



A Chapter of the American Planning Association

Housing Policy

General Housing Policy Guides: Housing is a central feature of human settlement. Everyone needs a place to live, regardless of age, job, race, disability, income or station in life. Although housing has often been cast as a “social” issue, it is in fact a broader concern. Comprehensive master planning, development regulations, and zoning ordinances are tools employed by the planning profession to protect residential neighborhoods from uses considered detrimental and inconsistent with a “suitable living environment.” Comprehensive master planning seeks a balance between the need for land resources to accommodate economic development and the need to provide housing for different types of households.

1. The Michigan Association of Planning supports efforts that preserve the environment by encouraging residential construction that is consistent with the principals of Smart Growth. Planners should promote housing that is energy efficient and does not place undue demands on the environment. Regional, county, and local plans should promote compact and clustered development patterns while discouraging leapfrogging and sprawl development.
2. The Michigan Association of Planning supports efforts of jurisdictions to adopt and implement plans and policies that reflect federal and state requirements regarding housing, that promote residential stability, housing choice, and affordability across all price ranges and that make effective use of federal, state, and local programs and incentives to meet housing needs not adequately addressed through the marketplace.
3. The Michigan Association of Planning promotes the development of quality housing that will continue to offer decent, affordable shelter throughout its entire life. Planners should be at the forefront of ensuring that housing not only has good immediate utility, but also represents a long-term value added investment to the neighborhood and the larger community.
4. The Michigan Association of Planning supports a cooperative and mutually supportive relationship among federal, state, and local governments based on the recognition that funding for housing programs is best implemented at the broadest level, while program delivery is best implemented at the local level.
5. The Michigan Association of Planning supports efforts to engage neighborhoods in planning for revitalization and in making use of collaborative planning tools and techniques that bring a wide range of interests and voices to the table, and that empower citizens to exercise influence in and access to the policy-development process.
6. The Michigan Association of Planning encourages their jurisdictions to adopt and enforce the Uniform Housing Code, or a similar regulatory code, and to inspect and repair unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions.

7. The Michigan Association of Planning supports traditional homeownership models as well as nontraditional forms of homeownership such as limited equity cooperatives, mutual housing, and community land trusts. Similarly, provision should be made for quality rental housing, not only through traditional multi-family forms, but also through single-family, mixed-use, and mixed-tenure development.

8. The Michigan Association of Planning encourages housing strategies to revitalize older urban neighborhoods, while taking steps to minimize displacement of existing businesses and residents.

Such strategies might include mixed use and infill development, mixed income housing, homeownership zones, urban homesteading, and housing rehabilitation.

9. The Michigan Association of Planning supports the use of objective measures to determine whether rehabilitation or clearance and redevelopment of severely blighted neighborhoods presents the most viable solution to urban blight. In making such an evaluation, planners should involve neighborhood residents, interest groups, and institutions in the planning process, and examine whether financing is in place to complete redevelopment activities after initial clearance of the site.

10. Residential development is a principal feature of communities, and should be represented in the Comprehensive Plan not only as a land use but also as an important element of community vitality and economic health. The Michigan Association of Planning encourages their jurisdictions to develop and maintain a Comprehensive Plan housing element which analyzes housing needs for all types and price ranges, and recommends specific measures to address gaps in the housing supply in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

11. The Michigan Association of Planning encourages new employment centers in or near existing residential neighborhoods, provided such development can be accomplished without displacement of existing residents.

Affordable Housing Policy Guides: Affordable housing has become a national crisis. According to the congressionally-chartered Millennium Housing Commission, more than 8 million Americans now spend more than 30% of their income on housing, working a full-time job no longer guarantees access to decent housing, and the homeownership rate for black and Hispanic Americans remains 27 percent below national average. The Michigan Association of Planning supports initiatives designed to preserve and expand affordable housing opportunities at a variety of income levels.

1. The Michigan Association of Planning encourages the state and local communities to inventory existing public and assisted housing stocks, including those units threatened by deterioration, prepayment, or opt-out of assistance contracts.

