

# 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.*

**1** LEVEL 1 · THE WHOLE  
**A THRIVING NEIGHBORHOOD**  
 The aggregate condition. Diagnosed by the pattern across all seven components.

**7** LEVEL 2 · THE COMPONENTS  
**WORKING TARGETS**  
 Each captures something the others do not. Each can be observed and cultivated.

**21** LEVEL 3 · THE ATTRIBUTES  
**KEY ATTRIBUTES**  
 Three per component. Each is a characteristic whose impairment would degrade the component.

**1**  
**PLACE & BUILT ENVIRONMENT**  
 The substrate  
 The physical and ecological stage — geography, infrastructure, watershed, canopy. Necessary but not sufficient.

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**KEY ATTRIBUTES**

- **Walkable shared infrastructure**  
Sidewalks, third places, transit.
- **Intactness of natural & ecological features**  
Watershed, canopy, green space.
- **Connectivity over division**  
Bridges outweigh barriers.

**2**  
**RECOGNITION**  
*Knowing & being known*  
 The texture of being a recognizable person in a recognizable place. The on-ramp to deeper relationship.

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**KEY ATTRIBUTES**

- **Density of weak ties**  
How many neighbors can be named.
- **Distribution across population & geography**  
Broadly shared, or hiding exclusion.
- **Turnover-resilience**  
Rebuilds, or collapses with turnover.

**3**  
**RHYTHM & RECURRENCE**  
*The activator*  
 The cadence of repeated encounter — daily routines, weekly rituals, seasonal gatherings, more-than-human time.

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**KEY ATTRIBUTES**

- **Density & reliability of recurring activity**  
How often and how dependably.
- **Distribution across the calendar**  
Across seasons and time scales.
- **Inclusion of more-than-human time**  
Seasonal markers, phenology.

**4**  
**MUTUAL OBLIGATION**  
*Care from recognition*  
 What recognition becomes when activated by trust. Bilateral care that turns acquaintance into shared responsibility.

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**KEY ATTRIBUTES**

- **Reciprocity of care**  
Two-way flow. Trust lives here.
- **Trust under stress**  
Whether obligation holds under load.
- **Distribution of mutual obligation**  
Who is included, and who is not.

**5**  
**COMMON STAKES**  
*Shared concerns & exposures*  
 Conditions residents share by living in the same place. Most visible when stress reveals them.

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**KEY ATTRIBUTES**

- **Shared exposure recognized as shared**  
Seen as common, not personal.
- **Capacity to convert concern into action**  
Response, not only complaint.
- **Equitable surfacing of stakes**  
Whose concerns get named, and whose do not.

**6**  
**INSTITUTIONAL ANCHORS**  
*Load-bearing structures*  
 Schools, congregations, libraries, businesses, mutual-aid — structures that hold material and relational life across time.

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**KEY ATTRIBUTES**

- **Presence & viability**  
Exist and are alive.
- **Distribution across function & population**  
Cover range of functions and people.
- **Effectiveness, not just presence**  
Actually anchor, or empty shells.

**7**  
**STORY, MEMORY & IDENTITY**  
*The temporal layer*  
 The layering of past and future that makes a neighborhood accountable to both. Honored, reckoned with, built toward.


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**KEY ATTRIBUTES**

- **Continuity of narrative**  
History held and passed on.
- **Honesty of narrative**  
Difficult history named publicly.
- **Future-orientation residents shape**  
Visions held by 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 across time. Story makes the whole accountable to past and future.

Material  Temporal

**WHAT IS NOT ON THIS PAGE · FOUR CROSS-CUTTING DIMENSIONS CONDITIONS OF THE WORK, NOT TARGETS IN THE SET**

The more-than-human shows up across place, rhythm, and story rather than as a separate component. The boundary question — whose “we” — applies to all seven. 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.