

URBAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

(B204, 302, 303, 305, 306, 307; R2001; R2008; R2009; R2018)



Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes that responsible social, economic, and ecological practices are critical to the sustainable development of our urban environments. ASLA encourages orienting growth toward biophilic urban centers at a variety of scales; remediating urban sites; designing and promoting green infrastructure, parks, and open spaces; and developing safe transportation systems that provide mobility and access for all. ASLA urges public and private collaboration to create livable communities that protect historic, cultural, and environmental resources.

As communities plan for growth and change, ASLA encourages infill and redevelopment utilizing existing infrastructure that anticipates and responds to innovative technologies. ASLA believes that urban development should be guided by comprehensive planning; prioritize walking, biking, and transit; promote healthy, livable communities; embrace equity and environmental justice; and design for resilience responding to global climate change.

Rationale

The past application of land-use-based zoning, real estate tax laws, and highway design regulations resulted in automobile-dominated sprawl conditions where cars are required for almost all activities, with ever-increasing congestion and longer commute times. Pavement for surface parking lots and additional roadway lanes as well as rooftops contribute to the heat island effect in cities. Concentrating development in urban and exurban centers reduces consumption of undeveloped land, optimizes infrastructure, and maximizes success and viability of urban cores. Emerging mobility options that embrace technology, such as connected and autonomous vehicles, potentially introduce new levels of sprawl while creating challenges for the design and planning of active transportation and transit systems.

Responsible growth and development strategies that are broader in vision and more regional in scale create more livable communities. These strategies at the federal, state, and local levels are needed to guide private development as urban growth continues within developed areas into open lands. Urban infill and redevelopment, suburban redevelopment, and open-land development advance diversity in housing styles and multimodal transportation.

The replacement of conventional zoning codes that control land use with those that control physical form can benefit growth and development, resulting 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 must take advantage of programs that 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.

Downtown civic centers are at the intersection of government commerce and culture. Revitalization efforts to retain and attract compatible businesses and services, along with tax credits or other incentives, can encourage the preservation or rehabilitation of historic properties within the urban core.

Public open space enhances human health and well-being. Communities must take advantage of governmental and private initiatives to preserve open space (such as conservation easements 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.

Development should include a diverse mix of uses and housing options within communities, whether an infill redevelopment or new development on open lands. Mixed-use development and transit-oriented development provide a variety of commercial, institutional, and educational uses, as well as both market rate and affordable housing. Cities and developers embracing diversity and multiculturalism create communities where individuals and families can thrive. An accessible, safe, and connected transportation network encourages walking, bicycling, and transit. Cities must promote innovation, regulation, and collaboration to address the growth of new mobility opportunities such as connected and autonomous vehicles, bike share, and transportation network companies.

Communities are embracing energy conservation, renewable energy, reducing dependency on fossil fuels, and minimizing air, water, and thermal pollution. The scope of landscape architecture includes proper placement of buildings, green roofs, urban agriculture, permeable paving, interconnected greenways and open space, innovative stormwater techniques, and planting or preserving vegetation that helps offset contributing factors of global climate change while enhancing and protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its residents.