

Stasis Undermines Equality: Or, What’s Wrong With Urban Growth Controls?

Kirun Sankaran
Department of Philosophy, University at Buffalo

Abstract

Egalitarian critics of gentrification argue that urban growth controls protect the worst off from market-driven change in cities. A growing body of empirical literature shows that growth controls cause the problems these critics want them to solve: they raise housing costs and exclude the poor from cities. But these egalitarian critics also face deeper philosophical problems. First, they assume (but do not argue) that neighborhoods are the sites of communal goods that are undermined by new entrants. This conflicts with the feature of cities that generates economic mobility: allowing cooperation with culturally dissimilar newcomers. Second, the democratic land-use governance these theorists call for already exists, and it enforces stasis precisely by distributing participation costs so as to exclude the poor. Egalitarian arguments for stasis are self-undermining.

Author’s version of an article published in *Philosophical Perspectives* (2026).

<https://doi.org/10.1111/phpe.70010>

Please cite the published version.

1 Introduction

Contemporary egalitarian critics of gentrification argue that urban change driven by markets disproportionately harms the worst off. In response, they argue, urban growth controls like rent regulation (Radin 1986) and other rules that limit entry into neighborhoods (Krishnamurthy and Moore 2024; Kukla 2021; Lloyd 2025; Schragger 2021; Serkin 2020; Sitaraman and Serkin 2025) can mitigate those harms by protecting incumbent residents’ collective rights over the built environment.¹

Most criticisms of urban growth controls either concentrate on their role in undermining economic growth (Glaeser and Gyourko 2018; Klein and Thompson 2025; Schleicher 2017), or on broadly libertarian arguments that they are unacceptable abrogations of individual liberty and autonomy (Christmas 2025; Kogelmann 2025). But there is a further problem: a growing body of empirical evidence that growth controls exacerbate inequality. By prohibiting change in the built environment, growth controls transform cities into playgrounds for the rich and deny poor people opportunities for better jobs and higher pay. They cause the very problems

¹I argue against a different sort of case for these policies in Sankaran (2025).

these “neighborhood defenders” (as I’ll call them, following Einstein et al. 2019) want them to solve.

This leaves us with a puzzle. Neighborhood defenders wanted stasis. They got stasis (Schleicher and Hills 2025). But what they didn’t get is equality. Their self-consciously egalitarian arguments land them, at best, somewhere near the current status quo. Why do so many avowed egalitarians defend such wildly inegalitarian policies? Surely one answer is simple ignorance of the empirical literature. The philosophical literature on housing is rife with what Joseph Heath (2025) calls “highbrow misinformation”. But there are two further, more philosophically interesting diagnoses. First, neighborhood defenders embrace a form of communitarianism that cannot undergird a normative theory of urban politics. These communitarian arguments hold that stasis is required to protect important neighborhood-level communal goods from being undermined by new entrants. These goods are important for helping provide us with control and authorship over our environment. They are scaffolds for our agency (e.g. Nine 2018). But urban territory requires much more than the goods neighborhood defenders are interested in defending; it is in fact *incompatible* with the kind of stasis neighborhood defenders want. Second, they argue that *democratic control* of land use will allow incumbent residents to preserve those important goods against impositions by outsiders who want to move in. But there is a tradeoff between democratic representation and stasis. Minoritarian political arrangements are the mechanism that maintains the stasis neighborhood defenders want, which conflicts with their egalitarian commitments.

2 The Puzzle: Egalitarians for Inequality

A robust contemporary literature holds “gentrification” responsible for a variety of ills in cities. They are increasingly inaccessible to all but the wealthiest; former working-class enclaves have been transformed into playgrounds for the ultra-rich, their previous residents pushed out by skyrocketing rents (Gyourko et al. 2013); and their built environments homogenized according to the tastes of the upper class (Kukla 2021, 96–97). A fashionable diagnosis from some philosophers, sociologists, urban planners, geographers and even some political scientists attributes these results to an influx of richer, often whiter newcomers. A natural response to these problems is to limit who can enter a neighborhood. There are a number of different arguments for this basic conclusion, however, and it’s worth distinguishing them along two axes. First, what problem are growth controls supposed to solve? The literature doesn’t usually distinguish them, but there are two separate harms growth controls are supposed to stave off. We’ll call them *gentrification* and *displacement*. For our purposes, “gentrification” is the arrival of newcomers to a neighborhood, sufficient to change “the whole social character of the district” (Glass 1964, xviii). “Displacement” is the exit of incumbent residents, due paradigmatically though not necessarily to rising rents caused by gentrification. Each can occur without the other. An elastic housing supply allows gentrification without displacement. Where it’s inelastic, gentrification can cause displacement. Municipal death spirals can cause

displacement without any gentrification at all. Second, sometimes neighborhood defenders argue directly for specific policies like rent control; other times they argue for democratic control over entry by incumbent residents.

In the rest of this section, I’m going to show that growth controls cannot be justified by concerns about displacement, since they exacerbate inequality. This sets up the puzzle that motivates the paper. If displacement can’t motivate urban growth controls on egalitarian grounds, what does? The next three sections address direct arguments; the sixth addresses indirect ones.

It’s extremely common both in academic and popular discourse to concentrate on the harms of displacement. For example, stable occupancy in a particular home is important because knowing where we’ll sleep tonight, tomorrow night, and the next night is both intrinsically valuable and allows us to plan our lives. Housing is thus an important piece of scaffolding for our agency (Huber and Wolkenstein 2018; Krishnamurthy and Moore 2024; Nine 2018; Putnam 2021); we also have an interest in having a place that’s our own exclusive domain (Essert 2016). In the worst cases, having to move because of eviction can disrupt social networks, lead to unemployment and psychological distress, and ruin prospects for income mobility and escaping the cycle of poverty (Desmond 2016). The specifics differ subtly from theorist to theorist, but in general, the literature articulates this cluster of important interests as a right to a home (Wells 2019), or an occupancy right. Gentrification, at least of the sort that leads to displacement, undermines these important interests, and, thus, rights to housing. Some theorists also articulate this as domination (Jenkins 2025; Putnam 2021) as well as in more expansive normative language (Hoover 2023). In arguing about this, contemporary philosophers often concentrate on the specific relationship between landlords and tenants, or gentrifiers and incumbents (Jenkins 2025; Putnam 2021). Neighborhood defenders in other disciplines appeal to the “growth machine” (Molotch 1976; Logan and Molotch 2007) or an amorphous construction they call “capital” (Madden and Marcuse 2016), which seizes upon investment opportunities to drive up rents and displace working class residents (Smith 1979, 1987, 1996; Smith and Williams 1986). And this requires residential rent control or democratic control over land use or some such to defuse.

But the causal mechanisms driving higher prices are well understood. Rent control, for example, does lower the rent burden of apartments subject to it. Unfortunately, it also imposes second-order costs: decreasing the value of rental properties, lowering the supply of new rental units, decreasing the quality of existing ones (by decreasing the returns to maintenance and renovation), and increasing their conversion to owner-occupied units. It also makes moving prohibitively expensive, leading to what economists call “spatial misallocation”. For example, a couple in a large rent-controlled apartment whose kids have left for college might want to downsize, but find the move prohibitively expensive because of a lack of available units. Because rent control raises the cost to that couple of moving, their apartment, which would be well suited to a younger couple starting a family, is unavailable to them. That family might thereby have to commute in from the suburbs, or never move to the city in the

first place (Diamond et al. 2019; Kholodilin 2024). Other mechanisms designed to protect tenants also seem to have bad effects (Abramson 2026; Coulson et al. 2025).

