



URBAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT (B204, 302, 303, 305, 306, 307; R2001; R2008; R2009)

Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects advocates the sustainable development of our urban environments through responsible social, economic, and ecological practices. Development should be guided by a comprehensive planning and management vision for interconnected green space, a multi-modal transportation system, and mixed-use development. ASLA urges public and private collaboration to create livable communities that protect historic, cultural, and environmental resources. ASLA supports sustainable site planning and construction techniques that reduce pollution and enhance balance between built and natural systems.

Development patterns that result in sprawl are not in the long-term interest of our cities, small towns, rural communities, and agricultural lands. As communities plan for growth and change, ASLA encourages in-fill and redevelopment utilizing existing infrastructure. Public agencies should promote and facilitate processes for remediation of urban sites to relieve pressure to develop at the urban fringe. ASLA believes that plans should identify open lands that can be sustainably developed if the need for growth cannot be met by in-fill and redevelopment.

Rationale

The application of land-use based zoning, real-estate tax laws, and highway design regulations, has created automobile dominated sprawl conditions where cars are required for almost all activities, with ever-increasing congestion and longer commute times. Decentralized suburban or exurban expansion has created developments with no sense of place while consuming exorbitant amounts of land, necessitating huge infrastructure commitments, and often contributing to the deterioration of urban centers.

Alternative planning initiatives argue for responsible growth and development strategies that are broader in vision and more regional in scale. Urban in-fill, suburban redevelopment, and open-land development can all offer a diversity in housing styles and multi-modal transit as examples of sustainable growth practices that vary from place to place. As there is no such thing as a “one-size-fits-all” solution for every community, appropriate principles must be developed for each. Responsible and innovative development strategies at the federal, state and local levels are needed to guide private development as urban growth continues within and beyond developed areas into open lands.

The replacement of conventional zoning codes that control land use with those that control physical form can benefit growth and development. The result of implementing these form based codes can result in communities that fit their place and time, have a mix of uses that are appropriately scaled, enjoy pedestrian friendly well-defined public realms, and are generally more sustainable.

Development of “brownfield” sites enables communities to reuse abandoned areas that are often located in urban centers with existing infrastructure. Communities should take

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advantage of programs which focus on facilitating the cleanup and reuse of these areas by awarding grants, capitalizing loan funds, providing technical assistance and training, and absolving innocent prospective and contiguous landowners of liability.

Governmental agencies are encouraged to locate their offices and other facilities within the urban core as opposed to suburban or fringe locations. This can help support downtown revitalization efforts by retaining and attracting compatible businesses and services. Likewise, tax credits or other incentives are needed to encourage the preservation or rehabilitation of historic properties within the urban core.

Communities should take advantage of governmental and private initiatives to preserve open space (such as conservation districts and open land trusts) with the goal of curbing scattered development, protecting watersheds and natural habitat, maintaining historic and cultural assets, and providing diverse recreational opportunities.

Emphasis should be placed upon the creation of a diverse mix of uses and housing options within communities; whether an infill redevelopment, or new development within open-lands. This offering should provide a variety of commercial, institutional, educational uses as well as housing styles, sizes and prices. The provision of sidewalks, trails, and private streets, connected to transit stops and an interconnected street network within these mixed use developments provides mobility options and helps reduce pollution by reducing vehicle trips. Walking, bicycling, and other mobility options should be encouraged throughout the urban mixed use core and mixed use neighborhoods with easily accessed and well-defined centers and edges.

Communities should also move toward energy conservation and non-oil based alternatives, such as solar, wind, thermal, and biomass, which are targeted at reducing dependency on non-renewable resources as well as minimizing air, water, and thermal pollution. Proper placement and design of buildings, the use of green roofs, accommodating urban agriculture, decreasing impervious areas, providing abundant (usable) interconnected greenways and open space, implementing innovative stormwater techniques, and planting or preserving vegetation will help offset some of the contributing factors of global climate change while enhancing or protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its residents.