

# The AIA's 10 Principles of Livable Communities

Contributed by the AIA Knowledge Resources Staff

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## SUMMARY

The AIA Center for Communities by Design with the help of AIA members created *Livability 101*, a guide to creating livable cities. The guide features a list of 10 elements of a healthy, vibrant, well-designed community.

### About the AIA Center for Communities by Design

The Center for Communities by Design is a catalyst, convener, and source of information that helps AIA members work with citizens and other stakeholders to envision and create more sustainable, healthy, safe, and livable communities. To learn more about the AIA Center for Communities by Design, visit [www.aia.org/liv\\_default](http://www.aia.org/liv_default).

#### 1. Design on a Human Scale

Compact, pedestrian-friendly communities allow residents to walk to shops, services, cultural resources, and jobs and can reduce traffic congestion and benefit people's health.



#### 2. Provide Choices

People want variety in housing, shopping, recreation, transportation, and employment. Variety creates lively neighborhoods and accommodates residents in different stages of their lives.

#### 3. Encourage Mixed-Use Development

Integrating different land uses and varied building types creates vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, and diverse communities.

#### 4. Preserve Urban Centers

Restoring, revitalizing, and infilling urban centers takes advantage of existing streets, services, and buildings and avoids the need for new infrastructure. This helps to curb sprawl and promote stability for city neighborhoods.

#### 5. Vary Transportation Options

Giving people the option of walking, biking, and using public transit, in addition to driving, reduces traffic congestion, protects the environment, and encourages physical activity.

#### 6. Build Vibrant Public Spaces

Citizens need welcoming, well-defined public places to stimulate face-to-face interaction, collectively celebrate and mourn, encourage civic participation, admire public art, and gather for public events.



Photo by: Daniel Lobo

#### 7. Create a Neighborhood Identity

A "sense of place" gives neighborhoods a unique character, enhances the walking environment, and creates pride in the community.

#### 8. Protect Environmental Resources

A well-designed balance of nature and development preserves natural systems, protects waterways from pollution, reduces air pollution, and protects property values.

9. **Conserve Landscapes**  
Open space, farms, and wildlife habitat are essential for environmental, recreational, and cultural reasons.
10. **Recognize that Design Matters**  
Design excellence is the foundation of successful and healthy communities

## RESOURCES

### More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 11.09.02 The Urban Design Process: Creating and Achieving a Vision
- 11.09.03 Ten Principles of Community Partnering
- 11.09.06 Lessons Learned: Urban Planning in New Orleans

### For More Information on This Topic

See also “Energy Analysis and Design” by Donald Prowler, FAIA, in *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 18, page 616.



See also the 14th edition of the *Handbook*, which can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by email at [bookstore@aia.org](mailto:bookstore@aia.org).



### Feedback

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### Key Terms

- Leadership
- Issues
- Social issues
- Development policy
- Urban policy
- Urban planning and design