AIA’s 10 Principles for Livable Communities

1. Design on a Human Scale
Compact, pedestrian-friendly communities allow residents to walk to shops, services, cultural resources, and jobs and can reduce traffic congestion and benefit people’s health.

2. Provide Choices
People want variety in housing, shopping, recreation, transportation, and employment. Variety creates lively neighborhoods and accommodates residents in different stages of their lives.

3. Encourage Mixed-Use Development
Integrating different land uses and varied building types creates vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, diverse communities.

4. Preserve Urban Centers
Restoring, revitalizing, and infilling urban centers take advantage of existing streets, services, and buildings and avoid the need for new infrastructure. This helps to curb sprawl and promote stability for city neighborhoods.

5. Vary Transportation Options
Giving people the option of walking, biking, and using public transit, in addition to driving, reduces traffic congestion, protects the environment, and encourages physical activity.

Good sidewalks create an environment where people feel comfortable walking.

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Farmers’ markets bring a community together, provide healthy food, and support the local economy.

Bike lanes and sidewalks are important elements of transportation infrastructure.

A former auto shop is converted to a neighborhood supermarket.
6. Build Vibrant Public Spaces
Citizens need welcoming, well-defined public places to stimulate face-to-face interaction, collectively celebrate and mourn, encourage civic participation, admire public art, and gather for public events.

7. Create a Neighborhood Identity
A “sense of place” gives neighborhoods a unique character, enhances the walking environment, and creates pride in the community.

8. Protect Environmental Resources
A well-designed balance of nature and development preserves natural systems, protects waterways from pollution, reduces air pollution, and protects property values.

9. Conserve Landscapes
Open space, farms, and wildlife habitat are essential for environmental, recreational, and cultural reasons.

10. Design Matters
Design excellence is the foundation of successful and healthy communities.