Running Head: BUILDING COMMUNITY IN NEW URBAN AND SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

**Building community:**

**Residential satisfaction in conventional and neotraditional suburban neighborhoods**

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Webstract

**Problem:** The *New Urbanism*, or neotraditional design, movement has fueled new forms of neighborhood planning, design and development whose guiding principles include providing more and better local amenities and walkability, and increasing density and resident social interaction, particularly in front yards, porches, and sidewalks, thereby improving the overall quality of life in communities. The literature suggests that such design features may foster a stronger sense of community and residential satisfaction than do typical suburban neighborhoods, but empirical results have been mixed.

**Purpose:** We examine the role of neighborhood design in promoting residential satisfaction, sense of community, neighboring behavior, and other quality-of-life indicators.

**Methods:** Two neighborhoods were compared to better understand this relationship, one of New Urbanist design and the other of typical suburban design. A survey was conducted with residents to determine how they experience community and social life in each of their neighborhoods.

**Results and Conclusions:** Some comparisons were not significant, but there were several differences between the two neighborhoods on resident perceptions. The New Urban community residents feel a stronger sense of community with their neighbors, which may be due to their more frequent interactions with neighbors, which may be due in part to walking more and the greater availability of nearby parks and playgrounds. Other forms of neighboring and home and neighborhood satisfaction did not significantly differ between neighborhoods.

**Takeaway for Practice:** In general, residents of the New Urban-designed neighborhood feel a stronger sense of community with their neighbors, which may be due to their more frequent social interactions and greater participation in neighborhood activities. These findings are supported by residents’ experiential accounts of neighborhood life. The study results provide support for the development of New Urban communities over suburban planned developments to improve residents’ social quality of life.

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**Keywords:** New Urbanism, sense of community, social cohesion, community satisfaction, environment and behavior.

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**Building community:**

**Residential satisfaction in conventional and neotraditional suburban neighborhoods**

In recent decades the *New Urbanism* movement has fueled new forms of neighborhood design and development whose guiding principles include providing more and better local amenities and walkability, and increasing resident social interaction and sense of community, thereby improving the overall quality of life in communities (Calthorpe, 1994; Katz, 1994; Talen, 2000). These neighborhoods are often referred to as Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND), Neo-Traditional Developments (NTD), or simply New Urban neighborhoods. This type of development runs contrary to the primary building type of the latter half of the 20th century, the suburban neighborhood type.

*Neighborhood Types*

The term *urban* can be defined in various ways. We use it to refer to the layout of the built environment, which is determined by factors such as density, pedestrian orientation, and land use. Characteristics of the urban environment include medium to high-density of buildings; sidewalks; mixed-use on the building, block, or neighborhood level; a pedestrian orientation; front porches and short set-backs from the street; connected street networks; and open public spaces.

In contrast to the urban neighborhood type, the suburban model is a relatively recent form of development. It emerged after World War II in response to pent up housing demand, the baby boom, a booming growth-based consumer economy, and government lending and tax policies. Land outside the urban core was cheaper and available in large tracts. Automobiles began to replace public transit and walking as the primary mode of transportation. The suburban model is uniquely car-oriented, regulating the built environment both in scale and functionality to give priority to drivers. Suburban environments are defined by low building density (single-family detached homes); buildings set back from the street with parking or large lawns in front; segregated uses (retail, office, and residential split up into distinct areas); and few or no sidewalks. Residential streetscapes became more dominated by attached garages than front porches. New Urbanists criticize the suburban model as hindering social interaction, leading to a diminished sense of community.

*Research on Environmental Design and Sense of Community*

Sense of community has been extensively researched and linked to numerous social and neighborhood conditions including the physical environment, mainly focusing on pedestrian orientation (neighborhood character, architectural design and quality, availability of public space, local stores and amenities), the social environment (social interaction, neighboring, neighborhood cohesion, community organizing, community identity, residential satisfaction), and individual factors (well-being, physical and mental health, attitudes toward neighbors, attraction to neighborhood, community identity, and place attachment; Levine, Perkins & Perkins, 2005; Lund, 2002). Perhaps the most important of those conditions for sense of community is social interaction (Jacobs, 1961; Demerath & Levinger, 2003; Kuo, Sullivan, Coley & Brunson, 1998). A central question and longstanding debate is whether, or how much, environmental planning and design can influence the frequency and/or quality of social interaction and, through it, sense of community.

