

Subject: Fwd: Looking at density as a reflection of human ambition and opportunity
From: Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>
Date: 25/03/2014 3:23 PM
To: Corrie Kost <corrie@kost.ca>

No post. FONVCA review.

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Looking at density as a reflection of human ambition and opportunity
Date: Tue, 25 Mar 2014 15:17:11 -0700
From: Douglas Curran <dougcurran@shaw.ca>
To: Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>, "<fonvca@fonvca.org>" <fonvca@fonvca.org>
CC: Peter Thompson <peterjthompson@shaw.ca>, John Gilmour <gilmour@magusta.com>

Hello Corrie,

I am still reflecting on your comments at the recent FONVCA meeting with respect to "density equals unaffordability". In a casual glance around North America, it comes to mind that there are any number of places where that equation does not appear to bear up. For example, Fort McMurray could hardly be termed "affordable", with many living in RVs and vacation trailers, with not even the par rates (\$100,000+ for packer buggy drivers) sufficient to allow for permanent housing. The density there is quite low.

Similarly, Beverly Hills, 90210, while possessing very low density requires multi-million dollar incomes/assets to live there as other than pool boy to a wealthy widow. At the other end of the range, Mumbai, along with a host of other 3rd world megacities, has seen an exponential growth in population. Doug Saunders, in his book "[Arrival City](#)" paints the picture of the slum dwellers not as the oppressed, but as those who view the urban environment as an escape from the drudgery, oppression and lack of opportunity of rural subsistence agriculture - a future (in their eyes) of low density, low return). The 'affordability' in that circumstance comes with its own cost of one's life's ambition, of hope, of opportunity.

Looking at all of the above, it seems to me that the equation of density = unaffordability is less about cost than it is about the human capacity and appetite for personal success, independence and self-realization. Most everyone desires that. For most of the world, that opportunity is best found within the competitive milieu of the city. The density and comparative cost is held in balance, or at least tolerated on balance of the alternatives.

There are many places where one can find high affordability on a relative scale. The problem is that most of us don't want, or choose, to live there. This is increasingly so, across every country, across all age groups.

There is a need to not allow the comfortable conciseness of a supposition such as "density equates to unaffordability" to lull us into a logic fallacy, and misdiagnose both the problem and the solution.

regards, Doug

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