



SMART GROWTH

Score your community!

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Design principles for great places

After conducting a Built Environment Rating, the participants in our Images of the Western Reserve workshop discussed why they liked some places better than others. Then they derived 47 basic principles to describe the features of the places they preferred. We took the 47 principles and created this score sheet. The scores reflect our judgment of the relative importance of each principle. This is a preliminary attempt at developing a simple tool that citizens can use to evaluate proposed developments (and existing places) in their communities.

This score sheet can be used to evaluate neighborhoods in almost all types of development, from downtowns to villages, from pre-war suburbs to post-war exurbs. Just use the applicable principles for the selected neighborhood (either real or planned), then total all points to find out how well designed that neighborhood is:

- 500 to 0 points—Failing Neighborhood
- 0 to 500 points—Deficient Neighborhood
- 500 to 1000 points—Good Neighborhood
- 1000 to 1500 points—Great Neighborhood

Urban structure

1. Walkable Neighborhoods. Within a 3,000-foot radius of the center of the neighborhood or town, are there a mixture of uses (residential, commercial, retail, civic, recreational)?

- A. Complete Conformity 50 points
- B. Partial conformity 25 points
- C. No -50 points

Do the street proportions (ratio of building height to street width) conform to the following standards?

- A. Most streets range from 1:1 to 1:3 20 points
- B. Most streets range from 1:4 to 1:6 5 points
- C. Most streets exceed 1:6 -5 points

2. Mixed Uses. Have buildings that support a mix of uses (e.g. apartments above shops) been included in the neighborhood?

- A. Complete conformity 20 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No -20 points

3. Town Center. Is there a town center, which includes offices, retail, residential, and/or mixed-use buildings?

- A. Complete conformity 20 points

- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No -20 points

4. Compact Development. Does the town center have the greatest concentration of development (density and intensity), located at the center using at least two-story buildings, with a lower concentration of development at the periphery? And, where possible, are vacant lots infilled first before building on virgin land?

- A. Complete conformity 50 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No -10 points

Getting around

5. Connected Streets. Does the interior street system create an interconnected network where each street connects to at least two other streets and where blocks do not exceed 1000 feet?

- A. Complete conformity 50 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No -5 points

6. Rural Roads. Have rural roads been kept free of commercial development, residential subdivisions, sidewalks, power lines, and street trees?

- A. Complete conformity 50 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No -50 points

7. Efficient Avenues. Are heavy traffic streets designed as avenues with 2 or 3 lanes in each direction, limited curb cuts, planting strips at both edges, street trees, underground utilities, and continuous sidewalks on both sides?

- A. Complete conformity 25 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No -5 points

8. Shady Boulevards. Are medium traffic streets designed as boulevards with 1 or 2 lanes in each direction, a central landscaped median (minimum width 10 feet) with integral turning lanes, limited curb cuts, planting strips at both edges, street trees, underground utilities, and continuous sidewalks on both sides?

- A. Complete conformity 25 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No -5 points

9. Main Streets. Are central commercial streets designed as Main Streets with 1 travel lane in each direction, on-street parking (angled or parallel), large parking lots behind the buildings, street trees, underground utilities, continuous sidewalks on both sides (10 feet minimum width), and two story buildings brought to the edge of the sidewalk on one or both sides? Are Main Streets no wider than 36 feet with parking on both sides?

- A. Complete conformity 25 points
- B. Partial conformity 10 points
- C. No -5 points

10. Quiet Residential Lanes. Are residential streets designed with 1 travel lane in each direction, on-street parallel parking on one or both sides, 6-foot planting strips at both edges, street trees, underground utilities, and at least 5 feet wide sidewalks on both sides? Are the Quiet Residential Lanes no wider than 28 feet with parallel parking on one side, or 34 feet with parallel parking on both sides?

- A. Complete conformity 25 points

- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No -5 points

11. Convenient Alleys. Are alleys used to access garages in areas that accommodate bungalows, townhomes, and apartments? Are the alleys no wider than 18 feet (preferably 12 feet)?

