

Research suggests denser development is good for single-family home values

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How do denser neighborhoods affect property values? And what's the economic value of walkable neighborhoods?

A study conducted by researchers at the University of Washington College of Built Environments and a South Korean university shows that, contrary to popular belief, there's a positive association between higher neighborhood density and the value of single-family residential properties.

Researchers modeled the values of single-family homes, multifamily rental buildings, commercial spaces and offices in King County, Wash., which includes Seattle. They used property values as a measure of [economic value](#), analyzing them in relation to [neighborhood characteristics](#) that correlate with walking, including access to open space and public transportation, mixed-use zoning and pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks.

They learned that pedestrian aids, such as [sidewalks](#) and shorter street blocks, as well as a mix of retail, commercial and residential properties significantly contributed to increases in multifamily rental property values.

The researchers found that not only did the value of single-family residential properties increase with density of surrounding development, but that the quality of neighborhoods, as defined by access to other land uses, including parks, increased with density as well.

But one of the lead researchers suggested some caution: "We should be careful to put the research results in the context of King County, where high residential densities are not those of Manhattan, and a relatively small proportion of the housing stock is in high-rise development," said Anne Vernez Moudon, a UW professor of [urban design](#) and planning who was one of the lead researchers.

"The results should not come as a complete surprise," Moudon said, "as it is well known that property values in neighborhoods like Queen Anne, packed with dense, single-family development and intermittent low-rise [apartment buildings](#) and condos near retail, are substantially higher than in some of the county's sprawling subdivisions."

It was more surprising, Moudon said, "to find that proximity to retail has a positive effect on multifamily rental properties, and that the value of retail properties benefited from strong pedestrian infrastructure."

More information: "The Economic Value of Walkable Neighborhoods" was published in the April issue of *Urban Design International*.

Provided by University of Washington

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