

## Aligning “Communities of Place” with “Communities of Interest”.

### NEIGHBORHOODS USED TO BE OUR COMMUNITY OF PLACE AND INTEREST.

The neighborhood, whether in the suburbs or the city, was the place that dominated our lives. Neighborhood streets, parks and school grounds used to be the places where people, especially kids, spent their “free” time. People historically focused their activities closer to home, be they church, club, sport, shopping or entertainment. Neighborhoods centered our lives and satisfied our interests.

Life has changed. Contemporary society has separated our places of interest from our places of residence. We now travel outside the neighborhood for schooling, entertainment and social engagements. This separation diminishes the neighborhood’s quality of life.

### TRENDS.

- **First, people have separated their “place of residence” from their “place of work”.** While the trend is toward re-establishment of the home-work connection, today most of us must deal with the separation and the commuting. Mixed use developments, re-alignment of the where and when of work and the growth of small and startup businesses are changing the industrial age dynamic that separated home from work.
- **The second trend is the separation of where people live and where they spend their discretionary time, their “place of interest”, or their “third” place.** Kids don’t play in the yard, on the street or in the neighborhood as they once did. Play dates, clubs, lessons, day-care and other programmed activities for children have changed the neighborhood dynamic.

Single head of household families, the reduction of leisure time and the draw of like-minded people to focused organizations rather than mixed, eclectic neighborhoods have changed the culture of the places where we reside. People’s interests are not often found in their neighborhoods.

- **Child safety changes everything.** Crime against children, requires more supervision. School programs, clubs and activities occupy more “free” time than ever before.
- **The fourth trend is the single person household.** In 2010, only 30% of households had children under 18 years old living at home; 70% of households were single persons living alone or with non-family members, or couples without children. Families and households without children are less likely to invest in their neighborhoods, less likely to find friends in the neighborhood.

### THE NEED FOR NEW “THIRD PLACES”.

Neighborhoods have the opportunity to facilitate togetherness by providing a place attractive to a diversity of interests using Ray Oldenburg’s idea of the “third place”:

- Individual “third places” serve a great purpose and should be encouraged and preserved by neighborhood and civic associations.
- Village and neighborhood centers can perform the same function. Programmed public and neighborhood spaces offer opportunities for neighbors to mingle. Design and attitude are the critical factors.