

Neighborhood Quality Assessment

This website was originally designed to be many interconnected pages. For the purpose of creating one document that can be emailed or printed, all of the pages have been combined into one html document. Thus, some of the directions may not apply to this document and some of the functionality and formatting may be lost. The original web address is <http://www.unc.edu/~kaimon/MP>.

By: Kai Monast, April 14, 2004

Created as a Masters Project for the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Does your neighborhood provide all of the things that you think are necessary for living a quality life? If not, do you know what is missing?

A quality neighborhood is based on a combination of your perceptions of the design, safety, mobility, and community. This neighborhood quality assessment form empowers you to survey neighborhoods to discover assets and shortcomings based on your values. By answering this short list of [questions](#), you can begin to understand what you like most about a community and what you think needs to be changed. The survey can also be used to decide between two different neighborhoods if you are thinking of moving. If you do identify a shortcoming, [remedies](#) are provided to help you understand what you can do to address it.

If you need help, view the [directions](#). If you would like understand how the scores are calculated, view the [calculation process](#).

For questions about this survey, please contact [Kai Monast](#).

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Question 1 -- Safety and Security

How safe is the neighborhood?

How much crime occurs in the neighborhood? How safe do you feel walking down the street? If a crime were committed on the street, how many people would witness it? Are there "eyes on the street"- do people spend time on the street or watching the street? How confident are you that your neighbors would know if a crime occurred on the street in front of their houses or to their neighbors?

Safety and Security

Not safe *Very safe*
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important is this issue to you?

Not important *Very important*
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How can an unsafe neighborhood be made safe?

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Question 2 -- Care and Maintenance

Are the homes, institutional buildings and public facilities (including streets, sidewalks, signs, street lamps, etc) well maintained, or do they show signs of neglect and disrepair?

Does the neighborhood engender a sense of pride and stewardship? Is street litter common? Do residents go out of their way to pick up a piece of trash? Do many buildings need to be painted or repaired? Are the sidewalks broken and cracked? Is there litter or broken glass on the street or in yards?

Care and Maintenance

Poorly maintained

Well-maintained

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important is this issue to you?

Not important

Very important

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What can be done to increase care for a neighborhood?

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Question 3 -- Walkability

To what extent is the neighborhood oriented to pedestrians versus motor vehicles?

Is there a contiguous network of sidewalks that enable you to walk around the neighborhood? Are street crossings adequately marked and equipped for pedestrian safety? Do the cars travel so fast as to scare pedestrians? Does the street seem unnecessarily wide? Do garages dominate the fronts of houses? Are there large parking areas that dominate the landscape?

Walkability

Not walkable

Very walkable

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important is this issue to you?

Not important

Very important

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What can be done to increase walkability?

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Question 4 -- Accessibility

How would you rate the "mobility options" in your neighborhood?

How long does it take you drive to the nearest store? Are there multiple routes into and out of the neighborhood? Are there barriers that inhibit access to, from, or across your community? Can you easily access adjacent neighborhoods or are you physically disconnected from them? Is there an easily accessible public transit stop?

Accessibility

Poor access

Good access

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important is this issue to you?

Not important

Very important

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What can be done to improve accessibility?

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Question 5 -- Recreational Opportunities

Are there parks, playgrounds, ball courts, hiking trails or other public recreational facilities within walking distance?

Are there certain facilities that the neighborhood is lacking? Do you have to leave the neighborhood to engage in recreation? Are there places for children to play?

Recreational Opportunities

<i>Few opportunities</i>	<i>Many opportunities</i>
0 1 2 3 4 5	6 7 8 9 10

How important is this issue to you?

<i>Not important</i>	<i>Very important</i>
0 1 2 3 4 5 6	7 8 9 10

What can be done to create recreational opportunities?

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Question 6 -- Amenities

Does the neighborhood contain the amenities that are important to you?

Many people today think that neighborhoods should contain a store where you can purchase bread or milk. Some people think that community centers, churches, schools, or libraries are essential elements of a neighborhood. Think about the number of activities that you can perform without leaving your neighborhood. Can you buy basic necessities? Can you go to church? Now, think about all of the reasons why you leave your neighborhood. Have you ever wished that the neighborhood included a specific amenity?

Amenities

<i>Few amenities</i>	<i>Many amenities</i>
0 1 2 3 4 5 6	7 8 9 10

How important is this issue to you?

<i>Not important</i>	<i>Very important</i>
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	8 9 10

How can I include these amenities in the neighborhood?

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Question 7 -- Appeal

Does your neighborhood appeal to or offend your senses of sight, smell, and sound?

Is there sufficient variety in the "sensual streetscape" to delight your senses? Is your neighborhood interesting to your eyes? As you are walking down the street, can your eye wander across different building styles or can you just see blank walls or the same style repeated? Is the street lined with trees or other plantings? Do you think the neighborhood is ugly? Remember to consider noises and smells.

Appeal

Not appealing

Very appealing

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important is this issue to you?

Not important

Very important

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What can be done to increase appeal?

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Question 8 -- Identity

Does the neighborhood present a clear "sense of place" to both residents and visitors?

Is there a compelling image or impression of the neighborhood that most residents share? Is there a dominant landmark that serves as a focal point in the community? The easiest test for identity is to ask if there is something memorable about the place that distinguishes this neighborhood from others? Memorable features can be building styles, unique street designs or layouts, or special places in the neighborhood like a church, store, or park.

Identity

No Identity

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Clear Identity

How important is this issue to you?

Not important

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very Important

What can be done to create identity?

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Question 9 -- Street Activity

What is the overall level of pedestrian activity in your neighborhood?

If you sat on your porch or looked out of your window, how long would it be for someone to walk by? Can you see children playing? If you were walking down the street, would you see other people walking or working in their yards?

Street Activity

Not active

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very active

How important is this issue to you?

Not important

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very important

How can street activity be encouraged?

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Score Calculator

	Your Scores	Import-ance	Question Value	Weighted Score
Q 1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Q 2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Q 3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Q 4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Q 5	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Q 6	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Q 7	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Q 8	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>		
Q 9	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>		

 [Interpret Scores](#)

Final Score of 100

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Directions

The survey consists of 9 questions. These questions are intentionally open-ended. It is up to the user to answer the questions based on his/her values.

1. Entering Scores. On the right of this screen, you will see the calculator. The yellow section is where you enter your answers and the white fields are where calculations are performed based on your answers in the yellow section. Do not enter data into the white sections because it will be overwritten when you press the "Calculate" button. Do not press the "Calculate" button until after you complete every question in the survey.

Record the scores for each question in the "Scores" column. In addition to providing scores for each question, you will also be asked to indicate how important that question is to you. Record this score in the "Importance" column. Both the "Scores" and the "Importance" answers should be on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

2. Remedies. Links to potential remedies are provided for each specific issue. Click on these links and you will be taken to a new page dedicated to remedies and sources for further research. Some of the pictures on the remedy pages come from the author and some from outside sources. To find out the source of the photo, click on the number link in the text description of the photo and you will be taken to the bottom of the page where the photo sources are listed.

3. Navigation. Use the arrows at the bottom of each form to continue to the next question or to move back to the previous question. Since the remedies open in new windows, close or minimize the remedy page to return to the survey.

