



ORANGE COUNTY SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS

BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT



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Introduction

In 2000, Orange County Neighborhood Services Division (NSD) launched the Safe Neighborhoods program to create and support voluntary neighborhood associations that “reduce crime through projects that enhance the safety and beauty of each [location](#).” Three neighborhoods were recruited as the first to participate in the program (Azalea Park, Pine Hills, and Lee Road), with five more joining in subsequent years (Orlo Vista, Pine Castle, South Apopka, Tildenville, and South Goldenrod).

Orange County has partnered with Polis Institute to understand how the Safe Neighborhoods program can continue to evolve with the communities it serves. We began by reviewing relevant literature and comparable initiatives related to neighborhood safety and engagement that could inform the work of Orange County Safe Neighborhoods. We also engaged with program stakeholders through interviews and focus groups, including County staff, County Commissioners, and current Safe Neighborhoods participants (referred to here as ‘grantees’). In this report, we provide an overview of best-practice strategies for neighborhood-level initiatives and provide recommendations to program leadership to support the integration of these best practices in the Safe Neighborhoods program.

Best Practices for Neighborhood-Level Strategies

Neighborhoods have interrelated factors (built environment and social connectedness) that impact safety and livability. Successful municipality-backed neighborhood engagement efforts incorporate a focus on social connectedness and the built environment, utilize asset-based strategies to engage residents as leaders and provide a flexible, sustainable model for residents to adapt to their context.

We identified four municipality-led models that incorporated innovative approaches in alignment with the goals of the Safe Neighborhoods program. In our review, three core practices emerged across two or more of the following models:

- City of Portland, OR
- City of Holland, MI
- City of San Jose, CA
- Palm Beach County, FL



Practice #1: Supporting Place Branding and Establishing a Neighborhood Identity

Civic, social, and physical infrastructure are essential to creating safe neighborhoods. However, even when there are opportunities to engage civically and socially in a neighborhood, what motivates or incentivizes residents to do so?

One factor is place attachment, which is the affective bond between people and [places](#).

“Place attachment, place identity, and sense of community can provide a greater understanding of how neighborhood spaces can motivate ordinary residents to act collectively to preserve, protect, or improve their community and participate in local planning [processes](#).”

(Manzo & Perkins, 2006)

A strong neighborhood identity and effective place branding are instrumental in developing place attachment among residents. These elements support the development of a neighborhood culture and motivate residents to be involved in their neighborhood’s social and civic life.

The models reviewed have active strategies to cultivate place attachment in neighborhoods. Within the City of Portland, new neighborhood associations can define the boundaries of the neighborhood they represent, provided they do not overlap with existing association bounds. Similarly, in their recent Blueprint for Flourishing Neighborhoods guide, the City of Holland noted that residents did not identify their neighborhood according to the municipality-defined geographic boundaries. As the City of Holland prioritizes a sense of place and character as one of the six elements of a flourishing neighborhood, they explore how residents identify the neighborhoods. The blueprint outlines that for a neighborhood to create a sense of place, the following criteria should be active:

1. It has a name,
2. Residents know where it is and whether they belong to it,
3. It has at least one place that serves as its “center,”
4. It has generally agreed upon spatial extent (boundaries),
5. It has everyday facilities and services within it or nearby,
6. It has internal and external connectivity,
7. It has social diversity within it or is open to enabling it, and
8. It has a means by which residents can be involved in its affairs and an ability to speak with a collective voice.

While the above strategies engage residents in defining the boundaries of their neighborhood, place attachment can still be cultivated even when this is not possible, as seen in the [Abundant Communities Edmonton initiative](#) (a strategic partner of West Palm Beach County). This historic model cultivates place attachment by encouraging residents to buy a membership to their neighborhood’s “[Community League](#),” which provides them with discounts to stores and restaurants within the neighborhood.

Practice #2: Collaborative Intergovernmental and Community Partnerships

Across the models, collaboration within the government and with community partners was a common practice with promising results. In the City of San Jose, Project Hope is an innovative model that launches neighborhood associations in “underserved areas stressed by crime, blight, and violence.” This model operates in nine neighborhoods and is under the city’s Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services. This department oversees parks, the Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force, #BeautifySJ, and Project Hope, among other services.