Although strengthening sense of community has been widely used as a justification by planners and developers for building neighborhoods with urban characteristics, what is the evidence supporting such a link? Some studies have compared urban and suburban neighborhood types while others have evaluated specific characteristics of those types, such as pedestrian orientation, density, public meeting spaces, and street layout.

*Studies of New Urban Communities*

Plas and Lewis (1996) interviewed residents of Seaside, Florida, a New Urban neighborhood specifically designed to promote sense of community. The neighborhood design elements include traditional architecture and materials, large front porches, homes built up to sidewalks, a low picket fence around every front yard, a mix of uses (residential, commercial, retail, open community space), a hexagonal street grid, and streets that are hospitable for pedestrians and inhospitable for automobiles, among others. While it was originally intended to be a mixed-income neighborhood, Seaside has become an upscale community that consists primarily of vacation homes. It has 10 neighborhood associations and residents are highly active in the community. The study found that physical characteristics of the neighborhood appeared to play a role in the development of sense of community. When asked about their experience of living in the neighborhood, participants in the study noted feelings of neighborliness, togetherness, community sharing, and loyalty.

Studies have also been conducted that compare New Urban and suburban neighborhoods on sense of community and other social constructs. Brown and Cropper (2001) evaluated sense of community and neighboring behavior by comparing a New Urban subdivision with a suburban subdivision. Although both neighborhoods had sidewalks, the New Urban subdivision had numerous pedestrian-oriented features and a higher density that the suburban subdivision lacked. No difference was found between the neighborhoods on sense of community, but the New Urban subdivision had significantly higher neighboring behavior and outdoor use. Similarly, Kim and Kaplan (2004) compared a New Urban community with a suburban development on sense of community. The neighborhoods differed in terms of density, lot sizes, variety of land uses, and open space. The survey questions assessed the role of physical characteristics related to site development, site design, circulation, amenities, and architectural design. Respondents were asked about the importance of each of these characteristics. Results show substantially higher sense of community in the New Urban community, a finding that was corroborated by in-person interviews with residents. However, of the dimensions of sense of community, social interaction did not appear to play a strong role in improving sense of community, even though interactions with next-door neighbors did play a strong role. One of the primary concerns with these comparison studies is that of *self-selection*. Critics argue that residents who live in New Urban neighborhoods will participate in behaviors associated with those types of neighborhoods because they are seeking out a neighborhood that facilitates that lifestyle. Conversely, residents of typical suburban neighborhoods would not choose that lifestyle. Thus, residents are essentially self-selecting themselves into their respective neighborhoods and any differences may be attributable to residents’ neighborhood selection and not the physical characteristics of those neighborhoods.

*Mixed-Use Development*

Nasar and Julian (1995) conducted two studies examining sense of community. The first evaluated residents in neighborhoods with varying levels of mixed-use development to assess differences in sense of community. The term *mixed-use* refers to developments that combine multiple uses such as residential, commercial, or retail. Results showed significantly less sense of community in the single-use areas when compared to those areas with three or four uses. A second study found that residents of an apartment building containing an outdoor courtyard felt a significantly higher sense of community than comparable residents in an interior corridor building. The findings suggest that the presence of an open, outdoor public meeting space, a key feature of urban environments, may lead to higher levels of sense of community.

*Density and Pedestrian Orientation*

Density is one of the key features that distinguish urban from suburban environments. Freeman (2001) compared four major metropolitan areas on social ties in neighborhoods of varying density. The results showed that residential density was not strongly related to the formation of social ties. However, the relationship with whether or not a resident had to drive to and from work was important. Freeman concludes that developing more transit-oriented neighborhoods, characteristic of urban environments, would likely increase social ties.

Another integral feature of urban neighborhoods is a pedestrian-oriented environment. Lund (2002) compared a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood of urban design with a suburban automobile-oriented neighborhood and found a significantly higher sense of community in the pedestrian-oriented neighborhood compared to the automobile-oriented neighborhood.