Restrictions on entry to a neighborhood, including on building new housing, exacerbate inequality, including via the displacement channel. One argument for these restrictions, from Lloyd, holds that communities ought to have “*pro tanto* rights of control to share the goods of the community with those who are best-placed to benefit from them” (2025, 1258). Similarly, Huber and Wolkenstein argue that “urban governance must first and foremost be made *more democratic and inclusive*” (2018, 391, emphasis in original). Krishnamurthy and Moore advocate for “control of public spaces, parks, in some cases schools and recreational facilities, and other things important to the collective local conditions of people’s lives” to “be placed at the local or community level, which, ideally, would be inclusive and democratically organized” (2024, 643; cf. also Imbroscio 2011, 2021a, 2021b, 2023, 2024; Schragger 2021; Serkin 2020). In practice, this amounts to what Fischel (2015, 1) calls “collective property rights”.

While there are a number of collective property rights schemes in the history of American housing policy, the most common is the municipal zoning code. Aside from their ugly racial history (Trounstine 2019; Sahn 2025), they have other inegalitarian effects as well (Gray 2022). For example, one important mechanism of income mobility, especially in the United States, is *labor mobility*. We tend to think of cities as playgrounds for educated, white-collar professionals. But this is a historical aberration (Appelbaum 2025). Even among less-educated workers, moving to a city from a rural area leads on average to higher wages (Glaeser 2012, 6–7; Moretti 2012, 88–107). The problem is that for the past several decades, higher housing costs have eaten up a huge percentage of those wage gains (Appelbaum 2025, 231). The combination of strict and often complicated rules and participatory mechanisms that governs land use in the United States and other western democracies increases the costs of building housing (Glaeser and Gyourko 2018; Gyourko and Krimmel 2021; Ward and Schlake 2025), results in less housing (especially multifamily housing) (Einstein et al. 2019; Einstein 2021; Greenaway-McGrevy and Phillips 2023; Gyourko and Molloy 2015), and delays the housing that does get built (Einstein et al. 2019)—which in turn raises prices (Glaeser et al. 2005a, 2005b). Once a zoning regime is in place, it rarely changes (Ellickson 2022). This lowers mobility into cities. That lack of mobility explains much of the persistence of regional inequality in the United States (Ganong and Shoag 2017; Duranton and Puga 2023; Schleicher 2017). We have a recent spate of good empirical evidence for the claim that at the margin, new housing construction lowers the price of housing, both in the surrounding neighborhood and citywide (Asquith et al. 2021; Bratu et al. 2023; Greenaway-McGrevy 2025; Li 2022; Mast 2023), just as theory predicts (Baum-Snow and Duranton 2025; Glaeser and Gyourko 2018). So the abrogations of individual property rights, in favor of collective ones, that are supposed to protect poor residents of cities from market mechanisms in fact have the opposite effect, undermining their welfare. So it’s hard to see why egalitarian concerns about displacement give us any kind of plausible egalitarian argument for them.

Partially, the enthusiasm for growth controls reflects a failure to reckon with the causes

of displacement (e.g. Imbroscio 2011, 2021a, 219–224; Kohn 2016, Ch.5; Smith 1996). But while the lack of subject matter knowledge is concerning, it gives us the ability to distinguish the non-starter argument from displacement from more philosophically interesting arguments about gentrification.

These arguments conclude that gentrification, even absent displacement, can justify urban growth controls. They do this by embracing the basic communitarian move that group membership generates claims of political morality. In the neighborhood defenders’ case, a set of important communal goods that residents of a neighborhood enjoy generate a strong, if defeasible, claim to collectively control entry into that neighborhood. Growth controls help preserve those goods by keeping outsiders out. One problem with this strategy is that it assumes, usually without argument, that consumption of those communal goods would be undermined by new entrants. It also assumes (again without argument) that demand for these goods are extremely inelastic. Neither of these assumptions is obviously true. Absent argument for them it’s hard to know why these bases of political membership are important, especially when traded off against the goods urban growth controls sacrifice. The second theoretical problem is that neighborhood defenders advocate for democratic control of land use, because it’s the best way to protect the interests of the worst off. The problem is that the features of democratic governance that enforce stasis also effectively disenfranchise the worst off. Neighborhood defenders’ motivations are self-undermining. But first, we should lay out the structure of the argument for stasis.

3 Most Things in Here Don’t React Too Well to Markets: Communitarian Arguments for Growth Controls

The positive case for urban growth controls identifies a set of important goods that can only be enjoyed in the context of a particular community, and, following old-school 1980s communitarians like Macintyre (1984) and Sandel (1998) and also new-school communitarians like Patrick Deneen (2018, 2023) and Adrian Vermeule (2020, 2022), infers from the existence and value of located attachments to a collective or group right held by community members over various aspects of governance of the local community and built environment. This communitarian strategy is completely inescapable in the contemporary critique of gentrification and housing markets in philosophy, critical urban studies, law, political science, and the popular press.

The communal goods identified by neighborhood defenders include stable tenancy in a neighborhood populated by other stable tenants, the opportunity to develop a stock of “social capital” (Putnam 2001; Krishnamurthy and Moore 2024; Lloyd 2025), as well as a set of relationships to the built environment like a favorite bookstore or coffee shop, and a general ease and comfort at knowing one’s way around (D Putnam 2021; Imbroscio 2011, Ch.4). These goods help constitute “a space within which [we] have authority and spatial agency—[we] belong in the space in a rich sense, and to some extent control entry into it and

norms within it” (Kukla 2021, 42). Jake Monaghan (2025, 524) gives us the useful term “territory” and defines it as “the collection of places where we have a measure of legitimate control and authorship”. I’ll adopt it for the rest of this essay as a catch-all term for the thing neighborhood defenders are interested in defending.

But according to neighborhood defenders, gentrification undermines stability and territory. That territory is disrupted if a new set of people very different from us and our neighbors suddenly shows up in town (Krishnamurthy and Moore 2024, 13–17, Kukla 2021, Ch.3), especially when an incoming group has very different cultural norms than the incumbent group. An influx of new residents changes incumbents’ relationships with the built environment, either by changing the character of places that undergird social relations, like stores and other small businesses, or creating conflict over public space like parks and playgrounds. (Dawkins 2023; Putnam 2021; Lloyd 2025; Guillery and Zimmer 2026). Control of public space is a fraught question at the best of times, but is especially so when groups with underlying cultural differences interact. Kukla gives the example of the category of “disorder,” in which a set of behaviors generally accepted by incumbent residents, like playing loud music or sitting outside on stoops drinking and talking, are seen as threatening by the (usually richer, whiter) newcomers (Kukla 2021, §3.2, Smith 1996). Lloyd argues further that newcomers might be unwilling to talk to incumbents, which apparently carries deep political implications (2025, 1253). Another worry is that the mechanism that spurs gentrification—the use of markets to produce and distribute housing—leads to *exit* from neighborhoods (though not *displacement*), as high human capital incumbents move in search of jobs. The intuition is that this might *undermine* the communal or democratic character of urban governance by undermining the social and political ties forged by extended tenancy (Imbroscio 2021a, 226–227). So the value of stability is that it preserves territory and mitigates the effects of changes in social capital and the built environment, and so it can serve as an ideal for neighborhood defenders.

