

What is a Green Neighborhood?

COMMUNITY OR NEIGHBORHOOD ATTACHMENT CAN BE DEFINED AS LOYALTY, OPTIMISM, PRIDE, AND PASSION THAT PEOPLE FEEL ABOUT THE PLACE WHERE THEY LIVE. WHAT MAKES PEOPLE WANT TO INVEST THEIR FUTURE IN A PLACE? ONE GAME-CHANGING STUDY IDENTIFIED THE ATTRIBUTES THAT MEAN THE MOST TO COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY:¹

- A WELCOMING AND FRIENDLY COMMUNITY.
- HAD AVAILABLE SOCIAL OFFERINGS SUCH AS ENTERTAINMENT, RECREATION, PLACES TO SIT AND EAT, PARKS AND GREEN SPACES.
- WAS PHYSICALLY ATTRACTIVE WITH GREENERY.



Designing With Natives

PLACES WITH THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF ATTACHMENT HAVE THE HIGHEST RATES OF GDP GROWTH OVER TIME. RESIDENTS ALSO TEND TO SPEND MORE TIME AND MONEY IN THEIR COMMUNITY, AND ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL.²

BUILDING ON THIS CONCEPT, WHAT MAKES A NEIGHBORHOOD GREEN? GREEN NEIGHBORHOODS ARE PLACES THAT HELP PEOPLE GET CLOSER TO NATURE AND EXPERIENCE NATURE'S INSPIRATION AND HEALING POWERS. GREAT HABITAT AND BEAUTIFUL BACKYARDS, PARKS AND BUSINESSES ARE CREATED, USING NATIVE PLANTS. THESE HEALTHY PLACES IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE, HEALTH, COST OF LIVING, SENSE OF PLACE AND ECONOMY FOR ALL PEOPLE WHO LIVE, WORK, WORSHIP, LEARN AND PLAY WITHIN THEIR BORDERS. UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF NINE GREEN NEIGHBORHOODS' CRITERIA WILL ENHANCE NEIGHBORHOOD BONDING, HEALTHY LIFESTYLES AND LOCAL BEAUTY. NEIGHBORS CAN EVALUATE THEIR OWN COMMUNITY AND LEARN HOW TO MAKE THEIR SURROUNDINGS MORE BEAUTIFUL AND BENEFICIAL TO NATURE.

Every place has benefits that may be undervalued or not recognized. Some places are aging in negative ways that could change both the neighborhood culture and sense of place, in the near future. Some places have excellent social chemistry that others seek. The Green Neighborhoods Program engages community groups to learn what makes their neighborhood great, how to keep it that way and how to take their neighborhood from good to great.