*Outdoor and Public Space*

Another common feature of urban environments is usable open space, or parks, plazas, and playgrounds. Skjveland (2001) examined street parks to evaluate social interactions among neighbors, a pedestrian-friendly element that is characteristic of urban environments. The study looked at sections of three residential streets that were converted into street parks that involved considerable changes in spatial layout, and were compared to two control groups. Overall, increased neighborhood involvement was observed at the street park sites, but increased social ties only increased for some people. The author suggests that the symbolic change may be more significant than the functional effects, and could play a key role in formation of neighborhood identity. Kuo *et al* (1998) also examined the use of common or meeting spaces with a particular focus on the levels of vegetation present in the space. The results indicated that more vegetation was associated with more use of common space, which led to more socialization and a greater sense of community.

*Research Literature Summary and Conclusions*

The conclusions in the literature comparing the effects of urban and suburban neighborhood characteristics on sense of community are mixed, but reveal some insights. Table 1 displays the neighborhood characteristics observed and the results for each study reviewed.

[Table 1 about here]

When comparing urban and suburban environments, several studies found a significantly higher sense of community in those areas with urban characteristics (Kim and Kaplan, 2004; Nasar and Julian, 1995; Lund 2002; Kuo et al., 1998). Some studies also found that social ties (Freeman, 2001) and neighborhood involvement (Skjveland, 2001) are higher in urban compared to suburban environments. Brown and Cropper (2001) found no difference in sense of community between a New Urbanist and a traditional suburban development, but did find more neighboring behavior in the former suggesting either that sense of community takes more time to develop or that one does not always lead to the other.

Overall, a relationship appears to exist between characteristics of the built environment and sense of community. The specific nature of this relationship, however, is still unclear. In general, it appears that there may be some merit to the New Urbanists’ claim that urban neighborhoods foster a stronger sense of community than typical suburban neighborhoods, but more research is needed to support and clarify this assertion.

Purpose of the Study

The study builds on literature suggesting that neighborhood design, including the layout, physical characteristics, and amenities of a neighborhood, can significantly influence resident perceptions, attitudes and subjective qualities of community life. The purpose of the study is to determine whether residents in a New Urbanist-designed neighborhood experience more home and community satisfaction, sense of community and neighboring than do residents in a demographically comparable suburban development. In order to better understand the mechanism for any differences we find in such qualities, we will also look for differences between the communities in how often residents visit with neighbors, walk in their neighborhood, look after a neighbor’s house, participate in neighborhood or group activities, and how they feel about various aspects of their neighborhood’s design and function. This study was developed with, and funded by, a local developer that currently builds both New Urban and typical suburban planned communities.

Methods

*Site Selection*

In order to determine the effects of neighborhood design on social quality of life, we selected two neighborhoods that differ in terms of neighborhood design. The first neighborhood, New Urbana (pseudonym), is a Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND), which was designed following the principles of New Urbanism. The second neighborhood is Southwood Estates (pseudonym), a neighborhood built according to typical suburban design principles. The neighborhoods were chosen to be similar in terms of location (county), income, race, size and quality of homes, and geographic size. Both are in the metropolitan area of the same medium-sized, mid-South U.S. city, and are approximately the same distance from the urban core. The most notable difference between the neighborhoods, other than the design, is the population density and number of homes. At the time of the study New Urbana had approximately 735 homes, while Southwood Estates had approximately 190. In addition, Southwood Estates is older, constructed primarily in the late 1980’s and 1990’s, while New Urbana was still under construction (although mostly complete) at the time of the survey.

[Figure 1 about here]

[Figure 2 about here]

*Participants*

We recruited residents from each neighborhood primarily through email and phone, although a few were recruited in person at their homes. A total of 170 (out of 735) New Urbana households and 140 (out of 190) Southwood Estates households were selected at random and contacted to participate in the study. We conducted 26 long-form surveys (15 in New Urbana; 11 in Southwood Estates) and an additional 38 short-form surveys from New Urbana households; total n=64). Although the sample is small, it is an adequate portion to represent each of the two neighborhoods.

*Neighborhood Similarities and Differences*

There were no statistically significant differences between neighborhoods on income, race, gender, age, years of education, number of children, homeownership, whether or not a close family member lives in the neighborhood, or household size. All survey respondents were white and owned their homes. There was a statistically significant difference between the neighborhoods on length of residence. Southwood Estates residents have lived in their neighborhood an average of approximately 12 years, while New Urbana residents have lived in their neighborhood about two and a half years, on average. All else equal, the longer average tenure in the suburban neighborhood would tend to favor it on all study variables; thus, if the New Urban neighborhood has even the same level of satisfaction, sense of community, or neighboring, that would be noteworthy.

