

Community Amenity Contributions

An introduction

Mulholland & Parker
Land Economists Ltd.

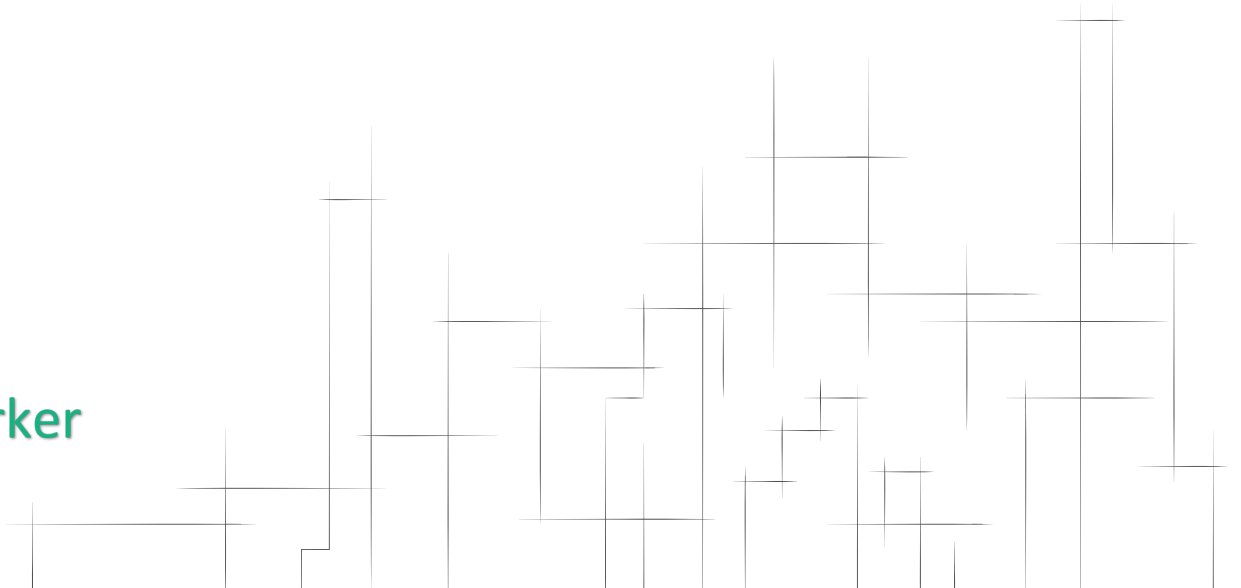
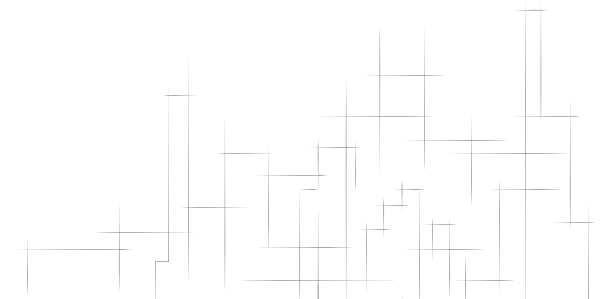


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1) My role

I am a land economist, which means I help clients understand development, typically in two ways:

- 1) Market research: Gathering quantitative and qualitative data about local markets, including costs, prices, timelines, and perspectives.
- 2) Financial analysis: Modelling the flow of money through development projects to answer particular questions.



1) My role

Questions like:

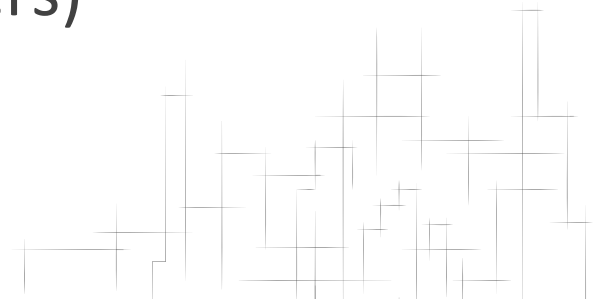
- Is a given type of development financially viable in a given location?
- How much land value would a particular land use support in a given location?
- What would be the anticipated economic impact of a given development?



1) My role

We have been retained to perform both of these roles for North Cowichan, with the overall aim of identifying supportable CAC rates:

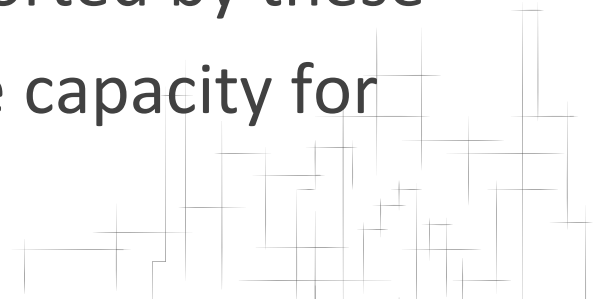
- 1) We conducted **market research** in August and submitted a market research report. This work included online research from several sources as well as interviews with 10 local experts (realtors, developers, and builders)



1) My role

We have been retained to perform both of these roles for North Cowichan, with the overall aim of identifying supportable CAC rates:

