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Last month, I attended my first ULI meeting in Washington D.C. as part of the Etkin Johnson Scholarship. As I listened in on panel discussions at the conference, I took away three major ideas about housing affordability and real estate's role in combating climate change.

*Addressing the issue of affordable housing requires changes in opinion about neighborhoods among residents and ways of doing business among developers.*

Many tools for addressing housing affordability already exist but a willingness to embrace these changes is lacking. Policy tools, like upzoning, have the potential to expand access to amenity-rich neighborhoods. However, in many cities, residents balk at any proposal to promote density. Low-density zoning is used as a way to defend against "neighborhood change" but it has the effect of segregating neighborhoods along racial and socioeconomic lines. On the construction side, developers have failed to embrace new construction methods, such as modular construction, which can reduce the time and cost it takes to build. It is even possible to add housing without new construction through accessory dwelling units or conversions of single family houses. There are some cities embracing these policy tools and technological changes to provide more affordable housing but they have not yet taken hold at scale.

*Cities are setting ambitious targets to reduce carbon emissions and will need the real estate sector's support to achieve these goals.*

As cities implement new regulations to reduce carbon emissions from buildings, it is essential that they work closely with the property owners and developers. Cities must hold the real estate sector accountable for retrofitting existing buildings and designing new buildings to higher standards. Putting energy efficiency measures into place, however, will not be enough. Many building owners will need to tap into renewable energy to power their buildings and collaborate with tenants to reduce their energy consumption. New regulations and policies must provide clear expectations and reduce the uncertainty associated with regulatory change.

*Carbon-free energy and affordable housing can go hand in hand.*

Green development is not just a luxury product. Affordable housing projects across the country are embracing energy efficiency upgrades and renewable energy production to reduce operating costs and upgrade their properties. At Sun Crest Heights in Capitol Heights, Maryland, the developer acquired and rehabbed a 44-unit low-rise multifamily building and installed a solar array on the new carports, reducing energy costs for tenants and the carbon footprint of the project. As cities and the real estate sector look to tackle housing affordability and reduce their carbon emissions, it will be essential that they embrace new tools and collaborate closely.

I am grateful to ULI for sponsoring my attendance at their fall meeting. In the years ahead, I look forward to continuing to engage with issues of affordable housing and climate change.