

Cultivating a Culture of Home Stewardship:

A Framework for Addressing the Challenges of Deferred Maintenance

Abstract

The upkeep of residential properties represents a significant challenge in the United States, with widespread implications for individual homeowners, communities, and the broader economy.

Deferred maintenance, often rooted in a complex interplay of financial constraints, psychological factors, and a lack of knowledge or skills, can lead to deteriorating property values, increased safety hazards, and diminished neighborhood aesthetics.

This white paper explores the multifaceted issue of home maintenance neglect, focusing on the elusive concept of "pride of ownership" and its practical manifestation: home stewardship.

By examining the underlying drivers of homeowner behavior and proposing a targeted intervention framework based on incentives, consequences, trust-building, and community engagement, this paper aims to provide a roadmap for fostering a culture of proactive home care.

The core of this framework is a conceptual formula that encapsulates the key variables influencing home stewardship, offering a lens through which to understand and modify homeowner behavior.

A detailed proof of concept is presented, outlining a pilot program designed to test the proposed interventions within a defined community, with the ultimate goal of developing a replicable model for promoting responsible homeownership across diverse settings.

Introduction

The American dream of homeownership has long been intertwined with notions of stability, security, and personal prosperity. However, owning a home often involves a complex and ongoing responsibility: the imperative of proper maintenance and upkeep. The failure to adequately maintain a property, usually referred to as deferred maintenance, can have far-reaching consequences, impacting not only the individual homeowner but also the surrounding community and the broader housing market. Despite its significance, the issue of home maintenance neglect remains a persistent challenge, defying easy solutions and prompting a deeper examination of the factors that drive homeowner behavior.

This white paper delves into the multifaceted nature of this challenge, focusing on the often overlooked psychological and social dimensions of homeownership. It explores the concept of "pride of ownership," a seemingly intangible quality that, when present, can motivate homeowners to invest time, effort, and resources into caring for their properties. Conversely, the absence of this sense of ownership, or its disconnect from tangible action, can contribute to a cycle of neglect, with detrimental effects on individual homes and the communities they comprise. This paper will also explore home stewardship's role as an extension of pride of ownership.

Central to this exploration is recognizing that rational economic calculations do not solely drive homeowner behavior. While financial constraints undoubtedly play a role, a range of psychological, social, and even emotional factors also come into play.

Homeowners may underestimate the long-term benefits of preventative maintenance, overestimate their ability to handle repairs when they become unavoidable, or simply need more knowledge and skills to care for their homes properly.

Moreover, societal trends, such as the increasing prevalence of a "disposable" mentality and the decline of traditional community structures, may further contribute to a weakening sense of responsibility for property upkeep.

The Elusive Nature of Pride of Ownership and Home Stewardship

Pride of ownership often evokes images of meticulously manicured lawns, freshly painted facades, and a general sense of care and attention to detail.

While these outward manifestations are part of the picture, the underlying sentiment is more complex and nuanced. It encompasses a sense of connection to one's home, a feeling of financial and emotional investment, and a perception of the property as an extension of oneself.

Ideally, this pride translates into proactive home stewardship. Home stewardship involves active care and decision-making to make the home sustainable. It's about understanding the home as valuable and taking steps to preserve and care for it.

However, the link between pride of ownership, home stewardship, and tangible action can be complicated.

Homeowners may genuinely care about their properties but still need to engage in necessary maintenance. This disconnect can be attributed to a variety of factors:

