

# Strong Neighborhoods Guide Series



City of Wilmington

Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Development

## [MODULE 1: IDENTIFYING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TYPE]

## INTRODUCTION

The *Neighborhood Effect* refers to the bundle of characteristics of a neighborhood that contribute to quality of life in that neighborhood. Changing these characteristics can change the quality of life there. This packet is designed to help neighborhood groups identify the characteristics of their neighborhood and classify it according to the Strong Neighborhoods Model – which has demonstrated success in several other cities.

If a friend from out of town called you on the phone and asked you how to get to Rodney Square, you would immediately ask, “Where are you now?” You could not begin to guide her without knowing where to start.

Likewise, to improve the quality of life in your neighborhood, it is necessary to identify a starting point. This packet will help you and your organization do that with crime and public safety as a focal point.

## CRIME AND DISORDER

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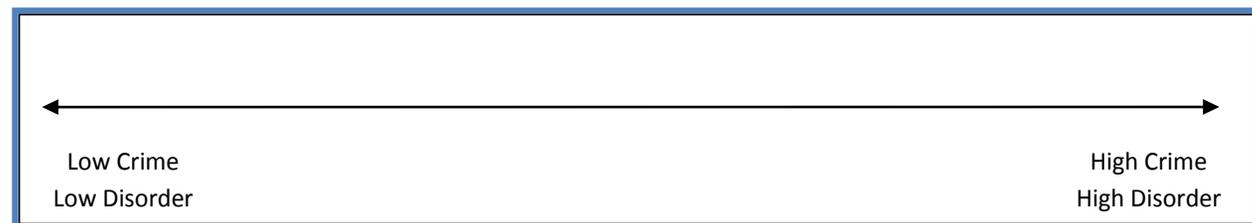
The *Crime and Disorder Scale* is a simple rating of residents' perceptions of criminal activity in their neighborhood. Residents can use this scale to rate the severity of criminal activity and disorder in their neighborhood relative to what they perceive the average to be in their city. Crime refers to illegal acts and can range from violent crime to property crime. Disorder is the disruption of peaceful, law-abiding behavior and can include anything from the litter strewn about to loud music. These characteristics tend to occur together.

### STEP 1

Think about the crime problems in your neighborhood. What are the types of crime? What is the quantity or frequency?

Relative to your perception of the average neighborhood in Wilmington, would you say crime is better, similar, or worse in your neighborhood?

Place your neighborhood on the scale below in terms of crime and disorder. The left extreme represents the lowest crime and disorder. The right extreme represents the highest crime and disorder.



## NEIGHBORHOOD ATMOSPHERE

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The *Neighborhood Atmosphere* is a combination of attitudes in a neighborhood. These attitudes range from responsibility for community wellbeing, to willingness to intervene when something is wrong, to the degree to which neighbors communicate and work together for the good of the community. A dependent neighborhood is generally detached from responsibility and leaves it up to the police alone to deal with crime and disorder. An interdependent neighborhood is generally more engaged and works collaboratively with the police to intervene and prevent crime and disorder.

## STEP 2

Think about the ways in which people in your neighborhood deal with crime. Do people talk to each other about what goes on in the neighborhood? Do people talk to the police about crime in the neighborhood?

Think about the way you and your neighbors would answer the following question. “Is it solely the responsibility of the police to prevent and solve crime in your neighborhood?”

If the answer is no, mark an “X” here \_\_\_\_\_. Your neighborhood is generally *Interdependent*.

If the answer is yes, mark an “X” here \_\_\_\_\_. Your neighborhood is generally *Dependent*.

## FRUSTRATION

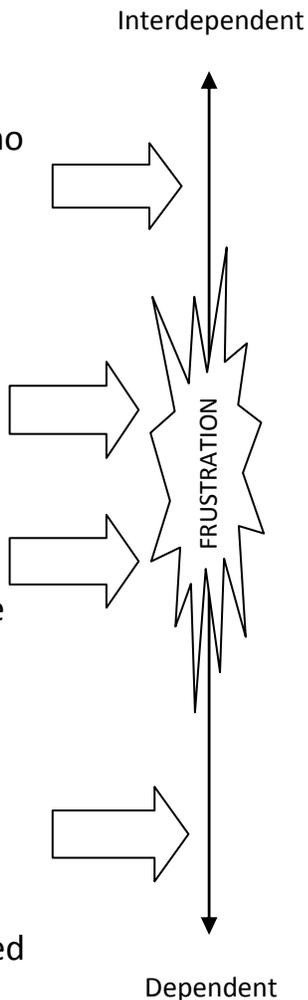
*Frustration* is a component of neighborhood atmosphere.

Interdependent neighborhoods have little or no frustration when residents and police work cohesively.