In the City of Portland, the Office of Neighborhood Involvement established District Coalitions, which serve as liaisons between the neighborhoods and city government. These coalitions provide training, orientation, and consultation to the associations, including the development of an annual action plan. While many are independent nonprofits, some are staffed by the city as needed. These organizations were launched to ensure neighborhood associations were inclusive and diverse for marginalized communities and partner with the city government to connect neighborhood associations to services and to support equitable engagement.

Lastly, in the City of Holland, strong partnerships exist with five neighborhood connection organizations that connect and mobilize residents to be involved in their neighborhoods. Through partnering with the City of Holland, these organizations support city programs and can be a liaison between the government and the community. These independent nonprofits receive operational matching funds from the City, and in return, they engage neighbors to provide support, opportunities for social engagement, and community beautification. One example of this partnership is that neighborhood connection organizations agree to support neighbors who have an active code enforcement violation. If the Code Enforcement Officer learns that a neighbor cannot bring their residence up to code due to extenuating life circumstances, they will share their contact information with the Neighborhood Connector for support and resources.

Practice #3: Investing in Social and Civic Infrastructure

The last common innovative practice across several of the models is providing learning and support that equips residents to actively participate in social and civic life. Several models offer learning opportunities for residents to understand how to engage with the city and create sustainable organizations. In Palm Beach County, a Residential Empowerment Program is provided, and in the City of San Jose, Project Hope uses the Neighborhood Academy to launch and support neighborhood associations. Both programs equip residents to connect and collaborate with their neighbors to create safer communities. These models incorporate neighbors as leaders and often use Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) as a framework for engagement.

Interestingly, two of the models, City of Holland and Palm Beach County, also employ Neighborhood or Community Connectors who catalyze these relationships and the use of resources within the neighborhood. These individuals live in the neighborhood and are either on staff or contracted to mobilize assets that “help communities to be places where people know their neighbors, watch out for each other, take pride in their

community, and enjoy many opportunities for social, educational and recreational [interaction](#).” This innovative practice can be leveraged to identify the strengths, priorities, and concerns that residents are most motivated to pursue.

Recommendations for Safe Neighborhoods

The Orange County Safe Neighborhoods program is similar to the innovative neighborhood-level programs reviewed. To understand how the program is being implemented and its current strengths and challenges, the Polis Institute conducted interviews and focus groups with program participants (neighborhood grantees), current and former program staff, and County commissioners. Primary themes were identified across conversations and used to frame guidance for recommendations, incorporating insights from the research and best practices described above.

Recommendation #1: Clarify and communicate the program’s purpose, goals, and activities.

There was notable confusion among staff, neighborhood leaders, and elected officials about the program’s goals, capabilities, and activities. With staff and elected officials, it appears that the lack of clarity around the program results in duplication of efforts and confusion.

With the Safe Neighborhood Association leaders, a primary source of confusion was the activities or expenses eligible for funding. During the focus group, leaders shared that a lack of funding for community-building activities and event expenses was an impediment. Further, while circumstances may have varied, it appeared that some groups received funding for expenses that others were told were not allowed, or the policy for funding changed depending on the fiscal year. Overall, this confusion led to a lack of trust between neighborhood leaders and County staff as they did not feel supported by the department. Based on research and program documents, the expenditures approved are determined by policy. However, residents perceived that determinations were made on a case-by-case basis, prompting resentment.

Developing a clear strategy to communicate with staff, elected officials, neighborhood leaders, and residents about the purpose of and support for the program will be necessary to build trust in the program and should be a priority for the program team. Several of these concerns will be addressed as part of this collaboration with Polis Institute, including developing a revised program guidebook to be used by program staff and grantees. However, the County may also want to explore ways to adapt elements of the guidebook or other program materials to quickly and clearly communicate program aims and limitations to audiences such as commissioners or the general public. Note, however, there will always be someone disappointed that County staff cannot fulfill a neighborhood request through the Safe Neighborhoods Program.

