

Developers don't cause growth, they respond to it

In the evolving landscape of growth and development, there is a belief amongst the public that developers are the primary drivers of growth. This belief often leads to finger-pointing and criticism regarding issues like gentrification, rising property values, and increased traffic congestion. However, it is important to dispel this myth and recognize that developers are not the catalysts of growth; they are, in fact, responders to broader economic and demographic trends.

Firstly, let's acknowledge that cities are dynamic ecosystems that naturally experience growth and change over time. Populations expand, industries evolve, and societal needs shift, such as the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard renovation. These are organic processes influenced by a multitude of factors such as job opportunities, quality of life, social trends, and economic flux. Developers play a role in adapting to these changes by providing housing of all types, commercial spaces, and infrastructure to meet the demands of a growing population.

Developers are often entrepreneurs and investors who respond to market forces. They identify opportunities in areas where there is a demand for new development, whether due to increased employment opportunities, improved amenities, or desirable neighborhoods. They do not single-handedly create the demand but react to it. Developers take risks and invest capital to meet the needs of a changing community.



Critics often point to negative development consequences, such as rising property values, environmental impacts, and potential displacement of long-term residents. It's essential to understand that these issues result from broader economic and social forces, including increased

demand for housing in desirable areas. Developers do not create this demand but respond to it by building housing units that, in turn, affect property values. To address these challenges, policymakers are implementing equitable housing policies and zoning regulations that ensure affordability and protect vulnerable communities. Kitsap County is increasing building heights for multi-family housing in Silverdale, a welcome change we will see in this year's comprehensive plan update. Allowing supply to rise is key to generating affordability.

Moreover, blaming developers for issues like traffic congestion oversimplifies a complex problem. Increased traffic is often a result of inadequate public transportation, among other reasons. This issue is easy to identify when it occurs but can be hard to plan for. Developers can contribute to solutions by designing mixed-use developments that promote walkability and reduce the need for car travel. A great example of this is the Marina Square development done by Sound West Group in downtown Bremerton. However, they cannot bear sole responsibility for solving urban mobility challenges. This societal issue needs to be addressed by all, not just the development community.

In conclusion, developers should not be seen as the culprits behind urban growth but rather as participants in a broader process. They respond to the changing needs and desires of communities. To address the challenges associated with growth, it is crucial for communities, policymakers, and developers to work together to create sustainable, inclusive, and equitable urban environments. Blaming developers for growth is an oversimplification that hinders productive discussions and solutions.

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