



Principles for the Welcoming Community BENCHMARKS, August 5, 2015

These Principles set out parameters by which each participating suburb can evaluate itself and by which residents can hold their communities accountable.

The hallmarks of the Welcoming Community are justice for all and an inclusive culture that upholds the rights of all residents, home seekers, employees, and visitors. In the Welcoming Community, all are treated equally regardless of income, race, sex, religion, national origin, presence of children, disability, age, sexual orientation or any other legally protected class.

The Welcoming Community organizes its efforts to fulfill these principles under three umbrellas: 1) Access 2) Safety and 3) Engagement

1. ACCESS

Business: The community offers a variety of services and retail shopping, especially from small independent businesses, so residents can meet most of their needs locally.

- △ The community has a local Chamber of Commerce to assist and mentor local business owners. The municipality supports and maintains a strong working relationship with the Chamber of Commerce.
- △ The municipality actively seeks ways to recruit new businesses and streamline the regulatory processes affecting local business.
- △ The municipality has an economic development employee or commission to develop a plan for economic growth in the community.

Jobs: The municipality seeks out and supports employers who bring economic opportunity to the community and treat their employees fairly. Employment practices are humane and safe.

- △ The municipality supports and encourages local employers to pay wages that are sufficient to secure housing and subsistence within the community.

- △ The municipality maintains a list of agencies/resources that assist workers who believe that they have not been treated fairly/lawfully by their employers.
- △ The municipality provides information and resources (including referrals to support groups) for disabled residents and others needing special assistance (i.e. recent immigrants, age 50+) to assist them in finding employment opportunities within the community and region. A staff member is designated as the contact person for those needing such assistance (questions of physical access, interpreters, sign language, etc.).

Credit: The community works to ensure that banking institutions have offices easily accessible to all residents, and that the institutions treat all persons and all neighborhoods equally, offering services according to transparently specified criteria.

- △ The municipality deposits its municipal funds and conducts its financial business with those lenders that have an outstanding community reinvestment record and maintain a diverse workforce at all levels of their organizations.
- △ The municipality maintains a list of housing counseling services certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that is available on its website.
- △ The municipality promptly enforces its building codes to ensure that foreclosed homes are maintained, including upkeep, utilities, and re-sale.

Education: Schools offer equitable and excellent public education, serving the needs of every student in the community and creating an open-door culture for all families.

- △ The school districts (boards) offer all levels of education (remedial, regular, advanced, special needs) with high quality instruction, appropriate resources, and equal opportunity for extracurricular enrichment.
- △ The school districts (boards) reach out to community newcomers and minority groups through direct invitations and special events, finding ways to involve them in the school culture as well as listen to their concerns.
- △ The school districts (boards) offer cultural sensitivity training to both students and staff.
- △ Elected officials engage with the community's schools in support of the principle of equitable, high quality education.
- △ Newsletters from both municipalities and schools provide information on local programs for youth.
- △ Transportation options are provided to all students to ensure that schools are easily accessible.

Food: All residents live near grocery stores or farmers' markets with a variety of fresh, culturally diverse, and nutritious food that is affordable on all budgets, and locally grown to the extent possible.

- △ The municipality has a summer/fall farmers' market (or partners with a neighboring community) in a convenient location to bring locally-produced foods to the community. The health department monitors conditions at the market and ensures that vendors maintain health standards.
- △ The municipality provides – through its website, local schools, and community fairs – information about healthful eating, preparation of food, and vegetable gardening.
- △ The municipality surveys vacant lands in its jurisdiction to determine where community gardens may be developed. Residents are given access to garden plots at nominal fees.
- △ The municipality supports food systems that are ecologically and economically sustainable, and that will improve the health of its residents.
- △ The municipality incorporates local food into its comprehensive plan.

Health Care and Safety Net: The community provides access to health care and social services in a culturally sensitive manner for all populations.

- △ The municipality identifies available state, county and local health care resources that reflect a wide range of cultures, languages, abilities and incomes, and maintains that information on its website. Information is disseminated throughout the community through bulletin boards, community fairs/festivals and a Welcome Packet that is sent to all new residents.
- △ The municipality has systems and processes in place for those in need of emergency services such as victims of domestic violence, the homeless, the mentally ill and troubled youth.
- △ The municipality actively supports public health by promoting healthy behaviors, educating the public about disease protection, injury prevention and other health-related topics and partnering with local and regional health departments. There is a “health disaster” plan in place.

Housing: The community offers a variety of housing alternatives to enable people within a wide range of incomes, family types, or abilities to find rental or ownership opportunities that are decent, safe, and in diverse neighborhoods.

- △ The municipality has a Fair Housing Ordinance that encompasses at least the same protected classes as Cook County and will work with Open Communities and/or enforcement bodies

such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to investigate fair housing violations. This includes the rental, sale, lending, insuring, and advertising of housing.