4. Calculating Scores. When you are finished with the survey, click the "Calculate" button and the total score for the neighborhood will be calculated. The calculation process is based on the scores that you give for each question and the importance that you assign to each question. See below for more information about the [calculation process](#). After filling out the values and running the calculation, click here to [interpret your scores](#).

If you do not see the calculator to the right, then you do not have Java Script installed on your computer. The calculator may not work with certain types of computers or certain versions of internet browser software. If the calculations are not correct, refer to the [Calculate Scores](#) section below to manually calculate the scores.

5. Interpreting Scores. See the [Interpret Scores](#) page.

6. Questions? If you have any questions about this form or believe that an important neighborhood quality is not addressed, please contact the [author](#).

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Calculate Scores

To calculate the scores, enter scores between 0 and 10 in both yellow columns for all questions. Then, press the "Calculate" button.

The calculation process is:

1. Add all values for the "Importance" field. The results of this sum are called the "Sum of Importance".
2. Divide the "Importance" field for each question by the "Sum of Importance" to obtain the percent worth for each question. Results are reported in the "Question Value" field for each question.
Example- if the "Sum of Importance" is 100 and the "Importance" of Question 1 is 10, then the "Question Value" for Question 1 is 10%.
3. Multiply "Your Score" for each question by the "Question Value" for each question to obtain the "Weighted Score".
4. Add all values for "Weighted Score" to obtain the "Final Score".
5. "Final Score" represents how well the neighborhood performed based on your values, on a scale of 1-100 with 100 being the best.
6. [Interpret your scores](#).

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Interpreting Scores

The Final Score that was just calculated can be read in three ways. First, it is easy to tell where your

neighborhood is lacking and where your neighborhood performs well based on the answers to the questions. Next, if you are comparing neighborhoods, then the one with the highest score better fits your needs. Third, if you are just scoring one neighborhood, you can use the scoring guide below to interpret your scores. If you have questions about how the scores were calculated, go back to the home page and click on the directions link.

Scoring Matrix	
0 - 39	This neighborhood does a poor job at meeting your needs. Some serious changes are necessary.
40 - 59	Your neighborhood is adequate, but it could use some changes.
60 - 79	You are satisfied with your neighborhood.
80 - 100	Congratulations, your neighborhood suits your needs very well.

On the survey page with your scores, click the Home button to return to the entry page for the survey. At the bottom of the page, you will see a list of remedies for each question on the survey. If you notice that your *Importance* for a question is very high, but *Your Score* for the question is very low, then you should look at the remedy and think about making changes to the neighborhood. The remedies provide guidance for how to deal with a shortcoming in your neighborhood and sources that you can consult for further help.

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Remedies

1. How can an unsafe neighborhood be made safe?

[1. Defensible Space](#)

[2. Street Activity](#)

[3. Add Amenities](#)

[4. Slow Traffic](#)

Create Defensible Space



The space above cannot be well defended because it is surrounded by blank walls. [1](#)



Many communities have posted these signs along the street. However, if you can't look out the window and see the street or your neighbor's home, how can you be watching? [2](#)



This area is hard to defend because the garages present blank walls to the street. Put the mouse over the image to see a street with similar homes that is protected by windows and porches instead of ignored by blank walls. [3](#)

Police patrols are a part of a safe neighborhood, but they cannot make an indefensible place safe. Think about a large city park at night that has thick trees and bushes. People walking along the street next to the park cannot see into it. They have no way of knowing what is going on in that park unless they go into it. Ask yourself, could you walk into that park and feel safe? Probably not.

The reason why you would not feel safe is that no one can protect you. Many urban streets operate in the same way. Streets with frequent activity and with many windows and balconies overlooking it are defensible. If a crime happens on this street, the chances are very high that someone nearby will know about it. Streets bordered by blank walls that have no pedestrian life are indefensible for the same reason- no one would know if a crime happened. Thus, a defensible space is one that has many possible "eyes on the street".

Remedies

- 1. Increase [Street Activity](#).** More people on the streets is one of the most effective ways to increase "eyes on the street" because of the people walking on the street and the fact that street activity encourages people to look out of their windows and observe the public realm.
- 2. Add [Amenities](#).** Stores and nightlife also help to increase street presence. In addition, storekeepers are very concerned with keeping neighborhoods safe because it effects their business.
- 3. Slow Down Traffic.** Slow moving drivers are more likely to be looking around while driving. Therefore, if cars are moving slowly, there are more eyes on the street. For information on slowing traffic, see the traffic calming section of the [walkability](#) page.
- 4. Change Building Designs.** In the future, do not allow new buildings to present blank walls to the street. This long term solution requires residents of the neighborhood to take an active role in helping to make decisions about land use changes. Talk to your local Planning Department to find out how to achieve this goal.

For more information on creating defensible space, see these sources:

- Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Vintage Books, New York, 1961.
- Newman, Oscar. *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design*. Collier Books, New York, 1973.
- The [Neighborhood Design Center](#) in Baltimore, MD, has a [Design for Safety](#) program that empowers residents to improve safety in their neighborhoods.
- The US Conference of Mayors has compiled a list of successful [community policing programs](#) (pdf) across the country.

- Design guidelines created by the City of Salisbury, NC, include techniques to create defensible spaces and reasons why traditional large-lot neighborhoods are not defensible.

Photograph Sources

1. Source: Unknown
2. Source: <http://www.plymouthgov.com/pypd/compolice/comm7.htm>
3. Source: Kai Monast

2. What can be done to increase care for a neighborhood?

1. Private Space

2. Public Space

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Above are two pictures of the same business. On the left is the facade before improvement and on the right is the business after improvements. 1



Caring for Private Space

Neighborhoods consist of two types of space, private space and public space. If private spaces (yards and buildings) in your neighborhood are neglected, this section provides remedies.

Remedies

1. **Enforce Existing Building Codes.** Most urban areas have building codes that look after the public interest by requiring a certain level of maintenance. If a building or yard is so neglected that it represents a danger to the public or seriously affects the values of neighboring properties, it can be declared a nuisance. For more information on building codes and enforcement, you should contact your local planning department.
2. **Exert Community Influence.** As a resident of a neighborhood, you do have power to make a difference in your community. Examples of exerting community influence are; 1) implementing a community improvement program that offers recognition and/or rewards for improving blighted private spaces, 2) starting an education program that informs landowners of their responsibilities toward the community and the potential negative effects of neglected property, and 3) starting a community work day in which neighbors come together to clean up severely distressed properties.
3. **Building Improvement Grants.** In some cases, there is money available from local, state, and federal sources for improving private buildings. These funds are most likely to be available in historic and/or culturally significant neighborhoods.