In both the program guidebook and its partner document, the *Safe Neighborhoods Organizational Planning Guide*, we outline additional strategies to help neighborhood organizations understand the limitations of Safe Neighborhoods funding while using it as an opportunity to work towards comprehensive community goals.

Recommendation #2: Implement inclusive intergenerational opportunities and leadership development to increase participation

All stakeholders expressed concerns about the representativeness of current Safe Neighborhoods programs relative to the communities themselves. Many felt that Millennial and Gen Z representation was lacking, suggesting intergenerational approaches could effectively address some of these concerns. Several models exist for intergenerational engagement.

Support and coaching should be provided to Safe Neighborhoods groups to implement intergenerational approaches as these require new perspectives and skills than the program has previously needed. A common theme in best practice intergenerational approaches is the engagement of diverse generations throughout the entire process, from planning to execution of initiatives. To effectively do so, resources from Generations United, such as the [*Intergenerational Community Building: Resource Guide*](#) and their [*Leadership for All Ages curriculum*](#), would be especially valuable to support current Safe Neighborhoods.

It may also be important to explore the concepts of place attachment and neighborhood identity described above for current or future Safe Neighborhoods. For example, several stakeholders pointed out the significant differences in the geographic footprint between some grantee neighborhoods. Like the city of Portland, how might engagement differ if neighborhood groups are able to create a place identity that is not solely determined by existing lines on maps? We encourage continued exploration of innovations to increase inclusivity, such as the Portland and Holland models.

Finally, a review of Safe Neighborhoods documentation demonstrated that broad community engagement has been a strength of the program. Yet, it primarily relied on a deficit approach that asked residents to identify issues and areas of concern. We strongly encourage an asset-based approach to engagement. Appendix A provides a suggested strategy that incorporates intergenerational and inclusive practices.

Recommendation #3: Revise Project Implementation

Partnership with OCSO

The Orange County Sheriff's Office is a key partner in safety initiatives, yet focus groups and interviews suggested that the relationship between the neighborhood groups and officers could be strengthened. A strategy meeting with Orange County Safe Neighborhoods Staff and Sheriff's Office representatives should be held to explore options to formalize partnership protocols between all stakeholders. An agreement should be documented that outlines partnership strategies including, but not limited to, frequency of attendance at neighborhood meetings by Sheriff's office personnel, purpose of attendance (e.g., share quarterly crime data), other methods and procedures for non-emergency, program-related communication between neighborhood groups and officers, etc. The rationale for formalizing the agreement is to ensure that officer, staff, and neighborhood leadership turnover does not impact overall partnership operations for the program. We also recommend exploring and, if necessary, formalizing the partnership between Safe Neighborhoods and Neighborhood Watch, organized by the Orange County Sheriff's Office.

Safe Neighborhoods Liaison

Within the focus group of grantees, it became clear that the role of program liaison is vital to help grantees gain clarity, consistent communication, and resources from Orange County. In addition to the support previously provided in the role, the following recommendations are made for the position to ensure the success of the program among all stakeholders:

- Liaison should be an effective bridge between intergovernmental departments, County commissioners, and other elected officials to support Safe Neighborhoods in leveraging existing assets and resources provided by the County. These relationships would also connect stakeholders at the County level to engage with and support the Safe Neighborhood associations.
- Liaison should be aware of community resources, funding, and partnerships that provide support for ideas and projects ineligible for funding through the Safe Neighborhoods program
- Liaison should find innovative ways for neighborhood-based nonprofits to be successful and potentially provide technical assistance with grants, organizational management, and formal neighborhood engagement strategies
- Liaison should be provided professional learning and development opportunities to continue identifying and connecting with promising approaches across the country
- The individual best suited for such a position should:
 - Have a background in community building or organizing
 - Have experience working with diverse populations across age, culture, and socioeconomic status
 - Be familiar with local organizations doing similar or complementary work

Revised Action Plan

As a part of the Safe Neighborhoods program, local associations are expected to participate to create a three-year action plan. These action plans outline tangible goals and steps related to communication, code compliance, beautification, and crime prevention and are created with input from community participation meetings. The County provides neighborhood-level information on current infrastructure, codes, resources, and census data every two years.

