

Subject: Density subsidizes neighborhoods

From: Eric Goldberg
Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2025 4:44 PM
To: Planning <Planning@a2gov.org>
Subject: Density subsidizes neighborhoods

Hi City Planning Commission,

I listened to a lot of misinformation from NIMBY public commenters at the 3/18/2025 CPC meeting. I know you're all diligent and thoughtful people, so I know you weigh the loud anti-change comments, with the pro-housing sentiment that is more quietly shared (and Ann Arbor has overwhelmingly voted for in the past several elections - Voted out all of the anti-housing CMs, resoundingly defeated Props C & D, etc.)

In person participation tends to bias to wealthier, older, retired citizens. This leads to over-representation of anti-change & incumbent views. A lot of us can't attend, because of work obligations, childcare, and generally having more fragmented schedules. So I think it's important for us to share positive feedback, such as that in this email.

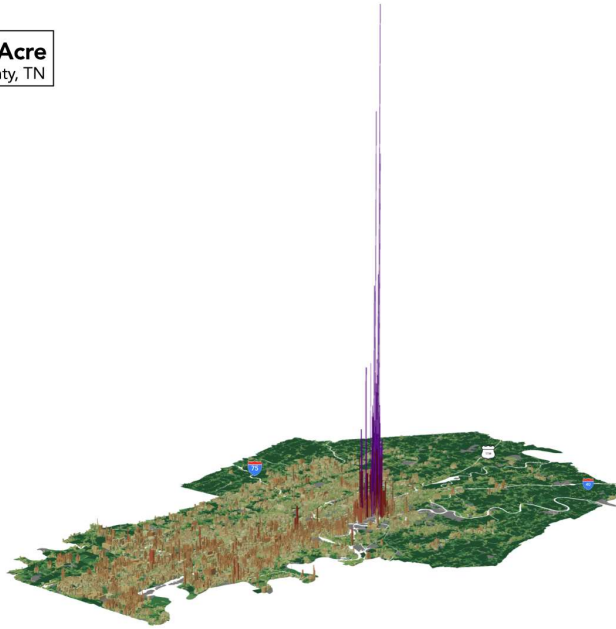
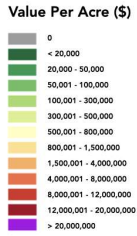
I'd like to share something that is salient for the Comprehensive Plan and other matters coming before the Commission. The TL;DR is: density subsidizes city services. Sparse housing is subsidized by dense areas. Neighborhoods need density to pay for high-quality, low-priced water service, sewer service, good schools, snow removal, pavement repair, and everything else.

Strong Towns did an amazing roundup in 2022 [1] of visualizations of taxable value per acre of land for several cities, from geoanalytics firm Urban3. I think these visualizations (see examples, attached) shed light on the important fact that sparse residential zoning is draining on city resources. Even if we were to somehow cap growth to zero, city services continue to get more expensive each year. One of the best ways to ensure low or no growth in tax rates is to shift our land use from low density to medium or high density. Ann Arbor residents enjoy great city services, so the goal should not be to force the City to choose between cutting services or raising taxes. And because of the Headlee Amendment, there's even a chance we won't be able to make such a choice – the necessary tax increase to cover services may exceed the rate of inflation with the right combination of low inflation and an urgent service need. If we balance the housing stock better, it won't even be a choice we need to make though.

Anyway, thanks for all that you do, and for remaining patient in the face of people heatedly sharing misinformation at your meetings. Please keep advocating for more housing, better land use, and the necessary density that unlocks both.

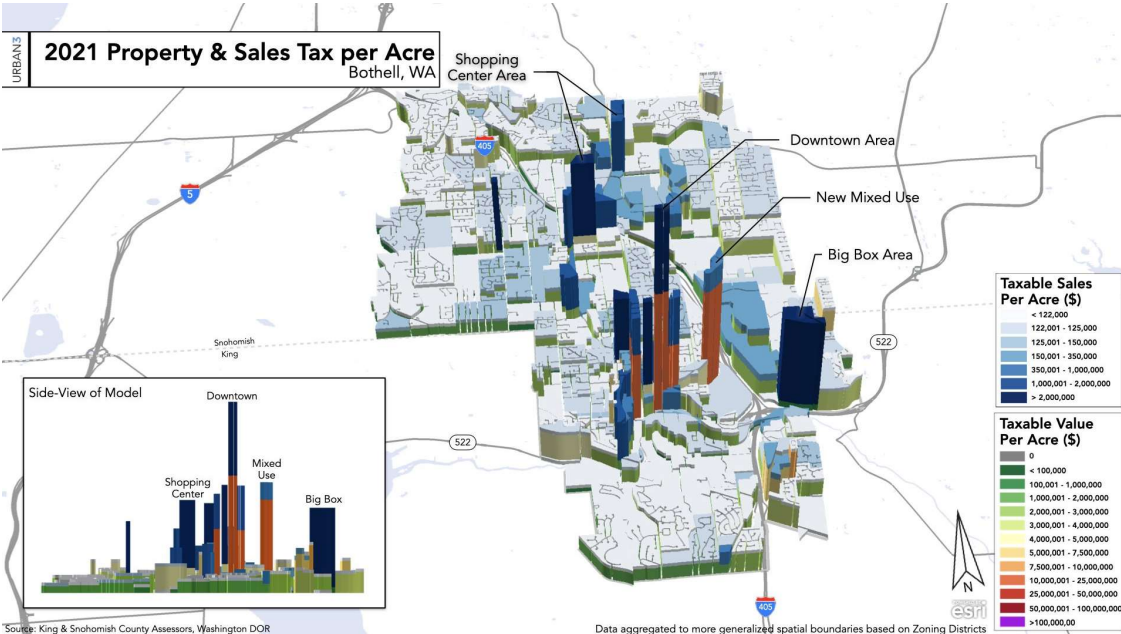
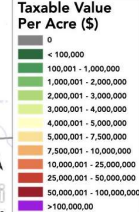
Eric Goldberg
Ward 5

URBAN3
Value Per Acre
 Knox County, TN



Source: Knox County, TN

URBAN3
2021 Property & Sales Tax per Acre
 Bothell, WA



Source: King & Snohomish County Assessors, Washington DOR

Data aggregated to more generalized spatial boundaries based on Zoning Districts

[1] <https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2022/12/15/2022-the-year-in-maps-and-charts-from-urban3>