- A. Complete conformity 10 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No -5 points

12. Hidden Parking. Where is the majority of off-street parking for retail, commercial and civic uses located?

- A. To the rear or side of buildings 50 points
- B. To the front of buildings -50 points

13. On-Street Parking. Is on-street parking allowed for on all residential streets and on all Main Streets?

- A. Complete conformity 10 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No -5 points

14. Planting Strips. Are planting strips (minimum 6 feet wide) located between the curb and sidewalk on all Quiet Residential Lanes, Shady Boulevards, and Efficient Avenues?

- A. Complete conformity 10 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No -5 points

15. Appealing Sidewalks. Is pedestrian circulation encouraged through the provision of sidewalks connecting uses with one another? And are these sidewalks at least 5 feet wide in residential areas and 10 feet wide in commercial areas?

- A. Complete conformity 50 points
- B. Partial conformity 20 points
- C. No sidewalks provided -50 points

16. Safe Crosswalks. Are crosswalks made safer by ...

- A. Elevating to the sidewalk level 20 points
- B. Making intersection bulb-outs 10 points
- C. Designing 10-foot wide turning radii 10 points

17. Street Trees. Does the plan include street trees and, if so, at what average spacing?

- A. 30 feet or less 50 points
- B. 31 to 50 feet 20 points
- C. Greater than 50 feet 10 points
- D. No street trees provided -50 points

18. Public Transit. Is a well-appointed bus or transit stop with shelter and good signage provided?

- A. Yes - near the Town Center 50 points
- B. Yes - located somewhere else 20 points
- C. No -50 points

Civic places

19. Prominent Government Buildings. Are Town Halls, Post Offices, Libraries, and Courthouses ...

- A. Located to terminate major streets 20 points
- B. Built with durable materials 20 points
- C. Near the Town Square 10 points
- D. Designed with Welcoming Entries 10 points

20. Community Churches. Are churches ...

- A. Located to terminate major streets 20 points
- B. Built with durable materials 20 points
- C. Within walking distance of homes 20 points
- D. Designed with Welcoming Entries 10 points

- 21. Neighborhood Schools.** Are schools ...
- A. Located to terminate major streets 20 points
 - B. Built with durable materials 20 points
 - C. Within walking distance of homes 20 points
 - D. Designed with Welcoming Entries 10 points

- 22. Town Squares.** Do communities have a common green, square, or central open space near the Town Center?
- A. Yes 50 points
 - B. No -50 points

- 23. Gazebos.** Do the Town Squares have attractive gazebos?
- A. Yes 15 points
 - B. No 0 points

- 24. Public Seats.** Do communities have public seats and benches in the following locations?
- A. Town Squares 20 points
 - B. Main Streets 5 points
 - C. Prominent Government Buildings 5 points
 - D. Shopping Streets 5 points

Charming commerce

- 25. Shopping Streets.** Are retail establishments designed to fit within a shopping street that is configured like a Main Street, and do these shopping streets have mixed-use buildings with offices or apartments above shops?
- A. Complete conformity 50 points
 - B. Partial conformity 10 points
 - C. No -20 points

- 26. Neighborhood Offices.** Are offices designed as part of a Main Street?
- A. Complete conformity 20 points
 - B. Partial conformity 10 points
 - C. No -20 points

- 27. Entertainment Centers.** Are entertainment centers with theaters, bars, and restaurants designed as part of a Main Street?
- A. Complete conformity 20 points
 - B. Partial conformity 10 points
 - C. No -20 points

- 28. Local Industry.** Are non-hazardous industries (e.g. automotive shops, wood shops, metal shops, etc.) that employ fewer than 50 people located in facilities within walking distance (3000 feet) of residential and commercial areas?
- A. Complete conformity 10 points
 - B. Partial conformity 5 points
 - C. No -10 points

- 29. Corner Buildings.** Are prominent corners designed with buildings adjacent to the sidewalk (Sidewalk Buildings), Welcoming Entries, and Hidden Parking?
- A. Complete conformity 20 points
 - B. Partial conformity 10 points
 - C. No -20 points

- 30. Sidewalk Cafés.** Are sidewalk cafés with outdoor seating, low walls or fences, and some overhead protection provided in Entertainment Centers and as part of a Main Street?
- A. Complete conformity 10 points
 - B. Partial conformity 5 points
 - C. No 0 points