During the focus group with grantees, the action plans were not mentioned, and it appears they are ineffective in setting priorities for the local associations. As most Safe Neighborhoods are volunteer-led, we suggest a simplified approach to better support volunteer-led teams. The following recommendations would support grantees to achieve goals related to the Safe Neighborhoods program:

- Shortening the timeframe from three-year goals to one-year goals
- Aligning project goals with the suggested benchmarks for neighborhood development
- Providing more support to grantees with neighborhood engagement specifically related to asset mapping
- Review of the annual goals, action plans, and successes at the end of every year

Recommendation #4: Leverage resources to create self-sustaining organizations

County stakeholders consistently agreed that the Safe Neighborhoods program should eventually "graduate". Providing clear and consistent communication, operating principles, and program goals, followed by implementing intergenerational and inclusive engagement practices and leadership training, will lay a solid foundation for moving neighborhoods toward sustainability. However, our review identified many additional resources that can be leveraged to improve program impact, including other programs, partners, human and physical assets, and funding sources.

We recommend that the County identify existing resources to support Safe Neighborhoods grantees in three areas:

1. Establishing a sustainable voluntary association or non-profit organization

Key to sustainability is the growth of the organization into an independent voluntary association or 501(c)3. Importantly, Safe Neighborhoods funds can be used to support the fees and costs of incorporation. However, additional resources exist to scaffold organizations as they move from fully volunteer-led to staff-run. Resources and workshops including the [GO \(Get Organized\)](#) program offered through the Neighborhood Services Division, could help organizations create basic bylaws and organizational structures in the early stages of development. More established organizations moving toward 501(c)3 status or having already obtained status could connect to University of Central Florida's Center for Nonprofit Management and the Edyth Bush Institute at Rollins College for further training.

The Organizational Development Benchmarks (Appendix B) developed as part of this project will support the assessment of neighborhood progress toward self-sustainability. Not all neighborhoods will have the ability, leadership, or desire to become a non-profit organization. The benchmarks provide criteria that can be flexibly applied to groups who remain a volunteer association with or without non-profit status.

2. Fulfilling community social and/or civic needs

The Safe Neighborhoods program provides opportunities for neighbors to organize and connect, naturally leading to residents' desires to grow the social fabric of their communities. However, current grantees expressed frustration as Safe Neighborhoods funding cannot support these social events. Staff, too, expressed frustration about the challenges of redirecting program focus back to only fundable projects under the Safe Neighborhoods statutes.

However, because Safe Neighborhoods funding can support organizational development, we see clear opportunities to leverage existing resources in tandem with Safe Neighborhoods funding to achieve both community safety project implementation and movement towards increased social connectivity. Framing the Safe Neighborhoods program as an on-ramp towards the larger goals of a healthy, connected community can help neighborhood leaders plan for a process rather than a project.

The additional documents created by Polis Institute, including the *Program Guidebook*, *Benchmarks*, and *Organizational Planning Guide*, are designed to help Orange County staff and Safe Neighborhoods leaders recognize how to begin working towards these objectives.

Recommendation #5: Engage grantees through continuous improvement

We recommend a cycle of piloting and feedback with grantees to ensure that the implementation of new processes in this report matches the capacities and needs of existing Safe Neighborhoods groups. The [University of Kansas' Community Toolbox](#) provides a comprehensive outline of evaluating initiatives that can be used to assess the impact of new processes. Specific practices related to piloting and feedback to consider are below:

- [Appreciative Inquiry](#) | This approach to evaluation focuses on the strengths and positive outcomes that can often be undervalued through the five stages of Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny. Sample questions include:
 - What do you wish your end goal to look like?
 - What do you think success in the project will mean for the team?
 - What changes do you see occurring as you achieve success with this project?
 - What overall purpose does this project serve for you, the team, and the organization?
- [Results-Based Accountability](#) | This approach to evaluation is specifically designed for communities and measures both population-level and performance-level metrics.