This home was identified as a public nuisance. The green flyer on the wall informs the owner that he/she must clean the property to come into compliance with the law. [2](#)



Vacant lots tend to collect trash because it appears that the owner does not respect the land. [3](#)

For more information on maintaining private places, see these sources:

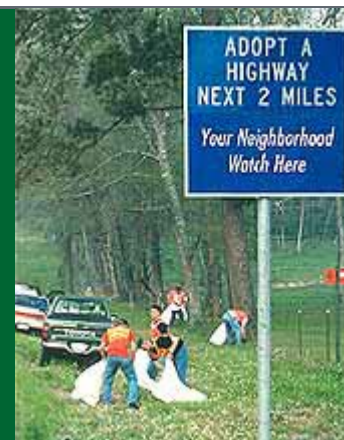
- The [Neighborhood Design Center](#) in Baltimore, MD, has published a work plan for maintaining [vacant land and abandoned housing](#) (pdf). Their plan includes an adopt-a-lot program, the creation of community gardens, and many other remedies.
- The Environmental Defense Fund has developed an online resource devoted to [cleaning up litter](#) in a community. The website has information on different litter control laws and cleanup programs.
- [Keep America Beautiful](#) is a nonprofit group that focuses on community programs to clean up litter, including the [Great American Cleanup](#).
- Henrico County, California, has a [Community Maintenance Program](#) that focuses on educating landowners about their maintenance responsibilities to the community.
- Many communities offer Facade Improvement Grants. Two examples are [Toledo, Ohio](#) and the [City of Milwaukee](#).
- Kelling, George L. *Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities*. Martin Kessler Books, New York, 1996.

Caring for Public Space

Public space includes streets, sidewalks, and other public areas such as parks. This section provides remedies for addressing the lack of care for public space. If the [private space](#) in your neighborhood is not well-cared for, see the section above.

Remedies

1. **Pressure Local Government.** If sidewalks, streets, and parks in your neighborhood have been neglected by the government, you should put pressure on them to improve service to your area. Everyone in your neighborhood pays taxes and deserves his/her fair share of city services. Begin by contacting your public works department to inform them of the problem. If that does not work, contact elected officials. Finally, contact the local media, including television stations and newspapers, to report the neglect.
2. **Create an Adoption Program.** Adopt-A-Street, Adopt-A-Park, Adopt-A-Planter, and numerous other adoption programs have a great effect on the maintenance of public space because these programs create a feeling of community ownership.
3. **Set an Example.** As a member of the community, you can set an example that can have an effect on others. If people see you picking up litter, they will know that the space is cared for and may not be as likely to litter in the future. By setting a good example with your behavior, you can encourage others to change their behavior.



Adopt-A-Road and other adoption programs have been very successful at creating a sense of ownership for public spaces. [4](#)



For more information on maintaining public spaces, see these sources:

- The [Clean City Initiative](#) developed by the Mayor of Washington, D.C., includes annual cleanliness assessments, an Adopt-A-Block program, and the city's plans for maintenance
- The Environmental Defense Fund has developed an online resource devoted to [cleaning up litter](#) in a community. The website has information on different litter control laws and cleanup programs.
- [Keep America Beautiful](#) is a nonprofit group that focuses on community programs to clean up litter, including the [Great American Cleanup](#).
- Adoption programs are found all across the country. Contact a group that has a successful program to find information on starting your own program.

Photograph Sources

1. Source: <http://www.arcatamainstreet.com/members/facade.shtml>
2. Source: Unknown
3. Source: <http://www.pecos.net/news/images2002/trash.jpg>
4. Source: Unknown
5. Source: http://www.dansvilleny.org/Trustees/DonSylor/adopt_a_planter.htm

Adopt-A-Planter programs have also been very successful at improving streetscapes. [5](#)

3. What can be done to increase walkability?

[1. Control Traffic](#)

[2. Add Facilities](#)

[3. Improve Design](#)

[4. Improve Appeal](#)

[5. Improve Safety](#)

[6. Increase Maintenance](#)

[7. Add Amenities](#)

[8. Add Recreation](#)

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Speed tables allow drivers to go faster than speed bumps, but still slow traffic to speeds more appropriate for a neighborhood. [1](#)



Median islands reduce speeds by narrowing the roadway. [2](#)



This half-closure of the street allows cars to exit, but not enter. A bicycle slip-through is also provided. [3](#)

Control Traffic

Traffic speeds and volumes are probably the most common deterrent to walking because no one wants to walk down a street that is solely designed for the automobile. The following section provides guidance for how to slow down and reduce traffic on neighborhood streets. Remember, the department of transportation builds these facilities and walking is the oldest and most sustainable form of transportation.

Remedies

1. Slow Traffic. Residential areas are supposed to be for people, not vehicles. If there is a road in your neighborhood where traffic speeds excessively, changes can be made to the road to slow traffic. You will need to work with your local department of transportation to implement these suggested remedies.

- **Speed Tables.** Tables are similar to speed bumps, but they are longer and allow traffic to pass over them at higher speeds. These tables are effective because they create a physical change in elevation of the road, which forces drivers to pay attention to them. They can also be used as raised crosswalks to further shelter the pedestrian.
- **Median Island.** Many residential streets are wide enough to permit cars to travel at high speeds. Islands narrow the road at strategic points to force cars to slow down. Landscaped islands can also be very attractive. Median islands, however, may create a dangerous conflict if a bicycle and automobile reach the narrowed section at the same time.
- **Curb Bulbout.** Bulbouts work the same way as islands, except they narrow the road from the edges instead of the middle. Bulbouts are successful at slowing traffic and they make it easier for pedestrians to cross at the treated area because the road is narrower. Like islands, bulbouts can be landscaped. Bulbouts may be safer for bicycles.
- **Street Parking.** Cars parked along the street also narrow the roadway. If your neighborhood does not allow street parking, you may want to consider allowing parking on one of both sides of the street. Parked cars along the road may pose a danger to children because they can dart out into the road from behind the parked cars.

2. Reduce Traffic Volumes. If your neighborhood is used as a shortcut for drivers coming from other parts of the city, the road network can be reconfigured to reduce traffic volume. You will need to work with your local department of transportation to implement these suggested remedies.

- **Slow Traffic.** If the road is being used as a shortcut, slowing the traffic may remove the advantage of the shortcut. See the solutions above.
- **Limit Access.** Full or partial closures of cut-through roads is very effective at reducing traffic volumes on the treated road. However, the closure must be carefully studied because it could divert traffic to other roads. A partial closure is one that only allows cars to enter or exit the street. A full closure makes the street a dead end. In all cases, it is important that bicycle and pedestrian access be retained. In addition, it is prudent to create a temporary barrier first to study the effects of the closure. If successful, a permanent barrier can be built.
- **Truck Prohibition.** Residential roads are not meant to carry through truck traffic. If this is a concern in your neighborhood, contact your local transportation department. They will probably welcome your call because heavy trucks destroy roads that are not designed to handle such weights.

**For more information on controlling traffic, see these sources:**

- [Traffic Calming.org](#) probably has the most comprehensive information on traffic calming available online.
- The [Federal Highway Administration](#) also has website devoted to traffic calming measures.
- The Los Angeles Department of Public Works has a [Neighborhood Traffic Management Program](#) with many examples of traffic calming techniques.
- Engwicht, David. *Street Reclaiming: Creating Livable Streets and Vibrant Communities*. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, Canada, 1999.
- Ewing, Reid. *Traffic Calming: State of the Practice*. Institute of Transportation Engineers, Washington, DC, 1999.