The biggest difference between stasis-focused neighborhood defenders and 1980s communitarians is that the neighborhood defenders are explicitly egalitarian. They are worried about the effects on poor and historically marginalized groups of an influx of newer, presumably wealthier residents, *even in the absence of significant displacement*. They go in for this communitarian strategy because they also hold the view that markets unfairly privilege the interests of the rich over the poor (Imbroscio 2021a; Kukla 2021; Putnam 2021). The communal goods stasis theorists endorse are especially important *because* of their importance to poorer people. Krishnamurthy and Moore, for example, argue that “... the economically disadvantaged are more likely to *rely on* help, assistance, and support from others in their families and community” (2024, 640–641), and that the interactions within the community are likely to constitute a larger proportion of their welfare (641). And the ostensible disruption to them by markets is bad specifically because of their effects on the worst off.

This argument turns on the idea that territory is *rivalrous* or *zero-sum*. Whatever goods constitute territory are undermined by newcomers. This commitment is common to neighborhood defenders and communitarians. Kukla’s (2021, §3.2) argument that concepts like

“disorder,” which organize the governance of public space, can undermine incumbents’ territory, similarly implies that territory is rivalrous. In the law literature, Serkin (2020, 785) defends zoning by arguing that “[t]oo much growth too quickly will disrupt owners’ reasonable expectations with regard to property values, community character, and the costs and burdens of new development.” This kind of move clearly shows that for neighborhood defenders, territory is easily undermined by newcomers of the wrong sort.

So far we’ve established that there’s a set of important goods that are required for agency, authorship, and control, which can only be enjoyed in the presence of others of a certain type, and which are undermined by new, different entrants. There’s a further argument—step two in the communitarian strategy—for communal property rights. Communitarians left and right agree that the liberal emphasis on individual choice makes it impossible to properly value communal goods. And they, and their inheritors, argue further that giving those goods their due requires a set of governance structures that are valuable *specifically at the community level*. Sandel and Deneen explicitly endorse group rights, which are held in common, for the purpose of protecting those communal goods, and which abrogate individual rights. Walzer’s (1983) positive proposals all involve strict controls to keep separate spheres of justice separate, to avoid polluting them with distributive principles appropriate to goods with different social meanings.

Contemporary neighborhood defenders follow their communitarian ancestors and contemporaries. They infer from the value of stability to a collective property right. Krishnamurthy and Moore (2024) argue that incumbent residents have a “right to a place based community”. It’s important to emphasize that this is a collective right, held by a community. It’s a “collectively shared interest that individual group members have in living in their neighborhood *together* and, in the case of gentrification, that has been disrupted” (Krishnamurthy and Moore 2024, 639- 640). This right includes an occupancy right to remain in a particular place, understood as one’s own home, over which one has some measure of sovereignty, a right to not be separated from that home, and robust rights to “located attachments” or “place-based community” (Krishnamurthy and Moore 2024, §3). This requires participatory, democratic control of public space, because democratic organization allows those affected by urban change a voice in determining the nature of that change (Huber and Wolkenstein 2018; Krishnamurthy and Moore 2024). Lloyd argues that “a community of incumbent land users have locational rights over a neighborhood to the extent that they have succeeded in creating or sustaining value there”, including over “cultural heritage and intangible social capital institutions”(2025, 1258). And Marxist writers defend something they call “the right to the city” (Lefebvre et al. 2003), which David Harvey (2008), characterizes as “far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization.” That collective right is generally characterized as a *democratic* one that encompasses democratic governance of major decisions about the use of land.

If the rights to “located attachments” or a “place based community” or “the city” are to be taken seriously, they’ll *have* to abrogate individual-level rights. Gentrification, whatever else it is, involves people buying land, and whatever’s on the land, from its previous owners and doing new things with it. Whatever criticisms we might have of gentrification, it proceeds in a way that respects individual property rights. If it didn’t, it’d be another thing and wrong for other reasons. But specifically because it’s compatible with (and, indeed, requires) robust individual property rights, gentrification is a kind of collective action problem. A series of voluntary transactions between landowners and land buyers can result in a wholesale change to a place, and thereby undermine the features of a community that underlie the collective rights neighborhood defenders care about. Protecting a right to place-based community, or any other collective good communitarians care about, then, involves protecting a collective right by abrogating an individual one. Obviously this isn’t objectionable by itself. Labor unions work on a similar principle. They protect the interests of a group of people by enforcing cooperation in the face of a temptation to defect by individual members. The purpose of them is to make sure that individuals can’t make separate agreements about the disposition of their property, thereby undermining (the argument goes) important collective rights. So communitarian claims about governance seem to follow straightforwardly from the kinds of goods they’re interested in protecting.

The *kinds* of goods neighborhood defenders think constitute territory, and which they’re concerned to defend, motivate the argument for growth controls. Goods whose value to an individual increases in the number of people who enjoy them, up to some point at which they become subject to congestion, are called “club goods” (Buchanan 1965). A swimming pool or public park, for example, can become difficult to enjoy if there are too many people around; at a certain point, the marginal user detracts from everyone’s enjoyment. But for neighborhood defenders, territory is a special kind of club good whose value depends both on the number of entrants to a neighborhood and their *type*. Territory, and the control, authorship, agency, and belonging that it supports, require restricting entry to the wrong sorts of people. This is why Lloyd (2025, 1258) argues that communities should have “*pro tanto* rights of control to share the goods of the community with those who are best-placed to benefit from them”. Importantly, he adds that these rights must be communal to defuse the collective action problem of individual incumbents selling to out-group members (2025, 1258–1259). The club-goods interpretation of territory justifies the inference from the importance of territory to the permissibility of urban growth controls.

4 Whose Community? Which Goods?

Territory is important because the goods that constitute it exhibit specific positive externalities: they are “scaffolding” for our agency. They make it easier for residents to pursue their various goals, and their absence impedes those pursuits. In large part, this is because residents have stable expectations about what’s normal that are anchored by everyone else’s

expectations (Bicchieri 2006). One initial problem is that not every component of territory is rivalrous in a way that would justify growth controls, and growth controls sacrifice the non-rivalrous components for the rivalrous ones. So the case for growth controls has to show that the rivalrous goods are worth it. Unfortunately, they just assume this without argument. But the revealed preferences of people lower down the income distribution give us good reasons to think otherwise—they’re consistently willing to sacrifice those goods for higher wages.

Urban territory isn’t obviously rivalrous. Social capital, for example, and the sort of “help, assistance and support” from family that Krishnamurthy and Moore highlight are unlikely to be undermined merely by the entry of new and dissimilar others. They are likely to be undermined by *displacement*, but as we saw above, that’s mostly downstream of the pro-stasis policies neighborhood defenders, well, defend. Of the plausible components of territory that are identified in this literature, the ones that seem reasonably likely to be rivalrous are the built environment, control of public space, and political control. Guillery and Zimmer (2026) argue that gentrification, even absent displacement, can lead to “marginalization”, a state of affairs in which neighborhood-level changes cause a kind of “disorientation”, which incumbents lack the political power to rectify or control. Kukla (2021, 95) notes that incumbent residents “may lose their ability to be at home in the neighborhood” and that “the space itself can change so that it is no longer the place that it was and no longer the territory of the people who have been residing there.” The argument that gentrification *without displacement* justifies urban growth controls requires showing that the rivalrousness of these particular goods undermines territory, not just at the margin, but all things considered, in a way that doesn’t permit substitutes. Any plausible theory of urban territory has to include a set of goods that aren’t rivalrous. At their core, cities are sites of hypercooperation. They are places where the returns to cooperative behaviors are higher than normal. Urban economists call these outsized returns “agglomeration effects.” They include things like a deeper and more specialized labor market, and knowledge spillovers that lead to technological advancement (Brueckner 2011, 5–10). The agglomeration effects depend, crucially, on the ability of cities to absorb newcomers and incorporate them into those deep labor markets. The possibility of cities is evidence that territory can be realized by different bundles of goods, and isn’t limited to the features of a small, insular community that neighborhood defenders fetishize. This is an important feature of urban territory. Realizing the benefits of agglomeration requires urban dwellers to marshal a wide range of strong and weak social ties, interact with culturally dissimilar others, and access a wide range of services, including public safety, transportation, and the like (Jacobs 1961). All of this is a consequence of the fact that cities, like all territory, exhibit what Monaghan (2025, 528) calls “autocatalytic diversity (diversity that begets more diversity)”. Any conception of urban territory, of the features of cities that make agency and authorship possible, has to make room for the role of this essential dynamism and diversity, because it brings with it important components of urban territory.

