

Towards creating an Ideal Neighbourhood

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Abstract – With joint families becoming a family type of the past and the rise in the number of nuclear families, creating and friendly and socially dynamic neighbourhood is indeed an important issue to be addressed to. It is an essential factor to be considered by planners while designing a neighbourhood or collective housing schemes.

Neighbourhood planning is quickly becoming a high priority for the city planning departments, and even human service providers. Neighbourhood planning is effective and inspires creative strategies that can increase the possibility of the residents to create a better environment for a shared future.

Key Words: Neighbourhood, Urban, Rural Settlement

1. INTRODUCTION

While the Cambridge dictionary defines neighbourhood as the area of a town that surrounds someone's home, or the people who live in this area, the Oxford dictionary defines it as a district or community within a town or city.

A neighbourhood could be seen as a geographically specific area catering to all the functional and spatial needs of the people residing in and around the vicinity.

The 'neighborhood unit' as a planning concept came into existence in response to the downfall of the environmental and social conditions created as a consequential outcome of the famous industrial revolution in the early 1900s.

One of the earliest authors to attempt a definition of the 'neighborhood unit' in fairly specific terms was Clarence Arthur Perry (1872-1944), a New York planner.

2. Neighbourhood Housing Unit

This concept was designed by Clarence Perry to act as a framework for the urban planners who as in the process of attempting to design functionally self-contained, self-sustaining and desirable neighbourhoods in the early 20th century in industrialising cities.

This concept was also described as sub – divisions of urban or rural settlements in a neighbourhood created in and around the vicinity in which people live.

An early diagrammatic planning model for residential development in metropolitan areas was developed by Clarence Perry as an experimental test of the theoretical concept formed.

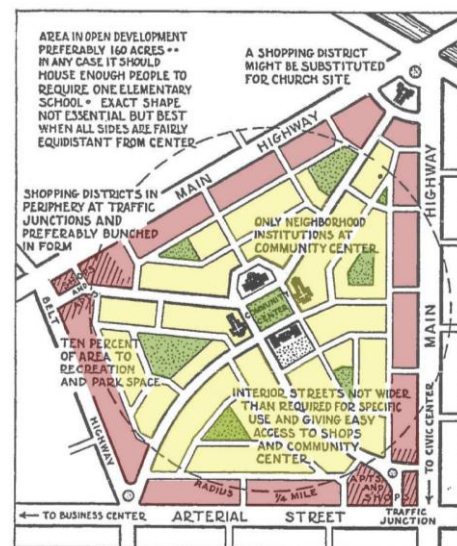


Figure 1 A diagram of Clarence Perry's neighbourhood unit

The neighbourhood housing concept was conceived of as a comprehensive physical planning tool, to be used to design self- contained residential neighbourhoods, which would promote a community centric lifestyle, away from the "noise of the trains, and out of sight of the smoke and ugliness of industrial plants" emblematic of an industrializing New York City in the early 1900s.

2.1 Principles of the Neighbourhood Unit

The core principles of Perry's Neighbourhood Unit were around these following design ideals :

- Centre all community spaces



Centre all community spaces, especially schools in the neighbourhood, so that a child's walk to school is not more than :

¼ of a mile for elementary school kids

½ mile for a middle school kids

2 miles for high school students.

All should be achieved without crossing a major arterial street.

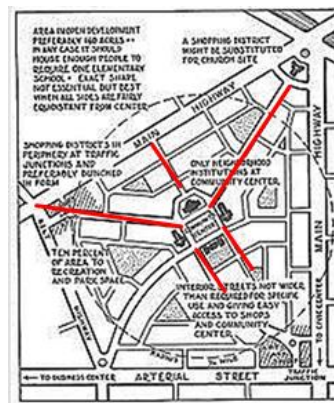
- Place arterial streets along the perimeter



In order to define and distinguish a "place" of the neighborhood by design, eliminate unwanted through-traffic from the neighborhood by placing all major and minor arterial roads on the periphery of the neighbourhood.

