

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES (2001, R2008)



Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes that communities are more livable when they respect ecological and cultural systems, promote economic development, strive for social equity, and provide places for positive social interaction. As they plan for growth and change, all communities should endeavor to be more sustainable and resource-efficient and to provide more options for housing, employment, and recreation.

ASLA calls upon both individuals and community leaders to work collaboratively with the goal of improving quality of life through sound and creative planning, design, and management of the natural and built environment. Furthermore, ASLA urges the employment of a broad range of policies, practices, and development incentives that will encourage the creation of more ecologically sustainable and economically vibrant communities.

Rationale

Land consumption created by the growth of metropolitan regions results in the permanent loss of rural areas, farm and forest lands and the pollution of watersheds. In concert with these losses is the decline of inner city economies and air and water quality, and increased traffic congestion and dependence upon the automobile.

The adoption of land use practices, which achieve a balance of the following interconnected goals will lessen the impacts of growth on natural resources and result in a better quality of life for all citizens:

Physical Environment. Communities should be beautiful places, reflecting the time-honored tradition of civic commitment to high quality and lasting public works. They should protect and enhance natural, cultural and scenic resources and avoid environmental degradation by respecting ecological systems and landscape character.

Education. ASLA supports schools that contribute to neighborhoods, making the campus an indoor and outdoor learning environment. Educational facilities should be available for appropriate community activities and recreation and they should be well connected to communities by sidewalks, bike trails and transit service, as well as roadways.

Housing. ASLA supports housing that is mixed with other land uses that afford residents the ability to live, learn, work, shop and play in a healthy, affordable and walkable setting. Housing should be closely linked to existing urban assets and carefully designed to preserve and enhance community resources, pride and a unique sense of place. Higher density housing should be located and designed to promote active and secure pedestrian environments supported by transit service.

Jobs & Economic Development. ASLA believes that offices, manufacturing facilities, institutions and other places of employment should be appropriately located to reduce travel distances and times between work, home, shopping, personal services, entertainment and other activities. Places of employment should be designed to enhance energy conservation, and to support ecological and human health.

Health, Safety & Security. ASLA urges that communities be designed to be attractive, safe and accessible. The design and management of each community should advance

energy conservation, healthy air and clean water, and minimize noise pollution. Communities should invest in public landscapes that promote ecological and human health and emotional well-being.



Transportation. ASLA supports the planning, development and maintenance of cohesive, multi-modal communities. Communities should have well-connected, universally accessible transportation systems that provide attractive, safe, comfortable and cost-effective access; improve convenience and mobility; and support economic vitality and environmental quality. Residents of all ages and levels of mobility should have full access to pedestrian and bicycle networks that promote safety, reduce auto dependency and support public transportation options. Parking facilities should be designed and managed to minimize their visual and physical impacts and the consumption of land, while maintaining pedestrian and motorist safety and supporting adjacent activities.