

Topic: Incentives for Investing in Livable Communities

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Policy Statement

The American Institute of Architects, California Council (AIACC) believes the design of the physical environment directly affects the quality of our lives. Through collaborative planning and design, architects contribute to creating safe, aesthetic, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable buildings and communities. The AIACC believes that investing in livable communities offers:

- Choices in housing, shopping, recreation, and job opportunities
- Transportation alternatives that reduce dependence automobiles
- A variety of open spaces for active recreation, walking, and public gatherings
- A shared identity and sense of pride that results from the visual character and vitality of the community

Related National AIA Policies

1. Comprehensive Energy
2. Environment and Architecture
3. Sustainability
4. Urban Design
5. Community Design Centers
6. Design Excellence in Public Architecture
7. Highway Beautification
8. Historic Preservation
9. Housing

Related AIACC Policies

- 1: Principles for Advocating a Sustainable Future

To achieve these goals, local, regional and State plans and policies must be coordinated to promote the revitalization of existing communities, and where appropriate, the development of new communities.

The AIACC supports a prosperous and sustainable vision for California that utilizes the opportunities inherent in the state's dynamic growth, beautiful natural setting, and abundance of renewable resources. The AIACC believes in the brightness of California's future and acts politically to achieve it. Accordingly, the AIACC will continue its role as a coalition-builder, educator, and advocate for incentivizing the creation of livable communities.



Policy Background

Members of AIACC are advocates for community participation, informed growth policy, and forging partnerships to pursue a prosperous and sustainable course for growth in California. The AIACC has taken a proactive role in developing options for public policy at the center of California's quality of life agenda. In addition, regional and local planning that enhances 'community', housing, schools, transportation, environmental equilibrium, and sustainable use of resources. In the dynamic context of California's expanding and richly diverse population, livable community policies must take the big picture approach.

California's opportunity to create and enhance the livability of our communities is being undercut by decisions which reinforce fiscalization of land use, infrastructure investment, and reinvestment that do not support a sustainable future for the state: a lack of incentives and fiscal support for regional planning, AIACC will work with our partners in removing these roadblocks so California can realize its cultural, economic, and environmental potential.

Policy Issues & Positions:

Issue 1: Policies that Incentivize Sustainable and Livable Communities

California should improve its sales and property tax structure to encourage inter-jurisdictional cooperation and land use planning, coupled with responsible private investment. This should be accomplished by:

- Revenue sharing for metropolitan regions, sub-regions, or counties as an incentive for responsible planning
- Regional plan elements within each community's general plan
- A tax structure that values transit dependent, higher density housing, developing them to be a strong economic value
- Financial incentives for land-efficient, and sustainable private investment

Issue 2: Strategic Investment in California

Infrastructure development and maintenance should reflect a long term sustainable vision for the State.

We recommend California should:

- Provide incentives for infill and compact development that acknowledges our limited capacity to fund infrastructure, and minimizes non-renewable resource utilization
- Restore brownfields and reutilize them for infill urban development
- Develop an integrated, and diversified multi-modal system of transportation
- Promote adequate water supply, gray-water reclamation, and other infrastructure planning

Issue 3: Create Forms of Regional Cooperation

California should employ integrated approaches to planning regional, community, and neighborhood scales that are commensurate with the state's growth. This can be accomplished by:

- Regional cooperation that puts today's decisions in a long-term framework
- Funding incentives for encouraging regional planning
- Rewarding local planning and cooperative ventures that further regional objectives

Issue 4: California's Need for Housing

Housing policies should acknowledge our changing demographics and reflect California's needs.

We recommend that California:

- Pursue policies that make land-efficient, starter ownership housing more affordable
- Provide increased incentives for communities meeting regional "fair share" housing goals
- Revise zoning ordinances and general plans to allow for and encourage increased development densities
- Provide incentives for private sector housing investment, and/or public-private housing partnerships to create a variety of housing types

Issue 5: Public Facilities as Center of Communities

California should invest in public facilities as social and cultural centers for our communities and promote inter-agency collaboration to maximize the benefits of existing facilities and resources. This should include:

- Engaging neighborhoods in the design process, especially of educational facilities
- Revising zoning ordinances to introduce public buildings in proximity to residential neighborhoods
- Providing incentives for joint-use facilities that increase the civic, social, and cultural focus of integration in communities.