

True Cost of Development

There are a lot of people who would like for you to believe that high density residential and commercial development will automatically lower your taxes. True or False?

False. Communities pay a high price for poorly planned growth. Scattered development causes traffic congestion, loss of open space and increased demand for costly public services.

According to numerous governmental studies, the cost of public services such as schools, fire and police protection and road maintenance actually exceeds the revenue that a high-density development produces.

In contrast, another study shows that the protection of open space results in an increase in value of residential properties in close proximity, thus paying more in taxes to the village. Also, homes in neighborhoods that protect mature trees sell for 10-15% more than homes built in subdivisions where trees were cut down and replaced with smaller landscaped trees.

Commercial development does not dramatically lower taxes either.

The town of Wheaton had sales tax revenues that were 29 times greater than Winfield in 2003. In a comparison of total tax rates, a Wheaton resident paid \$5,246 on a house valued at \$247,500. A Winfield resident paid \$5,725 on the same house value of \$247,500. So, if we increase commercial development by almost 30 times the present level (can you picture it?), the average person might save \$479.

How about the impact of Commercial development on the value of your home? The median home value of a home in Winfield was \$247,500 in 2003, higher than Wheaton's median home value of \$238,000.

In a recent letter to a local paper, a Wheaton resident said, "I can not begin to understand why Winfield would allow developers to control the local government and encourage dense (and commercial) construction. The quality of life, property values, and waste management are certainly not given proper consideration by those in office if they are only concerned about maximum profit for developers. You have a beautiful community with charm. Why do you want to look like every other subdivision built out of cornfields?"

Looking at the facts, I don't understand why anyone else would either.

It has been proven that open space and low-density land use is fiscally beneficial for three reasons. First, because these lands are privately owned, they are still paying taxes. Second, by increasing neighborhood property values, these land uses improve the community's tax base and increase tax revenue. Thirdly, these land uses do not require the level of publicly provided services that high density residential or commercial land

requires. Thus, these land uses do not exert the same financial drain on the village. From a revenue and expenditure perspective, open land and low density residential is a win-win situation for any community.

We still can and should have a beautiful town center. What we don't need is five-story buildings going up everywhere, ill-planned strip malls and a town that has had its beauty stripped away by developers and the candidates that they endorse.

April is our chance to vote for Rudy Czech, Joel Kunesh, Jack Bajor, and Christine Petitti. We need a Village President and Trustees that understand the relationships between residential and commercial growth, conservation, and their community's bottom line.

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