

Focus on

**Livable
Communities**

Resources

Because law enforcement is often the biggest item in a city budget, neighborhoods should be designed to be self-policing. The following are some useful resources for communities:

Livable communities experts at the Local Government Commission: (800) 290-8202.

Street Design Guidelines for Healthy Neighborhoods, by Dan Burden, 1999, LGC.

Streets and Sidewalks, People and Cars; The Citizens' Guide to Traffic Calming, by Dan Burden, 2000, LGC.

Defensible Space: Detering Crime and Building Community, by Henry G. Cisneros, 1995, U.S. HUD, HUD-1512-PDR. Available: (800) 245-2691.

Physical Environment and Crime, U.S. Department of Justice, 1996, Order #NCJ 157311 at (800) 851-3420.

Creating Defensible Space, by Oscar Newman, 1996, DIANE Publishing, Co.

Street Reclaiming, Creating Livable Streets and Vibrant Communities, by David Engwicht, 1999, New Society Publishers.



**Local Government Commission
Center for Livable Communities**

1414 K St., Suite 250
Sacramento, CA 95814-3966
tel (916) 448-1198
fax (916) 448-8246
web www.lgc.org

Land Use Planning for Safe, Crime-Free Neighborhoods

A sense of community is key to neighborhood safety.

A recent study published by the Harvard School of Public Health has confirmed earlier research: Community spirit and a willingness to get involved reduces violent crime by as much as 40 percent.

In this study, race and income were not factors in determining whether people were willing to watch out for one another. The key factor was whether or not there was a sense of community.¹

In a community, neighbors have a shared sense of responsibility.

Neighbors need not be formally organized or have especially close relationships with one another to make an impact, according to University of Chicago sociologist Robert Sampson. "We're talking about people just having a shared sense of responsibility."

Mixing uses provides watchfulness day and night.



These two neighborhoods – Bainbridge, WA (l) and San Diego, CA (r) – are never deserted and are therefore much more safe.

Good Land Use Planning Facilitates Community.

Community “happens when people are in the street, when people are speaking to each other, and when there are activities that bring people together.”

– Felton Earls, Professor,
Harvard School of Public Health

“The key is to provide places – and reasons – for people to come together as they go about their daily routines.”

– Judy Corbett, Executive Director,
Local Government Commission;
Co-developer, Village Homes



► Community gardens

Seattle officials have noted a decrease in crime when a community garden is established. “Community grows in community gardens.”²



► Corner stores

As far back as 1960, Jane Jacobs noted the importance of the neighborhood grocery to building a sense of community.³



► Pocket parks

In Village Homes, a 20-year old development in Davis, CA, homeowners share open space. Each also knows an average of 40 of their neighbors. The neighborhood is known for being safe.⁴



► Shared courtyards

Residents of St. Francis Square in San Francisco share a courtyard through membership in a cooperative. They also watch out for one another.⁵

When space is defined, neighbors can watch out for each other.

► Before:
space belongs
to no one.

► After remodel:
space belongs
to someone.

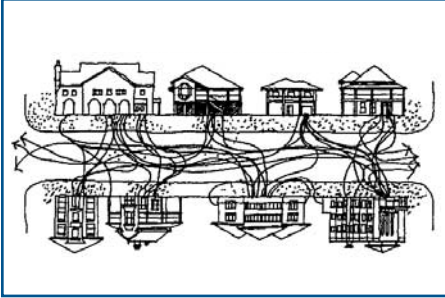


Outdoor space in the Diggs Town housing project in Norfolk, VA, was undefined, it belonged to no one.



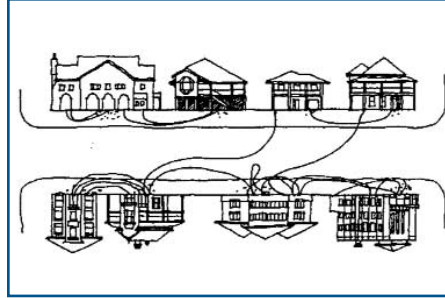
Once the space was divided into private yards and front porches were added, police calls dropped dramatically.⁸

Streets Impact A Sense of Community.



► Narrow street, little traffic

Research shows that on a small street with little traffic, neighbors tend to visit with one another.



► High traffic volume

As traffic increases, contact among neighbors decreases.⁶



► Traffic calming

Traffic calming projects increase community both by slowing and reducing traffic and by bringing people together to design the traffic measures. The result of these efforts can be a decrease in crime rates.⁷



When a neighborhood owns the street...



In a high-crime neighborhood in Dayton, Ohio, high traffic volumes made the street a no man's land. The city helped neighbors reclaim the street by fencing it off at one end and providing an entry portal at the other. Pedestrians and bicyclists can pass through but cars can't. When through traffic was reduced, violent crime dropped in half.⁹

Tips for Policymakers

- * Because law enforcement is often the biggest item in a city budget, neighborhoods should be designed to be self-policing.
- * Require common space in new development – such as pocket parks, community gardens, community centers or neighborhood schools.
- * Retrofit existing neighborhoods with community spaces such as community gardens and community centers. Share facilities with neighborhood schools.
- * Mix uses and housing types.
- * Make sure that windows face the street in residential and commercial projects.
- * In dense multi-family housing, provide semi-private courtyards shared by no more than 20 or 30 people.
- * Revive the downtown as a community gathering place and add housing (which puts people in the downtown at night).
- * In proposed new neighborhoods, design streets that are narrow.
- * In older neighborhoods, initiate traffic calming projects to slow traffic and make streets safer for pedestrians. Involve neighbors in the process.
- * Enact ordinances and policies that encourage owners to build on vacant lots and revitalize vacated properties.
- * Enact ordinances to require property clean-up and maintenance.

Poorly maintained properties say, "Nobody's watching."



► Nobody cares about these spaces.

Neglected properties say to the potential assailant: This space belongs to no one, therefore no one is watching you.¹⁰

Windows help neighbors watch out for each other.



► "Eyes on the street" are important.

On a wide street lined by garages and fences, no one is watching. Windows, on the other hand, discourage a potential assailant.

But don't forget the need for privacy.



► Private courtyard

Studies show that when there is inadequate privacy, people draw into themselves.¹² Private or semi-private outdoor space and entrances, and good sound insulation between housing units, fosters neighborliness.

► No private space

Focus on Livable Communities

► Notes

1. *Science*, Vol. 277, August 15, 1997.
2. Jim Diers, Director, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, personal communication.
3. Jacobs, Jane. *Death and Life of Great American Cities*.
4. Corbett, Judith and Corbett, Michael. *Designing Sustainable Communities*.
5. Cooper Marcus, Clare. *Resident Attitudes Toward the Environment at St. Francis Square*.
6. Appleyard, Donald. *Livable Streets*.
7. Tom Richman, Palo Alto landscape architect, personal communication.
8. Gindroz, Ray, UDA Architects, Pittsburgh, PA, personal communication.
9. Cisneros, Henry. *Defensible Space: Detering Crime and Building Community*.
10. National Institute of Justice, *Physical Environment and Crime*.
11. Hall, Edward T. *The Hidden Dimension*.
12. Jacobs, Jane, op.cit.

This project is funded by the Physical Activity and Health Initiative, California Department of Health Services under a Preventive Health Services Block Grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Work performed as part of a UC San Francisco contract.