

Nextdoor launches neighborhood social networks

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Internet startup Nextdoor launched a social network designed to strengthen communities by connecting real-world neighbors.

Internet startup Nextdoor launched a social network Wednesday designed to strengthen communities by connecting real-world neighbors.

The US launch of Nextdoor.com was touted as a modern age variation on the town square or backyard fence where neighbors get to know each other and keep tabs on what was happening around their homes.

"Good things happen when people know their neighbors," Nextdoor co-founder and chief executive Nirav Tolia said while showing the service to AFP.

Nextdoor is free. The only caveat is that users must verify who they are

and that they live in the real-world location that comports with the boundaries of the online neighborhood they wish to join.

"When you have a physical address, you have a high level of trust," Tolia said. "This way you can get to know your neighbors and, more than anything, bring back a sense of community."

Nextdoor has been in private test mode for less than a year and has already spread to more than 175 neighborhoods in 26 states.

"Nextdoor takes the best of social media, adds a spoonful of intimacy, and envelopes it in a blanket of privacy and comfort," said Anne Clauss, whose neighborhood in Hamilton, New York, staked out a place at the service.

The website layout is reminiscent of [social networking](#) king Facebook, but news feeds focus on local topics ranging from movie DVDs being given away or lost pets to recommendations for babysitters or ice cream shops.

"Nextdoor is the virtual backyard fence or front-porch conversations of years ago," said Verlinda Henning, part of the online version of her neighborhood in Memphis, Tennessee.

Maps atop Nextdoor pages show layouts of a [neighborhoods](#), with green plots symbolizing members and red showing non-members. Members can click on any plot to see who lives there and have Nextdoor send them an invitation postcard.

"This is very similar to Facebook, but it is really your neighborhood identity," Tolia said.

"We heard users don't want to mix their social lives and local community

lives... They want [Facebook](#) for friends and family, and a neighborhood."

He likened the model to that of LinkedIn, a thriving social network centered on advancing careers, jobs and business prospects.

"We need specific social networks for specific use cases," Tolia said. "If we put it all together into one social network, it is going to be overwhelming."

Being part of Nextdoor is free and the website doesn't post advertisements. The startup is focused on attracting users, expecting revenue will follow, likely in the form of working with local businesses.

Only those with passwords can get into the pages of a virtual neighborhood, and information can't be indexed by Google or other search engines, according to Nextdoor.

"Nextdoor is different from other networking sites because it was built from the ground up to help neighbors come together in a trusted environment," said board member Bill Gurley of Benchmark Capital, which is backing the startup.

"We have been blown away by the positive response to Nextdoor and believe it is a natural evolution of [social networking](#)."

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