- **Temporal Discounting:** This psychological phenomenon describes the human tendency to undervalue future rewards compared to immediate ones. (Source: Laibson, D. (1997). *Golden eggs and hyperbolic discounting*. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 112(2), 443-478.) The benefits of routine maintenance, such as preventing costly repairs down the line, often accrue gradually over time, while the costs (time, money, effort) are immediate and tangible. This can lead homeowners to prioritize short-term gratification over long-term well-being.
- **Lack of Knowledge and Skills:** Many homeowners, particularly first-time buyers, may need more knowledge or skills to perform basic maintenance tasks. They may be unaware of potential problems until they escalate into significant issues, or they may feel overwhelmed by the complexity of home repairs. (Source: Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. (2020). *Improving America's Housing 2020*.)
- **Financial Constraints:** Home repairs and upgrades can be expensive, and homeowners facing financial hardship may be forced to prioritize immediate needs over preventative maintenance. This is particularly true for low- and moderate-income households with limited access to affordable financing options. (Source: Goodman, L. S., & Zhu, J. (2020). *Housing Finance At A Glance: A Monthly Chartbook, August 2020*. Urban Institute.)
- **"It's Not My Problem Yet" Syndrome:** This common human tendency leads individuals to ignore problems that are not immediately visible or disruptive. Leaky faucets, minor roof damage, or aging appliances may be overlooked until they become major, costly issues.

- **Shifting Societal Values:** In some segments of society, there appears to be a growing trend towards a "disposable" mentality, where replacing items is seen as more manageable and desirable than repairing them. This mindset can also extend to homes, with some homeowners opting for superficial upgrades rather than investing in essential maintenance. (Source: Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Polity.)
- **Erosion of Community Connection:** In neighborhoods with low social cohesion, there may be less social pressure to maintain property standards and contribute to the overall aesthetic of the community. This can lead to a decline in collective responsibility for upkeep and an increase in deferred maintenance. (Source: Sampson, R. J. (2012). *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. University of Chicago Press.)

A Framework for Change: Incentives, Consequences, and Trust

Addressing the challenge of deferred maintenance requires a multi-pronged approach beyond simply educating homeowners about the importance of upkeep. It necessitates a deeper understanding of the factors that drive their behavior and the development of strategies that effectively address these underlying motivations. This white paper proposes a framework for change based on the principles of incentivization, consequences, and trust-building.

Incentives (Positive Reinforcement):

Financial incentives can play a significant role in motivating homeowners to invest in maintenance and upgrades. These can include:

- **Tax breaks or rebates for energy-efficient improvements or documented preventative maintenance:** This directly offsets the cost of upkeep and provides a tangible financial reward for responsible behavior. (Source: *Energy Star*. (n.d.). *Federal Tax Credits for Energy Efficiency*.)
- **Insurance premium discounts for homes with smart home monitoring systems that detect leaks, fire hazards, etc.,** link proactive maintenance with lower risk and reduced insurance costs.
- **Home equity appreciation through demonstrable maintenance:** A well-maintained home retains its value and appreciates more over time, representing a significant financial incentive for homeowners.

Beyond financial rewards, social incentives can also be powerful motivators:

- **Neighborhood "Home Stewardship" competitions or awards:** These tap into social pressure and provide a sense of community achievement, encouraging homeowners to maintain and improve their properties.
- **Gamification and apps that track home maintenance tasks offer rewards and allow homeowners to share their progress:** This makes

maintenance more engaging, less isolating, and provides a sense of accomplishment.

Consequences (Negative Reinforcement):

While incentives are generally preferred, consequences can also play a role in deterring neglect and encouraging responsible behavior:

- Financial penalties for neglected properties that violate building codes or pose safety hazards are typically a last resort but can be effective in extreme neglect.
- Higher insurance premiums or deductibles for homes with a history of deferred maintenance can create a direct financial consequence for neglecting property upkeep.

Social consequences can also be influential:

- Community pressure and social "nudges" to maintain property standards may be particularly effective in close-knit neighborhoods where residents have a strong sense of collective responsibility.
- Emphasis on thorough home inspections during the home-selling process can help make the consequences of neglect transparent to potential buyers.

The Foundation of Trust:

Underlying both incentives and consequences is the crucial element of trust. Homeowners must trust the information they receive, the service providers they engage with, and the institutions promoting home stewardship. Trust is necessary for even the most well-designed programs to succeed.

