

October 25, 2011

America's Most Beautiful Neighborhoods

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Stroll these beautiful neighborhoods for the eye candy, the Americana, and the locals' perspective on a city.

From [October 2011](#)
By [Jason Cochran](#)



Nik Wheeler/Alamy

Urban planner Jeff Soule remembers the moment he fully appreciated the beauty of Baltimore's Charles Village. He was leading a tour through tree-lined streets of cheery row houses when it started to pour. "I was with 20 visiting Chinese mayors, and there was this wonderful African American woman—not only did she invite everyone up on her porch, but she made them all lemonade."

Eye-catching design and green spaces go a long way toward making a neighborhood attractive, but the most beautiful neighborhoods are also enriched by this kind of welcoming community spirit. And they tend to resonate with American history, whether recalling a bygone way of life (the South of Broad area of Charleston) or acting as an open-air museum that showcases the work of iconic architects.

Chicago's Oak Park, for instance, counts 23 of Frank Lloyd Wright's modestly elegant, low-slung buildings, but the Americana runs even deeper: 90 percent of the neighborhood is classified as a historic district. No resident is more than two blocks from a bikeway, and the neighborhood is easily reached on the El train.

Some modern developers strive to manufacture an instant neighborhood-y feel and to create the kind of pastiche that a gorgeous, lived-in neighborhood possesses naturally. But Soule, director of outreach for the American Planning Association, says he hasn't found many areas developed in the last 25 years that tick all the boxes: "A lot of newer neighborhoods haven't stood the test of time yet."

Fledgling and struggling neighborhoods alike can look to the Paseo in Oklahoma City as a success story. This artists' colony of Spanish Revival 1920s bungalows was marred by mid-century gang violence. But unfazed artists moved in, taking advantage of low property values, and eventually brought the neighborhood back to a state of homey, charming bohemianism—just two miles from downtown.

Accessibility and authenticity are valued as much by travelers as by prospective residents. After all, making a detour to one of these beautiful neighborhoods isn't just visually pleasing—it can reveal a city at its most genuine. You may not be offered free lemonade, but you may still want to move in tomorrow.

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Brooklyn Heights, New York City

The storied Brooklyn Bridge, an American beauty itself, sets its eastern granite foot in this neighborhood made beautiful by brownstones and regal prewar condos on leafy streets, some named for fruit. Generations of literati (Thomas Wolfe, Walt Whitman, Truman Capote) have flocked to Brooklyn Heights, and more than 600 houses date to before the Civil War—surpassing better-known areas in Philadelphia and D.C. Visitors' most memorable snapshots of the Manhattan skyline are taken from its sunset-soaking waterfront esplanade.



Christopher Vernon-Parry/Alamy