**Design Features**

A typical suburban design (bottom) offers less direct connectivity to amenities with nonresidential areas located along major corridors, and is encompassed by parking lots. A reconfigured neighborhood (above) demonstrates greater connectivity and access for a multitude of users while preserving green space and reducing traffic.

Lack of safe pedestrian infrastructure, like the above street, is a standard suburban design feature. This lack of infrastructure decreases accessibility and increases safety hazards for people without access to a personal vehicle.

**Policies**

While healthy design features are important, implementing policies that promote these features is equally important. Below are some policy recommendations to encourage healthy design in the Suburban Transect.

Consider existing land use policies, and how they promote or deter health-promoting design. Updating or creating new policies that allow mixed-use, particularly along and around existing corridors, promotes more livable and connected communities.

Commission a transportation study of the suburban transect, with special emphasis on pedestrian connectivity along major corridors and arterials, and between amenities.

Adopt complete streets requirements in and around main corridors to encourage multiple methods of travel, reduce parking, and free-up space for more profitable uses. Greenways and trails additionally can create connections between existing amenities and services.

**HEALTHY DESIGN IN TENNESSEE**

**What is a Transect?**

The transect model of city planning defines a community by a series of “zones,” each with its own unique features and design. The full transect model contains seven zones, ranging from natural undeveloped land, to dense urban cores. The transect model has been partially adapted for this series to demonstrate health-promoting design in Tennessee’s primarily non-urban context.

**Why Study Transects?**

The transect model provides a common, unified language in which to talk about land use and planning practices. Using this language, communities can create clearer outlines for their growth while specifying context-specific design, density, and connectivity. If done mindfully these features produce healthy and vibrant communities for all residents.

To see more case study, visit the TN Department of Health’s list of Case Studies.
Suburban Transect

The suburban transect is marked by low to moderate development, and separated land uses. Denser commercial areas are often located along major corridors and strip malls away from residential areas. Most suburban transects are car-centric commuter communities, with little or no public transportation, and road networks that generally aren’t conducive to pedestrian travel. Neighborhoods typically consist of single-family residences, with any multi-unit housing usually located along or near major roadways.

Transportation

Connecting existing or new bike and pedestrian infrastructure creates connectivity and access to amenities and services typically not accessible to pedestrian or bicyclists. Limiting vehicle access points to primary corridors and integrating more cross streets, reduces congestion and accidents while streamlining traffic patterns. Adopting complete streets policies along major roadways calms traffic while offering safer pedestrian travel opportunities.

Food Resources

Food stores within the suburban transect should be located in short, accessible travel distances from residential areas. Recognizing that not all residents may have access to vehicles, locating food stores near or on public transit routes should be prioritized. Similarly, encouraging local corner stores within residential areas increases access.

Walkability

Suburban walkability can be encouraged through complete streets, sidewalk and trail creation, and integrated land use. Encouraging pedestrian infrastructure, particularly within and between existing amenities and services, can be coupled with fronting buildings to sidewalks and roadways. Reducing separation between commercial and residential areas through connective trails and integrated land use.

Neighborhoods in the suburban transect should establish unique community centers and definable gathering spaces within residential areas. This may be done by incorporating mixed land uses, public spaces, and connectivity within and between existing residential and commercial areas. Intentionally reorienting parking lots to the back side of commercial and public buildings, while fronting buildings entrances to sidewalks and trails promotes accessibility and walkability. Reduce separation between commercial and residential areas through connective trails and integrated land use.

Suburban open space and parks can be interwoven into existing residential and commercial spaces through miniature parklets and plazas. Similarly, pursuing infill development throughout existing suburban spaces preserves greenspace and reduces sprawl—an idea known as retrofitting the suburbs.

A standard suburban neighborhood design. Residential units are often the sole use of a neighborhood, with the only option for transportation being a car. Notice too that each road ends in an unconnected cul-de-sac, with each funneling into a one access road.

Design Features

Lack of safe pedestrian infrastructure, like this corridor, is an unfortunately common suburban design feature. This lack of infrastructure decreases accessibility and increases safety hazards for people without access to a personal vehicle.

Housing

Suburban transects should offer a diversity of housing that provides attainable options for all stages of life and incomes. New housing developments along corridors should, when possible, incorporate mixed-use housing that includes housing with retail and/or commercial space. Combining these land uses encourages interconnected communities and reduces separation of residential areas with amenities and services.

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