Strong communities are built on the success of their neighborhoods. While the home is the basic building block, neighborhoods provide a larger structural framework by offering a wide range of housing choices and local services to meet the needs of residents at all stages of life. Successful housing and neighborhoods lead to greater economic opportunity and a healthier environment for all residents. Below are three neighborhood elements that are particularly important for strengthening the larger community.

- A Range of Housing Types
- An Attractive Design Framework
- A Safe, Walkable Layout

Range of Housing Types
When communities offer residents a variety of housing types, they make it easier to retain residents and keep families closer together. Quality housing units come in a variety of sizes, and different land uses can be designed to blend attractively within the same neighborhood. The town of Cary, North Carolina adopted an Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance allowing homeowners to add an additional unit to their property to accommodate family or rent out to defray the costs of a mortgage. Additional advantages include the deconcentration of poverty and the creation of livelier markets for neighborhood businesses.

Attractive Design Framework
While it is desirable to maintain some level of visual consistency throughout a development, variation in architectural detail can reduce the “cookie-cutter” feel that often results from overuse of the same few elements. The Mississippi Urban Renewal Pattern Book is an excellent tool to provide local governments and developers with a reference point for appropriate architectural styles, features and options from which to choose, while maintaining unity throughout a development.
A Safe, Walkable Layout

A safe and walkable network of streets connects homes and neighborhoods to each other and to surrounding areas. A mixture of uses throughout a community provides safer environments because of increased 24-hour activity and more “eyes on the street”. Architectural elements like front porches and compact building design reduce areas for undesirable activities to occur and not be noticed. The Walkability Checklist encourages its users to take a walk with a child and then answer a series of questions about traffic safety in their neighborhood.

Sidewalks and front porches encourage more “eyes on the streets”, providing for safer neighborhoods in Starkville, MS. Photo by Hollye Raines, RLA.

An illustration from the Mississippi Urban Renewal Pattern Book shows a walkable neighborhood with houses set close to the street.

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<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>POLICIES • TOOLS • TECHNIQUES</th>
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| Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices | Allow zoning flexibility for [housing units of varied sizes and prices](#)
Adopt [Inclusionary Zoning](#) to incentivize or require affordable units
Create [Community Land Trusts](#) that lower the cost of housing |
| Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place | Identify unique architectural characteristics of [Mississippi neighborhoods](#)
Determine the characteristics that [make a place special](#)
Preserve the community’s history |
| Create Walkable Neighborhoods | Incorporate [safe infrastructure for walking](#)
Create [trails](#) to promote fitness and reduce traffic
Encourage [walking to promote health](#) in Mississippi
Create [sustainable places](#) |

*For a complete list of tools and resources, please see the “Tools & Resources Index” section of the Smart Growth and Sustainability Toolbox.*

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