

HOUSING

(1964, R1992, R2000, R2001, R2011, R2022)



Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes housing is the foundation on which we live, grow, and thrive, and that everyone should have access to safe and equitable housing that optimizes energy efficiency and existing natural resources, including natural light and fresh air.

ASLA supports:

- Housing that is affordable, adaptable to climate change and constructed to be sensitive to its environment
- Housing developments that include trees, landscapes, and green infrastructure measures; address heat island mitigation and stormwater management; and enhance well-being and aesthetics
- Assessing climate change impacts on housing that serves vulnerable, marginalized, and low-income communities
- Housing developments that minimize impacts to agricultural lands, open spaces, and greenfields
- Prioritizing development on vacant and underutilized previously developed sites
- Housing that provides equitable access to public space, commercial facilities, and infrastructure
- Housing environments that preserve and encourage unique cultural and social traits of users
- Early and continued collaboration between designers, contractors, developers, and communities to achieve resilient and holistic solutions
- Actively developing, recommending, and promoting housing regulations and incentives that provide resilient, mixed-use development
- The inclusion of landscape architects on boards and commissions to advance equitable, affordable, and implementable housing projects

Justification

Landscape architects have uniquely diverse training and project experience, with skills focused on economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects that are critical to the design and location of housing developments. Landscape architects' experience with respect to stormwater, transportation, ecological, cultural, and social systems allow them to provide balanced design solutions that serve the long-term needs of both the public and the environment. Landscape architects are educated on broader contextual issues associated with climate change, and have the ability to put forth resilient and adaptable design solutions.

Landscape architects help enrich and enhance housing projects through design and policy development to ensure public health, safety, and welfare. The skills landscape architects bring to housing developments are critical to the shaping of not only welcoming and pleasing neighborhoods, but also communities that are equitable and resilient. In



addition to understanding the ecological and social challenges of proposed and renovated housing developments, landscape architects have the skills and knowledge to lead boards and commissions, and to work at the policy level to guide development. As planners, designers, and project leaders, landscape architects are equipped with multifaceted knowledge, vision, and experience that helps ensure the success of housing projects.

Issues

Housing is an integral and defining part of individual lives and community character, and it contributes greatly to the public's overall prosperity, health, safety and welfare. Well-designed housing, whether new or repurposed, respects and enhances the natural environment and utilizes existing opportunities, including proximity and access to public space, commercial facilities and infrastructure, such as utilities and transportation.

Urban Sprawl

Urban sprawl costs the American economy more than \$1 trillion annually.¹ Suburban development and urban sprawl has been exacerbated by car-centric lifestyles resulting in disproportionate allocation of resources. Research has shown that communities that experience sprawl “bear an extra \$400 billion in external costs.” Mixed-use development helps limit urban sprawl by building near existing infrastructure, and on land with low environmental value. Retention of agricultural, historic, and native lands—as well as those related to existing working class or low-income populations—is critical for stability, equity, and longevity of communities.

Access to Affordable and Resilient Housing

The nation is faced with a housing crisis shaped by ever-changing forces, including climate change, the notable flattening of income growth, and rising housing prices. The housing crisis, coupled with growing risks of climate change, is proving to be increasingly detrimental to existing housing infrastructure. Vulnerable populations, often situated in places of higher risk, are less equipped to withstand the impact of severe disasters, extreme temperatures, and newly inhospitable environments. Thirty percent (30%) of Americans cited climate change as a motivator to move in 2022 due to fires, flooding, and permafrost melting.² Disparities in housing for low-income communities has also led to increased houseless populations, food insecurity, poor health, lower academic success, and less opportunity to increase income levels.

Development Incentives

Attainable and affordable housing starts at the policy level. It requires creative solutions that utilize the skills of planners and designers who work collaboratively with developers and municipalities to provide thoughtful and equitable green space. Done correctly, this

¹ New Climate Economy “Urban Sprawl Costs US Economy More than \$1 Trillion per Year”

² Forbes “30% of Americans Cite Climate Change as a Motivator to Move in 2022”



collaboration leads to more marketable developments and an overall higher quality of life. Reducing permitting costs and improving permitting timelines are examples of incentives for developers to incorporate green roofs, stormwater treatment, green infrastructure, energy efficiency, and higher density. These incentives illustrate how creative and well-crafted policies improve the environment while enhancing housing for all.

References

“FY 2022-2026 HUD Strategic Plan.” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). March 2022. <https://www.hud.gov/HUD-FY22-26-Strategic-Plan-Focus-Areas>

“30% of Americans Cite Climate Change as a Motivator to Move in 2022.” Forbes. April 2022. <https://www.forbes.com/home-improvement/features/americans-moving-climate-change>

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“Analysis of Public Policies That Unintentionally Encourage and Subsidize Urban Sprawl.” The New Climate Economy. Commission on the Economy and Climate. March 2015. <http://2014.newclimateeconomy.report/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/public-policies-encourage-sprawl-nce-report.pdf>

“The Cost of the Climate Crisis? 20 Million Homeless Every Year.” World Economic Forum. 2019. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/12/extreme-weather-climate-change-displaced>

Inter-Related ASLA Policies

Climate Change and Resilience
Environmental Justice
Environmental Sustainability
Human Health and Welfare
Livable Communities
Open Space
Outdoor Lighting
Rural Landscapes

Transportation Corridors and Facilities
Universal Design
Urban and Local Agriculture
Urban Growth and Development
Visual Character and Scenic Resources
Water Quality and Conservation
Waterways
Wetlands