









Infill Housing & Land Use: A Climate Action Toolkit for Cities

Efficient urban land use is one of the most powerful tools cities have to fight climate change, yet it is currently overlooked by many local policymakers and environmentalists alike. By prioritizing compact and walkable development, cities and states have a far better chance of achieving our climate goals and building climate-resilient communities.

Key Benefits of Compact and Abundant Climate-Friendly Housing

-  **Reduces greenhouse gas emissions and improves air quality:** Compact communities with abundant housing near low-carbon transportation options—including public transit and bike lanes—reduce dependence on cars and lower per capita CO2 emissions.
-  **Protects wild habitats and open spaces:** Building up through urban density avoids urban sprawl and the destruction of undeveloped natural habitats.
-  **Creates communities that are both climate-resilient and equitable:** Compact infill development allows more people to live in areas that are safe from extreme climate impacts—communities that are typically already resource- and job-rich.

Policy Recommendations

-  **Upzone residential areas near jobs, high-performing schools, and other daily destinations:** Allowing higher density housing, particularly in walkable and historically exclusionary areas, reduces vehicle travel and fosters equitable, climate-conscious cities.
-  **Re-legalize diverse housing types:** Allowing "missing middle" housing (ADUs, duplexes, townhomes) and innovative solutions like single-stair buildings will create sustainable and affordable housing options that meet varying needs.
-  **Promote transit-oriented development and eliminate parking minimums:** Building housing near transit and reducing parking requirements allows car-free living and increases housing affordability.

Important Considerations:

- Ensure strong tenant protections to prevent displacement of vulnerable residents.
- Correct the legacy of exclusionary zoning in high-resource areas.
- Prioritize mobility and park access while increasing density.

By embracing these policies, cities can simultaneously address the climate crisis, housing affordability, and social equity. Local governments have the power to shape a sustainable and just future through bold housing and land use policy reforms.



About the co-authoring organizations: This talking points memo and the accompanying white paper “*Infill Housing & Land Use as a Tool to Fight Climate Change*” was written by a coalition of urbanist, pro-housing, and climate nonprofits in Los Angeles.

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