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Introduction

The future for our cities is dependent on the actions of today. In particular, achieving cities that are sustainable is an imperative in our rapidly urbanizing world. In 1950 30% of the world's population lived in urban areas. By 2003 that proportion had risen to 48%, and it is very likely that the watershed of over half will be reached when this book is published. The predictions are that by 2030, 61% of the population will be urban (United Nations, 2004). Envisioning such a future is no easy matter. One of the conclusions reached by Williams *et al.* as to how a sustainable urban form can be achieved was the need for the development of 'new ways of conceiving the future built environment' (2000, p. 354).

The aim of this book is to present the reader with examples of the latest research into different urban forms and the ways in which they can be designed to be more sustainable. The pursuit of sustainability has been placed on the agenda of governments and non-governmental organizations after the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, and more recently by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) and the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. It has been stated by these, and other, bodies that cities must be economically viable, socially equitable and contribute to environmental protection of all species: adhering to the concept of the *Three Pillars of Sustainable Development* (United Nations, 2002). In many countries, policy has been adopted with long-term urban sustainability as its focus,