Generally, we think of agglomeration as a driver of increased productivity and economic growth. But they are also importantly *egalitarian*. Access to a superior system of cooperation

helps make poor people richer. That insight underlies many of the motivations to move, whether it's to another country (Heath 2022) or to a city within the same country. What cities offer newcomers is a more extensive set of opportunities to gain from cooperation. The revealed preferences of working-class Americans are further evidence of this. For generations, Americans moved to cities to find work, giving up the insular and homogenous small towns that neighborhood defenders' accounts of territory most mirror. That is, they traded the goods neighborhood defenders *think* constitute territory, and which justify urban growth controls, for the set of goods that *in fact* constitute urban territory. Until recently, this was a major mechanism of income mobility and income inequality (Appelbaum 2025; Ganong and Shoag 2017). Growth controls turn a positive-sum enterprise into a negative-sum one. So an egalitarian theory of urban territory will have to incorporate the features of cities that allow them to drive egalitarian outcomes. This makes urban growth controls an awkward fit. The punchline, then, is that the goals neighborhood defenders claim to support are ill-served by the zero-sum framing they impose. But the assumption that territory is rivalrous both with respect to neighborhood population and ethnic mix turns on an implausibly narrow picture of how territory actually works.

Urban growth controls sacrifice important components of urban territory, including ones their revealed preferences tell us poor people value, for the specifically rivalrous components neighborhood defenders value. Let's work through an example to further illustrate the point. In a recent article, the philosopher Harry Lloyd argues that in order to protect the collective goods that gentrification ostensibly threatens, communities ought to have collective property rights over their built environment that should allow them to decide what sorts of newcomers are best suited to enjoy those goods. This sort of arrangement has a name: "racial deed covenant" (Brady 2021; Brooks and Rose 2013). These are essentially agreements among property owners to restrict the sale of property to people who would best be able to enjoy the collective goods of the communities in question (this is a euphemism). And while these covenants were agreed to by whoever owned the home at the time they were signed, they effectively ran with the *property*, not the owner, because agreeing to them was a condition of purchase. This helped maintain a *collective*, rather than individual-level, property right. Importantly, even though these agreements have been illegal since 1948, they helped white property owners signal their values to one another, in a way that enforced a racist equilibrium by default. If everyone thinks everyone else thinks that it's unacceptable to sell your house to someone with dark skin, then nobody is likely to do so (for a fleshed out theory of this sort of dynamic, Basu 2018). Even the most committed NIMBY is unlikely to advocate for a return to racial deed covenants. But they have all the formal features that Lloyd (2025) advocates: a property right, held at the collective level, designed to preserve a collective good enjoyed by incumbents, that allows those incumbents to disburse those collective goods to those they think best able to enjoy them.

From the perspective of racial equality and distributive justice, deed covenants are *quite* bad. They play a central role in America's ugly history of spatial segregation (Lens 2024;

Logan and Parman 2025; Rothstein 2017; Trounstein 2019). One mechanism by which they enforce racial inequality is by segmenting the housing market. Restricting black and white residents to different neighborhoods means that the demand for houses in both black and white neighborhoods will be lower. This leads to lower property values in black neighborhoods, due to relative lack of demand, as well as (at the margin) lower property values *in white neighborhoods*, assuming that individual-level racial animus isn't a big driver of housing decisions. This leads to what urban economists call "spatial misallocation."²

All of this lowers welfare, in aggregate. Even if this sort of collective property right were restricted to neighborhoods populated mostly or entirely by members of marginalized groups, *motivated entirely by the goal of protecting the territory of marginalized groups, rather than outright racial discrimination*, we should expect the same inequalitarian consequences. By constricting the set of possible buyers or renters, racial deed covenants and other collective property rights make incumbents worse off by lowering their property values. This makes exit costlier, exacerbating spatial misallocation (Lens 2024, 25–27, 61–67). These collective property rights also make properties in the neighborhood less attractive targets for investment, which you'd expect to leave those neighborhoods with older, lower-quality housing stock. In fact, we do see these effects in black neighborhoods in the US (Lens 2024, 63). In fact, black neighborhoods declined in the wake of the Fair Housing Act in part because affluent black families left for higher-income neighborhoods (Wilson 2012, 268). Fundamentally, racial deed covenants are sets of restrictions on positive-sum transactions, and that explains why segmenting the housing market like they do undermines equality. If we restrict the set of transactions black homeowners can make, we should expect that they'd be worse off. That reinforces stasis at the individual level, by making it harder to move, and it reinforces stasis at the neighborhood level by making it harder to change the built environment. Racial deed covenants are just one particularly odious example, but the argument generalizes. Neighborhood defenders are interested in urban growth controls because they value stasis in urban neighborhoods, on the theory that stasis is required to preserve the rivalrous components of territory. But this preservation sacrifices the characteristics that make cities work. Their defense requires an unduly narrow conception of urban territory. The fact that territory encompasses a much larger, more diverse, and more versatile basket of goods than neighborhood defenders recognize undermines the case for stasis. So to make their case, neighborhood defenders have to argue that control of public space and the built environment somehow constitute territory, to the exclusion of all the other things that make cities work. And it's hard to see how they can plausibly pull this off.

It's also not obvious that the *rivalrous* set of goods can be preserved by growth controls. Monaghan (2025, 530) gives the example of Greenwich Village in New York City, which,

²Slightly more technically: a spatial equilibrium is an allocation of people across places in which nobody can do better by moving. Misallocation is what happens when the allocation is not a spatial equilibrium. Cf. Glaeser (2008), Glaeser and Gottlieb (2009), Roback (1982)

in the middle of the twentieth century, was famously a bohemian enclave home to artists and a burgeoning queer community, as well as a large Greek immigrant community. The built environment was, in effect, frozen in amber in the late 1960s. And this has completely changed the character of the territory. It’s no longer a countercultural haven; the townhome that Jane Jacobs moved into in 1947 is now worth well into the seven figures (Appelbaum 2025, 36). If you were interested in starting a punk band, you would not move to the Village. Similarly, trying to control entry to a neighborhood, whether directly or through controlling the built environment won’t necessarily preserve territory, because the sort of goods required for agency change over the life cycle.

Guillery and Zimmer admit, echoing many others in this literature that their goal is to “present an account of one possible (and significant) injustice arising from the process of gentrification, not to contribute to the understanding of its causal basis” (2026, 2). But part of the point here is that the causal story is important for figuring out whether important values are likely to be impeded by policy, and how they relate to other values (Wiens 2013).