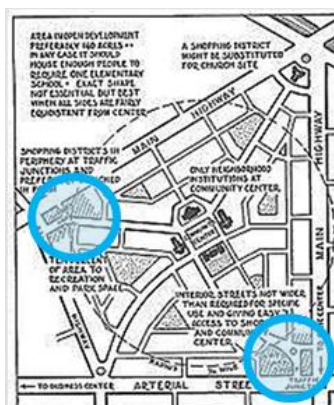
This will help keep the neighbourhood more pedestrian friendly and keep away the unwanted traffic congestions within.

- Design internal streets



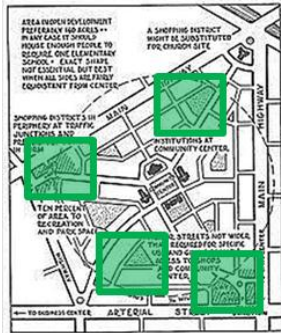
Using a hierarchy that easily distinguishes local streets from arterial streets and using curvilinear street design can benefit both the safety and aesthetic purposes of the streets in the neighbourhood. Streets, by design, would discourage unwanted through traffic and enhance the safety of pedestrians.

- Restrict local shopping areas to the perimeter



Keeping the shopping commercial areas to the perimeter or to the main entrance of the neighbourhood enables the exclusion of non-local traffic destined for these commercial uses that might intrude on the neighbourhood thus creating an unfriendly and unsafe neighbourhood.

- Dedicate at least 10 per cent of the neighbourhood land area to parks and open space



This will help in creating sufficient places for play and community interaction for the neighbourhood thus increasing community socialization and community growth as a whole.

The principles are simply based on the fact that one is planning for society and not for an aggregate of houses. The neighbours are not dependent on one another's company and aid because the city life gives a wide field of acquaintance and entertainment in various forms. The neighbours may not have common modes and habits of living and thus may sometimes not like to engage with a certain kind of people's group.

Hence, the neighbourhood planning is an attempt to form various physical units of residential areas in which people belonging to a particular rank of life settle or stay and through their commonalities they come together to form like a big, happy family though not directly related.

The entire planning process is done for the following various reasons :

- To make the people socialize with one and another.
- To enable the inhabitants to share the public amenities and recreational facilities.
- To support a safe and healthy environment within the neighbourhood.
- To provide safety and efficiency to road users and pedestrians.
- To maintain, enhance, and improve area for recreational activities.
- To determine community's prospects for the future.

2.2 Elements of the Neighbourhood Unit

1. **Size** : The town is divided into self-contained units or sectors of population. This is further divided into smaller units called neighbourhood.

2. **Boundaries** : The unit should be bounded on all its sides by main road, enough for traffic.

3. **Protective Strips**: These are necessary to protect the neighbourhood from traffic and to provide suitable facilities for developing parks, playgrounds, and road widening scheme in future. These are called Minor Green Belts.

4. **Internal Streets**: The internal streets are designed to ensure safety to the people school going children in particular. The internal streets should circulate throughout the unit with easy shops and community centres.

5. **Layout of Buildings** : To encourage neighbourhood relation and secure social stability and balance. The houses to suit the different income group should be provided single family houses, double family houses, cottages , flats, etc.

6. **Shopping Centres** : Each shop should be located on the circumference of the unit, preferably at traffic junctions and adjacent to the neighbourhood units.

7. **Community Centres** : Each community will have its centre with social, cultural and recreational amenities.

8. **Facilities** : All public facilities required for the family for their comfort and convenience should be within easy reach. These include the primary school, temple, club, retail shop, sport. These should be located within 1km in the central place so as to nucleus to develop social life of the unit.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Neighbourhoods form the urban tissue of the city both physically and socially. The concept of the neighborhood is well established as a basic unit of planning the cities. Further, it is a popular and accepted element of social and physical organization in the minds of most people. Hence the neighborhood has become the symbol and the means to preserve the socio-cultural values of an earlier less hurried way of life in our increasingly complex and fast moving urban centers. This also causes enhancement in the social-cultural bonds that would result as a direct outcome of improvement in physical conditions of a neighborhood.

This intention of a town planner to rejuvenate the valuable idea of neighbourhood which have been lost in busy uncontrolled city life has been able to take shape through the

neighbourhood unit concept thus creating what we can call an ideal neighbourhood for all.

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BIOGRAPHIES



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