Building and maintaining trust requires:

- **Transparency:** Clear, upfront pricing, open communication about data usage, and honest assessments of home conditions are essential.
- **Credibility and Expertise:** Partnering with reputable organizations, certified professionals, and unbiased sources of information builds confidence.
- **Empowerment and Control:** Giving homeowners choices, allowing them to control their data, and providing educational resources that build their knowledge and confidence fosters a sense of agency.
- **Community Focus:** Fostering genuine relationships and highlighting the collective benefits of home stewardship strengthens community bonds and reinforces trust.
- **Long-Term Relationship Building:** Focusing on ongoing support, soliciting feedback, and demonstrating accountability builds lasting trust with homeowners.

A Conceptual Formula for Home Stewardship

To encapsulate the complex interplay of factors influencing homeowner behavior, this paper proposes the following conceptual formula:

$$\mathbf{HS = (Perceived\ Value + Incentives - Costs - Barriers) * Knowledge * Community\ Factor * Trust}$$

Where:

- **HS:** Home Stewardship (level of care and maintenance)
- **Perceived Value:** Homeowner's perception of their home's current and future value, both financial and emotional.
- **Incentives:** Sum of all positive reinforcements (financial, social, etc.)
- **Costs:** Perceived costs of maintenance (time, money, effort)
- **Barriers:** Lack of skills, access to resources, or physical limitations.
- **Knowledge:** Homeowner's understanding of home maintenance needs and practices.
- **Community Factor:** Influence of neighborhood norms and social connections.
- **Trust:** Level of trust in information, service providers, and institutions.

Proposed Guide to the Formula:

- Higher perceived value and incentives increase the likelihood of home stewardship.
- Higher costs and barriers decrease the likelihood of home stewardship.
- Knowledge acts as a multiplier, amplifying the impact of other factors.
- The community factor can either reinforce or diminish stewardship behavior.
- Trust acts as a crucial multiplier; without it, the effectiveness of all other factors is significantly reduced.

Limitations:

This formula is a simplified representation of a complex reality. Each variable is multifaceted and influenced by numerous other factors.

Quantifying these variables is challenging, as they involve subjective perceptions and individual circumstances. However, the formula provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics at play and for designing interventions that target specific drivers of behavior.

Proof of Concept: A Pilot Program for Fostering Home Stewardship

To test the proposed framework and demonstrate its potential to shift homeowner behavior, this paper outlines a proof of concept (POC) for a pilot program designed to promote home stewardship within a defined community.

Project Goal:

To demonstrate that a targeted intervention, based on an understanding of homeowner behavior and the principles of trust and incentivization, can measurably increase engagement in home stewardship activities within a defined community.

Phase 1: Assessment and Baseline Measurement (6-8 Weeks)

1. **Target Community Selection:** A small, well-defined community (e.g., a neighborhood or homeowners' association) with a mix of demographics and housing types will be selected.
2. **Data Collection & Baseline Measurement:**
 - **Survey:** A comprehensive survey of homeowners will assess current maintenance practices, perceived home value, existing barriers, awareness of community initiatives, levels of trust, attitudes towards incentives and consequences, and willingness to participate in data-sharing programs.
 - **Home Assessments:** Voluntary professional home assessments will be offered to a subset of homeowners to evaluate property conditions objectively.
 - **Community Audit:** The general condition of properties within the community will be observed and documented.
3. **Data Analysis and Segmentation:** Survey data will be analyzed to identify key trends and segment homeowners into groups based on motivations, barriers, and engagement levels. A "Trust Index" will be developed based on survey responses.

Phase 2: Intervention Design and Implementation (8-12 Weeks)

1. Intervention Components:

○ Incentive Program:

- **Financial:** Rebates for specific energy-efficient upgrades or preventative maintenance services will be offered, potentially in partnership with local businesses or utility companies. A "matching fund" may be considered.
- **Social:** A neighborhood "Stewardship Challenge" with friendly competition and public recognition will be organized. An online platform or newsletter will highlight success stories.

○ Education and Empowerment:

- Trusted experts will conduct workshops or webinars on practical home maintenance topics.
- A resource library with easy-to-understand guides, checklists, and how-to videos will be created.
- A "Homeowner Hotline" or online forum will support and facilitate peer-to-peer learning.