5 Strong Communitarianism

But neighborhood defenders can also embrace what I’ll call “strong communitarianism”, which holds that community-level goods are *partially constitutive* of residents’ good, instead of valuable merely because they serve the causes of agency and control. Here is one statement of this strategy, from Mulhall and Swift (1996, 41): “... individuals might become constitutively attached to their community and thereby gain access to a type of human good that they could not achieve on their own.” Michael Sandel (1998) insists on the importance of our ends, as given by our circumstances, in somehow *constituting* us. Similarly, Roberto Unger (1975, 76) claims that “the political doctrine of liberalism does not acknowledge communal values.” His compatriot Alasdair MacIntyre tells us “the notion of the political community as a common project is alien to the modern liberal individualist world” (1984, 156).³ Or, as Mulhall and Swift put it, in a commentary on communitarianism, “... the possibility of a public life in which the identity as well as the interests of the participants might be at stake is ... ruled out in advance” by liberalism (1996, 52). More recently, right-wing communitarians like Patrick Deneen (2018) echo this thought by arguing that liberal governance attempts to substitute impersonal modes of governance for the specific, concrete features of human life (Deneen calls this “culture”) that allow us to recognize important human goods. He claims, for example, that liberalism has “successfully disembedded us from relationships that once made claims upon us but also informed our conception of selfhood, our sense of ourselves as citizens sharing a common fate and as economic actors sharing a common world” (2018, 18).

Generally, neighborhood defenders don’t embrace strong communitarianism. But Putnam (2021, 170) identifies the relationship between place and agency as either causal or

³These are gathered in Holmes (1993, 177). For discussion of the communitarian critiques, cf. Holmes (1993), Gutmann (1985), and Mulhall and Swift (1996)

constitutive, which opens the door to this strategy. Strong communitarianism would entail that features of the neighborhood like social capital, norms governing public space, relationships to the built environment and the like partially constitute residents' identities and therefore the correct conception of the good for them. While the paper doesn't provide a great deal of detail, I think the communitarian ideas in the previous paragraph provide a natural interpretation. One advantage of this view is that it immediately defuses most of the objections in the previous subsection. If the important, identity-constituting features of neighborhoods conflict with dynamism and agglomeration, so much the worse for dynamism and agglomeration. And the revealed preferences of people, who either do or would like to move to cities, sacrificing those identity-constituting features of their hometowns, are of no ethical significance. These people are simply making a mistake.

This move has three other tremendous costs. First, it doesn't seem a plausible basis for a normative theory of cities, because it embraces commitments that are inimical to the existence of cities in the first place. Second, it seems in some tension with the egalitarian ethos of neighborhood defenders. One motivation of neighborhood defenders is to think through the conditions under which members of marginalized groups can participate as full members in a democracy. That seems hard to square with the claim that the identity-conferring goods associated with place generate specific ethical standards. If you're an egalitarian, you have to be able to make cross-community comparisons, which strong communitarianism precludes. Third, it's unclear why the relevant identity-constituting goods operate at the *neighborhood* level. It seems to me that being a member of the Bills Mafia is at least as much an identity-conferring property as anything neighborhood defenders identify, and it's one I share with every other member, whether they're in my neighborhood in Buffalo or elsewhere. So strong communitarianism *is* an open but unattractive possibility for neighborhood defenders.

6 Urban Governance as Democratic Erosion

It's striking that academic neighborhood defenders advocate for "democratic" governance of land use, as though it were a change from the status quo. In fact, American land use is governed by a whole mess of "citizen voice" mechanisms that allow residents a great deal of input into what gets built in their neighborhoods. Our contemporary governance paradigm multiplies *opportunities to participate*, on the theory that expansions of those opportunities help make them more available to those who are most vulnerable. But there are two reasons to think that this abstract commitment to equality is undermined by our ostensibly democratic land use governance. First, the costs of participation are simply not distributed equally. This means that formally equal opportunities will yield substantive differences in participation. It's a well-known stylized fact that these opportunities tend to benefit the wealthy and privileged (Einstein et al. 2019; Elliott 2023; Hall and Yoder 2022; Lemar 2021; Sahn 2024; Yoder 2020). While deliberative democracy is in theory about the voice of the people, in practice it is about the voice of the people who love meetings. Second, land use policies are (quite literally) public

goods, which create collective action problems for any constituency with a stake (Olson 1971). The proliferation of participation opportunities allows small, motivated groups, which, in this case, tend to be the pro-stasis ones, an advantage in solving collective action problems (Olson 1982), and thereby reinforces stasis (Einstein et al. 2019). The punchline for neighborhood defenders is that ostensibly democratic governance mechanisms reinforce stasis specifically by being inegalitarian.

6.1 The Status Quo: Meetings Take Up Valuable Time

Generally, in the United States, both enactment of a zoning regulation and “adjustment”—where a variance is requested by a property owner due to some feature of a project violating the letter of the zoning code—require a public comment period (Lemar 2021, 1090–1092). Multifamily housing, in particular, often requires zoning variances due to the restrictive nature of single-family zoning, which makes it more likely to invite public comment (1092). Each of these public comment periods happens during a meeting of either a planning board (which handles the enactment of zoning rules) or a zoning board (which handles variances) (Fischel 2015, Ch.2). In Lebanon, NH, where I lived while writing this paper, those meetings are held on the first and second Tuesdays of the month at 6:30 or 7pm, and depending on the length of the meeting agenda, can extend until 10pm. In other words, they’re during dinner, and they often extend past my bedtime. The opportunity costs for me are time spent putting my daughter to bed and hanging out with my spouse and my dog, and maybe reading a book. In many places, zoning and planning board meetings can get contentious. Why would you skip family dinner to give a public comment in support of a multifamily housing project, when it gets you yelled at for being an interloper who doesn’t care about the community?⁴ Similarly, if you’re a nurse working second shift, land use decisions are made while you’re at work. If you’re a low-wage service worker who’s called into work on short notice, you won’t be able to go to the zoning board meeting. It should not surprise anyone that public comment periods don’t capture a descriptively representative sample of the population or a representative sample of public opinion (Einstein et al. 2019, Ch.5; Sahn 2024). The people who show up will be older, longtime residents of a neighborhood who simply face lower opportunity costs (or real sickos like me). And this point generalizes beyond local land use planning—the impulse to make various forms of governance more democratic by layering on more public participation undermines the interests of people who *have stuff to do* (Elliott 2023). The point, then, is that facially egalitarian governance institutions can conceal extremely *inegalitarian* structures. As we’ve seen, facially democratic governance institutions often promote stasis. But they do so specifically by making participation harder for all but an unrepresentative sample of the population. And this makes it easier for small, motivated groups to organize and get their way, even though their preferences don’t reflect the broader population’s.

⁴This is not a hypothetical example.

6.2 From Positive Sum to Negative Sum

Neighborhood defenders might argue that these features show that land use governance isn't *really* democratic, specifically because it distributes opportunities to participate unequally. The problem is that the features that make it undemocratic are what generate the stasis in the first place. And to see why requires a short detour into the theory of collective action.

Policy outcomes are public goods. They are nonrivalrous, in that your being subject to a policy doesn't subject me to it any less. They are nonexcludable, in that if anyone's subject to a policy, then everyone is. You might think that if a group's members all have an interest in producing some policy outcome, then that group will naturally act to produce that outcome. And you might think further that participatory democracy is the forum in which the public mobilizes, on basically egalitarian terms, to figure out the right course of action. This is an error.

As the classic account in Olson (1971) tells us, every public good faces a collective action problem. If you want a public good, you could contribute, but as long as the expected return on your contribution to that public good is lower than the expected return of the next best thing you could do with your money, effort, or whatever else, you'd rather free ride, because even if you don't contribute, you'll still be able to enjoy the public good.

Because each opportunity for public participation brings with it an opportunity to produce a public good, a collective action problem comes along for the ride. Every interest group faces the same problems, but some can solve them better than others. And the punchline here is that because land use governance involves concentrated costs and diffuse benefits, layering on public comment period after public comment period advantages small, motivated groups of neighborhood defenders because they can solve collective action problems more easily. This undermines majoritarianism and the egalitarian commitments that motivate these forums for participation in the first place.

