

Won't You Be My Rotten Neighbor?

Written by Laura Von Harten

Ever wonder what it's like to live in a certain neighborhood here in the Lowcountry? You might want to take a look at www.rottenneighbor.com.



This is the concept: You take a Google map and turn the public loose on it. You let people who supposedly live in those neighborhoods tell you where the good places – and the not so good places – are.

Go to the website and pull up a map of Beaufort County. You'll see houses in three different colors: green, red and yellow. A green house means you are a nice neighbor. A red house means you are a bad neighbor. Yellow means mixed reviews.

When you zoom in, you can point and click to find out what people are saying about a particular street, or a particular house, or even a particular person in that house. There is potential for a lot of garbage and mudslinging here, but you don't see much of that. Some people actually take the opportunity to write nice things, like "Good Neighbors - Great folks who look out for their neighbors."

The whole red house/green house thing is pretty subjective. Some comments might look positive, but could be perceived as negative, depending on your own preferences.

For example, "Quiet street - neighbors have lots of privacy," might be someone's idea of heaven on earth. Give it a little green Monopoly house, right?

But if you are the kind of person who likes a lot of activity and interaction, the comment might as well read, "Boring street, neighbors are disinterested and keep to themselves." That would make it a red-house street for you.

But unfortunately the site doesn't make allowances for different value systems. And it can be hard to judge the impartiality of the people who make the comments. For example, that last comment, the one about the quiet street, was left by someone named "Realtor."

That gives you a pretty good idea of where that person is coming from. But if the name were "Joe" you'd be on your own as far as knowing whether this person is truly a neighbor, whether this person is honest, whether this person is reasonable, etc.

This process is anonymous so you have to be careful. There's nothing you can click on that will tell you "this person is reliable," or "this is a crazy lying snake of a person," so use your judgment. Browser beware.

Thankfully there is a feedback system where users can rate other users, so at least there is some hope of weeding out the cranks.

So, on to the dirt. Here is some of the interesting stuff that people are saying about their Lowcountry neighbors:

"These guys are always waking up in the wee hours of the morning, running around, hooting and hollering about how "motivated" they are and how much they love the drum corps or whatever. Then they disappear in their house, come back out, and play with guns. ANNOYING!"

The address on that one is "Guantanamo Street, Parris Island."

Here is stuff from some of the unhappy neighbors:

"What a wanker. This guy is a classic turd!"

"THINKS HE A RACE CAR DRIVER. CAN'T GO FAST ENOUGH THROUGH THE NEIGHBORHOOD. Maybe that's why he has a Nascar plate on his shi**y Trans Am."

"It's Edgefields finest Bed & Breakfast. Never seen so many people come out of one house. Also fun to watch them wash their hair outside with the garden hose, and party in the driveway."

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They don't care who has to get up for work, just make the music louder! What a**holes." In the don't-go-there category, there is bashing of some ethnic groups. For example, "Polka-Blasting, Party-Every-Night, Park-Across-Your-Driveway Mexicans. This house has to have at least 15 people living in it. This is very obvious since they have a party at least 1 or 2 nights a week. Every time they do have a party there are cars parked all over the street, blocking driveways, and so far from the curb you can't fit between them to get down the road. These parties usually last all night long with Mexican-Polka blasting loud enough to hear all the way down the block. Someone please deport them!

If you don't like a comment, you can respond to it. The responses to the comment above: "I noticed that you don't let us viewers know where these rotten neighbors live. you were pretty bold on your racial comments. Well I'm sure you don't want a confederate flag posted over your house on the neighborhood map right jethro! By the way It's tejanos, nortenos, or mariachi style music idiot!"

And, "No comments from the anti-bigot crowd? Why are the commenters only crying when it's a non-white bigoted statement?"

So there's two kinds of bad comments, the legitimate kind, like the one about a fast driver, and the beyond-the-pale kind, like the racist one.

By the same token, there are two different kinds of positive comments on rottenneighbors.com.

There are what I classify as regular nice comments. This is just normal praise, like "Well maintained yard and great folks."

But there is a second category of weird over-the-top nice comments, the likes of which you might have seen jumping off the pages of your high school yearbook:

"They Rock!!! They are the sweetest kindest people EVER!!!"

"LOVE those people!!!"

OK, so there are positive comments and negative comments. And then there are the comments that make you wonder what the hell is going on:

"They are WONDERFUL people!!! They are sweet, CHRISTian people, and they don't deserve to be treated the way they are."

Boy, I'd like to hear the rest of that story.

Here's another one of those: "They are the nicest people in the Universe, and even though I have been sueing them, I want out to Bob." First of all, what does that mean exactly? Second, if they are such great people why are you sueing -- I mean suing -- them?

Some reviewers provide video documentation about their bad neighbors. The following example is not from the Lowcountry -- in fact, it's from another state -- but I'm mentioning it because it demonstrates the awesome power this website offers us to shame our neighbors into acting better.

This is the comment: "Pam refuses to pick up her barking pooches. They bark 24 hours a day because she doesn't take them for walks or spend any quality time with them! I took her to court and she was found guilty of violating Magnolia noise violation and fined a measly 25 dollars. Still to this day my anguish of not being able to sleep persists. I don't want harm to the dogs but I do expect her to be a responsible dog owner, and respect her neighbors right to peaceful sleep."

This comment is accompanied by a link to a video on YouTube that lets you see -- and hear in excruciating detail -- how truly awful it is to listen to Pam's barking pooches all day long.

There's a lot of potential for abuse here. But there is also tremendous opportunity to learn more about a neighborhood before you decide to buy or rent there, and that is a great benefit.

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In the neighborhood of the World Wide Web, www.rottenneighbor.com gets a green house.