○ Trust-Building Measures:

- A network of reliable local contractors and service providers will be vetted and partnered with.
- Transparent pricing and clear communication will be emphasized in all interactions.
- A community ombudsman or mediator will be appointed to address concerns and resolve disputes.
- A clear data privacy policy will be developed for any data collected.

2. **Targeted Implementation:** Intervention components will be tailored to the specific needs and motivations of the homeowner segments identified in Phase 1. A multi-channel communication approach will be employed.

Phase 3: Evaluation and Iteration (6-8 Weeks)

1. Post-Intervention Data Collection:

- **Repeat Survey:** A follow-up survey will measure attitudes, knowledge, and behavior changes.
- **Repeat Home Assessments:** Follow-up assessments will evaluate changes in property conditions.
- **Track Incentive Program Participation:** We will monitor the uptake of rebates, participation in the Stewardship Challenge, and utilization of educational resources.
- **Community Audit (Repeat):** Community appearance will be reassessed.

2. **Data Analysis and Impact Assessment:** Pre- and post-intervention data will be compared to measure the program's impact. Changes in the "Trust Index" will be analyzed. The incentive program's return on investment (ROI) will be calculated.

3. **Reporting and Recommendations:** The community and stakeholders will receive a comprehensive report documenting the POC, including methodology, findings, and recommendations for future implementation and scaling.

4. **Iteration and Refinement:** Based on the evaluation, intervention components, and implementation strategies will be refined for future iterations.

Success Metrics:

- Increased participation in home maintenance activities.
- Measurable improvements in property condition.
- Positive shifts in homeowner attitudes towards home stewardship.
- Higher levels of trust in service providers and community initiatives.
- Demonstrable ROI for the incentive program.
- Increased community engagement and social cohesion.

Grading the Goal:

The success of the PoC will be graded using a tiered system.

An "A" represents a significant, positive impact across all success metrics, and an "F" indicates project failure or inability to complete.

Grades B through D represent varying degrees of success, with specific criteria for each level based on the magnitude of observed changes in home maintenance activities, property conditions, homeowner attitudes, trust levels, ROI, and community engagement.

Addressing the Challenges of Privacy and Autonomy in Home Stewardship Research

While this research initiative is promising, it faces inherent challenges due to homeownership's sensitive and personal nature. Successfully navigating these challenges is crucial for ensuring robust participation, reliable data, and, ultimately, the effectiveness of the proposed interventions. This section outlines the key obstacles to privacy, autonomy, and trust and suggests specific strategies to mitigate these concerns.

Privacy Concerns:

Homeowners are understandably protective of information related to their homes and finances. Sharing details about property conditions, maintenance practices, or financial capacity can feel intrusive and raise concerns about potential misuse of data.

- Examples of Challenges:
 - Homeowners may be reluctant to participate in surveys, particularly those inquiring about income, home value, or maintenance history.
 - Resistance to home assessments may arise from fears of judgment, potential code violations, or unwanted scrutiny.
 - Concerns may surface regarding data collection, especially regarding technologies or energy usage monitoring. Questions like, "Will I see this information?" and "Could this impact my insurance or property taxes?" may be asked.
- Impact on Study: These concerns can lead to reduced participation rates, incomplete data sets, and a potential bias in the sample, as only the most confident or least concerned homeowners might choose to participate.

Autonomy and Control:

A fundamental tenet of homeownership is the autonomy to make decisions regarding one's property. Even well-intentioned interventions might be perceived as infringements on this independence.

- Examples of Challenges:
 - Homeowners may reject advice or recommendations, even if based on expert knowledge, preferring to make their own choices.
 - Resistance may arise towards programs perceived as overly prescriptive, such as mandated maintenance schedules.

- Incentives might be viewed with skepticism, interpreted as manipulative or a "bribe" to conform.
- Impact on Study: This can result in difficulty implementing interventions, low adoption rates of recommended practices, and potential opposition to the project.