Interdependent neighborhoods can have frustration between residents – typically not with the police – over things like resource distribution and power structures.

Dependent neighborhoods can experience frustration with the police when the police are not able to single-handedly meet resident expectations.

Dependent neighborhoods where the police happen to be able to meet resident expectations have little frustration. In this condition, residents are apathetic and detached entirely.

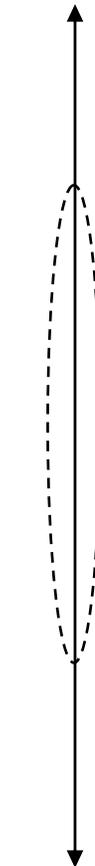


## STEP 3

Use your answer from **Step 2** and what you now know about neighborhood frustration to place your neighborhood on the atmosphere scale to the right.

The top half of the scale represents Interdependence and the bottom half represents Dependence. If there is frustration in your neighborhood, your “X” should be somewhere in the dashed oval.

Interdependent



Dependent

# Strong Neighborhoods Guide Series Module 1: Identifying Your Neighborhood Type

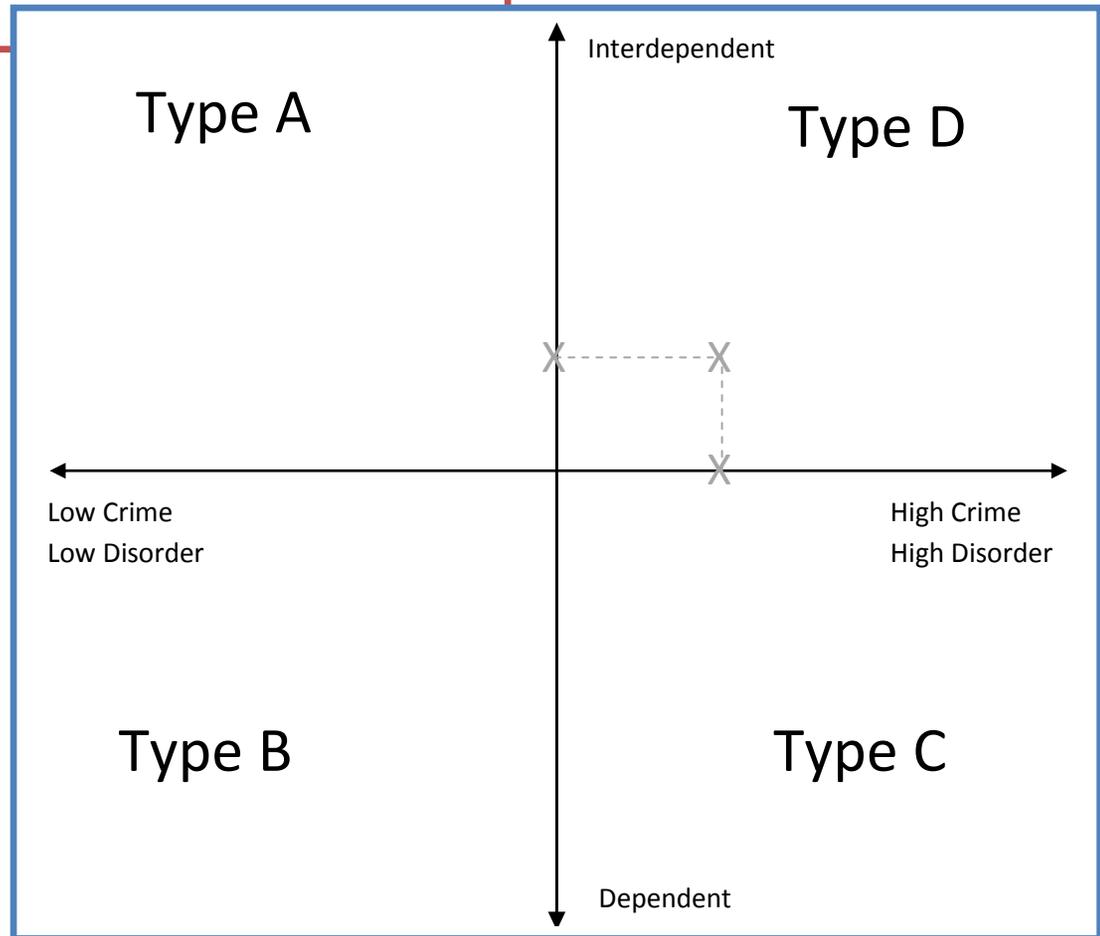
## STEP 4

Now that you have identified where your neighborhood falls on the two scales, combine them. Use your position on each axis to identify the point where your neighborhood falls on the plane below. There should be an "X" in one of the four quadrants below.