Add Facilities

Pedestrian facilities are an important part of neighborhood streets. Unfortunately, many neighborhoods built after World War II failed to provide for pedestrians. The following section provides guidance on how to add pedestrian facilities to your neighborhood. Pedestrian facilities typically cost just a tiny fraction of the cost of roads yet they are frequently overlooked.



Pedestrian Crossing Sign

Remedies

- 1. Sidewalks.** Sidewalks are the most important aspect of a pedestrian friendly environment because they separate pedestrians from automobile traffic. Well-designed sidewalks will have a buffer between the sidewalk and the road, preferably planted with trees to further separate the pedestrian from the automobiles. The higher the traffic speeds, the more important the buffer. A good sidewalk is usually wide enough for two people to walk side by side (at least 5 feet wide). Contact the city council and/or the department of transportation to find out how to add sidewalks.
- 2. Crossing Aids.** High speed roads can be a significant barrier to walking. Crossing aids can help inform drivers that they must share the road with pedestrians. Crossing aids can be as simple as a sign and marked crosswalk. More expensive but more effective aids are pedestrian signals, raised crosswalks, and curb bulbouts. Contact the city council and/or the department of transportation to find out how to add crossing aids.
- 3. Lighting.** Street lights are essential to encourage pedestrian activity in the evening. Many street lights are focused on lighting the street for automobiles. Think about how street lights can be added or improved in your neighborhood to encourage pedestrian activity and contact your local government with your suggestions.
- 4. Sitting Space.** It is important to provide resting places for pedestrians. The inclusion of benches, chairs, and ledges on the street encourages people to walk and to just spend time on the street. The general rule is if there is a comfortable place to sit, people will sit there. The more people enjoying the street scene, the more interesting it is for walking.

For more information on adding pedestrian facilities, see these sources:

- The [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) has a survey to assess walkability, a list of remedies, and links to other organizations that deal with improving pedestrian facilities.
- [America Walks](#) is a nonprofit coalition devoted to improving walkability.
- The [National Center for Bicycling and Walking](#) has a large amount of information on pedestrian facilities.
- Whyte, William. *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. The Conservation Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1980.

Signs area a common technique for informing drivers that they must share the road. [4](#)



The University of Washington built this very noticeable crosswalk. Put the mouse over the image to see what it looks like at night. [5](#)



Having places to sit allows pedestrians to take a break and watch others passing by. [6](#)

Improve Design

The design of the built environment has a great effect on walkability. In general, buildings closer to the street with street entrances create a more walkable environment and buildings that shun the street and/or have large parking areas between the street and the entrance inhibit

This brand new shopping center seems to be miles away from the street. Notice how the sidewalk does not approach the stores and how the pedestrian must cross the large parking lot. [7](#)



In contrast, this shopping center provides pedestrian access. [8](#)



Buildings that are close to the street create a more engaging pedestrian environment. [9](#)



Big box stores are the most obvious example of automobile scale versus human scale. The signs are huge to attract drivers and the buildings are designed to be viewed from far away. [10](#)

walkability. The following section describes long-term remedies for poor designs.

Remedies

1. **Parking Lots.** Large parking lots tend to discourage walking. Parking lots do not have to be forbidding places for pedestrians, though. Design changes that increase the pedestrian friendliness of parking areas are listed below.
 - **Add Footpaths.** It is possible to configure parking areas to make them more pedestrian friendly by adding protected walkways through the parking area from the street to the building. These walkways provide a sanctuary for people walking from their cars to the stores and they provide a safe path for pedestrians on the street to access the stores. Contact the owner of the property to discuss adding footpaths to the parking lot.
 - **Landscaping.** The addition of a few trees and shrubs can soften the harshness of a parking lot and make it more appealing for pedestrians. If well-designed, these planters can help funnel traffic into certain paths to stop cars from racing across the parking area. Contact the owner of the property to discuss landscape improvements. Most cities have landscaping requirements for parking lots. Contact the city planning department to find out what the requirements are in your neighborhood. Remember, these rules try to make the city a better place. If they are insufficient, you can organize your neighborhood to exert your influence to change them.
 - **Overflow Parking.** Parking lots are usually built to have enough space to handle all of the cars that may be parked there on the busiest day of the year. Most of the time, only a fraction of the spots are used. Instead of having all of these spots between the road and the building, the parking area could be redesigned to have what could be called a normal capacity of parking in front of the building and overflow parking behind the building. This would help connect the building to the street and make it more easily accessible for pedestrians. To implement the overflow parking idea, you will have to become involved in the project before it is built.
2. **Building Setbacks.** Buildings are an integral part of the streetscape for pedestrians. If homes are located close to the street, you can walk down the street and talk to people working in their yards or sitting on their porches. If the building is setback far from the street, there is no sense of enclosure to the street. Buildings also provide pedestrians with something interesting to look. Thus, it is important for buildings to be located close to the street in order to create a pedestrian friendly environment. Setback requirements are usually found in the zoning laws. To find out more information on creating a maximum allowable setback in your neighborhood, contact your city planning department.
3. **Human Scale.** Many buildings and signs are oriented for drivers in fast moving cars. Stores in a neighborhood built on the human scale will have small, ornate signs instead of large, attention getting signs. Buildings in a human scaled environment will also have intricate details that are not included on car-oriented buildings. Details such as decorated rain gutters and elaborate trimwork create an interesting pedestrian environment. Most communities have design requirements for new buildings. You can lobby to include pedestrian scale additions to these requirements by contacting your city planning department.

For more information on improving designs, see these sources:

- [Active Living By Design](#) is a program dedicated to increasing physical activity through community design.
- Jacobs, Allen B. *Great Streets*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, 1993.
- Appleyard, Donald. *Livable Streets*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1981.
- Kelbaugh, Doug, et al. *The Pedestrian Pocket Book: A New Suburban Design Strategy*. Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1989.
- *New Urbanism: Comprehensive Report and Best Practices- 2nd Edition*. New Urban Publications, Ithaca, NY, 2001.
- [Florida's Department of Transportation](#) (pdf) has a document that includes design techniques for encouraging pedestrian activity.
- [Beaverton, Oregon](#) (pdf), is just one of the many communities with design guidelines aimed at encouraging pedestrian activity by creating maximum building setbacks and requiring that the structure be built on a human scale.

Other Solutions

Walkability is also directly affected by issues covered in other sections of this webpage.

- **Appeal**. The area should be visually appealing to invite pedestrian activity.
- **Safety**. Pedestrian activity will not occur unless the area is safe.
- **Maintenance**. Both the pedestrian facilities and the buildings must be well-maintained to create a pleasant pedestrian environment.
- **Amenities**. Amenities are important because they are possible destinations for pedestrians.
- **Recreation**. Recreation areas represent another potential pedestrian destination.

