

12 Ways To Improve Your Neighborhood

1. **REPORT CRIME PROMPTLY** - Whether the issue is graffiti, petty vandalism or something much more serious, police cannot act without first hearing about the problem from you. Calling won't guarantee that the police can fix the problem, but failing to call can guarantee that they won't. Also, don't assume someone else has called, make the call yourself.
2. **REPORT NUISANCES AND OTHER & CRIMINAL PROBLEMS PROMPTLY**
- Examples: Junked cars on front lawns, abandoned autos in the streets, old mattresses left to rot in the backyard, broken furniture on porches, garbage dumped illegally in a vacant lot. When you find yourself thinking, "Someone ought to do something!" - do something! Call Community Revitalization, non-emergency numbers 311, landlords, residents, local business owners, or any other person or agency that may have influence on the issue. Then call your neighbors and ask those who are also concerned about the issue to call and report as well.
3. **TAKE AWAY OPPORTUNITY FOR CRIME** - Think about your home, your car, and even your lifestyle and ask what you could change to take away the opportunity for crime. Lock your car and never leave items visible, close all windows, park in garage, on driveway, or near lighted area's. Check vehicle before riding out, to make sure tires are safe and all seems as it should be. Homes should use outdoor bright lighting both front and back (sides if on corner), motion sensor is the best. Surveillance cameras are gaining popularity and useful so you can see what goes in/out side your home and often make others think twice before targeting a home. Never leave windows open while sleeping/out. Screens may be cut for someone to gain easy entry. Keep bushes, trees and other lawn items at a level so they do not block visibility or create dark spots where someone may hide. Walk/jog with a friend or two, it's more fun! Pay attention if you hear or see something that seems not right, and trust your instincts. Carry a small purse, over the shoulder and in front of you, to prevent an easy snatch.
4. **MEET THE YOUTH WHO LIVE ON YOUR BLOCK AND GREET THEM BY NAME** - This is one of the simplest steps an adult can take, yet it can make a profound difference should there be a future need for adults and young people to speak to each other in the midst of a neighborhood crisis. Also, it is difficult to help form a safe and supportive community for children without the adults and children knowing each other. Even those without children should know to whom the various children in the neighborhood belong. In this way, each adult is better able to help in an emergency and is better prepared to discuss problems immediately as they arise.

5. **INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO YOUR NEIGHBORS** - Make a list of names and phone numbers of every neighbor on your block. Set a goal of at least 10 neighbor contacts. Each citizen is responsible for their own neighborhood. Any citizen who has turned around a problem block is a citizen who really knows the people who live there. Did you grow up in a neighborhood where everyone knew each other? That is rare today. Neighborhoods have changed, but realize that you can fix it. It makes a huge difference to know your neighbors and be able to talk to them.
6. **MAKE A LIST OF PROPERTY OWNERS IN YOUR AREA** - As owners of property in the community, they are responsible to the neighborhood and should be concerned with the health of that neighborhood. You can easily find out the name and address of the owner of the property by using Philadelphia's online property search tool <http://property.phila.gov/#disclaimer>. Should you look up a property and find the names of owner is not the same as those who occupy the property, then it is being rented. While there may or may not be an agreement between renter and owner, any part of the property that public may use, remains the landlords/owners responsibility to take care of and concerns regarding property reported to 311. Examples: broken or cracked sidewalks, curbs, snow in winter (needs to be shoveled 36" wide) and at least 6 hours after snow stops falling, broken steps/landing, etc. Other property safety concerns to report using 311 include; unstable structure, graffiti, collapsing roof, trash, high weeds/grass, patio's containing what appears to be a lot of items that may pose a health hazard, abandoned cars, animal droppings on property that are not cleaned up, vacant lots and properties, etc. Take a look on your block and see if there are any properties you may have concern about for health, safety or maintenance so insure your neighborhood properties are not being neglected. Do it today and check periodically.
7. **TURN YOUR PORCH LIGHT ON TO KEEP IT BRIGHTER AND SAFER** - Do this every night at dusk and keep it on till dawn. This can become a daily routine or it can be accomplished by installing a timer. Crime tends to decline in neighborhoods that are well lit. Turning on lights is a simple way to start this process. It also makes the street feel more "welcome" to residents out for a walk in the evening. It communicates a higher level of caring for the neighborhood by residents, as well. It is also immediate - in the event you need to wait for a streetlight to be installed/repared. Get the trend going for shedding some light, on your block! Motion / sensor lights are a way to save energy if you are in a low traffic area, however they serve no purpose to keep the neighborhood lit at night. If you use a high efficient bulb, the cost of the sensor is more than just running the light all night for a couple of years. Decorative lights for seasons and special events; should not replace white lights, which provides better visibility. Encourage other neighbors to brighten

up and make your neighborhood safer, by turning on those porch lights, front door lights and even back lights; starting this weekend!!

