



HOUSING

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GOAL STATEMENT

Increase food production and access to healthy food and meals in residential settings

OVERVIEW

One's home serves essential needs that go well beyond shelter. Ideally, it also provides identity, rootedness, and a sense of comfort and safety. Housing goals in local comprehensive plans are generally intended to support a diverse population with a broad range of housing options that address different layers of needs. Therefore, communities should offer:

- Ownership and rental housing
- Single-family houses, townhomes, apartments, and condominiums
- Housing of different sizes to accommodate singles to large families
- Housing that is affordable to people of diverse means
- Housing that includes supportive services for people with various needs, including seniors, low-income households, and the homeless

In any of these housing contexts, raising food is an option many residents wish to exercise. Local governments can encourage and support this integration of healthy food into residential environments. Areas particularly deserving of support are incorporation of gardens and animals into diverse residential settings, habitats helpful for beneficial insects, and provision of healthy food and meals. There are established practices and intriguing experiments in these domains.

Residential Cluster Development, or open space development, is a planning technique that can be used in new single- and multi-family developments that minimizes development impacts by positioning building and other improvements in a manner that preserves open space to its fullest extent. That open space can be used for agriculture, gardens, and natural habitat.

Many communities have established more flexible regulations for keeping animals such as bees, chickens, and goats on residential properties, which opens new food production options for residents. Local government has a lead responsibility in determining what is possible in this area and under what circumstances.

Integrating healthy meals into multi-family settings can build community, help residents learn about nutrition, and meet practical needs. Local policies can foster improved access to healthy foods by supporting congregate dining and healthy meals in multi-family settings such as homeless shelters, supportive housing facilities, and housing for seniors.

HOUSING SAMPLE PLAN LANGUAGE

POLICY I

[Local government] will support practices that integrate healthy food in residential settings.

- Partner with others to foster gardening practices and a local gardening culture.
- Encourage edible and pollinator-friendly landscapes on residential properties.
- Revise local regulations as needed to maintain flexibility for garden locations and support backyard composting.
- Support a diversity of efforts to make fresh food and healthy meals available at multi-family properties.
- Partner with gardening clubs and others to facilitate testing soils for contamination.
- Expand options for keeping animals such as bees, chickens, and goats, as appropriate for the size and location of the property, along with the accessory structures they require.
- Encourage single-family subdivisions and multi-family development models that incorporate community gardens.
- Build and encourage partnerships that work to expand residential access to healthy food.
- Integrate community gardens into public housing developments and create incentives for community gardens in affordable housing developments that receive public assistance.
- Use a food system lens when planning housing developments to inform site layout, landscape design, and residential amenities.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Integrating community gardens and nearby small farms into housing developments is proven means to build a more robust local food supply.
- Accommodating housing growth in ways that use less land can preserve farmland that provides healthy food to nearby communities for years to come.
- Testing of soils for contaminants is an important step to establish new gardens in some locations; some plants will absorb poisonous heavy metals in soil.
- Private homeowner and townhome associations may restrict residents from gardening or planting trees on their property.

SNAP SHOT

Agritopia is a pedestrian-friendly development in suburban Phoenix, with mixed-income housing, commercial, and open space tracts. With a farm that serves neighborhood residents and restaurants, this mixed-use development puts food, equity, health, and economic development at the center.

www.agritopia.com