

STANDARDS FOR HEALTHFUL HOUSING

# Planning the Neighborhood

*By the*

American Public Health Association

Committee on the Hygiene of Housing

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## PLANNING THE NEIGHBORHOOD

site, owing to the absence of wind or the season or time of day. Inquiries should be made of impartial persons familiar with the site over a long period. If there is any doubt as to the seriousness of smoke, odors or dust, public health officials should be consulted.

Excessive localized smoke, odor or dust, unless it can be controlled, should disqualify a site for residential use. As standards for measuring smoke are inadequate for site selection purposes, and standards for odors nonexistent, decisions as to the seriousness of the nuisance must be based on the judgment of qualified investigators. It should be noted that the continuous, low-intensity odor is less likely to be objectionable than the periodic odor of equal intensity. However, an odor with unpleasant associations (from sewage disposal or a pigsty) causes greater annoyance than stronger odors without unpleasant associations.

Control of smoke and industrial odors can usually be obtained only by legal regulation, perhaps on a city-wide basis. Where ordinances exist, enforcement for the protection of a particular site may be possible.

### DISEASE HAZARDS

Residents of a site should not be unduly exposed to sources of animal or insect carriers of disease on or adjoining the site, or to polluted water courses, lakes or ponds.

Investigation should be made of the site and surrounding terrain to determine the existence of breeding places for rats, flies and mosquitoes, even if there are no visible signs of their existence. Refuse and garbage dumps, junk yards, poorly kept food stores, insanitary vacant lots and dilapidated structures, and certain industrial establishments such as docks and warehouses are centers of chronic rat infestation and mosquito and fly breeding. Mosquitoes also breed in bodies of still water, which may be swamps, poorly drained areas or even rainwater in tin cans. Flies breed in manure piles, garbage receptacles, dumps and privies.

Where there is any possibility that land or water in or adjacent to the site may be polluted by insufficiently treated sewer effluent or industrial wastes, tests should be made by competent health authorities to appraise the degree of pollution.

While some control of rodents and insects may be obtained by screening and other protective measures in dwelling construction, the only effective procedure is elimination or full control of the breeding grounds of these pests near residential areas.

If control or elimination of the sources is not practicable, housing areas should be located outside the range of any substantial breeding places for rodents and insects and of any sizable deposits of refuse which might contribute to the spread of fly-borne or rodent-borne disease. The range of influence varies so that no specific distance can be given. The local health department should be consulted as to the safe distance of a site from breeding places.

### MORAL HAZARDS

Establishments which tend to exert a socially undesirable influence on the residents, especially on children and adolescents, may be a hazard to morals and the public peace. These include gambling houses, bars, low-grade taverns and night clubs, and houses of prostitution.

The site and the surrounding area should be investigated for a radius of several blocks to determine the existence of such hazards. Particular investigation should be made of streets leading to schools and other facilities used daily by the residents. Consultation with the police or health department may be helpful in such investigation.

Housing areas should not be located so close to an area containing numerous moral hazards that children will be continuously exposed to their influence.

The proper distance from such establishments will depend on their type, number and concentration, and whether they lie in the direction of normal pedestrian traffic. No general standards can be set. Proper enforcement of existing regulations may eliminate some moral hazards.

## 6. ACCESS TO COMMUNITY FACILITIES OUTSIDE THE NEIGHBORHOOD<sup>11</sup>

The usual residential neighborhood will not contain certain of the facilities regularly needed by its residents. These include centers of employment, high school, major shopping centers, specialized health services and similar features to be found in the larger district or city. From the standpoint of site selection, a given tract of land may be definitely unsuitable for residential development if travel to these facilities would entail excessive time, cost or fatigue.

Availability of transportation and standards of access to extraneighborhood facilities are considered immediately below; the desirable range of these outside facilities is reviewed in Section 7.

### AUTOMOBILE TRANSPORTATION

All residents of the neighborhood development should have access to an improved highway system, including all-weather roads to outside centers of activity.

In evaluating the role of automobile transportation, convenience and safety should be considered. These depend on such factors as availability of high speed roads, avoidance of heavy traffic, minimum number of traffic lights and intersections, directness of route and ease of parking at the destination.

The full cost of automobile travel, excluding parking or toll charges, is ordinarily at least 4 cents to 5 cents per mile. Driving any considerable distance to

<sup>11</sup> Community facilities within the neighborhood are considered in Chapter IV.

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