*Survey Measures*

The survey was developed by the researchers in partnership with the local developer who funded the study. The short version of the survey used for the present study includes questions on home and neighborhood satisfaction, neighborhood preferences, neighborhood qualities/amenities, sense of community, walking and neighboring behavior, social interaction, demographics, and other items not used here (items appear below in Table 2). Most survey questions are multiple choice, but open-ended questions were also included so that residents could describe their neighborhood experiences and perceptions.

Results

*Sense of Community*

Neighborhood mean comparisons appear in Table 2. New Urbana residents responded significantly more than Southwood Estates residents that people in their neighborhood generally watch after each other and help out when they can and that they feel a strong sense of community with others in their neighborhood.

[Table 2 about here]

*Home and Neighborhood Satisfaction*

Residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their house as a place to live, their neighborhood as a place to live, and their neighborhood as a place to raise children. New Urbana residents rated their homes and neighborhoods marginally higher than did Southwood Estates residents, although differences were not statistically significant due in part to the very high level of satisfaction in both neighborhoods (average ratings over 9 out of 10).

*Neighborhood Qualities and Amenities*

Residents were asked to rate the qualities of, and amenities in, their neighborhood, specifically nearby parks and playgrounds, housing quality, availability of needed stores, and activities for youth after school. There was a statistically significant difference on nearby parks and playgrounds, with New Urbana residents expressing better availability and quality of these amenities in their neighborhood.

*Neighborhood Preferences*

Residents in both neighborhoods were asked if they preferred to live in a dense, mixed use neighborhood rather than a low-density neighborhood with separated uses. New Urbana residents responded significantly more than Southwood Estates residents that they prefer mixed-use neighborhoods to those with segregated uses.

*Walking*

When asked how often residents walk in their neighborhood, New Urbana residents indicated that they walk more than Southwood Estates residents, a statistically significant difference.

*Neighboring Behavior*

Residents were asked how many times in the past year they had borrowed something from (or loaned something to) a neighbor, visited with neighbors, spoken with a neighbor about a problem, and kept watch on a neighbor’s house while they were away. New Urbana residents visit with their neighbors more than residents in Southwood Estates, a statistically significant difference. Answers to the other questions were not statistically significant.

*Neighborhood Involvement*

Questions asked only in the long form of the survey were less likely to show significant neighborhood differences due to the smaller sample, but the questions focusing on neighborhood involvement did reveal significant differences. When asked if they participate in more activities than they did in their previous neighborhood, New Urbana residents were significantly more likely to say yes than Southwood Estates residents. There was also a significant difference between neighborhoods on whether or not residents participate in neighborhood meetings or activities in their neighborhood, but not on whether they are a member of any groups or organizations in their neighborhood.

Residents in both neighborhoods were asked to write down the types of neighborhood activities they are involved in (responses are listed in Table 3). Overall, Southwood Estates residents appear more likely to participate in organizational meetings, whereas New Urbana residents appear to be more active in recreational clubs, events, and classes.

[Table 3 about here]

In general, New Urbana residents participate in neighborhood activities more frequently (weekly or multiple times a week), whereas Southwood Estates residents most often participate in monthly or annual events.

*Experiential Account of Life in the Neighborhood*

Residents of both neighborhoods were asked to write about their family’s experience of living in their neighborhood. They also had an opportunity to write any additional comments about their neighborhood at the end of the survey.

New Urbana residents overwhelmingly discuss positive feelings about their neighborhood, particularly amenities, closeness with neighbors, activities and events, safety, child-friendliness, and walkability. Although there are numerous mentions of architecture, landscaping, and other physical features, most comments are about the social and community life of the neighborhood; visiting with neighbors, participating in classes and activities, looking out for one another, etc. A New Urbana resident gave the following response when asked about their experience of living in the neighborhood:

We all enjoy living here. I met more neighbors in the first few months here than I met in 3 years at the previous house. We take tennis lessons, use the clubhouse (fitness room and classes), attend events at the clubhouse, and use the pools regularly. We especially like the social interaction in the alley behind our house (the neighbors hang out, chat, and watch the kids). When we walk, we stop and talk to people in their yards and on their porches. We also have a lot of fun on Halloween and other holidays due to the foot traffic in the neighborhood. None of us have any real complaints. All of us like this neighborhood better than anywhere else we’ve lived.

