



HOUSING (1964, R1992, R2000, R2001)

Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects supports the fulfillment of the need for good quality, comfortable, safe, affordable and accessible housing that protects the health, safety and welfare of the public and the health of the environment.

The Society believes that the quality of housing is directly linked to personal identity, self-worth, belonging, pride, long-term vitality and a strong sense of place and community. The Society decries urban decay and urges the use of codes, ordinances and development controls to facilitate rehabilitation while promoting health, safety and welfare and innovative physical planning and design, to optimize ecological and human systems.

Rationale

The goals of quality-of-life and a healthy environment are dependent upon quality housing environments. There is pervasive insensitivity to the relationship of housing policy, ordinances, codes, regulations, management processes, planning and design to affordability. There is an inadequate understanding of the need of regulatory ordinances and policies to respond to regional context, public benefits and the additional costs that they incur.

New housing is land and resource consumptive and often degrades the quality of the community and the environment. Many existing housing environments are characterized by obsolescence problems, which often lead to abandonment because current code structures make upgrading costly.

Each year, good quality, affordable housing becomes less accessible to American families. There is growing disparity between what people define as good quality and what is available to them, and an increasing divergence between the cost of housing and what people can afford to pay.

Innovative cost management of the housing environment is essential to good quality affordable housing. Much of the current discussion on affordability only revolves around increased efficiency in construction methods. Greater cost savings can be attained through regionally appropriate ordinances and policies, development controls, land planning, and infrastructure and site design rather than just through the application of techniques related solely to building construction.

Site Issues related to affordability include:

- Sustainable site planning and design
- Density
- Building setback
- Quantity of infrastructure required to service housing units
- Slope and soil characteristics
- Distance from available job opportunities and mass transit
- Excessive infrastructure required by communities
- Use of creative design approaches to permit less costly construction
- Use of recycled materials
- Siting for energy efficiency and to allow use of alternative energy sources

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