Photograph Sources

1. Source: <http://www.trafficcalming.org/toolbox/speedtables.html>
2. Source: <http://www.trafficcalming.org/toolbox/center-isl.html>
3. Source: <http://www.trafficcalming.org/>
4. Source: <http://www.ci.new-bedford.ma.us/PSAFETY/POLICE/PedestrianSafety.htm>
5. Source: http://www.cpd.wsu.edu/projects/pullman/stadium_way_improvements/StadiumWay1.htm
6. Source: <http://www.americanidea.org/speakers/pace/harlemren.htm>
7. Source: Kai Monast
8. Source: Unknown
9. Source: <http://www.designadvisor.org/gallery/stjohns.html>
10. Source: <http://www.ecocitycleveland.org/health/health.html>
11. Source: Kai Monast



The intricate trim
visual feast for pe

4. What can be done to improve accessibility?

[1. Add Transit](#)

[2. Improve the Network](#)

[3. Add Amenities](#)

[4. Add Recreation](#)

[5. Make Walkable](#)

[Top](#)



Park and ride lots have proven to be effective transit solutions for low density developments. [1](#)



Generally, people view rail as preferable to buses. However, densities around stations must be higher to support rail. [2](#)



The Triangle Transit Authority in North Carolina is currently working on a project to add a light rail line to the area. [3](#)

Add Transit

Transit is a city or region-wide issue. However, the battle takes place on the neighborhood level. The heart of the issue is can you easily access a transit stop and can you go where you want to go from that stop? Do people in your neighborhood want to be able to access transit? If so, then you can lobby the transportation department to alter existing transit routes and/or create new routes to serve your community.

Remedies

1. **Add Bus Stops.** Buses are the least glamorous, but cheapest and most effective transit provider for low density neighborhoods. In general, it takes a density of about 12 dwelling units per acre to sustain a successful bus stop. The lower the density around the bus stop, the more infrequent the bus will come. To add a bus stop, consult your neighbors first, then lobby your local transit agency.
2. **Park and Ride.** If your neighborhood is not an appropriate place for transit, a park and ride lot may help to solve your accessibility issues. Park and ride lots are large parking areas where you drive your car, park, then catch a bus or train. Because people from all over drive to the lots, there is a very high density of riders on the buses. The high densities make transit a viable solution because it allows frequent transit service. Many communities have built park and ride lots, but they are most successful in areas where traffic is bad and/or parking is scarce.
2. **Add Rail.** People usually prefer trains to buses. However, subways and rail lines require a much higher density around stops to be successful. Rail stops and lines are also much more difficult and expensive to add. To successfully add a rail line in the future, land use patterns should be changed immediately.
3. **Long Term Transit Plan.** If your neighborhood or entire community is not

planned well for transit, then you can get involved in thinking about the long term vision for these areas. Planning departments frequently create and update long term visions. If you get involved, you can help to ensure that transit is a priority in these visions.

For more information on adding transit, see these sources:

- The Triangle Transit Authority has published many studies on how to implement a [light rail transit system](#) in central North Carolina.
- Charlotte, North Carolina, has begun planning to increase land use densities around transit stops that will be [built in the future](#) (search keywords: 2025, TLUP, 6). This preparation should make the transit system more effective once it is built.
- Calthorpe, Peter and William Fulton. *The Regional City, Planning for the End of Sprawl*. Island Press, Washington, DC, 2001.
- Gatzlaff, Dean, et al. [Marketing Transit Oriented Development, Phase III, Final Report](#) (pdf). The Marketing Institute, Florida State University College of Business, Tallahassee, Florida, 1999.
- Bernick, Michael and Robert Cervero. *Transit Villages in the 21st Century*. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1997.

Improve the Network

Many neighborhoods have very poor accessibility because of the road and pedestrian networks. A good test for network accessibility is directness. First, how far as the crow flies is the nearest store? Now, how far is it to the same store using the road network (as you have to drive)? Finally, how far is it to the same store using the pedestrian network (if there is one)? If you find that the crow flies distance is significantly shorter than the network distance, then you may want to consider making changes to the network. Federal funding is available for improving transportation networks, including making pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

Remedies

- 1. Pedestrian Cut-Throughs.** Perhaps the easiest and cheapest improvement that can be made to a network is to add pedestrian cut-throughs. These cut-throughs can be added to cul-de-sac or dead end roads to connect them to the road in the rear. Also, pedestrian cut-throughs can be added to blocks that are too large to comfortably walk around. Cut-throughs usually are placed along property lines. They can also follow utility easements, such as sewer lines. To add a cut-through, you will need to consult with your neighbors first- especially those whose property borders the potential path. Then, approach the city planning department with your idea.
- 2. Greenways.** A greenway is a long pedestrian/bicycle path that is usually placed along utility easements or near streams. If there are easements or streams in your neighborhood, it is probably a good candidate for a greenway. On the regional level, old rail lines are perfect places for greenways because the linear network already exists and the land has already been graded. To add a greenway, you will need to consult with your neighbors first- especially those whose property borders the potential path. Then, approach the city planning department with your idea.
- 3. Long Term Network Changes.** It is very difficult to retrofit a neighborhood with a poor network. To do so, you will have to work with the city planning department to identify properties that need to be acquired. Then, develop an acquisition plan and the city or a nonprofit land agency can purchase the properties when they become available.

For more information on improving the street network, see these sources:

- The City of Salem, Oregon, has developed a [connectivity policy and implementation plan](#) (pdf) for neighborhoods.
- The City of Vernon Hills, Illinois, has a comprehensive program to create [pedestrian and bicycle paths](#) that will increase the connectivity of their communities.

Poor Network



Good Network

This image illustrates what good and bad networks look like. The poor network forces residents onto the main road to access stores, schools, and workplaces. [4](#)



Pedestrian cut-throughs like this one are the easiest and cheapest improvements that can be made to a poor network. [5](#)

- Calthorpe, Peter and William Fulton. *The Regional City, Planning for the End of Sprawl*. Island Press, Washington, DC, 2001.
- Tolley, Rodney. *Sustainable Transport: Planning for Walking and Cycling in Urban Environments*. CRC Press, Cambridge, England, 2003.



Other Solutions

Accessibility is also directly affected by issues covered in other sections of this webpage.

- **Amenities.** If it is very difficult to access amenities from your neighborhood, amenities could be added to the neighborhood.
- **Recreation.** If there are no recreation facilities within the neighborhood, adding them will increase accessibility.
- **Walkability.** Some neighborhoods have good networks, but the accessibility is still poor because the neighborhood was not built with pedestrians in mind.

Photograph Sources

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1. | Source: http://www.townofchapelhill.org/transit/routes/ |
| 2. | Source: http://www.eslarp.uiuc.edu/overview/doc6.htm |
| 3. | Source: http://www.ridetta.org/rrprosta.html |
| 4. | Source: http://prairie.sierraclub.ca/Sprawl/quick_facts.htm
(slightly modified) |
| 5. | Source: http://www.dangermouse.net/pic/wollstonecraft.html |

5. How can recreation areas be created?

[1. Natural Areas](#)

[2. Developed Areas](#)

[3. Walkability](#)

[Top](#)



Natural Areas

Leftover parcels of undeveloped land are perfect for recreation. In fact, children probably already use these spaces for recreation. The advice below tells you how to identify and create recreation areas using undeveloped land.

