

Are You Building New in an Old Neighborhood?

You finally bought a lot in that urban neighborhood you love.

Before you build, here's what you need to know.

Design Guide for
Urban Neighborhoods
in Chattanooga

What makes a neighborhood *feel* neighborly?

Older neighborhoods have a warmth and charm that can be hard to define. But there's a formula to that neighborly feeling.

VISIBILITY

Front-yard fences and hedges are low. Front porches are raised a few steps from the yard. Especially on hillier streets, fences, walls, steps, or slopes raise the yard from the sidewalk, in order to provide a better view of the street.

WALKABILITY

Continuous sidewalks make busier streets pedestrian friendly. Streets without sidewalks tend to be narrow, lightly trafficked, and entirely residential. Proximity to downtown further encourages walking.

LIVABILITY

Front porches are furnished places to sit and visit, like outdoor living rooms with a view of the street. Comfortable seating, a small table, potted plants and simple, cheerful decorations—details like these make a house feel welcoming even if you never step inside.

CONNECTIVITY

Homes have walkways laid through the front yard, connecting porch to sidewalk (not porch to driveway). In a pedestrian neighborhood, these walkways are built-in invitations for neighbors to stop and visit.

UNIFORMITY

Every house is unique, yet they all go together. (Think siblings, not twins.) They're all the same distance from the sidewalk. They are all within a reasonable size range. They share certain basic design features. Newer homes tend to borrow architectural details from older ones.

DIVERSITY

Healthy neighborhoods have a healthy mix of people. Well-maintained rental homes and appropriately scaled multi-family housing make a neighborhood accessible to a more diverse demographic. Properly scaled commercial spaces that fit the character of a neighborhood make it more vibrant.

Hidden benefits of making your new house fit the vibe



YOUR HOME AND STREET WILL BE SAFER

All the features that make old neighborhoods feel neighborly—tall windows; focal-point front doors; large, furnished front porches; low fences and hedges—don't just make it easy for people to get to know each other. They also make it easy for people to keep an eye out for each other. In this way, classic urban residential design fosters a sense of community, leading to safer streets.

YOUR HOME AND STREET WILL KEEP THEIR VALUE

There's a reason you want to live in that old Chattanooga neighborhood: You love the vibe. That's not just you, or Chattanooga. All across the country, people are flocking back to urban communities. By making sure your new house complements the character of the neighborhood, you're preserving the appeal of the street and the value of all the homes on it—including yours.

To give your new home old-home charm, remember these secrets.

Chattanooga's most charming communities were designed for pedestrians. They are typical of urban neighborhoods adjacent to downtowns across the United States. They were built in a less-hurried time, when walking was a major mode of transportation, and visiting with neighbors—on front porches or across fences—was a major form of recreation. So if you want your new house to fit into an old neighborhood, include features that suggest those two activities: walking and visiting.



MAKE YOUR CARS INVISIBLE

Maintain the neighborhood's pedestrian feel by keeping your cars, and where you park them, out of sight.

- Garage doors should only be found on the side or rear of the home.
- If your lot abuts an alley, use it to access your garage or parking area.
- If physically possible, park behind your house.
- If rear access and parking aren't possible, locate the driveway and/or parking area beside your house, not in front of it.
- Build a walkway through the front yard, connecting the sidewalk to your front steps. A driveway shouldn't be the most obvious pedestrian path to your house.

Chattanooga's hills and valleys shaped its urban neighborhoods. Use these Chattanooga-specific resources to find design ideas that fit your street.

For detailed tips on fixing up an old home, building a new one, or landscaping a yard in one of Chattanooga's urban neighborhoods, visit the interactive website:

MyChattHouse.com

For a list of Chattanooga's defined historic districts, visit:

<https://tinyurl.com/y6klv9ur>

ABOUT CHATTANOOGA DESIGN STUDIO

The mission of the Chattanooga Design Studio is to enhance quality of life in Chattanooga by advocating for and facilitating excellent urban design.

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MAKE YOUR HOME LOOK WELCOMING

Even in old neighborhoods with a mix of architectural styles, the houses generally share certain features that make them look gracious and inviting. To give your house the same welcoming look, incorporate these basic design elements:

- A large, elevated front porch (at least six feet deep), with comfortable seating.
- An attractive entryway/front door that's easily visible from the street.
- A garden-like front yard, with plants and flowers.
- Plenty of proportional, vertical windows (always critical for bringing in light and fresh air).
- HVAC units or other mechanical systems located at the side or rear of the home, rather than the front.