8. **WALK AROUND THE BLOCK** - It sounds simple enough, but neighbors benefit over time when responsible citizens walk about more, particularly for those who are comfortable doing it. As you walk, look around for anything that may cause concern for the safety and health of your block and neighbors. Things like: broken street lights, potholes, graffiti, people loitering on another person's property, water pipe breaks and flooding, abandoned cars, trash or trash cans that cannot be secured, weeds and high grass, illegal dumping, drug paraphernalia, piles of aged leaves, dog poop, rodents, park animals, etc. Walk up and down both sides of the street. If you have alleys, also walk up and down any connected to your block. And walk around during; daytime, evenings, nigh time, weekends, and week days; whenever you have time! Encourage other neighbors to get involved, too. Increased amount of neighbors who get involved become empowered and able to improve their block, this will also help with walking around to check on things, with scattered schedules. While walking, be sure to talk with your neighbors, and the children, when the opportunity arises. Remember when you see something, say something right away so it doesn't linger, which could cause harm to people or lower the value of property. For non-urgent situations call 311 or email them at philly311@phila.gov be prepared to provide as much in detail, as you can and pictures if you have any. To learn about what types of situations benefit by contacting the non-emergency number check out www.phila.gov/311 Always call 911 for urgent situations
9. **DRIVE SLOWLY ON NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS** - While we often see places where we want to add stop signs, lights, and speed bumps, we forget how we have the power to slow down neighborhood traffic, sooner. If you start the trend and become the example; others will follow it. It is actually legal to drive a few miles per hour *below* the speed limit in neighborhoods and on city streets. For example, if the speed limit is 25, try 20 instead. Regular slower driving on neighborhood side streets by multiple neighbors and within the community will dampen the desire of racers to use your street. The word gets out fast! It isn't a lot of fun to cut through a neighborhood with the risks of getting stuck behind those who are drivers more mindful of slowly down. You'll want to slow things down on every side street in the neighborhood, not just the one near your home. These simple and easy changes in driving speed, will reduce sudden unexpected stops accidents and injuries, establish the standards of a slower speed for your own block and contribute to making all our neighborhood streets, safer!
10. **PICK UP LITTER NEAR YOUR HOME, EVEN IF YOU DIDN'T PUT IT THERE** - Most people are less likely to litter where they don't see litter already. You can help stop the growth of trash in your neighborhood by taking

away the existing litter that attracts it. Don't stop there. Get neighbors involved in seeing what a difference it makes when litter doesn't stick around. Encourage children to become more aware about picking up / preventing litter. Sharing one small way for them to make a huge impact on their street, is empowering and can give them a sense of pride! When we toss/drop trash to the ground; instead of disposing it properly the wind can move to another location. Littering makes a big mess and is even a health risk. If we aren't one to pick up litter; one way or another, we may be unintentionally creating it. We can and need to Keep Philadelphia Beautiful! Visit this link and learn more! <http://keepphiladelphiabeautiful.org/about-us> Pennsylvania also has great information so check out this link! https://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/illegal_dumping/14084/litter_program/589635 Many neighborhoods have a growing problem with litter. Everyone needs to do their part so we can get our city to have less litter on the streets and more litter; put into its place! Pick up litter near your home and check for it, often. After all; who doesn't like it when things look nice and neat!

11. **STAY WHERE YOU ARE** - Stable neighborhoods are built on the commitment of long term residents who would rather live in a healthy community than move to a bigger house. Communities reach stability when conscientious citizens allow their roots to grow deep and help transform a geographic area that exists as a "neighborhood" in name only into a real community of involved people. Please, stay and help.
12. **HELP YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION OR SIMILAR GROUPS** - If you are willing, decide what greater contribution you would like to make - then take the lead and do it. If leadership isn't your desire, at least make sure someone in your household attends local neighborhood association meetings. You'll be kept better informed of the issues facing the neighborhood and how you can help and, perhaps more importantly, you'll have the chance to shape, guide, and participate in the future of your neighborhood.

Finally, don't stop at 12 tasks: Do whatever else you can to make your neighborhood a safe and enjoyable place to live, work, go to school, and raise a family. Remember: living in a good neighborhood isn't a right, it's a responsibility

Credit and appreciation to Wissinoming Civic Association

Revised by Taking Our Holmesburg Philadelphia Streets Back (@TOHPSB)