- △ The municipality has a Residential Landlord/Tenant Ordinance in place to protect due process rights and set out expectations and consequences when it comes to property maintenance, with an enforcement mechanism for prompt inspections and processes that allow tenants to complain without fear of retaliation.
- △ The municipality provides for mixed income housing through mandatory inclusionary zoning in multi-family developments. To keep the below-market rate housing units permanently affordable, the municipality can work with an established Community Land Trust.
- △ The municipality encourages non-traditional housing models such as co-housing, inter-generational housing, group homes, and shared housing.
- △ The municipality employs an occupancy code based on the sizes of sleeping areas and accommodates various cultural constructs of family, not a one-size fits all two-persons-per-bedroom model.
- △ The municipality ensures that new home or multi-family developments include units that are accessible to people with disabilities.
- △ The municipality affirmatively markets itself to underrepresented populations through posters, banners and advertisements, and on the municipality's web site.

Recreation and Services: The community makes low-cost meaningful recreational opportunities available at convenient locations and times to residents of all age groups. Parks and other public spaces are well-maintained and accessible to all.

- △ The community provides at least one (1) acre per 100 population of total recreation land.
- △ The community offers a wide array of programs and services, including at least 50% of the following programs or services:
 - Walking and bicycle paths
 - Recreation: playing fields, courts, community parks, neighborhood parks, athletic field or stadium, swimming pool, ice skating facilities, sledding hills, golf courses, gymnasiums equipped with work-out equipment and classes, meeting rooms.
 - Cultural arts [Public Art; Instruction; Theatre; Museums, Galleries]
 - Youth Services
 - Senior Services
- △ The community provides information and resources for disabled residents and others needing special assistance (i.e. recent immigrants) to assist them in finding recreational opportunities and specialized programs within the community and region. A staff member is designated as

the contact person for those needing such assistance (questions of physical access, interpreters, sign language, etc.).

Transit: The community makes available affordable, safe, environmentally sound, and conveniently situated and scheduled alternatives to using privately-owned cars for local transportation.

- △ The community offers at least two (2) public transportation systems or programs (bus or shuttle; taxi service; cycling lanes and paths; sidewalks and walking paths; car sharing or ride sharing programs), that effectively connect the following:
 - Central business district (downtown)
 - Regional shopping centers
 - Hospitals and other major medical facilities
 - Entertainment and sports complexes
 - Other transportation facilities (airports, rail stations, bus terminals)
 - Concentrations of high-density residential or commercial development
 - Colleges and universities

- △ The municipality regularly communicates the benefits of public transit to residents.

- △ The municipality offers readily available information about accessing public transportation within the community.

2. SAFETY

Environment: The community promotes programs and supports regulations that protect and preserve its environment.

- △ The municipality ensures that recycling is available for residential, commercial and industrial properties and encourages its use.

- △ The municipality creates conservation areas to preserve natural resources.

- △ The municipality coordinates its wetland, floodplain and environmental enforcement measures with storm water management.

- △ The municipality and park district commit to reducing exposure to harmful pesticides and herbicides and encourage residents to do the same.

- △ The municipality uses and recommends best environmental practices for development and redevelopment to reduce its carbon footprint.

Guns: The community makes every effort to prohibit the carrying of firearms in public places and reduce the access to firearms by dangerous people. The community offers educational opportunities on the safe storage of firearms and the dangers of gun ownership. The community closely regulates gun sales and gun facilities.

- △ The municipality has approved legislation to regulate gun sales and gun facilities and to minimize the carrying of firearms in public places and to limit access of dangerous individuals to firearms. It annually reviews the implementation of these regulations.
- △ The municipality has made it a priority to pass a local ordinance to improve public safety in light of the legality of concealed carry, including provisions that restrict liquor licenses **only** to businesses that prohibit concealed carry in their premises.
- △ The municipality provides public education and assistance concerning concealed carry; it advises citizens that they have the right to ban guns from their homes or business.
- △ The community offers educational opportunities on the safe storage of firearms and the dangers of gun ownership.

Hate Crimes: The community has an intergovernmental protocol for swiftly and categorically responding to hate crimes. The community also supports the victims through care and protection.

- △ The municipality makes clear that hate crimes and hate groups are categorically abhorred, and incidents will be immediately investigated and coordinated with state or federal government enforcement bodies as needed.
- △ The municipality establishes a Hate Crimes Task Force or Bias Response Team consisting of representatives of the municipality such as police, city manager's office, human services and other community leaders such as clergy, to meet regularly to set procedures and coordinate swift responses to victims.
- △ The municipality provides training to all top managerial staff and law enforcement officers on addressing hate crimes and serving victims.
- △ Since hate crimes are under-reported, the municipality provides educational materials and/or conducts educational programs for community members that teach how to recognize and prevent hate crimes.

Police: The community's security personnel are trained and deployed to treat all residents and visitors with respect and with cultural sensitivity.

