

WHAT MAKES A NEIGHBORHOOD THRIVE

A neighborhood is not one thing. It is a set of components that, taken together, make up the unit. Each component is healthy when its key attributes are functioning. A neighborhood is thriving when all seven components are healthy.

● Framework structure: thriving neighborhood → 7 components → key attributes

LEVEL 1 · THE WHOLE

A THRIVING NEIGHBORHOOD

The aggregate condition. Diagnosed by the pattern of strengths and weaknesses across all seven components.

LEVEL 2 · THE COMPONENTS

7 WORKING TARGETS

Each component captures something the others do not. Each can be observed in an existing place and cultivated when neighborhoods are being made.

LEVEL 3 · THE ATTRIBUTES

21 KEY ATTRIBUTES

Three per component. Each attribute is a characteristic whose impairment would degrade the component itself.

LEVEL 2 — LEVEL 3

THE SEVEN COMPONENTS AND WHAT HOLDS EACH ONE TOGETHER

1 PLACE & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The substrate

The physical and ecological stage on which the neighborhood exists — geography, infrastructure, watershed, canopy. Necessary but not sufficient.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

- **Walkable shared infrastructure**
Sidewalks, third places, transit that put people in contact on foot.
- **Intactness of natural & ecological features**
Watershed condition, canopy, green space, absence of active degradation.
- **Connectivity over division**
Bridging features outweigh dividing ones. The same infrastructure can do either.

2 RECOGNITION

Knowing & being known

The texture of being a recognizable person in a recognizable place. The on-ramp to every deeper relational component.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

- **Density of weak ties**
How many neighbors a typical resident can name and be named by.
- **Distribution across population & geography**
Whether recognition is broadly shared or hides exclusion behind a healthy average.
- **Turnover-resilience**
Whether recognition rebuilds as residents move in and out, or collapses.

3 RHYTHM & RECURRENCE

The activator

The cadence of repeated encounter over time — daily routines, weekly rituals, seasonal gatherings, and the more-than-human time of the place itself.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

- **Density & reliability of recurring activity**
How often, and how dependably, neighbors are placed in repeated contact.
- **Distribution across the calendar**
Rhythms spread across seasons and time scales — weekly, monthly, annual.
- **Inclusion of more-than-human time**
Seasonal markers, phenology, the rhythm of the land held in shared awareness.

4 MUTUAL OBLIGATION

Care that follows from recognition

What recognition becomes when activated by trust and reciprocity. The fabric of bilateral care that turns acquaintance into shared responsibility.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

- **Reciprocity of care**
Care that flows in both directions, not only one. Trust lives here.
- **Trust under stress**
Whether obligation holds when something tests it. Diagnostic under load.
- **Distribution of mutual obligation**
Who is included in care networks, and who is not.

5 COMMON STAKES

Shared concerns & exposures

The conditions and risks residents share simply by living in the same place — whether they chose to or not. Visible most clearly when stress reveals them.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

- **Shared exposure recognized as shared**
Residents see the conditions they share as common, not just personal.
- **Capacity to convert concern into action**
Shared concern produces shared response, not only shared complaint.
- **Equitable surfacing of stakes**
Whose concerns get named publicly, and whose do not.

6 INSTITUTIONAL ANCHORS

The load-bearing structures

The formal and informal structures that hold material and relational life together across time — schools, congregations, libraries, businesses, mutual-aid.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

- **Presence & viability**
Anchor institutions exist and are alive — financially, participatorily.
- **Distribution across function & population**
Coverage spans the range of functions and the range of people served.
- **Effectiveness, not just presence**
Institutions actually anchor — hosting gatherings, generating activity — rather than existing as shells.

7 STORY, MEMORY & IDENTITY

The temporal layer

The layering of past and future that makes a neighborhood accountable to both. What is honored, what is reckoned with, what is being built toward.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

- **Continuity of narrative**
History is held and passed on — not lost to turnover or development.
- **Honesty of narrative**
Difficult history is named publicly — redlining, displacement, Indigenous dispossession.
- **Future-orientation residents shape**
Articulated visions for the place's future, held by the people who live there.

HOW THE SEVEN WORK TOGETHER

FROM SUBSTRATE TO TEMPORAL LAYERING

The components are not independent. Place is the substrate. Recognition is what proximity can produce given rhythm. Mutual obligation is what recognition becomes when activated by trust. Common stakes are conditions residents share whether they recognize each other or not. Institutions hold material and relational life across time. Story makes the whole accountable to past and future.

Material  Temporal

WHAT IS NOT ON THIS PAGE

FOUR DIMENSIONS CUT ACROSS ALL SEVEN

The more-than-human shows up across place, rhythm, and story rather than as a separate component. The boundary question — whose "we," and who are we responsible to — applies to all seven, not one. Geography excludes, relationship includes — the asymmetry has to be held with intentionality. Activated and potential — measurement captures what is currently activated; cultivation works on what is latent.

These are conditions of the work, not targets in the set. They shape how the seven get applied. Ignoring them produces a framework that flattens what the cohort surfaced.