



## Statement on Sustainable Housing

Housing – its location and manner of construction – dramatically affects the lives of its occupants. It impacts residents’ educational and social opportunities, ability to have an active and healthy lifestyle, financial security, and environmental footprint. Our nation’s approach to housing also impacts our nation’s ability to respond to an aging and more diverse population, to increase our economic competitiveness, to reduce our dependence on oil, to enhance the overall livability of existing communities, and to responsibly grow in a manner that creates better environmental and climate outcomes.

Between now and 2050, as the nation approaches a total projected population of 420 million people, it is projected that roughly 89 million new and replaced homes will be constructed<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, state and local governments are developing greenhouse gas reduction goals for 2050 that will be dramatically affected by how and where new growth occurs. These challenges present an opportunity to rethink our conventional approach to housing, and move towards a more sustainable approach – one that would better reflect the true cost of housing, foster healthy and walkable communities, and yield better outcomes for community residents, our neighborhoods, the economy, and the environment.

The Smart Growth Network believes that sustainable housing is characterized by the following principles and characteristics:

- Housing that is located on sites near transit, job opportunities, commercial centers, schools, open space, recreation and public and community services.
- Housing that is made more affordable through strengthened connections to viable transportation alternatives and allows households to dramatically reduce the cost of transportation to and from work, retail, and recreation.
- Housing that makes use of previously developed land and existing buildings and infrastructure (e.g., water/sewer lines) through rehabilitation and infill development.
- Housing that is compact and uses green building materials and techniques to reduce energy consumption associated with transportation and indoor climate, water use, and stormwater runoff.
- Housing that is sited and/or designed to be resilient to natural hazards such as flooding, earthquakes, and sea level rise.

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<sup>1</sup> Ewing, Reid H. 2008 *Growing cooler : the evidence on urban development and climate change / Reid Ewing ... [et al.]* ULI, Washington, D.C.

- Housing that optimizes the health and safety of its occupants through design and location that protects indoor air quality, increases accessibility, and minimizes potential injuries.
- Housing that is characterized by: a mix of incomes, sizes, and housing types to meet a range of household sizes, resident ages and income levels; does not differentiate income level through building design, location and availability, and is designed to add value to the community.
- Housing that is part of a holistic community development strategy to create sustainable communities and revitalized neighborhoods that feature job creation, transit accessibility, commercial corridor redevelopment, educational opportunities, and community and human services.

There is a role for all levels of private, public, and nonprofit sector leadership to implement this approach. This includes the HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities which has the potential to align federal resources, and support state, regional, and local governments to create the types of communities characterized by the principles above.

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*The Smart Growth Network was formed in 1996 as a partnership between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and several nonprofit and government organizations to encourage development that serves the economy, community, and environment. To learn more, visit <http://www.smartgrowth.org/sgn/default.asp>.*