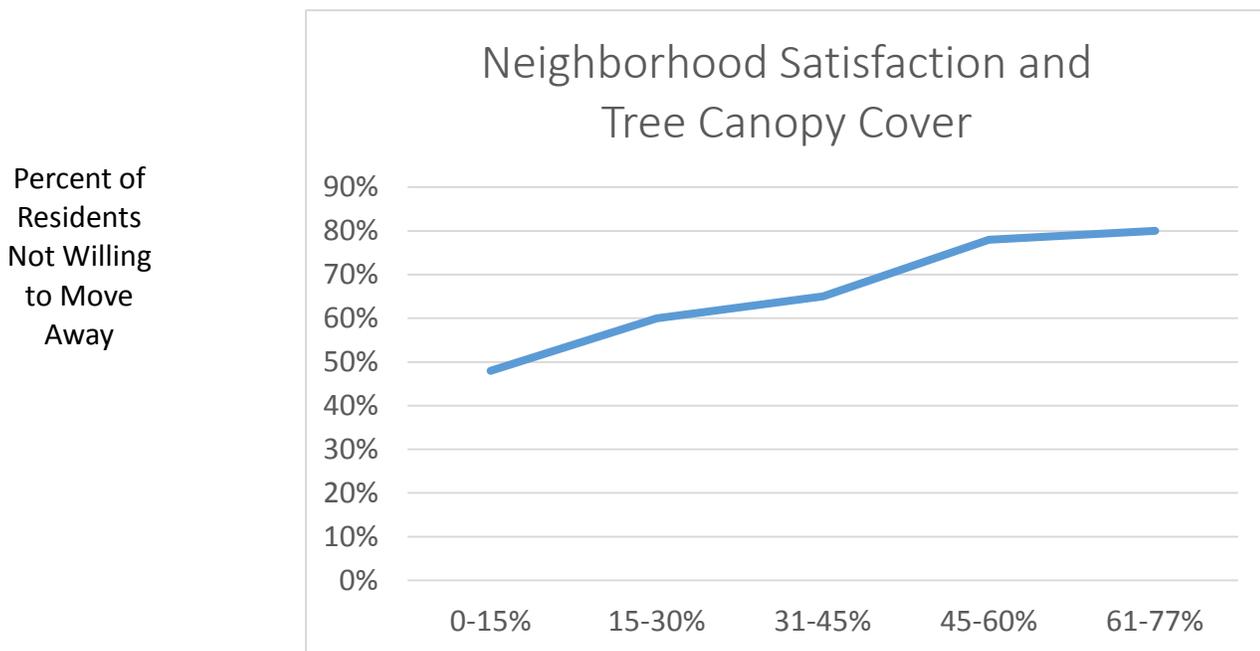
A study in Baltimore, Maryland revealed that as the percent of tree canopy cover increases, residents are more satisfied with that community. The study also found that when neighborhood forest cover is below 15%, more than half of the residents consider moving away. When the canopy cover reaches 60% or better, over 80% of residents want to stay in the neighborhood.³

¹ John. S and James L. Knight Foundation and Gallup, Inc. 2011. *Soul of the Community Study*.

² IBID.

³ Morgan Graves, et.al., 2004. Demographic and socioeconomic research team: Research Highlights. Baltimore Ecosystem Study.

Contact with nature on a regular basis provides stress reduction and improvement in overall sense of wellbeing and hopefulness.⁴ It helps alleviate mental fatigue by relaxing and restoring the mind. Within built environments, green spaces are settings for cognitive respite, as they encourage social interaction and de-stressing through exercise or conversation, and provide calming settings. Having quality landscaping and vegetation in and around the places where people work and study is a good investment. Both visual access and being within green space helps to restore the mind's ability to focus and can improve job and school performance, and help alleviate mental stress and illness.



Howard Frumkin and Richard Louv's research on contact with nature suggests that children and adults benefit so much from contact with nature that land conservation can now be viewed as a public health strategy. Nature contact yields surprisingly broad benefits. This contact may occur on a very small scale—plants in the workplace or trees outside the apartment building—or it may occur on a larger scale—a nearby park, a riparian corridor in a city, or a wilderness area.⁵

⁴ Marcus, Clare Copper and Marni Barnes. 1999. *Healing gardens: Therapeutic Benefits and Design Recommendations* (9Trans), New York, John Wiley and Sons.

⁵ Howard Frumkin and Richard Louv. 2007. *The powerful link between conserving land and human health*. Essay addresses to the Land Trust Alliance.

Useable and safely-accessible gardens or green spaces not only foster a sense of community, but also provide psychological benefits.