Distrust of Authority and Institutions:

A broader societal trend of declining trust in institutions can extend to research initiatives, particularly those involving data sharing or external evaluations of private property.

- Examples of Challenges:
 - Homeowners may suspect the study has ulterior motives, such as increasing property taxes or benefiting specific contractors.
 - Concerns about data being shared with third parties without consent or used for targeted marketing may arise.
 - The project's stated goals might be met with disbelief, perceived as a superficial exercise with no discernible benefit to homeowners.
- Impact on Study: This distrust can manifest as low participation, inaccurate or incomplete data due to suspicion, and difficulty building the necessary rapport for effective intervention.

"Not My Problem" Mentality and Social Norms:

In some communities, a prevailing "minding your own business" norm can hinder efforts to promote collective responsibility for neighborhood upkeep.

- Examples of Challenges:
 - Resistance to participating in neighborhood-wide initiatives like a "Stewardship Challenge."
 - Reluctance to report neighbors for code violations, even if it impacts property values.
 - Apathy towards community-level efforts to improve aesthetics or safety.
- Impact on Study: The study may need help fostering a sense of collective responsibility and achieving widespread participation in community-based interventions.

Strategies for Mitigation:

To address these challenges and foster a trusting and collaborative research environment, the following strategies will be employed:

- **Radical Transparency and Communication:** The project will be completely transparent about its goals, methods, data usage, and potential benefits. A detailed FAQ section will be provided, and the research team will be readily available to answer questions. Community meetings will be held to introduce the project and directly address concerns.
- **Emphasis on Homeowner Empowerment and Control:** Participation will be framed as an opportunity for homeowners to gain valuable knowledge and resources. Choices and options will be offered rather than mandates, and DIY efforts will be supported through resources and workshops.
- **Building Trust Through Community Partnerships:** The project will collaborate with trusted local organizations, such as respected community leaders, established homeowner associations, or faith-based groups, to leverage existing relationships and build trust.
- **Demonstrating Value and Tangible Benefits:** The potential benefits of participation, both for individual homeowners and the community, will be clearly articulated. The incentives offered will be valuable and address real needs, such as free home assessments with actionable recommendations and connections to reputable contractors or rebates on energy-efficient upgrades.
- **Anonymization and Data Security:** To protect participant privacy, rigorous data anonymization and security protocols will be implemented. These measures will be clearly explained to participants, and informed consent will be obtained for any data collection. The project will comply with all relevant data privacy regulations.
- **Focus on Shared Goals and Community Benefits:** While respecting individual autonomy, the project will emphasize the collective benefits of home stewardship for property values, neighborhood aesthetics, and overall quality of life. The study will be framed as a collaborative effort to improve the neighborhood for everyone.
- **Pilot Testing and Iterative Design:** The project will begin with a small-scale pilot study to test the approach, identify challenges, and refine the methodology before launching a larger project. The research team will be

prepared to adapt and adjust based on participant feedback.

The project aims to foster a research environment built on trust, transparency, and mutual respect by proactively addressing these challenges and implementing these mitigation strategies. This approach will enhance the quality and reliability of the data collected and contribute to the long-term success of efforts to cultivate a culture of home stewardship within the community.

Quantifying the Efforts

Predicting participation rates for studies like this is always tricky, as they depend on numerous factors specific to the community, the study design, and the broader socio-economic context. However, based on similar studies and the challenges we've discussed and polling results, here's a realistic range of expected participation rates and some factors that will influence them:

Estimated Participation Rate Range:

- **Low End: 5-15%** This would be expected if there's significant distrust, low community engagement, poorly designed incentives, or the study is perceived as overly intrusive or complex.
- **Mid-Range: 15-35%** This is a more likely scenario, especially with careful planning, community outreach, and trust-building efforts. This range suggests a moderate level of interest and willingness to participate but acknowledges that a significant portion of the community may still choose not to engage.
- **High End: 35-50%.** Achieving this level of participation would be very successful and would likely require strong community partnerships, desirable incentives, and exceptional communication and outreach efforts. It might also be more feasible in smaller, close-knit communities with high levels of social capital.
- **Exceptional: 50% +** While rare in studies of this nature, exceeding 50% participation is possible in specific contexts, such as communities with a strong sense of collective identity, a history of successful community-based initiatives, or a particularly pressing and widely recognized need for improved home maintenance.