## RESULT

Based on where your neighborhood fell in the previous grid, your neighborhood will be either a type – in no particular order – A, B, C or D. Which type of neighborhood do you live in?

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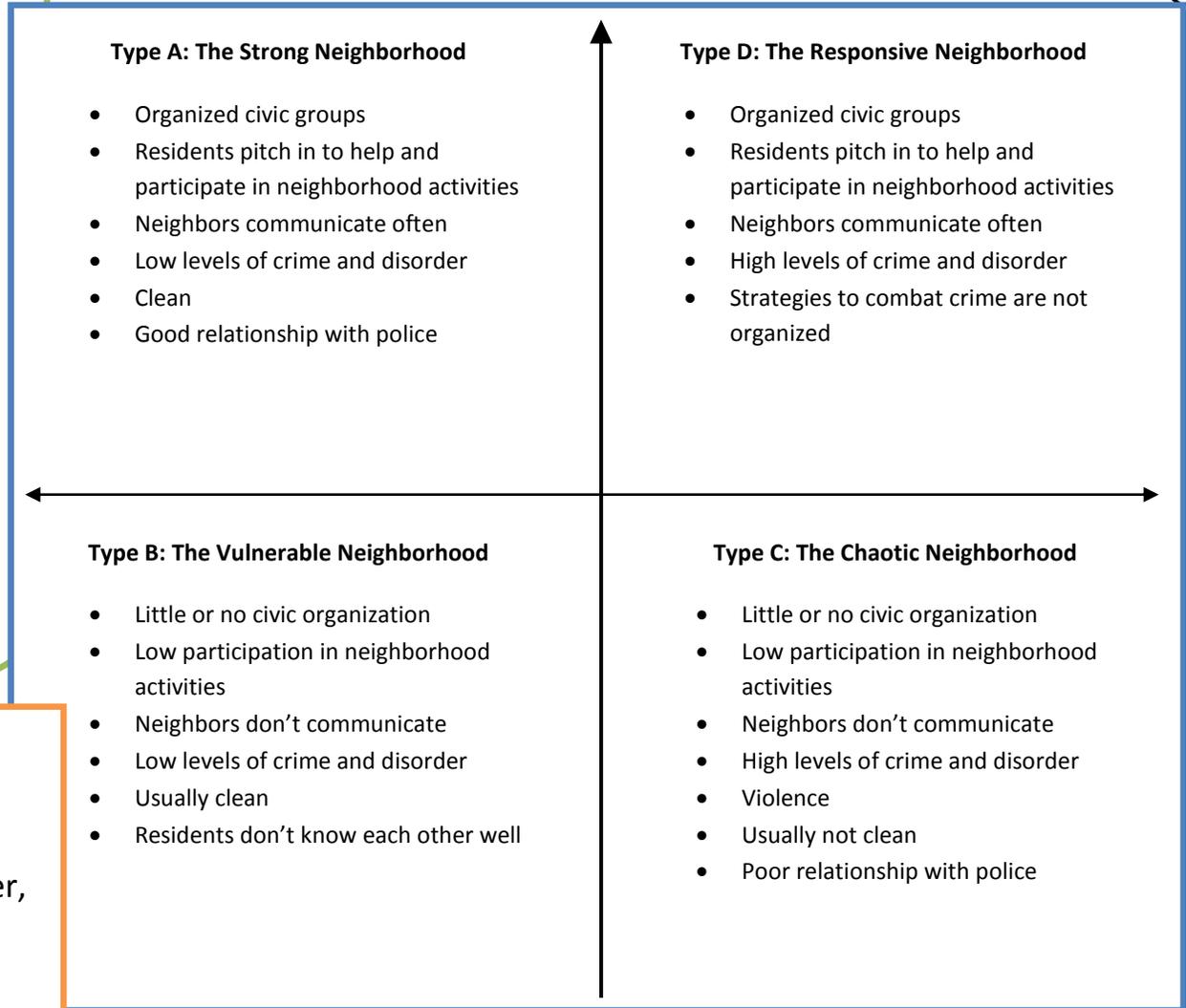
## TYPE CHARACTERISTICS

The four neighborhood types typically have the characteristics described in this diagram. The combinations of Crime and Disorder, and Neighborhood Atmosphere tend to result in these outcomes. Not every neighborhood of a particular type will perfectly fit the following characteristics, but most do fit the descriptions below fairly closely.

Do these descriptions sound like your neighborhood? As a group, discuss why or why not.

