

and most are rightly concerned about the health of the community in which they have rental property. You can find out the name and address of the person or organization that owns a property, including the rental house next door, by contacting your county tax assessor's office — some post the information online, others provide it by phone. Do it today.

**7. Turn on your porch light.** Do this every night at dusk and keep it on till dawn. Crime tends to decline in neighborhoods that are well lit. Turning on porch lights is a simple way to start this process. It also makes the street feel more "welcome" to good residents who are out for a walk in the evening. It communicates a higher level of caring for the neighborhood by residents. This can become a daily routine or it can be accomplished by installing a timer. It is also immediate — while you wait for local government to install that new street light that everyone is asking for, go ahead and add a little more light yourself. Then encourage other neighbors to do the same.

**8. Walk around the block.** It sounds simple enough, but neighbors benefit over time when more responsible citizens walk about more, particularly for those who are comfortable walking at night, every night, around their block. At minimum walk around the block, once every day, preferably at night if you feel comfortable doing so. Take a moment to chat with neighbors, including youth, when the opportunity arises.

**9. Drive slowly on neighborhood streets.** As we call for new stop signs, lights, and speed bumps, we often forget that we can organize a means to slow down neighborhood traffic sooner. Remember that it is legal to drive a few miles per hour *below* the speed limit in your neighborhood. For example, if the speed limit is 25, try 20 instead. Regular, slower driving on neighborhood side streets

by multiple neighbors reduces some of the faster driving by itself and will also dampen the desire of others to use your street to speed — it isn't as fun to cut through a neighborhood if the likelihood of being stuck behind a car traveling at a more respectful pace has increased. Also, do it on every side street in the neighborhood, not just the one near your home.

**10. Pick up the litter near your home, even if you didn't put it there.** Generally, people litter less where they don't see litter already. You can help stop the growth of trash in your neighborhood by taking away the existing litter that encourages it.

**11. Stay where you are.** Stable neighborhoods are built on the commitment of long term residents who would rather live in a healthy community than move to a bigger house. Communities reach stability when conscientious citizens allow their roots to grow deep and help transform a geographic area that exists as a "neighborhood" in name only into a real community of involved people. Please, stay and help.

**12. Help your neighborhood association or similar groups.** If you are willing, decide what greater contribution you would like to make — then take the lead and do it. If leadership isn't your desire, at least make sure someone in your household attends local neighborhood association meetings. You'll be kept better informed of the issues facing the neighborhood and how you can help and, perhaps more importantly, you'll have the chance to shape, guide, and participate in the future of your neighborhood.

**Finally, don't stop at 12 tasks:** Do whatever else you can to make your neighborhood a safe and enjoyable place to live, work, go to school, and raise a family. Remember: Living in a good neighborhood isn't a right; it's a responsibility.