Examples from Similar Studies:

- **Energy Efficiency Programs:** Studies evaluating participation in voluntary energy efficiency programs often report 10-30% participation rates. These programs frequently involve home assessments and upgrades, similar to aspects of your proposed study.
- **Community-Based Health Interventions:** Participation rates in community health studies vary widely but can range from 10% to over 50%, depending on factors like community trust, the perceived relevance of the health issue, and the intensity of outreach efforts.
- **Surveys on Housing Issues:** General surveys on housing conditions or neighborhood satisfaction tend to have lower response rates, often in the 5-20% range, especially if conducted by mail or online without significant follow-up.

While aiming for a high participation rate is desirable, it's essential to be realistic and prioritize the data quality over the number of participants. A smaller, more engaged sample that provides accurate and thoughtful responses is often more valuable than a larger sample with low engagement or biased responses.

By building trust, demonstrating value, simplifying the study design, and conducting extensive community outreach, you can maximize your chances of achieving a respectable participation rate that yields meaningful results. Remember that flexibility and adaptability are key. Be prepared to adjust your approach based on feedback and participation patterns during the pilot phase.

Conclusion

The challenge of deferred maintenance is complex, with roots in individual psychology, economic realities, and broader societal trends. Addressing this challenge requires a shift from simply informing homeowners about the importance of maintenance to creating an environment that actively encourages and supports proactive home stewardship. This white paper presents a framework for achieving this shift, grounded in the principles of incentivization, consequences, and trust-building.

The proposed conceptual formula, **HS = (Perceived Value + Incentives—Costs—Barriers) * Knowledge * Community Factor * Trust**, provides a valuable lens for understanding the multifaceted nature of homeowner behavior. By recognizing the interplay of these factors and designing interventions that target specific drivers, we can cultivate a culture of home stewardship that benefits individual homeowners, strengthens communities, and safeguards the long-term health of the housing stock.

This paper outlines a proof of concept offering a practical roadmap for testing and refining this framework in the real world. We can develop an effective and scalable model by carefully measuring the impact of targeted interventions and continuously iterating based on the data.

The ultimate goal is not simply to increase the frequency of repairs and upgrades but to foster a more profound sense of ownership, responsibility, and pride among homeowners. This would transform houses into well-cared-for homes that serve as anchors for thriving communities. The journey towards widespread home stewardship may be a long one. Still, it is worthwhile with a concerted effort grounded in a nuanced understanding of human behavior.

Poll: Home Stewardship and Your Community (draft)

This poll will be used during Phase 1 (Assessment and Baseline Measurement) of the Proof of Concept. It can be distributed to residents of the target community online or in paper form.

Introduction:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this important survey. Your responses will help us understand how homeowners in our community view their homes and what factors influence their decisions about home maintenance.

We will use this information to develop programs and resources that support homeownership and enhance our neighborhood. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Section 1: About Your Home

1. How long have you owned your current home?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- More than 20 years

2. What type of home do you own?

- Single-family detached house
- Townhouse or row house
- Condominium
- Other (please specify)

Section 2: Your Perceptions of Your Home (Perceived Value)

This section relates to the **Perceived Value** element of our formula: **HS = (Perceived Value + Incentives - Costs - Barriers) * Knowledge * Community Factor * Trust**

3. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

- a. My home is my most valuable financial asset. (1-5)
- b. I take pride in the appearance of my home. (1-5)
- c. My home reflects my style and values. (1-5)
- d. Maintaining my home is important for its long-term value. (1-5)
- e. I enjoy working on projects to improve my home. (1-5)

Section 3: Home Maintenance Practices (Home Stewardship)

This section helps us understand current **Home Stewardship (HS)** levels.