There were a few criticisms, as well. Residents noted problems with landscaping being maintained, neighbors who complain too much, and the neighborhood becoming too large (a long-term resident noted a diminished sense of community and closeness with neighbors as the neighborhood has grown in size). Several residents noted the lack of racial, religious, and economic diversity as a problem for the neighborhood, particularly the increasingly affluent residents the newer homes are attracting. Many residents specifically mentioned the neighborhood concept of a TND as a reason for choosing New Urbana. Some residents also feel that the neighborhood has strayed from its original design and intent, to its detriment. Southwood Estates residents also responded positively to these questions, although responses were much shorter and less detailed than those of the New Urbana residents. They noted that it is a great neighborhood and they are thankful to live there but some wish there are more amenities such as a pool or clubhouse. The most striking difference between the neighborhoods is detailed answers from New Urbana residents praising the neighborhood, which often include stories, compared to more succinct, “satisfied” statements from Southwood Estates residents.

*Reasons for Moving to Neighborhood*

Residents were also asked what motivated them to move to their neighborhood. New Urbana residents noted an array of motivating factors, including landscaping, neighborhood amenities, architecture, sense of community, walkability, investment, kid-friendliness, and neighborhood activities, among others. Southwood Estates residents primarily noted access to the interstate, large lots, and the size of homes.

*Self-Selection*

One of the problems with comparing two different types of neighborhoods on sense of community is that residents who want a strong sense of community, or to be involved in neighborhood activities, will move to a neighborhood that is specifically designed to promote or enhance those things. This is called *self-selection*, and presents the problem of residents being more involved in the neighborhood and experiencing a stronger sense of community in a TND because they sought that out in their selection of a neighborhood to live in. Most studies that have compared TND and typical suburban neighborhoods have not accounted for this problem. For this study we proposed to account for this by asking residents what motivated them to move to their neighborhood. Those New Urbana residents who said they moved there specifically seeking a sense of community were excluded in a second analysis of the data. Residents who specifically noted that New Urbana was a Traditional Neighborhood Design were also excluded, since use of that terminology implies they are familiar with the intent of that design, which is to promote sense of community.

Findings from this self-selection analysis revealed a difference from the original analysis on the frequency of walking in the neighborhood. The second analysis indicated no difference between neighborhoods on how often residents walk in the neighborhood. In the original analysis, New Urbana residents reported walking significantly more than Southwood Estates residents. This seems to indicate that those New Urbana residents who walk the most in the neighborhood are those who specifically sought out a neighborhood like New Urbana that intends to promote sense of community. The findings from the self selection analysis are perhaps most relevant in that even when accounting for those residents who specifically moved to New Urbana for a sense of community there were still a number of significant differences between neighborhoods. This seems to indicate that neighborhood design does play a role in residents’ social behavior and quality of life.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to determine whether or not neighborhood design influences social indicators of community life, specifically neighborhood satisfaction, neighborhood amenities, neighborhood preference, walking, neighboring behavior, and neighborhood involvement. With regards to sense of community, some key statistically significant differences exist between the neighborhoods. New Urbana residents responded significantly more that they generally watch after each other and help out when they can, and that they feel a strong sense of community with others in their neighborhood. New Urbana residents also visit with their neighbors significantly more than Southwood Estates residents. While New Urbana residents rated neighborhood satisfaction higher than those in Southwood Estates the difference was not significant. Taken together, these findings seem to indicate that New Urbana residents do in fact feel a stronger sense of community with others in their neighborhood than residents of Southwood Estates. These findings are also supported by the experiential accounts of residents’ experiences of living in each neighborhood. While Southwood Estates residents seem happy with their neighborhood and have few negative things to say about their experience of living there, New Urbana residents describe their experiences in detail and often with overwhelming pride and affection. However, some New Urbana residents were also critical of the neighborhood, specifically diversity and changes in sense of community and neighboring behavior as the neighborhood has grown. Several residents noted the lack of religious, ethnic, and income diversity as a problem for the neighborhood, a problem that has unfortunately been observed in similar developments nationwide (Harvey, 1997). Another long-time resident also noted that, as the neighborhood has grown in size, the sense of community has diminished. These may be important points to consider when planning future New Urban developments. It is also important to note that a number of residents from both neighborhoods asked to view the results of this study, which indicates interest in the study topic from both New Urbana and Southwood Estates residents. While collecting data for the study, we also received responses from residents of both neighborhoods who offered help in contacting other residents or providing other useful information for the study.