## THE GOAL

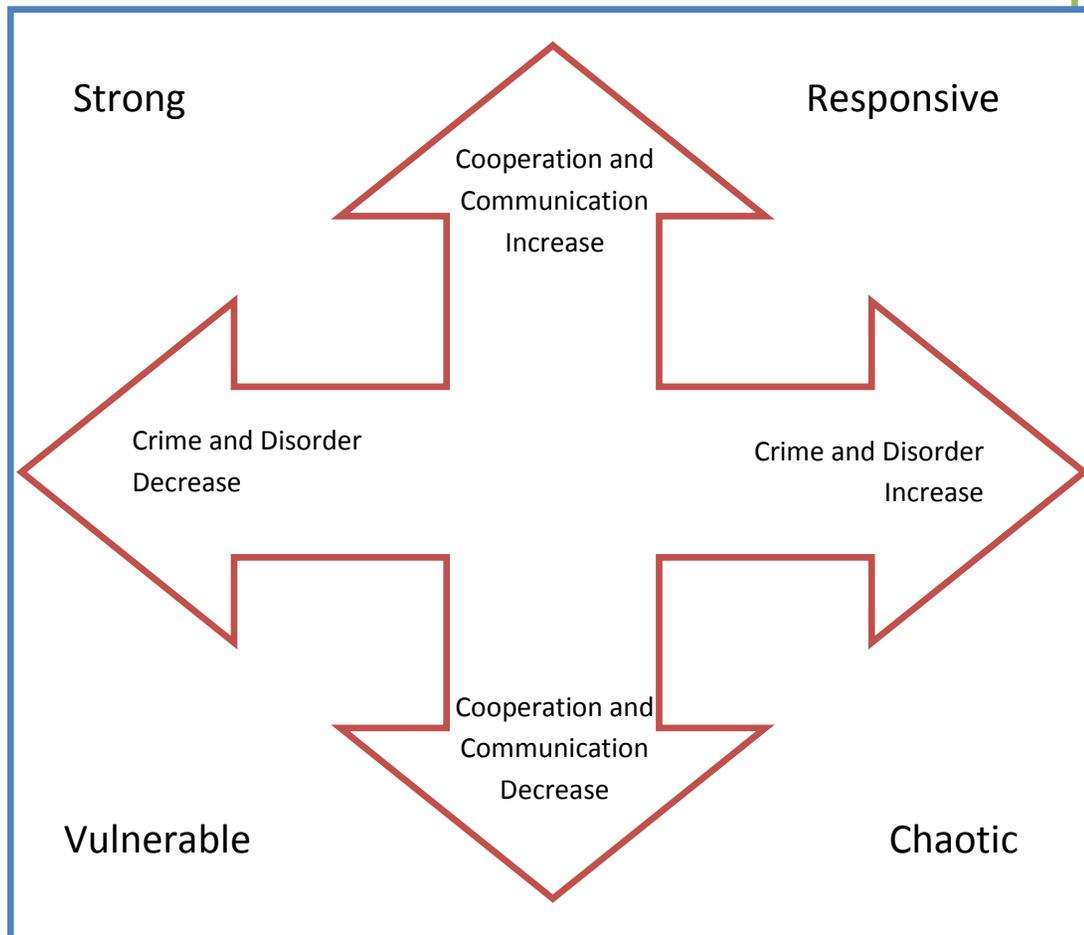
The *Strong Neighborhood* – Type A – is best suited to prevent crime and disorder, as well as quickly and efficiently resolve problems that arise.



### CHARACTERISTICS ARE FLUID

These neighborhood types are not static. They can change over time. This presents both opportunities and threats for all neighborhood types. For example, if a vulnerable neighborhood begins to organize and improves its communication, it can become strong. Conversely, if a Strong Neighborhood gets complacent and allows communications to break down and neighbors disengage, it could become vulnerable. If criminal activity and disorder begin to occur, the neighborhood could become chaotic.

As a general rule, the changes you want to make will move your neighborhood up – *increasing cooperation and communication* – and left – *reducing crime and disorder*.



## **MOVING FORWARD**

Now that you know what type of neighborhood you live in, think about what needs to happen for that neighborhood to become Strong. What characteristics of the neighborhood can be changed to improve communication between residents, and between residents and the police? What characteristics can be changed to discourage criminal activity?

There is no right or wrong answer. All neighborhoods are different. What works in one may not necessarily work in another. You know your neighborhood best!

## **CONCLUSION**

Now that your friend has told you that she is at the train station, you'll have a much easier time directing her to Rodney Square. What you and your neighbors have done is collectively identify a starting point to move forward in either reducing crime in your neighborhood, or keeping it from occurring in the future.

The next guide in this series will offer best practices and suggested plans of action for neighborhoods of all four types. Some of the suggestions will come from Community Development literature; others will come from what you told us at the first round of Community Cluster Meetings. In the meantime, your group may already have some ideas to share and discuss.