4. **In the past year, how often have you done the following:** (1 = Never, 5 = Very Often)
- a. Inspected your roof for damage (1-5)
 - b. Cleaned your gutters (1-5)
 - c. Serviced your HVAC system (heating/cooling) (1-5)
 - d. Checked for plumbing leaks (1-5)
 - e. Performed other preventative maintenance tasks (please list) (1-5)
 - f. Made any major home repairs or improvements (please describe) (1-5)

Section 4: Incentives and Barriers

This section addresses **Incentives, Costs, and Barriers** in our formula.

5. **Which of the following would motivate you to invest more in home maintenance and improvements?** (Check all that apply)
- Rebates on energy-efficient upgrades
 - Discounts on home maintenance services
 - Property tax breaks for home improvements
 - Neighborhood competitions or awards for well-maintained homes
 - Recognition in a community newsletter or website
 - Free or low-cost workshops on home maintenance
 - Access to a tool-lending library or shared equipment
 - Other (please specify)
6. **What are the most significant barriers you face when maintaining your home?** (Check all that apply)
- Lack of time
 - Lack of money
 - Lack of knowledge or skills
 - Difficulty finding reliable contractors
 - Physical limitations
 - I don't see the need for preventative maintenance
 - Other (please specify)
7. **How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?** (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
- a. Home maintenance is too expensive. (1-5)
 - b. Home maintenance is too time-consuming. (1-5)
 - c. I know how to perform basic home maintenance tasks. (1-5)

- d. I have access to the tools I need for home maintenance. (1-5)

Section 5: Knowledge and Information

This section relates to the **Knowledge** element of our formula.

8. How would you rate your current knowledge of home maintenance?

- Very Low
- Low
- Moderate
- High
- Very High

9. Where do you typically get information about home maintenance and repairs? (Check all that apply)

- Family or friends
- Internet search engines (e.g., Google)
- Online videos (e.g., YouTube)
- Home improvement stores (e.g., Home Depot, Lowe's)
- Contractors or service providers
- Books or magazines
- Community workshops or classes
- Other (please specify)

Section 6: Community and Trust

This section addresses the **Community Factor** and **Trust** elements.

10. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

- a. I feel a sense of belonging to my neighborhood. (1-5)
- b. Well-maintained homes improve the overall appearance of our neighborhood. (1-5)
- c. I would be more likely to invest in home maintenance if my neighbors did the same. (1-5)
- d. I trust the information I receive about home maintenance from local contractors. (1-5)
- e. I trust the information I receive about home maintenance from my homeowner's association (HOA) or neighborhood organization. (1-5)
- f. I trust the information I receive about home maintenance from the local government. (1-5)

Section 7: Participation and Data Sharing

11. **Would you be interested in participating in any of the following?**
(Check all that apply)

- Free home maintenance workshops
- A Neighborhood Home Stewardship Challenge
- A program that offers discounts on home maintenance services
- A voluntary home assessment program
- None of the above

12. **Would you share data about your home's energy usage or maintenance history (anonymized and aggregated) to help improve community programs and resources?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe (need more information)

Section 8: Demographics (Optional)

Providing this information is optional but helpful for understanding the needs of different groups within our community.

13. **What is your age range?**

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

14. **What is your annual household income range?**

- Less than \$30,000
- \$30,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

15. **Do you require any special accommodation?**

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

Important Considerations:

- **Distribution:** This poll can be distributed online (using platforms like SurveyMonkey or Google Forms), by mail, or in person at community events.
- **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Emphasize that responses are confidential and will be used for research purposes only.
- **Incentivize Participation:** To encourage participation, consider offering a small incentive, such as a raffle entry for a gift card to a local business.
- **Adaptability:** This poll can be modified and adapted based on the specific characteristics and needs of the target community. For example, questions could be added about specific local concerns or initiatives.

By collecting data through this poll, the project team will gain valuable insights into homeowner perceptions, behaviors, and needs, allowing them to tailor the intervention strategies effectively and work towards fostering a stronger culture of home stewardship within the community. Remember that the information gathered from this poll will be used to refine our formula.