New Urbana residents appear to be more involved in neighborhood activities than Southwood Estates residents. They report that they are significantly more likely to be involved in neighborhood activities, and that they are involved more than in their previous neighborhood. New Urbana residents also participate in neighborhood activities more frequently than Southwood Estates residents, although this seems to be primarily due to the types of activities in each neighborhood. New Urbana activities include more classes, recreation, and use of neighborhood amenities. Southwood Estates residents are active in their HOA and other neighborhood meetings, but they do not have amenities (pool, clubhouse, etc) for recreation and other socializing. Southwood Estates residents noted this lack of amenities as a negative aspect of their neighborhood when describing their experience of living there.

Regarding neighborhood preferences, New Urbana residents responded significantly more than Southwood Estates residents that they prefer to live in a dense, mixed-use neighborhood, which is perhaps not surprising since residents who live in a neighborhood with these characteristics prefer them to a more typical suburban neighborhood. However, it does show that New Urbana residents prefer to have those unique neighborhood features, rather than indifference or preferring to live in New Urbana despite these features. Most New Urbana residents also visit the neighborhood businesses, and those who have not yet done so plan to in the future. Many residents wrote on their surveys that they are anxiously awaiting the arrival of a grocery store and restaurants and would visit them regularly.

Residents of New Urbana reported that they walk in their neighborhood significantly more than Southwood Estates residents, and rated the availability of nearby parks and playgrounds significantly higher than Southwood Estates residents. Availability of neighborhood amenities such as parks, playgrounds, and other social meeting spaces may be the reason for the greater frequency of walking in the neighborhood, which may also provide opportunities for social interaction and ultimately lead to a stronger sense of community among neighbors.

There were no significant differences demographically between the neighborhoods except the length of time they have lived in the neighborhood, with Southwood Estates residents living in their neighborhood significantly longer than New Urbana residents. Southwood Estates is an older and more established neighborhood, so it would be expected that residents have lived there longer, as was the case. This difference, however, strengthens the study results as one would expect a longer-established neighborhood to have stronger social ties and sense of community between neighbors. Overall, there are a number of significant differences between the two neighborhoods on various aspects of social quality of life. New Urbana residents appear to feel a stronger sense of community with their neighbors, which may be due to their more frequent social interactions and greater participation in neighborhood activities.

*Study Limitations and Recommendations*

As with most neighborhood studies, probably the greatest limitation of our findings is the threat of self-selection bias—we cannot be sure the differences found were due to the environmental differences between the two communities. The only significant demographic difference was that the suburban residents had lived in their community much longer, which should have biased them in favor of higher sense of community. It is possible that residents of the New Urban development moved there in part because they are more community-minded. As Audirac (1999) has found, not all suburban residents are willing to sacrifice larger yards for proximity to shared neighborhood amenities, but some are. We also recommend that post-occupancy research be conducted after all of the neighborhood businesses have opened, as their presence may promote more walking and social interaction, which may lead to changes in sense of community and overall social quality of life. The finding in the self-selection analysis related to walking behavior may be influenced by the opening of more neighborhood businesses, since those residents who do not walk as frequently might begin to do so once they are open.

Other cautions are the limited total number of participants and the modest response rate in each neighborhood. When only a small percentage of residents are surveyed the sample may not be representative of the whole (i.e. there may be significant differences between those residents who participated and those who did not respond).

Yet, despite the limited sample size, the fact that there were a number of statistically significant differences between the two neighborhoods on various aspects of social quality of life is noteworthy and suggests that the differences are substantial and that with a larger sample, we would have found even more differences. In general, despite their shorter tenure, New Urbana residents feel a stronger sense of community with their neighbors, which may be due to their more frequent social interactions and greater participation in neighborhood activities.