- △ The municipality collects demographic data on police stops. Gathering data on stops and the use of force—and using it to support accountability for officer conduct—helps surface bad practices, the first step toward improving them.

- △ The municipality creates early-warning systems, supervisory reviews, and a clear way to reward officers who solve community problems rather than those who have high arrest rates. A citizen review board can provide valuable external oversight.
- △ The municipality diversifies its police force. Increasing diversity up the chain of command helps support an improved internal and external culture.
- △ The municipality has police connect with neighborhood residents. Building better relations with the community and developing trust helps police operate a fair and just law enforcement system.
- △ The municipality trains officers to guard against racial bias, reduce incidences of the use of force, and to defuse situations rather than escalate them. Police officers are also trained to address domestic violence, mental illness, and neighbor-to-neighbor and landlord-tenant disputes.
- △ The municipality develops a mediation and conflict resolution program as an alternative to issuing citations.
- △ The municipality has an adequately funded community oversight board with significant investigatory and disciplinary powers. The board reflects the community, especially the elements of the community most affected by police abuse. The majority of the committee members are democratically elected. And if at all possible, the board avoids having former or current police officers in order to avoid conflicts of interest.

Safe Roads: The community implements and enforces strict traffic laws and standards that keep the streets safe, well-lit, and accessible for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.

- △ The municipality has documented public safety programs that are available on its website and seeks to educate residents through community events and partnerships with schools, community centers and other agencies.
- △ The municipality plans well-designed road and maintenance projects consistent with local, state, and federal guidelines.
- △ The municipality implements a written plan to maintain sidewalks, bike paths, lighting, curbs, signage, and to remove snow.

3. ENGAGEMENT

Civic Participation: The community encourages resident participation in a wide array of political, social, cultural, spiritual, environmental, and recreational activities.

- △ The community provides spaces where people can obtain information and discuss issues, such as resource centers, neighborhood organizations, websites and other online outlets such as bulletin boards and social media.
- △ The municipality encourages residents to engage with their elected officials and participate in their government through voting. The municipality conducts or supports voter registration drives and tracks voter turnout.
- △ The municipality holds meetings/public workshops in schools, libraries, community centers and other forums besides city hall to encourage participation.
- △ The municipality provides staff and elected officials with diversity training and materials.
- △ The municipality makes information available to new residents that includes how local government operates, basic services, how to get involved and how to get further information.

Volunteerism: The community encourages volunteerism, with talent banks for community groups, government and school boards.

- △ The municipality provides a listing of nonprofit and other organizations that enlist volunteers and current volunteer opportunities through its website, local libraries and written materials.
- △ The municipality partners with local school districts to encourage students and their families to volunteer their time to school, local government and community organizations and projects.
- △ The municipality hosts a Volunteer Fair, either on its own or as part of another community event, during which local nonprofits can participate by educating the public about their organization and volunteer opportunities.

Culture of Welcome: The community creates a welcoming spirit through its social offerings, openness, and aesthetically pleasing spaces. It also fosters a culture of mutual trust and understanding, transmitting these values through its schools and cultural programs.

- △ The municipality offers access to and participation in the arts.
- △ Community building is encouraged through programs in libraries, houses of worship and community centers open to the public on current events, issues that face the community, and projects that foster esprit.
- △ The municipality offers gathering places and opportunities for social interaction that combat isolation and depression for all members of a community, as well as promote information sharing.

Representation: Elected and appointed boards, commissions, schools, and other public institutions and agencies reflect the demographics of the populations they serve, actively soliciting community preferences and incorporating them into governance practices.

- △ The municipality advertises vacancies widely through print and electronic means – email, press release, social media, religious groups, community-based organizations (including those for the disabled and LGBTQ), housing organizations, and the business community.
- △ The municipality has established criteria for recruitment and appointment that encourages diversity of representation.
- △ The municipality has standardized appointment/selection policies that address the following elements: independent screening panels; term limits; automatic reappointments; conflicts of interest; and restrictions on holding multiple offices.
- △ The municipality supports the “participatory budgeting” process by which residents propose specific community projects and then vote directly for those that will be included in the budget.

Transparency of Government: The community encourages a variety of news outlets in multiple languages, including free and easy access to municipal newsletters and web sites, neighborhood papers, and blogs. These represent a variety of political views and cultures and convey a neighborly, positive tone.

- △ The municipality works to ensure that the operations of local government are transparent to members of the community.
- △ The municipality adheres to the Open Meetings Act and responds timely to queries from local media.
- △ Elected officials and staff actively engage with local media—newspapers and newsletters, websites, blogs - to ensure that news of local government reaches all constituencies.
- △ The municipality provides ready access to information about all units of local government, both on-line and in printed form. Non-English speakers can access information in their native language, or via translation.
- △ Citizen involvement is encouraged through public comment at meetings and service on boards, commissions and committees. All citizens and views are respected.