Neighborhood homes

31. Stately Homes. Are the largest homes in the community ...

- A. Within 3000 feet of the Town Center 25 points
- B. On lots no larger than 1 acre 25 points
- C. Setback no more than 100 feet 10 points
- D. Built with Hidden Garages 10 points
- E. Connected to the sidewalk network 10 points
- F. Built with Front Porches 5 points
- G. Located on Rural Roads -50 points

32. Bungalows. Are the majority of single family, detached homes in the community ...

- A. Within 3000 feet of the Town Center 25 points
- B. Built at 4 to 8 per acre 25 points
- C. Setback no more than 20 feet 10 points
- D. Built with Hidden Garages 10 points
- E. Connected to the sidewalk network 10 points
- F. Built with Front Porches 10 points
- G. Located on Rural Roads -50 points

33. Town Homes. Are attached homes in the community ...

- A. Within 1500 feet of the Town Center 25 points
- B. Built at 8 to 10 per acre 25 points
- C. Setback no more than 20 feet 10 points
- D. Connected to the sidewalk network 10 points
- E. Built with Hidden Garages 10 points
- F. Located on Rural Roads -50 points

34. Village Apartments. Are two- to three-story apartments in the community ...

- A. Within 1500 feet of the Town Center 25 points
- B. Built at 15 to 20 per acre 25 points
- C. Setback no more than 20 feet 10 points
- D. Connected to the sidewalk network 10 points
- E. Built with Hidden Garages 10 points
- F. Located on Rural Roads -50 points

35. City Apartments. Are four- to seven-story apartments in the community ...

- A. Within 1000 feet of the Town Center 25 points
- B. Built at 30 to 50 per acre 25 points
- C. Setback no more than 20 feet 10 points
- D. Connected to the sidewalk network 10 points
- E. Built with Hidden Garages 10 points
- F. Located on Rural Roads -50 points

Better buildings

36. Welcoming Entries. Are entries to all buildings visible and accessible from the street?

- A. Visible from the street 10 points
- B. Accessible from the street 10 points
- C. Elevated at least three steps 10 points

37. Human Scale. Are buildings designed to be at the human scale using the following attributes?

- A. Base/middle/top 10 points
- B. Vertical Windows 10 points
- C. Small scale materials (brick, stone) 10 points
- D. Textured Architecture 10 points

38. Storefront Windows. Are ground level retail functions designed with traditional storefront windows that run the length of the façade?

- A. Complete conformity 10 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No 0 points

39. Vertical Windows. Are windows in buildings vertically oriented (as opposed to unbroken bands of horizontal windows)?

- A. Complete conformity 10 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No 0 points

40. Textured Architecture. Are buildings designed to give texture and depth to the façade?

- A. Complete conformity 10 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No 0 points

41. Hidden Garages. Are garages in residential neighborhoods...

- A. At the back of the lot accessed via 50 points a Hollywood Drive or alley
- B. At the side of the house 20 points and accessed via the side
- C. At the front of the house and -50 points accessed from the front

42. Sidewalk Buildings. Are all buildings oriented parallel to the sidewalk and, in commercial areas, brought directly to the edge of the sidewalk?

- A. Complete conformity 50 points
- B. Partial conformity 25 points
- C. No -50 points

43. Porches and Balconies. Do residential buildings have either porches or balconies that are at least 6 feet deep?

- A. Complete conformity 10 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No 0 points

44. Visible Roofs. Are all residential buildings, except village and city apartments, built with visible roofs with at least a 6:12 slope?

- A. Complete conformity 10 points
- B. Partial conformity 5 points
- C. No 0 points

Landscapes

45. Protected Natural Areas. Are natural areas like wetlands, prime agricultural land, viewsheds, and watersheds preserved?

- A. Complete conformity 100 points
- B. Partial conformity 50 points
- C. No -50 points

46. Lakefront Access. Are public lakes provided with numerous points of access for private citizens?

- A. Complete conformity 20 points
- B. Partial conformity 15 points
- C. No -20 points

47. Preserved Rural Character. Are prime farmlands, rural roads, and historic farm structures preserved?

- A. Complete conformity 50 points
- B. Partial conformity 25 points
- C. No -50 points

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