Remedies

- 1. Greenways.** Greenways are pedestrian and bicycle trails typically built along streams or in utility easements. As their name implies, they are separated from the roads and usually pass through natural areas. These linear parks serve multiple roles as an alternative transportation network, a recreation area, and a place for exercise. Sewer, power, and other utility easements exist throughout the city. The government or a utility company has the legal right to use this land even if it is privately owned. Because the land is only being used for the utility and the government has at least partial control over the land, easements are perfect places for creating recreation areas. To turn an easement into a recreation area, you will have to contact the city planning department and/or the utility company that owns the easement.
- 2. Pocket Parks.** Many developments have leftover land that is either too small or too oddly shaped to build on. These areas are perfect for creating a pocket park. Pocket parks can be something as simple as a swingset and a picnic table. Some new developments actually plan for pocket parks to provide small recreation areas near each home.

For more information on adding recreation to natural areas, see these sources:

-  The [East Coast Greenway](#) organization is in the process of building a 2600 mile greenway from Maine to Florida. Visit their website to learn about the plan and to find information on greenway advocacy.
-  [Raleigh, NC](#), has won awards for its greenway system. Currently, the trail system is 43 miles long. Plans are in place to connect the trails together to form one complete system. Click on the [Park](#)



Greenways are linear parks that usually follow streams or utility easements. [1](#)



Pocket parks turn leftover land into small recreation areas perfect for playgrounds and barbecues. [2](#)

[Planning](#) link to find out more information about the extent of the trail system. Also, this link has an [article](#) that brings up the history and the future of the greenway trails in Raleigh.

- The mixed-use development of [Southern Village](#) advertises its' pocket parks and greenways in an attempt to woo prospective buyers.

Developed Areas

Most urban areas have very little in the way of leftover natural space. There is, however, a lot of leftover developed space. The section below explains how to convert underutilized land into recreation areas.

Remedies

- 1. Parking Lots.** Most parking lots are built to hold every car that needs a space on the busiest shopping day of the year. Thus, a large portion of the parking lot is empty most of the time. The extra space can be converted into basketball or tennis courts without losing any parking spaces because cars can park there on the busiest days of the year. To convert part of a parking lot into a recreation area, you should first consult the property owner. Also, consult with the parks and recreation department. It could be that they have funds to lease the spots from the landowner.
- 2. Vacant Lots.** Vacant lots are problems in many urban areas. These problems can be changed into recreation opportunities by turning them into pocket parks or community gardens. See the Natural Area section above for information on pocket parks. Community gardens are small plots of land that members of the community plant their own personal gardens in. Not only is gardening a great recreational activity, but it also changes a vacant lot into a lush oasis. The city planning department will be able to help you identify what can be done with vacant lots in your neighborhood.

For more information on adding recreation to developed areas, see these sources:

- The [American Community Gardening Association](#) is a good place to look for information on starting up and operating a community garden.
- Engwicht, David. *Street Reclaiming: Creating Livable Streets and Vibrant Communities*. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, Canada, 1999.



Basketball courts and a tennis practice wall have been built in this parking lot. Cars can still park there on busy days. [3](#)



Community gardens can transform vacant lots into beautiful additions to the neighborhood. Plus, gardening is a popular recreation activity. [4](#)

Other Solutions

Adding recreation is also covered by:

- **Walkability.** Make your neighborhood more inviting for pedestrians and you will create recreational opportunities.

Photograph Sources

1. Source: <http://www.trianglegreenways.org/whataregwy.htm>
2. Source: <http://www.pct3.hctx.net/PSpringBranch/>
3. Source: Kai Monast
4. Source: <http://www.welcomeproject.org/garden.html>

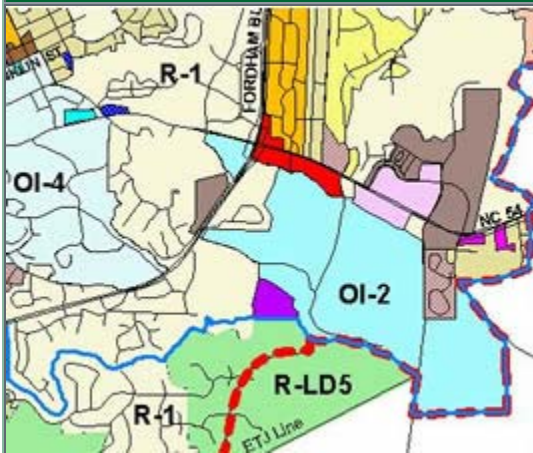
6. How can amenities be added to a neighborhood?

[1. Policy Changes](#)

[2. Add Recreation](#)

[3. Increase Accessibility](#)

[Top](#)



Traditional zoning laws segregate land into large parcels that only allow one use. This segregation means that many of the amenities we desire cannot be located within our community. [1](#)



This lawyer's office fits well within any community. However, many zoning laws prohibit these uses within residential areas. [2](#)

Policy Changes

The reason why many amenities do not exist within your neighborhood is that it is illegal to have them. Zoning laws and other regulations were intended to maintain property values. However, in doing so, they also dictated that residential areas cannot include commercial activities. Thus, in order to add amenities such as corner stores to your neighborhood, you will need to change the policies of your city. This task may seem daunting, but there are many local and national movements dedicated to making these changes.

Remedies

1. Zoning. Zoning laws divide the city up into areas of residential, commercial, office, and industrial properties. Historically, these areas have been very large, meaning that huge tracts of land are reserved solely for residential uses. The unfortunate side effect of these laws is that stores cannot be built inside neighborhoods. If there is a parcel of land within your community that you think would be perfect for a store or other use, contact the city planning department to find out what the zoning regulations on the property are. You can then work with the owner and members of your community to change the zoning of the parcel.

- **Exceptions.** Churches and public buildings such as community centers are often exempt from zoning laws. Therefore, these can be added to the community without making any changes to the existing policies.
- **Live-Work Units.** Doctor's offices, lawyer's offices, music shops, even laundromats can all fit seamlessly onto the ground floor of a house. Conventional zoning laws tend to discriminate against the inclusion of commercial/office space into a neighborhood. However, most of the best neighborhoods allow these examples of "neighborhood commercial" uses. Look up the zoning laws in your community to make sure that live-work units are acceptable.



Street vendors are an easy way to increase amenities in your neighborhood, but they are often outlawed by city codes. [3](#)

2. Other Policies. There can be other policies that prohibit amenities from being included in your neighborhood. In all cases, you will have to work with the city planning department and/or city council to make changes to the policies.

- **Street Vending.** Every child loves the ice cream truck because it brings ice cream almost to their front door. Many store owners think that street vendors have an unfair advantage because they do not have to pay rent. However, street vendors add life to a street and can provide a diverse selection of goods that are not sold in the regular stores. Parks are also perfect places for vendors. Some places have laws that prohibit street vending. These laws are meant to protect the general public. If the laws are not benefiting the general public, they can be changed.
- **Newspaper Boxes.** Appearance laws can prohibit newspaper vending kiosks from being located within a community. The laws are designed to prevent visual disorder within the neighborhood, which may bring property values down. However, the laws are designed to protect residents. If residents feel that newspaper boxes or any other amenity will make their neighborhood a better place, then the regulation does not make any sense and should be amended.