Both evaluation methods complement Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), highlighted in this [webinar](#) by Dan Duncan, steward at the ABCD Institute at DePaul University. This webinar outlines the power of combining ABCD, Collective Impact, and Results-Based Accountability. Additionally, the below suggestions are specific to the Safe Neighborhoods Program:

- A successful evaluation begins when the project begins. During planning, it is important to ensure all participants understand the goals, target audience, and intended impact of the project.
- Assessments and evaluations should be relevant, culturally competent, and beneficial for the grantees.
- Assessments should be accessible to grantees across generations, with factors such as technological literacy taken into consideration.

Additionally, the County may decide to evaluate program outcomes using instruments shown in the “Suggested Measures” row of the Program Benchmarks (see Appendix C). We recommend the County develop a clear strategy to survey or query neighborhood groups based on the current project status, focus areas, and capacities. These measures may not be appropriate during all phases of organizational development. Other indicators can also be used to provide insights into program outputs, such as number of projects completed, annual expenditures, engagement, and communication metrics, etc. However, the suggested measures provide improved information on the program’s impact on the targeted communities.

Recommendations for Adding Prospective Neighborhoods to the Safe Neighborhoods Program

It is recommended that objective criteria be established for adding prospective neighborhoods to the program and another set of criteria be utilized for transitioning a neighborhood from the program. The criteria should include relevant data points, program compliance, if applicable, and the human and organizational capacity necessary to execute the program.

Such criteria would ensure that prospective neighborhoods have a specific need for the program, that the need would be consistently assessed using known data points, and that champions for the program and a lead organization have been identified. Opportunities for capacity building of both program champions and lead organizations should be made available.

For neighborhoods that are currently in the program, there should be an expectation of compliance to the requirements of the program as well as a good faith effort to see meaningful improvements in the neighborhood through its own activities and through strategic partnerships, since wholesale community transformation goes beyond the scope of the program.

An objective criteria safeguards the Safe Neighborhoods Program from being perceived as valuing one part of the community over another or 'playing favorites.' It also allows program participants the opportunity to choose interventions and partnerships that can improve one or more of these data points and to track their progress.

Polis recommends the use of the Neighborhood Opportunity Index (NOI) for the data criteria (growopportunity.org). The NOI utilizes 12 variables that are related to individual, family, and community well-being (including safety variables). The variables are tracked annually at the U.S. Census Block Group level, aggregated, and assigned a score from 1 to 10. High scores on the index serve as an indicator of or contributor to lower states of well-being in one or more of these three contexts (individual, family, and community). Appendix D describes the variables used in the NOI.

Onboarding criteria:

1. Neighborhood has a need for the program
 - a. NOI Score of 9 or 10 (in at least one Block Group that intersects neighborhood)
 - b. Average NOI Score of 6 or more (all Block Groups that intersect neighborhood)
2. Program champions
 - a. Individuals with interest and capacity to get the program up and running
 - b. Three residents and one non-resident
 - c. Capacity building programming made available to interested parties

3 A. Lead organization (a new organization)

- a. Shall go through the County's Get Organized (G.O.) Program to establish a voluntary neighborhood organization
- b. Shall have bylaws, a full board, be registered in Sunbiz, and meet regularly for a minimum period of two (2) years
- c. May take next steps toward joining the Safe Neighborhoods Program if it shows its' ability to run successfully for a minimum of 2 years

OR 3 B. Lead organization (an existing organization)

- a. Listed as "active" on Sunbiz.org
- b. Submitted appropriate tax filings in the prior year
- c. In good standing (has no pending litigation, civil suits, or open criminal investigations)
- d. Has the capacity to receive and properly manage program funds
- e. Has the capacity to comply with program requirements
- f. Capacity building programming made available to interested parties

Transition criteria (off the program):

- 1. Compliance/non-compliance with program requirements
- 2. Presence or absence of program champions or lead organization
- 3. Data points fall below established NOI thresholds

For neighborhoods that transition out of the program, they would be given "alumni" status which would avail them to certain types of ongoing support. They would not be eligible for the same level of support but would have opportunities to apply for funding and receive capacity building support.

Of the existing neighborhoods, only one of the participants does not meet the criteria as articulated above, Tildenville, but they could be grandfathered in.