Decisions about land use, particularly about the production of multifamily housing, impose concentrated costs, but diffuse benefits. The costs of dynamism, in particular, are concentrated. Neighborhood defenders, by nature, are small-c conservative (which is *not* the same thing as being Republican) about their neighborhoods. That's why they're "neighborhood defenders". They tend to worry about things like parking, traffic, flooding and environmental concerns, and broader concerns about the character of the neighborhood (Einstein et al. 2019, Ch.6). Indeed, rhetorically, real-world neighborhood defenders mirror their academic counterparts in seeing their neighborhood as the site of important collective goods they fear losing. Sometimes, they're interpreted by observers as concerned with property values, but Einstein et al. find this concern is relatively rarely expressed (which, of course, doesn't mean it doesn't underlie other concerns). They also tend to have intense preferences:

The highly expert or intense views of a disproportionately oppositional group of meeting attendees mean that housing supporters would likely have to show up with similar expertise in order to be interested and effective in planning or

zoning discussions. Indeed, opponents’ intensity may be especially salient. As one housing investor we interviewed put it, “My hard-earned experience is that the NIMBYs ... bring an extremely high level of passion, time and anger to this issue. Proponents of housing tend to be busier ... and less angry and passionate, more likely to blow off a 4-hour slugfest at city hall on a Tuesday evening. The resulting impact on the political process is profound. One NIMBY equals 2 or 3 housing advocates.” (Einstein et al. 2019, 121)

The concentrated costs imposed by dynamism, and the relative intensity of preferences for stasis, allow neighborhood defenders to solve collective action problems better than their opponents. That’s because zealots by definition face lower participation costs (if their participation costs were as high as normal people, they wouldn’t be zealots), and a greater willingness to coerce or incentivize other people to participate (Olson 1982, 34).

This raises an interesting puzzle. One important explanation for neighborhood defenders’ behavior, Fischel’s (2001) “homevoter hypothesis,” holds that restrictive zoning is a form of property-value maximization. By this line of reasoning, residents most concerned with property values should be the most intense cheerleaders for denser development. A well-located piece of land restricted to single-family homes is *much* less valuable than the same piece of land without that restriction, because the net present value of the revenue stream from a large apartment building will likely be much larger than from a single-family home. This puzzle is easy to solve if we remember that part of what homeowners value is the consumption utility of living in a particular kind of home, in a particular kind of neighborhood. They could, presumably, choose to advocate for increased housing production of all sorts, which would require giving that consumption utility up, in exchange for the benefits of economic growth. But those benefits are diffuse, and the amount that a group of homeowners can internalize is small and uncertain. On the other hand, the benefits of stasis are relatively large and easily appropriable by the group (though not excludable or rivalrous within the group). Public participation in land use regulation is just a special case of Olson’s observation that “[o]n balance, special interest organizations and collusions reduce efficiency and aggregate income in the societies in which they operate” (Olson 1982, 47). Land use governance reforms are thus “low-hanging fruit guarded by dragons” (Lindsey 2015; cf. also Teles 2015; Lindsey and Teles 2017). They’d have great aggregate consequences, but those consequences are undermined by powerful interests whose power is augmented by ostensibly democratic and facially egalitarian governance structures. The collective action problems brought by diffuse benefits and concentrated costs are exacerbated in another way by the structure of participation mechanisms. Because the returns to building densely on high-demand land are so great, builders should, in principle, be able to strike Coasean bargains (Coase 1960) with most residents by compensating them for the inconveniences of traffic and construction (Altshuler et al. 1993). But endless meetings allow the most hardcore opponents of development to impose *transaction costs*, forcing developers to spend money in ways that don’t compensate other residents.

This undermines potential bargains between developers and residents, and raises the costs of development (Foster and Warren 2022). These transaction costs are a key mechanism that preserves stasis in urban neighborhoods.

This helps explain the structural bias against dynamism. Proponents of dynamism who live in a particular jurisdiction, who are already more likely to be affected by high participation costs, won't have the same ability to solve collective action problems as neighborhood defenders. For one, they're unlikely to have the same ability to bring "selective incentives" like social pressure to bear. For another, the benefits of the policy change are much more diffuse, and are likely to seem even more so in the context of widespread public ignorance of the relationship between housing supply and housing prices (Elmendorf et al. 2025).

This is all exacerbated by the structural asymmetry in local democracy between incumbent and aspirational residents. I don't get a say in New York City's land use decisions, even though I'd *love* to move there, and plenty of the city's employers would *love* it if more educated workers could live there. But because local democracy privileges specifically local interests over municipal-, regional-, or national-level ones, the external costs of a given decision go un-internalized. In other words, each neighborhood in a city, or each municipality in a region, free-rides off the others. When every neighborhood embraces stasis, the entire city loses. *oTuhte yo na ctht ei ne cao ncoomlleicc tibveenlye fistesl fo-fd edfyenaatimngis mw aayn. dA angdg ltohmeye radtoi osno.*

because the structure of participatory democracy excludes those with the most to gain from the city's agglomeration effects.

The punchline here is that there is a tradeoff between participation on the intensive and extensive margins. More opportunities for participation ironically make participation less representative because of the way the costs of participation are distributed. And this has structurally anti-egalitarian and anti-dynamism consequences. If participatory democracy is motivated by equality, *tshtreunc,t uatr et hoef vpearryt icleipasatt,i othne mreo atirvea steodm be yh tahrdat qeugeasltiitoanrisa na bmouott itvhae-*

tion (Lemar 2021). It might well be that maximizing participation on the *intensive* margin—that is, maximizing the extent to which the voices heard are representative of the broader population—might require less participation on the extensive margin—that is, fewer discrete opportunities to participate.

The ostensibly democratic governance institutions neighborhood defenders embrace *also* have had deeply inequalitarian consequences, beyond their structural problems. Participatory mechanisms are supposed to protect the interests of the worst off. But people who show up to local planning and zoning board meetings are older, richer, whiter, and more likely to be homeowners than the median resident, and are more likely to oppose whatever project is being discussed (Einstein et al. 2019, Ch.5). The features that contribute to inequality also explain the bias towards stasis. In fact, maintaining that stasis *requires* giving in to anti-egalitarian organizational forms by privileging the voices of the most hardcore proponents of stasis. And all of this raises some difficult questions for egalitarians. They can't simply wave

away concerns about economic growth as unfashionably right wing. The values that they themselves endorse raise problems.

7 Conclusion

It's well known that egalitarian arguments for urban growth controls run afoul of our best empirical evidence of their causes and consequences. But they *also* turn on flawed philosophical assumptions about what goods actually help confer the agency and control that motivate neighborhood defenders' arguments. Growth controls undermine economic growth, make everyone poorer, and violate individual property rights. But they are also inequalitarian. They undermine an important mechanism of economic mobility. All this makes it hard to see why they are so popular among the academics and policymakers who advocate for them.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Daniel Muñoz, Jake Monaghan, Abe Singer, Gianna Englert, Alex Oprea, Ryan Muldoon, Jacob Barrett, Steve Mello, Rebecca Haw Allensworth, Harry Lloyd and his PPE698 class, Pei-Yu Wei, and an audience at the 2025 PPE Society Meeting. Thanks also to Claude Opus 5 and Fable 5 for being a superlative referee.