2. The Michigan Association of Planning encourages national, state and local initiatives designed to preserve and expand affordable housing opportunities at a variety of income levels. Planners should work to ensure that scarce housing subsidies are used to provide long term benefits to those in need of assistance. In general, capital subsidies for construction or acquisition of housing should also be accompanied by measures that ensure long-term affordability.

3. The Michigan Association of Planning supports transportation and transit improvements that allow low-income households in central cities to access jobs in surrounding suburbs.

4. The Michigan Association of Planning supports efforts to expand affordable housing opportunities by facilitating the development and preservation of accessory apartments, cluster

housing, elder cottages, manufactured housing, mixed-income housing, shared residences, and single room occupancy (SRO) developments.

5. The Michigan Association of Planning supports efforts to preserve the federal Low-Income Tax Credit (LIHTC), a critical tool for affordable housing finance, and to encourage accountability in the management of LIHTC projects.

6. The Michigan Association of Planning supports a wide range of programs and incentives that encourage private and non-profit development of affordable housing to supplement publicly owned and managed housing, and that complements local housing delivery systems. These measures include density bonuses, land donations, low-income housing tax credits, commercial linkage impact fees, and local requirements to keep a percentage of new units affordable within each new housing development.

7. The Michigan Association of Planning encourages efforts to insure that housing for the homeless is planned and developed in conjunction with a local continuum of care plan.

8. The Michigan Association of Planning recognizes that housing is a regional issue in metropolitan areas, usually requiring inter-jurisdictional dialogue and cooperation. The Michigan Association of Planning encourages collaboration with non-profit housing providers to educate citizens and elected officials about affordable housing and work to eliminate negative perceptions and stereotypes.

9. The Michigan Association of Planning supports a regional fair share distribution of affordable housing, particularly in proximity to moderate- and low-wage jobs.

1. 10. The Michigan Association of Planning supports legislation that creates tax equity and consistent valuation among the various housing forms.

Fair Housing Policy Guides: Despite the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968 and the Fair Housing Act Amendments in 1998, housing discrimination continues. Most housing discrimination continues to be based on race and ethnic origin, although persons with disabilities and families with children also continue to experience illegal housing discrimination.

1. The Michigan Association of Planning supports efforts to identify, document, and eliminate impediments to fair housing contained within comprehensive plans and/or zoning regulations, including, but not limited to, special use permits for group homes, large lot zoning when used for the purposes of exclusion, and restrictive single family definitions.

2. The Michigan Association of Planning supports the accessibility guidelines of the Fair Housing Act and other federal and state accessibility laws for new housing. Housing that is accessible and adaptable increases housing opportunities for physically disabled and frail elderly persons, while offering convenience to non-impaired persons. In the interest of promoting housing choice, accessibility measures should not be limited to rental development, but should be promoted in housing built or rehabilitated for homeownership as well.

Factory-Built Housing Policy Guides: Factory built housing plays an increasing role in the provision of housing in all market segments in the United States. The Michigan Association of Planning urges consumers, planners, and government at all levels to recognize that factory built housing as but one form of housing in a spectrum of housing choices offering distinct characteristics that meet the needs of many consumers.

1. The Michigan Association of Planning supports the use of factory built housing as a legitimate and acceptable alternative to traditional site-built housing and encourages the production of a variety of housing choices to meet the needs of people at all income levels.

2. The Michigan Association of Planning supports the use of manufactured homes where

residential uses are permitted consistent with locally adopted plans, ordinances, and design requirements and the HUD Code, where locally adopted plans, ordinances, and design requirements are consistent with this policy guide.

3. The Michigan Association of Planning encourages the development and adoption of model definitions, siting standards, and design standards to achieve local design and compatibility goals.

4. The Michigan Association of Planning supports and encourages the application of local health and safety laws and the development of measures designed to achieve the rehabilitation and modernization of aging and substandard land lease communities, commonly referred to as mobile home parks, while addressing the displacement of residents.