Azalea Park - Consists of 6 block groups (BG)

Lowest Rank - 9 Average Rank - 7.5

Pine Hills - Consists of 30 BG

Lowest Rank - 10 Average Rank - 8.9

Tildenville - Consists of 1 BG

Lowest Rank - 4 Average Rank - 4

South Goldenrod - Consists of 4 BG

Lowest Rank - 10 Average Rank - 6.5

South Apopka - Consists of 4 BG

Lowest Rank - 10 Average Rank - 8.5

Orlo Vista - Consists of 7 BG

Lowest Rank - 10 Average Rank - 8

Pine Castle - Consists of 11 BG

Lowest Rank - 9 Average Rank - 7.2

Lee Road - Consists of 5 BG

Lowest Rank - 9 Average Rank - 6

Conclusion

The Orange County Safe Neighborhoods program has been a consistent touchpoint with neighborhoods concerned about safety over the past two decades. Successful improvement projects have been completed, and it is clear from the focus group that grantees desire a way to serve their community. The Safe Neighborhoods program can effectively support neighborhood organizations by supporting grantees in building place attachment, collaborative partnerships, and the social and civic infrastructure of neighborhoods. With these recommendations and best practices, the Orange County Safe Neighborhoods program can become a leader in neighborhood safety and well-being.



Appendix A: Asset-Based Neighborhood Engagement

We recommend incorporating the following activity into the Safe Neighborhoods program as an annual event for each community. Initially, neighborhoods will need support to plan and implement a community engagement activity like the one suggested here. In time, this can become an annual event fully planned and executed by neighborhood organizations as they work towards sustainable operations.

Community-Engaged and Inclusive Asset Mapping

Asset maps highlight areas of strength in a community through the eyes of those who live there. A community mapping event provides a starting point for Safe Neighborhoods leaders to understand what their neighbors love about where they live. This knowledge can be used to create projects that replicate those feelings in additional areas of the community or strengthen those attachments.

Three key data points are needed when creating an asset map: 1) The geographic coordinates; 2) A description of the asset; and 3) A rationale for why it is an asset to the community. Data collection tools include an electronic survey accessed on a smartphone. Some survey systems can collect geolocation data, but indicating the closest physical address to an asset can also create accurate maps. Smartphone use also promotes inclusive engagement and creativity: neighbors can submit photos and recordings in place of written text.

A one-day event that pairs new neighbors on a walking tour to capture assets as a team can build social connections. Inviting families with young children to participate provides a near-ground-level view of the neighborhood with new perspectives. For elders or those with mobility challenges, a visit from a neighbor to help capture the view from their front window or a story of what they loved about their street as a child can ensure everyone is represented.

The resulting map can be shared electronically with participants, inviting them to remain engaged with the Safe Neighborhoods program over time. Project ideas are generated as neighbors visualize areas with fewer assets, and residents can be invited to become part of solutions. As an annual activity, the map will grow as more neighbors participate.

We have included a simplified version of this activity as part of the *Organizational Planning Guide*. As noted, it is likely that neighborhoods will initially need additional support and guidance to implement this activity at a broader scale. Polis Institute is equipped to provide initial training, implementation support, and evaluation of this type of neighborhood engagement strategy.

Appendix B: Benchmarks for Organizational Development —

Category	Visioning & Planning	Growth	Sustainability
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization has a clear vision for what they want to achieve in its neighborhood and how the organization can help it achieve that vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active Neighborhood leadership team willing to become a Board of Directors and having completed Board of Directors training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear succession planning guidelines and processes are in place. Little to no reliance on County intervention and support.
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an active strategy for neighborhood engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a clear pipeline for recruitment and leadership development, starting from one-time volunteers through Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighborhood leadership team and volunteers are demographically representative of neighborhood residents
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entirely reliant on SN funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding sources include Safe Neighborhoods, other County, local, or private grants, or private fundraising efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources and personnel are sufficient for organizational objectives. (may still obtain funding from County grants and programs)
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily focused on planning and creating organizational structures, practices, and policies Execute at least 1 successful neighborhood project with support from SN funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-3 successful projects, events, or initiatives completed annually, with SN support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-2 projects under Safe Neighborhoods guidelines 1 project in social or civic engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects and events are independently organized and run by the organization
Outcomes	Increased Place Attachment, Safety, Social Capital, Perceptions of trust in individuals and institutions		