References

- Abramson, B. 2026. "The Equilibrium Effects of Eviction Policies." *Journal of Finance*. Early View. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jofi.70046>.
- Altshuler, A., J. A. Gómez-Ibáñez, and A. M. Howitt. 1993. *Regulation for Revenue: the Political Economy of Land Use Exactions*. Brookings Institution; Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.
- Appelbaum, Y. 2025. *Stuck: How the Privileged and the Propertied Broke the Engine of American Opportunity*. Random House.
- Asquith, B. J., E. Mast, and D. Reed. 2021. "Local Effects of Large New Apartment Buildings in Low-Income Areas." *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 105, no. 2: 359–375. https://doi.org/10.1162/rest_a_01055.
- Basu, K. 2018. *The Republic of Beliefs*. Princeton University Press.
- Baum-Snow, N., and G. Duranton. 2025. Housing Supply and Housing Affordability. NBER Working Paper 33694. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w33694>.
- Bicchieri, C. 2006. *The Grammar of Society*. Cambridge University Press.
- Brady, M. E. 2021. "From Neighbors to Nuisances." *Harvard Law Review* 134, no. 5: 1609–1682.

- Bratu, C., O. Harjunen, and T. Saarimaa. 2023. “JUE Insight: City-wide Effects of New Housing Supply: Evidence From Moving Chains.” *Journal of Urban Economics* 133: 103528. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2022.103528>.
- Brooks, R. R. W., and C. M. Rose. 2013. *Saving the Neighborhood: Racially Restrictive Covenants, Law, and Social Norms*. Harvard University Press.
- Brueckner, J. K. 2011. *Lectures on Urban Economics*. MIT Press.
- Buchanan, J. 1965. “An Economic Theory of Clubs.” *Economica* 32, no. 125: 1–14.
- Christmas, B. 2025. “Free to Build: Liberty and Urban Housing.” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 53, no. 2: 169–183. <https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12281>.
- Coase, R. 1960. “The Problem of Social Cost.” *The Journal of Law and Economics* 3: 1–44. <https://doi.org/10.1086/466560>.
- Coulson, N. E., T. Le, V. Ortego-Marti, and L. Shen. 2025. “Tenant Rights, Eviction, and Rent Affordability.” *Journal of Urban Economics* 147: 103762. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2025.103762>.
- Dawkins, C. J. 2023. “On the Injustices of Gentrification.” *Housing, Theory, and Society* 40, no. 3: 261–281.
- Deneen, P. 2018. *Why Liberalism Failed*. Yale University Press.
- Deneen, P. 2023. *Regime Change: toward a Postliberal Future*. Sentinel.
- Desmond, M. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Crown.
- Diamond, R., T. McQuade, and F. Qian. 2019. “The Effects of Rent Control Expansion on Tenants, Landlords, and Inequality: Evidence From San Francisco.” *American Economic Review* 109, no. 9: 3365–3394.
- Duranton, G., and D. Puga. 2023. “Urban Growth and Its Aggregate Implications.” *Econometrica* 91, no. 6: 2219–2259. <https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA17936>.
- Einstein, K. L., D. M. Glick, and M. Palmer. 2019. *Neighborhood Defenders: Participatory Politics and America’s Housing Crisis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Einstein, K. L. 2021. “The Privileged Few: How Exclusionary Zoning Amplifies the Advantaged and Blocks New Housing—and What We Can Do about It.” *Urban Affairs Review* 57, no. 1: 252–268.
- Elliott, K. J. 2023. *Democracy for Busy People*. University of Chicago Press.
- Ellickson, R. C. 2022. *America’s Frozen Neighborhoods: The Abuse of Zoning*. Yale University Press.
- Elmendorf, C. S., C. Nall, and S. Oklobzdija. 2025. “The Folk Economics of Housing.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 39, no. 3: 45–66. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.20241428>.
- Essert, C. 2016. “Property and Homelessness.” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 44, no. 4:

266–295.

- Fischel, W. A. 2001. *The Homevoter Hypothesis*. Harvard University Press.
- Fischel, W. A. 2015. *Zoning Rules!: the Economics of Land Use Regulation*. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.
- Foster, D., and J. Warren. 2022. “The NIMBY Problem.” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 34, no. 1: 145–172.
- Ganong, P., and D. Shoag. 2017. “Why Has Regional Income Convergence in the U.S. declined?” *Journal of Urban Economics* 102: 76–90. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2017.07.002>.
- Glaeser, E. 2012. *Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier*. Penguin.
- Glaeser, E., and J. Gyourko. 2018. “The Economic Implications of Housing Supply.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 32, no. 1: 3–30. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.32.1.3>.
- Glaeser, E., J. Gyourko, and R. Saks. 2005a. “Why Is Manhattan So Expensive? Regulation and the Rise in Housing Prices.” *The Journal of Law and Economics* 48, no. 2: 331–369.
- Glaeser, E., J. Gyourko, and R. Saks. 2005b. “Why Have Housing Prices Gone Up?” *American Economic Review* 95, no. 2: 329–333.
- Glaeser, E. L. 2008. *Cities, Agglomeration, and Spatial Equilibrium*. Oxford University Press.
- Glaeser, E. L., and J. D. Gottlieb. 2009. “The Wealth of Cities: Agglomeration Economies and Spatial Equilibrium in the United States.” *Journal of Economic Literature* 47, no. 4: 983–1028.
- Glass, R. 1964. *London: Aspects of Change*. MacGibbon and Kee.
- Gray, M. N. 2022. *Arbitrary Lines: How Zoning Broke the American City and How to Fix It*. Island Press.
- Greenaway-McGrevy, R. 2025. “Evaluating the Long-run Effects of Zoning Reform on Urban Development.” *Regional Science and Urban Economics* 111: 104062. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2024.104062>.
- Greenaway-McGrevy, R., and P. C. B. Phillips. 2023. “The Impact of Upzoning on Housing Construction in Auckland.” *Journal of Urban Economics* 136: 103555.
- Guillery, D., and T. Zimmer. 2026. “Gentrification and Marginalization.” *Journal of Social Philosophy*: josp.70057.
- Gutmann, A. 1985. “Communitarian Critiques of Liberalism.” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14, no. 3: 308–322.
- Gyourko, J., and J. Krimmel. 2021. “The Impact of Local Residential Land Use Restrictions on Land Values Across and Within Single family Housing Markets.” *Journal of Urban*

- Economics* 126: 103374. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2021.103374>.
- Gyourko, J., C. Mayer, and T. Sinai. 2013. “Superstar Cities.” *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 5, no. 4: 167–199. <https://doi.org/10.1257/pol.5.4.167>.
- Gyourko, J., and R. Molloy. 2015. “Regulation and Housing Supply.” In *Handbook of Regional and Urban Economics*, 1289–1337. Elsevier.
- Hall, A. B., and J. Yoder. 2022. “Does Homeownership Influence Political Behavior? Evidence from Administrative Data.” *Journal of Politics* 84, no. 1: 351–366.
- Harvey, D. 2008. “The Right to the City.” *New Left Review* 53: 23–40. <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii53/article/harvey-the-right-to-the-city>.
- Heath, J. 2022. “A Unified Theory of Border Control and Reasonable Accommodation.” In *Cooperation and Social Justice*, University of Toronto Press, 200–251.
- Heath, J. 2025. “Highbrow Climate Misinformation”. In *Due Course*. <https://josephheath.substack.com/p/highbrow-climate-misinformation>.
- Holmes, S. 1993. *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism*. Harvard University Press.
- Hoover, J. 2023. “The Injustice of Gentrification.” *Political Theory* 51, no. 6: 925–954.
- Huber, J., and F. Wolkenstein. 2018. “Gentrification and Occupancy Rights.” *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics* 17, no. 4: 378–397.
- Imbroscio, D. 2023. “Beyond Opportunity Hoarding: Interrogating Its Limits as an Account of Urban Inequalities.” *Housing Policy Debate* 33, no. 4: 770–788. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2023.2173979>.
- Imbroscio, D. 2024. “Toward the Democratic Reconstruction of the Urban.” *Dialogues in Urban Research* 2, no. 2: 167–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27541258241233484>.
- Imbroscio, D. L. 2011. *Urban America Reconsidered: Alternatives for Governance and Policy*. Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9780801458811>.
- Imbroscio, D. L. 2021a. “Rethinking Exclusionary Zoning: or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love It.” *Urban Affairs Review* 57, no. 1: 214–251.
- Imbroscio, D. L. 2021b. “Stop Worrying (So Much) About Exclusionary Zoning and Fight Our Real Enemies: a Reply to My Critics.” *Urban Affairs Review* 57, no. 1: 298–311. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087419890679>.
- Jacobs, J. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Vintage Books.
- Jenkins, D. 2025. “Gentrification as Domination.” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 28, no. 2: 188–214.
- Kholodilin, K. A. 2024. “Rent Control Effects Through the Lens of Empirical Research: an Almost Complete Review of the Literature.” *Journal of Housing Economics* 63: 101983. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhe.2024.101983>.

