

## COMMUNITY POLICY

Promote the fiscal, social, cultural, residential, educational and environmental quality of life for all residents. Recognizing that the League has a national Urban Policy position, the state League's Urban Policy position was updated in 2016 with the idea that Leagues across the state would use portions of the policy as they deem applicable.

Support of the following positions and measures:

State, county and local governments should develop complementary policies to improve fiscal and growth management through such means as:

- “smart growth” practices that encourage sustainability, green space, population density and equitable development. These practices should consider the future service needs of aging community members, while also addressing the needs of young workers;
- consolidated governmental services;
- investments to increase the tax base;
- subsidies that enable and expand affordable housing near community centers, workplaces and public transit for low- and middle-income and senior populations, as well as persons with disabilities and persons experiencing homelessness;
- investments to secure and maintain infrastructural integrity and modernization, including wired and wireless communication networks;
- sustainable practices for meeting energy needs, food security and recreation;
- planning and programs that promote inclusive, multi-modal transit, including bicycle-friendly and pedestrian-friendly passage;
- programs in housing, education, recreation, job training, energy efficiency, child and elder care should be available to complement measures intended to enhance the economic base and to further the quality of life for all residents.

State aids should be targeted to declining and/or distressed Wisconsin communities.

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### Background

At the 1976 national convention, delegates added cities/urban crisis to the national program. The 1978 convention adopted an "evaluation of urban policy options, with emphasis on fiscal policy.

In Wisconsin, League members also studied the appropriate role of the state government in urban policy. They felt aid should go to both declining and distressed communities in the state, using these definitions:

*Fiscally declining cities* have these characteristics:

- a stabilized tax base, showing little change over a long period of time; and
- a stabilized or declining population (with growing numbers of elderly and poor, which is unable to support a major increase in property taxes).

*Fiscally distressed cities* have the above, as well as these additional characteristics:

- a loss of a major portion of the employment base and/or employers who are unable to provide job opportunities for low-skilled and low-income residents;
- a rapidly deteriorating housing stock including significant numbers of housing units constructed prior to 1939;
- a rapid incremental increase in labor costs to municipalities, due in part to escalating labor and pension costs.

In 1978, concurrent with the study, the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board and the LWVWI produced the film, "QUIET CHANGES: Small Towns in Crisis," which examined the urban problems of seven small cities in Wisconsin. Funded in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Committee, the film was intended to stimulate viewer discussion.

The position has been used in action on laws governing such development techniques as Tax Incremental Financing and Industrial Revenue Bonds.

After a number of Leagues noted that the Urban Policy position was outdated, delegates at the 2015 Annual Meeting of LWVWI authorized an update of the position. It was found that while some Leagues felt the position applied to rural and suburban communities as much as urban, others had never attempted to use the position because they felt that the term "urban" did not apply to their community. The position was updated with the idea that all Leagues would use portions of the policy as they deem applicable. Updated position was adopted by delegates at the 2016 Annual Meeting.

**RELATED POSITIONS:**

- LWVUS positions
  - o Urban Policy <http://lww.org/content/urban-policy>
  - o Transportation <http://lww.org/content/social-policy-0>
  - o Healthcare <http://lww.org/content/health-care>
  - o Fair Housing <http://lww.org/content/social-policy-0>
  - o Education <http://lww.org/content/social-policy-0>
  - o Employment <http://lww.org/content/social-policy-0>
- LWVWI positions:
  - o Land Use <http://www.lwwwi.org/IssuesAdvocacy/NaturalResourcesAirLandPolicies.aspx>
  - o Energy <http://www.lwwwi.org/IssuesAdvocacy/NaturalResourcesEnergy.aspx>
  - o Healthcare – <http://www.lwwwi.org/IssuesAdvocacy/SocialPolicyHealthCareMentalHealth.aspx>
  - o Water <http://www.lwwwi.org/IssuesAdvocacy/NaturalResourcesWaterQuality.aspx>
  - o Education <http://www.lwwwi.org/IssuesAdvocacy/SocialPolicyEducation.aspx>