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Table 1: Neighborhood Design - Summary of Results by Study

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Study** | **Neighborhood Characteristics Studied** | **Results** |
| Plas and Lewis (1996) | New Urban town | Neighborhood characteristics appeared to promote development of sense of community |
| Brown and Cropper (2001) | New Urban subdivision vs. suburban subdivision | No difference in sense of communityHigher neighboring and outdoor use in New Urban neighborhood |
| Kim and Kaplan (2004) | New Urban subdivision vs. suburban subdivision | Significantly higher sense of community in the urban neighborhood |
| Nasar and Julian (1995)Study 1 | Neighborhoods with varying levels of mixed-use development | Significantly higher sense of community in mixed-use neighborhoods |
| Nasar and Julian (1995)Study 2 | Buildings with outdoor courtyard vs. interior hallway | Significantly higher sense of community in a building with an outdoor courtyard |
| Lund (2002) | Pedestrian-oriented neighborhood vs. automobile-oriented neighborhood | Significantly higher sense of community in pedestrian- oriented neighborhood |
| Kuo et al. (1998) | Levels of vegetation around buildings | More vegetation linked to more social interaction leading to increase in sense of community |
| Freeman (2001) | Neighborhoods with varying density | Residential density not significant in the formation of social tiesMore social ties for those who do not have to drive to work |
| Skjveland (2001) | Neighborhoods with street parks (public spaces) vs. no street parks | Significant increase in neighborhood involvement in neighborhoods with street parks |

Table 2: Neighborhood comparisons on key variables

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Question (possible range)** | **New Urbana****(n=51)****Mean (SD)** | **Southwood Estates (n=11)****Mean (SD)** | **2-tailed *p*** |
| How satisfied are you with your house as a place to live? (1-10) | 9.16 (1.08) | 9.09 (1.04) | ns |
| How satisfied are you with your neighborhood as a place to live? (1-10) | 9.36 (1.03) | 9.18 (1.08) | ns |
| How satisfied are you with your neighborhood as a place to raise children? (1-10) | 9.36 (1.13) | 9.18 (1.08) | ns |
| I feel a strong sense of community with others in my neighborhood (1-5) | 4.41 (.85) | 3.45(1.04) | .002\*\* |
| People in my neighborhood watch after each other and help out when they can. (1-5) | 4.63 (.94) | 3.91 (.54) | .02\* |
| It is important to me to feel a sense of community with the people in my neighborhood | 4.67 (.49) | 3.55 (1.04) | .001\*\*\* |
| How often do you walk in your neighborhood? [1=never to 5=every day] | 4.37 (.87) | 3.73 (.90) | .03\*⁺ |
| How many times in the past 12 months did you borrow something from or loan something to a neighbor? | 2.67 (1.01) | 2.18 (.75) | ns |
| How many times in the past 12 months did you visit with neighbors? | 4.28 (.90) | 3.45 (1.04) | .01\*\* |
| How many times in the past 12 months did you speak with a neighbor about a neighborhood problem? | 2.85 (1.05) | 2.73 (1.10) | ns |
| How many times in the past 12 months did you keep watch on a neighbor's home while they're away? | 2.65 (.93) | 2.73 (1.19) | ns |
| I prefer dense, mixed-use neighborhoods to neighborhoods where commercial, office, and residential uses are apart from one another | 4.31 (1.18) | 3.00 (.89) | .001\*\*\* |
| How would you rate the availability of nearby parks and playgrounds (in your neighborhood; 1-10) | 9.28 (.90) | 8.45 (2.02) | .04\* |
| How would you rate the housing quality (in your neighborhood; 1-10) | 9.00 (1.18) | 8.70 (.95) | ns |

\* p≤.05, \*\*p≤.01, \*\*\*p≤.001

⁺difference not significant when excluding those reporting sense of community or New Urbanist features as a reason for moving to the neighborhood they chose

Table 3: Activities in Each Neighborhood

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **New Urbana** | **Southwood Estates** |
| Exercise ClassHOA MeetingsBible StudyPotlucksVotingFinancial CommitteeWelcome CommitteeBlock PartiesHoliday PartiesPool/SwimmingMoviesConcertsScrapbookingSt. Jude’s | DancingTown Hall MeetingsGardening ClassBook ClubMah JonggBunkoWine ClubHoliday Home TourInformal PartiesGreen CommitteeGolf ClubMotorcycle ClubCourtyard Garden TourPumpkin Path | Women’s AssociationBunkoHOA Board and MeetingsPetitioningHoliday PartiesChildren’s PartiesLunchesInformal Parties |

Figure 1: New Urbana



Figure 2: Southwood Estates