Appendix C: Benchmarks for Neighborhood Development —

Pillars	Place Identification & Built Environment	Place Attachment & Beautification	Social Infrastructure	Civic Infrastructure
Goal*	Residents are able to identify and have an active awareness of their neighborhood's name and boundaries.	Neighbors have an attachment to their neighborhood and opportunities to engage in the neighborhood. This includes a publicly accessible space where neighbors choose to spend time (park, neighborhood center, library, etc.) along with everyday facilities or services within or nearby the neighborhood.	Neighbors have a sense of belonging in their neighborhood and choose to spend time, money, and assets within the neighborhood. Engagement in social/ civic life is inclusive, represents the diversity of the neighborhood, and is open to social diversity.	Neighbors have accessible, inclusive opportunities to collaborate with neighbors along the democratic process and access to meaningful participation in neighborhood affairs.
Safe Neighborhoods Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement • Signage • Branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks & Rec partnership • Neighborhood clean-ups • Beautification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Training • Connections to County services & community partners • Events such as National Night Out, block parties, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Training • Active neighborhood group or nonprofit
Suggested Metrics	Residents' ability to identify the name and boundaries of the neighborhood.	Place Attachment Inventory Psychological Place Attachment Scale	Neighborhood Cohesion Instrument	Civic Engagement and Volunteerism Questionnaire
Outcomes	Increased Place Attachment, Safety, Social Capital, Perceptions of trust in individuals and institutions			

* Goals are outlined according to the definition of a neighborhood found in the City of Holland's Blueprint for Flourishing Neighborhoods

Appendix D: Variables in the Neighborhood Opportunity Index

Variables

1. Median Household Income
2. Median Disposable Income
3. Unemployment Rate
4. Percentage of Civilian Population 16 years and older in Labor Force
5. Personal Crime Index
6. Property Crime Index
7. Health Insurance Expenditure: Annual Household Spending Average
8. Prescription Drugs Expenditure: Annual Household Spending Average
9. Percentage of Income for Mortgage
10. Percentage of Owner Occupied Households
11. Percentage of Persons without a High School Diploma
12. Percentage of Persons with a Bachelor's Degree

Variable Details

Esri Updated Demographics represents the suite of annually updated U.S. demographic data that provides current-year and five-year forecasts for more than 2,000 demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

Median Household Income

The median household income represents the middle of the income distribution for a group. Income is defined here for persons 15 years of age or older within a population and as the sum of money received from all sources for the preceding fiscal year (earnings, unemployment compensation, Social Security, SSI, public assistance, veterans' payments, survivors benefits, disability benefits, pension or retirement income, interest, dividends, rent, royalties, estates and trusts, educational assistance, alimony, child support, financial assistance from outside the household, and other income). Income as defined by the Census Bureau and used here is exclusive of capital gains and is before payments for personal income taxes, Social Security, union dues, and Medicare deductions. The figures shown are estimates based on modeling by Esri in which the 16 household income intervals of the ACS are collapsed into 9 intervals to improve statistical reliability (source Esri).

Median Disposable Income

Disposable income represents money after taxes—an estimate of a household's purchasing power. The proportion of household income left after taxes is estimated from special studies conducted by the Census Bureau to simulate household taxes (source Esri).

Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate represents the number of unemployed individuals as a percent of the civilian labor force ($(\text{Unemployment} / \text{Civilian Labor Force}) \times 100 = \text{Unemployment Rate}$). Calculated percentages are based on data from LAUS, OES, BLS, and ACS in conjunction with US Census Current Population Survey data (source Esri).

