This project produces concise, useful and insightful research briefs and FAQ-oriented statements that summarize existing research findings on affordable, workforce, and mixed-income housing issues. By weighing the strength of evidence and synthesizing the findings of numerous valid and reliable studies into a single report on an issue, these web-accessible briefs and FAQ statements give architects, developers, builders, and public officials convincing, dependable information and new perspectives to inform design, policy, and development decisions.

Research Synthesis is a review of a clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods (see diagram below) to identify, select and critically appraise relevant research, and to analyze, synthesize and summarize findings from the studies into a single review or brief. Results are summarized in 3 types of products: (a) one-page FAQ-oriented overview; (b) two- to three-page summaries or briefs, with both graphic and narrative descriptions; and (c) a technical report that provides more detail of the process and individual studies that form the basis of the synthesis.

Steps in the Research Synthesis Protocol

This Stardust Center web resource provides a framework where practitioners can seek answers to questions relevant to design and development issues of workforce housing. In determining the issues to be covered in these briefs, an advisory panel of leading architects, public officials, developers, and researchers identified specific critical issues/questions pertinent to the design and development of affordable housing with long-term economic and social value. The panel also reviews and corroborates the products before they are made available to the public. Initial issues to be addressed include:

Under what conditions does affordable housing impact – positively and negatively – surrounding property values?

What important site, design, and residential mix ratios of mixed-income developments result in positive social interaction, sense of community, and resident stabilization?

What aspects of indoor environmental quality and housing quality/design characteristics impact household stress? Children’s health and development?

Within specified economic and housing conditions, what type of inclusionary zoning policies result in significant increases in affordable housing units for households working in the area?

What are the costs and benefits (to residents, to communities) of accessory dwelling units?

While research synthesis is prevalent in the health care policy arena, this is the first systematic research synthesis project undertaken of affordable, workforce and mixed-income housing. With 25 years of housing research experience, Dr. Sherry Ahrentzen of Arizona State University’s Stardust Center for Affordable Homes and the Family supervises this project. The Stardust Center is a cutting edge research, education and design center, dedicated to exploring a range of innovative ideas that lead to increased development of affordable, workforce and mixed-income housing. Since its inception the Center has involved a wide range of professionals from various fields that contribute to the development of affordable housing. For more information about the Stardust Center, contact Dr. Sherry Ahrentzen, Associate Director for Research:  sherry.ahrentzen@asu.edu, or 602.496.1466.