- Klein, E., and D. Thompson. 2025. *Abundance*. Avid Reader.
- Kogelmann, B. 2025. “Autonomy, Zoning, and Gentrification.” *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 25, no. 1: 109–132. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470594X251330912>.
- Kohn, M. 2016. *The Death and Life of the Urban Commonwealth*. Oxford University Press.
- Krishnamurthy, M., and M. Moore. 2024. “What Makes Gentrification Wrong? A Place-Based Account.” *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 21, no. 5-6: 625–653. <https://doi.org/10.1163/17455243-20244083>.
- Kukla, Q. R. 2021. *City Living*. Oxford University Press.
- Lefebvre, H., S. Elden, E. Lebas, and E. Kofman. 2003. *Henri Lefebvre: Key Writings*. Continuum.
- Lemar, A. S. 2021. “Overparticipation: Designing Effective Land Use Public Processes.” *Fordham Law Review* 90: 1083–1150.
- Lens, M. C. 2024. *Where the Hood at? Fifty Years of Change in Black Neighborhoods*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Li, X. 2022. “Do New Housing Units in Your Backyard Raise Your Rents?” *Journal of Economic Geography* 22, no. 6: 1309–1352. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lbab034>.
- Lindsey, B. 2015. *Low-Hanging Fruit Guarded by Dragons*. CATO Institute. <https://www.cato.org/white-paper/low-hanging-fruit-guarded-dragons-reforming-regressive-regulation-boost-us-economic>.
- Lindsey, B., and S. M. Teles. 2017. *The Captured Economy: How the Powerful Enrich Themselves, Slow Down Growth, and Increase Inequality*. Oxford University Press.
- Lloyd, H. 2025. “Gentrification: a Philosophical Analysis and Critique.” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 47, no. 4: 1246–1264.
- Logan, J. R., and H. L. Molotch. 2007. *Urban Fortunes: the Political Economy of Place (20th Anniversary Edition)*. University of California Press.
- Logan, T. D., and J. M. Parman. 2025. “Racial Residential Segregation in the United States.” *Journal of Economic Literature* 63, no. 3: 964–1010.
- MacIntyre, A. 1984. *After Virtue: a Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd Ed. University of Notre Dame Press.
- Marcuse, P., and D. Madden. 2016. *In Defense of Housing: the Politics of Crisis*. Verso.
- Mast, E. 2023. “JUE Insight: the Effect of New Market-rate Housing Construction on the Low-income Housing Market.” *Journal of Urban Economics* 133: 103383. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2021.103383>.
- Molotch, H. 1976. “The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place.” *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 2: 309–332.

- Monaghan, J. 2025. "Territory without Turf." *Political Philosophy* 2, no. 2. <https://doi.org/10.16995/pp.20053>.
- Moretti, E. 2012. *The New Geography of Jobs*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Mulhall, S., and A. Swift. 1996. *Liberals and Communitarians*. Blackwell.
- Nine, C. 2018. "The Wrong of Displacement: The Home as Extended Mind." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26, no. 2: 240–257. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12133>.
- Olson, M. 1971. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Harvard University Press.
- Olson, M. 1982. *The Rise and Decline of Nations*. Yale University Press.
- Putnam, D. 2021. "Gentrification and Domination." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 29, no. 2: 167–187. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopp.12220>.
- Putnam, R. D. 2001. *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon and Schuster.
- Radin, M. J. 1986. "Residential Rent Control." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 15, no. 4: 350–380.
- Roback, J. 1982. "Wages, Rents, and the Quality of Life." *Journal of Political Economy* 90, no. 6: 1257–1278.
- Rothstein, R. 2017. *The Color of Law: a Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, (First edition). Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W. W. Norton & Company.
- Sahn, A. 2024. "Public Comment and Public Policy." *American Journal of Political Science* 69, no. 2: 685–700. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12900>.
- Sahn, A. 2025. "Racial Diversity and Exclusionary Zoning: Evidence From the Great Migration." *The Journal of Politics* 87, no. 4: 1302–1318.
- Sankaran, K. 2025. "Cash Rules Everything Around Me: in Defence of Housing Markets." *Economics and Philosophy* 41, no. 3: 581–599.
- Sandel, M. J. 1998. *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 2nd Ed. Cambridge University Press.
- Schleicher, D. 2017. "Stuck! the Law and Economics of Residential Stagnation." *The Yale Law Journal* 127, no. 1: 78–154. https://www.yalelawjournal.org/pdf/Schleicher_tdwkf2cd.pdf.
- Schleicher, D., and R. Hills. 2025. "How the Gentry Won: Property Law's Embrace of Stasis." *Texas Law Review* 104, no. 5: 987–1051.
- Schragger, R. C. 2021. "The Perils of Land Use Deregulation." *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 170: 125–205.
- Serkin, C. 2020. "A Case for Zoning." *Notre Dame Law Review* 96: 749–798.
- Serkin, C., and G. Sitaraman. 2025. "Post-Neoliberal Housing Policy." *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 174: 783. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5227899.

- Smith, N. 1979. "Toward a Theory of Gentrification: a Back to the City Movement by Capital, Not People." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 45: 538–548.
- Smith, N. 1987. "Gentrification and the Rent Gap." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77: 462–465.
- Smith, N. 1996. *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. Routledge.
- Smith, N., and P. Williams. 1986. *Gentrification of the City*. Allen & Unwin.
- Teles, S. 2015. "The Scourge of Upward Redistribution." *National Affairs* 25: 78–95.
- Trounstein, J. 2019. *Segregation by Design: Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108555722>.
- Unger, R. M. 1975. *Knowledge and Politics*. Free Press.
- Vermeule, A. 2020. *Beyond Originalism*. The Atlantic.
- Vermeule, A. 2022. *Common Good Constitutionalism: Recovering the Classical Legal Tradition*. Polity.
- Walzer, M. 1983. *Spheres of Justice: a Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. Basic Books.
- Ward, J., and L. Schlake. 2025. *The High Cost of Producing Multifamily Housing in California: Evidence and Policy Recommendations*. Rand Corporation.
- Wells, K. 2019. "The Right to Housing." *Political Studies* 67, no. 2: 406–421.
- Wiens, D. 2013. "Demands of Justice, Feasible Alternatives, and the Need for Causal Analysis." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 16: 325–338.
- Wilson, W. J. 2012. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. University of Chicago Press.
- Yoder, J. 2020. "Does Property Ownership Lead to Participation in Local Politics? Evidence From Property Record and Meeting Minutes." *American Political Science Review* 114, no. 4: 1213–1229. W W