diminishes a city’s ability to re-invent itself with new investments and programs downtown or elsewhere.

Fear comes from distrust which comes from bad civic behavior and experiences. Once residents trust that their interests are being protected, they are more likely to support city initiatives like downtown redevelopment, new business investments in development corridors adjacent to residential areas and other efforts to fund schools, parks or streets.



**THE “NEIGHBORHOOD COMPLETE”  
w/CHARACTER actions include:**

1. Designing city and neighborhood programs to build hometown spirit, civic pride and popular trust in community institutions.
2. Adopting a citywide “neighborhood primacy policy” that declares the primary responsibility of the city is to protect people in their homes and neighborhoods.
3. Planning neighborhoods based on a “complete neighborhoods” strategy that recognizes neighborhoods as more than a collection of houses; a neighborhood includes homes of all types, parks, schools and shops connected with quiet streets, transit and bike/ped paths.
4. Codifying regulations and standards flexible enough to accommodate historic “third places”.
5. Pursuing an agenda of neighborhood economic, physical and social sustainability.
6. Leveraging and cross-leveraging all assets to produce multiple benefits with special attention given to leveraging economic and physical assets to produce social capital and infrastructure.
7. Establishing a real time, transparent citywide dashboard that reports city events, actions and programs.

*Character is the emotional additive to a “complete neighborhood”. Character infuses community trust, civic pride, hometown spirit, fun and beauty while completeness provides all the physical features necessary for daily life. Great neighborhoods require both elements to be the places where people want to live. Safety, sociability, learning and prosperity add character to the physically complete place.*

**READINGS.**

Residents and neighborhood associations have many resources available to them to learn how to be effective planners, designers and organizers of neighborhoods. The Urban Land Institute, the Congress for the New Urbanism and the American Planning Association are great resources.

Books of value are:

1. ***Celebrating the Third Place, Inspiring Stories About the “Good Great Places” at the Heart of Our Communities***, Edited by Ray Oldenburg, Marlowe & Company, New York, 2001.
2. ***Developing Sustainable Planned Communities***, Edited by Jo Allen Gause, Primary Authors: Richard Franco, Jo Allen Gause, Jim Heid, Jr., Steven Kellenberg, Edward T. McMahon, Judi G. Schweitzer, Daniel Stone, Urban Land Institute, Washington, 2007.
3. ***For the Love of Cities, The Love Affair Between People and Their Places***, Peter Kageyama, Creative City Productions, 2011.
4. ***Regenerating Older Suburbs***, Richard Peiser, Urban Land Institute, Washington D.C., 2007.
5. ***Social Entrepreneurship for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Innovation Across Nonprofit, Private and Public Sectors***, Georgia Levenson Keohane, The McGraw-Hill Companies, New York, 2013.
6. ***Sustainable Residential Development: Planning and Design for Green Neighborhoods***, Avi Friedman, The McGraw-Hill Companies, New York, 2007.
7. ***Ten Principles for Rebuilding Neighborhood Retail***, Michael D. Beyard, Michael Pawlukiewicz, Alex Bond, Urban Land Institute, Washington D.C., 2003.
8. ***The Great Good Places, Cafés, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community***, Ray Oldenburg, Marlowe & Company, New York, 1999.
9. ***Triumph of the City, How our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier and Happier***, Edward Glaeser, The Penguin Press [USA], London, 2011.

A small apartment building on a traditional single family neighborhood street.