- Green spaces that provide the shade of a large tree, encourage social contact by serving as informal meeting places and sites for group and shared activities.⁶
- Green spaces can serve as a sort of nature therapy, where people experiencing difficulties can find empowerment, respite from stress, and personal involvement in environmental stewardship.⁷ As a result, the mental health of individuals may also remain positive due to a decreased chance of depression and feelings of isolation as well as increased self-esteem.
- Green spaces, in close proximity to homes, encourage exercise, which can improve mental health.⁸
- Effective social support networks have been found to restore feelings of personal control and self-esteem by buffering the effects of stress and poor health. Greenery seems to make people happy.^{9 10}
- Studies indicate that having views of nearby nature and living within green spaces can improve worker productivity,¹¹ reduce stress, improve school performance,¹² and lessen the symptoms of ADD.²²
- From their research, Gina Lovasi, Ph.D. and colleagues estimate that young children who live in city neighborhoods with tree-lined streets are less likely to develop asthma. Asthma rates in preschoolers fall by 24% to 29% for every standard deviation increase in tree density, equivalent to an additional 343 trees/km (247 trees/acre).^{2,13}
- People who spent time in a park with more plant species scored higher on various measures of psychological well-being than those subjects in less biodiverse parks.¹⁴

⁶ Health Council of the Netherlands. 2004. *Nature and Health: The Influence of Nature on Social, Psychological and Physical Well-Being*. Health Council of the Netherlands and RMNO, The Hague.

⁷ Burls, A. 2007. People and Green Spaces: Promoting Public Health and Mental Well-Being Through Ecotherapy. *Journal of Public Mental Health* 6, 3: 24-39.

⁸ Bell, S., V. Hamilton, et al. 2008. *Greenspace and Quality of Life: A Critical Literature Review*. Greenspace Scotland, Edinburgh, 75 pp.

⁹ Krause, N. and B.A. Shaw. 2000. Giving Social Support to Others, Socioeconomic Status, and Changes in Self-Esteem in Late Life. *The Journals of Gerontology. Series B, Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* 55, 6: S323.

¹⁰ Pretty, J., R. Hine, and J. Peacock. 2006. Green Exercise: The Benefits of Activities in Green Places. *Biologist* 53, 3: 143-48.

¹¹ Kaplan, R. 1993. Urban Forestry and the Workplace. In: P.H. Gobster (ed.), *Managing Urban and High-Use Recreation Settings*. International Symposium on Society and Natural Resources. USDA Forest Service, St Paul MN, pp. 41-45.

¹² Wells, N.M. 2000. At Home with Nature: Effects of "Greenness" on Children's Cognitive Functioning. *Environment and Behavior* 32, 6: 775-795.

¹³ Gina Lovasi, Ph.D., (2013) of Columbia University, and colleagues online in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* estimate of Columbia University, and colleagues online in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*.

¹⁴ Fuller, R.A., K.N. Irvine, P. Devine-Wright, P.H. Warren, and K.J. Gaston. 2007. Psychological Benefits of Greenspace Increase with Biodiversity. *Biology Letters* 3, 4: 390-94.

- In today's lifestyles and work environments, we must focus our attention on critical information or tasks. Exposure to settings that are visually interesting (having "high fascination") have been found to aid directed attention recovery.¹⁵ Comparing memory retention in people viewing low versus high fascination scenes in built and natural environments, respectively, people viewing natural environments performed significantly better.¹¹ So, in the case of offices and schools, where one must focus on tasks, the addition of natural features could significantly improve attention and content retention rates.

A study of single family home sales in Athens, Georgia, found that landscaping with trees was associated with an increase in the home sale's price of 3.5 to 4.5 percent.¹⁶ In addition, builders have estimated that homes on wooded lots sell, on average, for 7% more than equivalent homes on open lots.¹⁷ The Lehigh Valley *Return on Environment Study* showed that homes located within 1/4 mile of protected open space were, on average, valued at \$16,500 more than those located further away.¹⁸

Green Neighborhoods' members make a commitment to complete at least one environmental improvement project each year and report their results. Projects are selected from five environmental tracks: wildlife, water, outreach and education, resource management, and community awareness. Currently, Green Neighborhoods' members are planting gardens for wildlife, cleaning up streams, and recycling. The benefits of the program are numerous, including the creation of a sense of community within the group; enhancement of natural areas for neighborhood residents and wildlife; and the conservation and protection of local resources. They also help save money for residents and the community.