For more information on changing policies, see these sources:

- The [Research Public Policy Institute](#) has a very interesting article on the history of zoning in the United States and the changes that need to be made in order for zoning to meet our current needs.
- The planning firm [Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company](#) (pdf) has developed an alternative development regulation program they call the Smart Code.
- The [City of Palo Alto, California](#), has performed a comprehensive study on changing their zoning laws. The results of the study and possible courses of action are found on this website.
- The proceedings of the [American Planning Association](#) meeting in 2001 contains a good article describing the conflicts between New Urbanism (a zoning type that encourages inclusion of amenities) and traditional zoning.
- Nolon, John R. *Well Grounded: Using Local Land Use Authority to Achieve Smart Growth*. Environmental law Institute, 2001.

Other Solutions

Adding amenities is also covered in these other sections.

- **Recreation.** Recreation areas are probably the most sought-after amenities.
- **Accessibility.** By increasing access, you essentially expand the territory of your neighborhood. A larger neighborhood will likely include more amenities.

Photograph Sources

1. Source: <http://townhall.townofchapelhill.org/planning/HWCC/zoning%20map.jpg>
2. Source: <http://www.friscoattorney.com/images/office.jpg>
3. Source: http://homepage.ntlworld.com/garryknight/Photos/Hyde_Park/Web/Hyde_Park_2.jpg

7. What can be done to increase appeal?

[1. Trees/Plantings](#)

[2. Built Environment](#)

[3. Art](#)

[4. Maintenance](#)

[Top](#)

Trees/Plantings

Probably the cheapest and easiest way to improve the appeal of a neighborhood is to plant trees, shrubs, and flowers. There are three levels of implementation of these suggestions: 1) Personal Level- improve your yard, 2) Community Level- organize the community to plant trees and flowers, and 3) City Level- convince the appropriate city department to improve the appeal of your community by adding trees and plantings.

Remedies

Street trees serve multiple roles. They improve the scenery, freshen the air, provide shade, and protect pedestrians from traffic. [1](#)



Flowers can drastically improve the appeal of a street. If planned well and taken care of, the street scene can change by the season. [2](#)



If you are serious about improving the appeal of your neighborhood, you should start by improving the appeal of your yard. [3](#)

1. Street Trees. Trees that border the street create walls on each side of the street and a ceiling above it. The shade that trees give off, the way the leaves interact with the sunlight, and the color that is brought to the street makes street trees one of the best improvements that can be made. Street trees can be different species or all the same. The spacing of the trees varies with the selected species. Pick trees that adapt well to the local climate and can handle the stress of urban environments. Some municipalities are hesitant to allow street trees because of liability in case of automobile accidents. They view trees as objects that can cause harm to drivers. The other, perhaps more logical viewpoint is that the trees will stop a vehicle from jumping the curb and harming pedestrians. Plus, the aesthetic and health benefits of street trees for residents should outweigh this fear.

2. Flowers and shrubs. Flowers, shrubs, and anything else that helps to "green" the street will improve the appeal. Start in your own yard and hopefully you will inspire your neighbors to do the same. You can also organize community groups to plant flowers and shrubs along curbs, medians, or any other neglected area. Starting a contest for the most improved yard or the most appealing planter can help

encourage people to take care of their surroundings.

For more information on trees and other plantings, see these sources:

- The [City of Ventura, California](#), has a webpage that informs residents of the value of street trees and how they should be cared for.
- [Street Tree.com](#) is an organization devoted to increasing the number of street trees in London, England. The site includes reasons why street trees are essential and advice on tree maintenance.
- Jacobs, Allen B. *Great Streets*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, 1993.
- Appleyard, Donald. *Livable Streets*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1981.

Built Environment

Many court cases have proven that it is within the legal rights of a community to regulate appearance. If built structures such as buildings and signs are degrading the appeal of your community, you can form an appearance committee. Consult the city planning department with your ideas.

Remedies

- 1. Buildings Styles.** Many new structures are built as cheaply as possible. The unfortunate effect for the neighborhood is that the new buildings are ugly. If this is a problem in your neighborhood, think about forming an appearance committee. Another idea is to reward builders by publicly acknowledging quality buildings with awards or other recognition.
- 2. Signs.** Signs that are too high or too large have negative effects on the appeal of neighborhoods. Many communities have ordinances that regulate sign height and size. If this is a problem in your neighborhood, consult the city planning department to discover what your community's options are.
- 3. Parking Lots.** It is also within a community's legal rights to require business owners to add features to parking lots that make them more appealing. Some options include screening the parking lot from sight by requiring a buffer of trees or a fence.

For more information on improving the appeal of the built



These houses may have been built at different times, but the builders made certain to have their structure fit into the theme of the block.



Lowering the signs and making them smaller could have a significant impact on the appeal of the street.

For more information on improving the appeal of the built environment, see these sources:

- The [City of Redmond, Washington](#), has some advice for designing buildings to fit into the existing neighborhood. The information covers building styles and signage and includes some illustrative drawings.
- The [City of Burlingame, California](#) (pdf), requires new structures to fit into the existing context of the neighborhood before receiving a permit. Click on the link to read the exact wording of the application for a special permit.
- The [City of Milpitas, California](#), has a comprehensive neighborhood beautification program that includes an appearance ordinance.
- The [Planters Walk](#) community in North Carolina has an appearance committee. Take a look at its website to see what can be done about appearance on a grassroots level.
- The [Tiffany Woods Homeowner's Association](#) has an architecture/appearance committee. Their website lists the duties of the committee.



Planting strips and fences can help improve the appeal of parking lots. [6](#)



A wall with a mural can change the whole feeling of the area. Imagine what this place looked like before art was added. [7](#)

Art

It is amazing what a difference artwork can make to improve appeal. Art not only increases the appeal of a neighborhood, but it can also be used to bring the community together and increase the sense of ownership that the residents have for their neighborhood. The reason for this is that if the community comes together to plan or even create artwork, then the residents have a vested interest in making sure that the artwork is cared for. It is not difficult to add art to a community. The first thing you need is an artist. The artists do not have to be professionals- children are great artists. The next thing you need is a canvas. Below is a list of possible canvasses and what you can do with them. You can organize a contest to find the best design, or you can hold a community art day in which everyone that shows up gets to work on his/her own section.



Some chalk and one or more inspired people can transform a dull walk into a lively adventure. [8](#)



The great thing about art is that it can turn trash into beauty. [9](#)

Remedies

1. **Walls.** Blank walls are perfect places for artwork because once art is added, the wall suddenly becomes something to appreciate instead of something to ignore. Check with the city to see if it has any funds for neighborhood beautification projects. Also, work with the owner of the wall. The owner will probably be supportive of any idea that makes his/her property look better—especially if it includes space for a small advertisement.
2. **Sidewalks.** Sidewalk art can add instant life to a street. The art can be impermanent chalk or permanent paint. It is probably better to experiment with chalk first. Sidewalks are wonderful canvasses for community art days. You can even leave chalk in a designated spot to encourage spontaneous work.
3. **Streets.** Streets may seem like a strange canvas, but artwork here serves two purposes. First, the art makes the street look better. Second, the art sends a message to drivers that this area is cared for. When drivers understand that they are passing through a living community, they are more likely to slow down. To decorate the street, you can organize a street fair. Then, when there are no cars around, community members can get to work. When the street reopens to traffic, it will be a completely different place.
4. **Sculptures.** Sculptures are great pieces of art because they can take the focus away from something nearby that is not as appealing. For instance, why not place a sculpture on a patch of dirt in a vacant lot. Now, instead of being a vacant lot, it is a pedestal for the sculpture. Anything can be used in sculptures. If you are using a vacant lot, you can probably just reorganize objects found there to make a trash sculpture.