Percentage of Civilian Population 16 years and older in Labor Force

The civilian labor force refers to the sum of employed and unemployed individuals. The Percentage of the civilian population 16 years old and up in the labor force refers to the percentage (within the defined geography) of all civilians 16 years old and over who either (1) were "at work," that is, those who did any work at all during the reference week as paid employees, worked in their own business or profession, worked on their own farm, or worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers on a family farm or in a family business; or (2) were "with a job but not at work," that is, those who did not work during the reference week but had jobs or businesses from which they were temporarily absent

Appendix D: Variables in the Neighborhood Opportunity Index

due to illness, bad weather, industrial dispute, vacation, or other personal reasons. Excluded from the item are people whose only activity consisted of work around the house or unpaid volunteer work for religious, charitable, and similar organizations; also excluded are all institutionalized people and people on active duty in the United States Armed Forces. This definition is in keeping with those of Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Office of Employment Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and American Community Survey frameworks. Model calculated percentages are based on data from LAUS, OES, BLS, and ACS in conjunction with US Census Current Population Survey data. Calculations include temporal changes in other measures, including job growth rates (source Esri).

Personal Crime Index

The Personal Crime Index provides an assessment of the relative risk of four major crime types: murder, rape, robbery, and assault. It is modeled using data from the FBI Uniform Crime Report and demographic data from the Census and AGS. The values are referenced by an index value. The index values are set to 100 representing the average crime for the United States. For example, an index of 120 indicates that crime in the area is 20 percent higher than the US average (100); an index of 80 implies that crime is 20 percent lower than the US average (100) (source Esri).

Property Crime Index

The Property Crime Index assesses the relative risk of three major crime types: burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. It is modeled using data from the FBI Uniform Crime Report and demographic data from the Census and AGS. The index values are set to 100 representing the average crime in the United States. For example, an index of 200 indicates that crime in the area is 100 percent higher than the US average (100); an index of 40 implies that crime is 60 percent lower than the US average (100) (source Esri).

Health Insurance Expenditure: Annual Household Spending Average

This item shows the average amount in dollars spent on health insurance by household. The total average amount spent on Health Insurance includes fees for service health plans, HMOs, Medicare supplements, and all single-service insurance plans covering services such as dental care, vision care, prescription drugs, and long-term care. The figure also includes payments to Medicare and premiums paid for Medicaid, Tricare/Military, and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage (source Esri).

Prescription Drugs Expenditure: Annual Household Spending Average

Esri 2024 estimates of the total (aggregate) amount spent, average amount spent per household, and Spending Potential Index (SPI) on Prescription Drugs in the geographic area. Esri's consumer spending data provides information about the estimated spending households for goods and services in an area. The aggregate value represents the total amount spent by all households. The average value represents the typical amount spent per household. The SPI compares average local expenditures to U.S. levels. The SPI value for the U.S. is 100. For example if the SPI value for a geographic area is 120 this implies that average spending by consumers in the geographic area is likely to be 20% more than the US average. (Sources Esri and Bureau of Labor Statistics).

Percentage of Income for Mortgage

Percent of Income for Mortgage (POIFM) quantifies the percent of median household income dedicated to mortgage payments on a home priced at the median value. Data to calculate the POIFM measure is drawn together from sources including the American Community Survey, Home Price Expectations Survey, House Price Index, Federal Housing Finance Agency, as well as Freddie Mae and Freddie Mac (source Esri).

Percentage of Owner Occupied Households

A housing unit is owner-occupied if the owner or co-owner lives in the unit, even if it is mortgaged or not fully paid for. This figure shows the percentage of houses within a Block Group that are owner-occupied. Current-year estimate of owner-occupied housing units is developed by combining independent data sources, including USPS residential lists, the ACS, and various state and local sources, along with the Housing Vacancy Survey from the Census Bureau (source Esri).

Appendix D: Variables in the Neighborhood Opportunity Index

Percentage of Persons without a High School Diploma

This item is the percentage of people of compulsory school attendance age or above who were not enrolled in school and were not high school graduates. There is no restriction on when they left or “dropped out” of school; therefore, they may have dropped out before high school and never attended high school (source Esri).

Percentage of Persons with a Bachelor's Degree

The percentage of persons age 25 and older within the geography of the Block Group defined as having a Bachelor's Degree or Higher are those who have received a bachelor's degree from a college or university or a master's, professional, or doctorate degree (source Esri).