Top Ten Good Stewardship Things You Can Do in Your Own Backyard.

1. Grow two native trees for every person in your house to infiltrate more water than you use. Try to create 60% canopy tree cover. Always replace canopy trees when possible.
2. Grow several native shrubs like winterberry, chokeberry, ninebark, elderberry, Black Haw or Maple-leaf viburnum or Witch hazel to enhance bird habitat. Try to plant 60% native plants in your yard to enhance biological diversity.
3. Grow a pollinator garden.

¹⁵ Berto, R., M.R. Baroni, A. Zainaghi, and S. Bettella. 2010. An Exploratory Study of the Effect of High and Low Fascination Environments on Attentional Fatigue. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30, 4: 494-500.

¹⁶ I.M Anderson, and H.K Gordell. 1988. Influence of trees on residential property values in Athens, Georgia. A survey based on actual sales prices. *Landscape and Urban Planning*. 15: 153-164.

¹⁷ A.F Selia, and I. M. Anderson. 1984. Estimating the preconstruction cost in Metropolitan Atlanta. Georgia Forestry Research Paper, no. 48.

¹⁸ Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, 2014. *Return on Environment Study*. Allentown, Pennsylvania.

4. Reduce the use of fertilizer and shrink your lawn by 25 percent to reduce nutrients and runoff.
5. Find the lowest portion of your yard and plant a rain garden or flower beds 6 feet wide to ensue zero runoff. If you have slopes in your yard, put small berms across the slopes. Consider the use of river stone edges along your beds, and under your walkways,
6. Use pesticides very sparingly and look for organic substitutes.
7. Remove invasive plants like Japanese honeysuckle, Euonymus shrubs.
8. Create a shady spot and place several chairs there. Plant ferns and blue colored plants to help you relax.
9. Practice water and energy conservation in your home.
10. Create a Backyard Conservation Design and strategy to renew your home, save money and create a healthy lifestyle.

Green Neighborhood Rating System

		1	2	3	4	5
1	Sense of place	15% canopy cover	25% canopy cover	35% canopy cover with shrub layer	45% canopy with shrub layer	60% canopy cover with shrub layer
2	Biological diversity	Masses of annual plants, 20% natives p	30% native	40% native plants	50% native plants	60% native plants or more
3	Habitat	Mostly lawn	Few small trees and shrubs	Few canopy trees or shrubs with 15 identified species of birds and butterflies	Multi-level layers with 40%+ canopy cover, 20 bird identified species of birds and butterflies	Multi-layered woods, 60% + canopy with 30 identified species of birds and butterflies
4	Curb appeal and property value	Mostly lawn	Few shrubs and gardens	Some effort to add color and texture to front yard gardens	Multi-layered trees and shrubs and gardens	Trees and shrubs selected with a "Wow" factor
5	Beauty and Seasonal Color	Green areas	Green areas limited color	Patches of color	Color in 2 or more seasons	Full seasonal vertical and horizontal color,
6	Healthy Living	High use of chemical, little nature apparent		Some native vegetation		Great habitat and close to nature
7	Cost of living	High runoff and no energy conservation, Large lawn		Flower beds and small trees,		Low runoff and high energy conservation
8	Real estate value	Limited landscaping and more than 1 mile from open space	Limited landscaping within 1 mile from a park	Well landscaped within 1 mile from a park	Well landscaped within 1 mile of a park or open space	Well landscaped within ¼ mile of a park or open space
9	Neighborhood bonding	Limited interaction with neighbors		Spend less than 8 hours per week enjoying the outdoors	Go on neighborhood walks	Lots of neighborhood interactions, 3 walks a week

How Green is your neighborhood?

- 45-50 points High level of community attachment
- 40-44 points Moderate level of community attachment
- 35-39 points Some community attachment
- 26-34 points Limited community attachment
- 25-points or less People are looking for other places to live