For more information on art, see these sources:

- [Art Street](#) is a community art initiative in Boston, Massachusetts. This should be your first stop for learning about the many possibilities of community art.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mural Arts Program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is responsible for many of the famous murals in the city.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cambridge, Massachusetts, has a public art program. Visit this site to learn how they do it and to get some ideas of possible art projects that can be undertaken in your community.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engwicht, David. <i>Street Reclaiming: Creating Livable Streets and Vibrant Communities</i>. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, Canada, 1999.

Other Solutions

Appeal is also directly affected by issues covered in other sections of this webpage.

- Maintenance.** Taking care of the buildings and the public places is a very important aspect of appeal.

Photograph Sources

- Source: <http://www.claremont.wa.gov.au/trees.html>
- Source: <http://web.mit.edu/andfan/www/nature.htm>
- Source: <http://www.phys.utk.edu/sorensen/Photos/Photos.html>
- Source: <http://arch.virginia.edu/dcplaces/paave/Segment4/1500Block/1500block.html>
- Source: http://www.plannersweb.com/sprawl/prob_place.html
- Source: Unknown
- Source: <http://danakate.smugmug.com/gallery/2873/2/86556>
- Source: <http://www.vacationlovers.net/downunder/downunder7.html>
- Source: http://www.chicagotraveler.com/suite_home_chicago.htm

8. What can be done to create identity?

[1. Entryways](#)

[2. Focal Points](#)

[Top](#)



Signs help define neighborhood entrances. [1](#)



Landscaping includes plants, fences, and walls. If planned properly, landscaping can be very attractive throughout the year. [2](#)



Textured pavement creates a threshold that signals an entrance to drivers. [3](#)

Entryways

Clearly defined entrances and exits from the neighborhood can help to create an identity. These thresholds mark the space where the outside world ends and your neighborhood begins. If your community has a homeowner's association, then attend a meeting and tell your neighbors about your idea for clearly defined entryways. Otherwise, you can start a community group or join an existing one. Soliciting local businesses is a good way to raise money for landscaping. It can also be a good idea to extend the theme from the entryway throughout the neighborhood.

Remedies

- 1. Signage.** Attractive signs at the edge of the neighborhood can be the first step in establishing an entryway. There is a lot of flexibility in the sign design. An easy way to get community input is to hold a contest.
- 2. Landscaping.** Landscaping can be effectively combined with a sign or can serve as the sign. For landscaping, try to include a plant that is unique so it clearly identifies your neighborhood. Also, include fences or walls that may be found within the community. Repeat the same landscaping design on all entryways. Maintenance of the landscaping is very important. If it is not maintained, then it will send a signal that the neighborhood does not care about its communal spaces. Also, try to develop a landscaping strategy that looks good in all seasons. For instance, plant bulbs that will pop up in the spring, flowers for the summer, and flowering shrubs for the fall.
- 3. Thresholds.** A common technique used in many new neighborhoods are thresholds designs, usually made of brick, built into the pavement. The threshold sends a signal to drivers that they are entering a special place. These designs serve dual roles: to visually mark the entrance to a neighborhood and to slow traffic down to neighborhood speeds.

For more information on entryways, see these sources:

- Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1960.
- Lynch, Kevin. *Good City Form*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA., 1981.
- Engwicht, David. *Street Reclaiming: Creating Livable Streets and Vibrant Communities*. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, Canada, 1999.
- Ewing, Reid. *Traffic Calming: State of the Practice*. Institute of Transportation Engineers, Washington, DC, 1999.

Focal Points

Community identity is closely related to focal points because focal points act as a "town well"- a place that everyone knows is the centerpiece of the neighborhood. Focal point creation should be done as a community project.

Remedies

- 1. Landmarks.** Landmarks are very flexible things. They can be buildings, monuments, sculptures, or even special physical features like trees or rocks. Having a landmark in your community increases its identity because it creates a symbol that every resident can identify. A good test for a landmark is if you were making a sign for the neighborhood, is their a special symbol that you would put on it. To create a landmark, find a central location, preferably on community owned land. Then, decide what would fit best. A landmark does not have to be an expensive endeavor. Art made with found objects can be a very effective landmark.
- 2. Amenities.** An amenity can also serve as a focal point. The most classic example is the corner store where everyone seems to end up on a beautiful Sunday morning. But, parks also work, especially parks with central points like gazebos. Think about how to elevate an existing amenity into a focal point. It could involve increasing access to the amenity or increasing its visibility. Or, simply using the amenity as a gathering point by holding community get-togethers at the location will make it a focal point.

For more information on creating focal points, see these sources:

- Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1960.
- Lynch, Kevin. *Good City Form*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA,, 1981.

Photograph Sources

1. Source:
http://www.richfield.ws/r/neighborhood/rf_tour/images/entrance.jpg
2. Source: Unknown
3. Source:
http://www.wvassociates.net/images/cf_comm-ave_af2_lg.jpg
4. Source: Kai Monast
5. Source: Unknown



Every community should have a "town well" that serves as a meeting place. [4](#)



Landmarks help to create community identity. [5](#)

9. How can street activity be encouraged?

[1. Increase Safety](#)

[2. Increase Maintenance](#)

[3. Make Walkable](#)

[4. Increase Accessibility](#)

[5. Add Recreation](#)

[6. Add Amenities](#)

[7. Increase Appeal](#)

[8. Create Identity](#)

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Street Activity

Street activity refers to the number of people, not cars, on the street. An increase in street activity results from a combination of all of the other remedies listed. For instance, an increase in walkability has a direct effect on the number of people walking down the street. Follow the directions on the other remedy pages to increase street activity

Remedies

- **Safety.** If the area is not a safe place to walk, there will be little street activity.
- **Maintenance.** When the neighborhood is well-cared for, street activity will tend to increase.
- **Walkability.** Demand for walking and spending time on the street increases when the street is made more pedestrian-friendly.
- **Accessibility.** Increasing access to facilities will in turn increase life on the street because there are more mobility options.
- **Recreation.** The inclusion of recreation facilities like parks and greenways increases street activity because they create destinations within walking distance.
- **Amenities.** Amenities are similar to recreation. By adding destinations to the neighborhood that are within walking distance, the street activity should increase.
- **Appeal.** Another factor that affects street activity is the general appeal of the street. If the street is not appealing, no one will want to spend time there. However, if the street is a pleasant place to be, street activity is encouraged.
- **Identity.** A neighborhood with a clear identity is a special place. Street activity is encouraged here because the identity makes the area more interesting. Plus, a truly unique identity may draw people from other communities to shop at your stores.


Photograph Sources



Improving access to amenities is one way of increasing street activity. [1](#)



Convenient access to recreation facilities also increases street activity. [2](#)



1. Source: Kai Monast

2. Source: Unknown