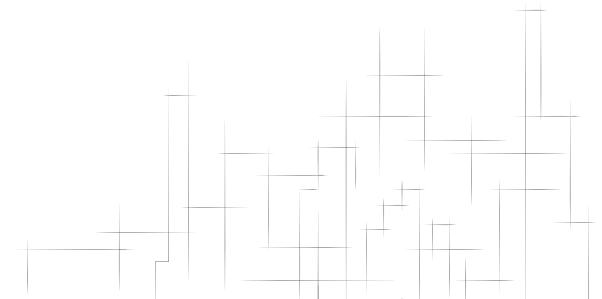
- 2) We are currently in the process of creating a **financial model** of 18 different residential development styles in each of North Cowichan's five urban neighbourhoods. By comparing the land values supported by these scenarios, we will determine the capacity for CACs in North Cowichan.



2) Policy framework

Community amenity contributions (CACs) and **density bonusing** are mechanisms that allow municipalities to acquire neighbourhood amenities in exchange for increased density.

They are based on the same economic principle but use different policy mechanisms.



2) Policy framework

These funds are typically applied to:

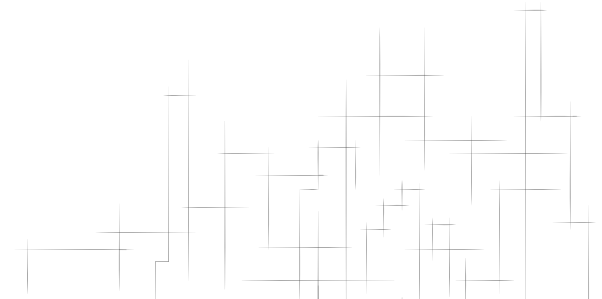
- Affordable housing
- Community facilities
- Park improvements
- Street beautification
- Fire halls
- Transit infrastructure



2) Policy framework

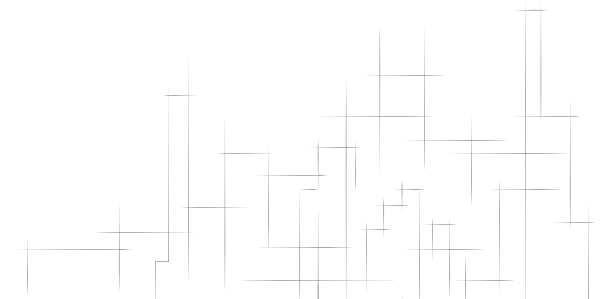
Density bonusing is codified directly into the zoning bylaw; it is part of the parcel's zoning and does not require rezoning to be used.

Typically the zoning will specify two densities: a lower density that may be developed as-of-right with no contribution, and a higher maximum density that may be developed if a contribution is provided.



2) Policy framework

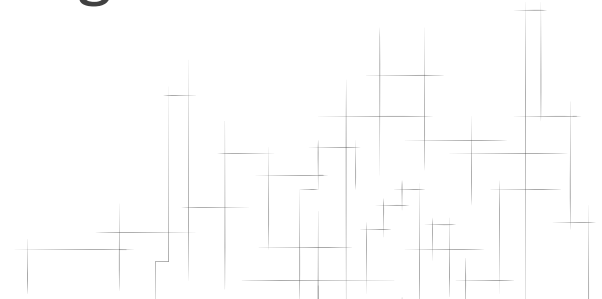
Density bonusing is expressly permitted by the Local Government Act, Section 482.



2) Policy framework

Community amenity contributions are the product of negotiation between the developer and the municipality. This may only take place during the rezoning phase.

This power is not expressly granted by any statute but is an automatic extension of the municipality's power to legislate zoning.

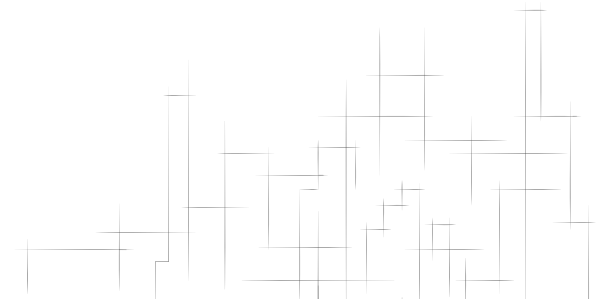


2) Policy framework

Implication

If the zoning does not already include a density bonus component, then rezoning is required to get a contribution.

Municipalities can't ask for a contribution without some benefit in return, typically additional density.

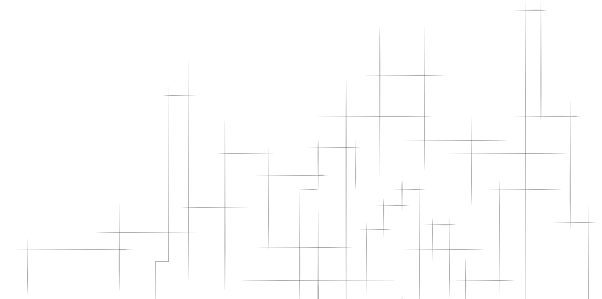


3) Setting rates

How should the size of the contribution be determined?

1) “Basket of goods” approach

2) “Land lift” approach



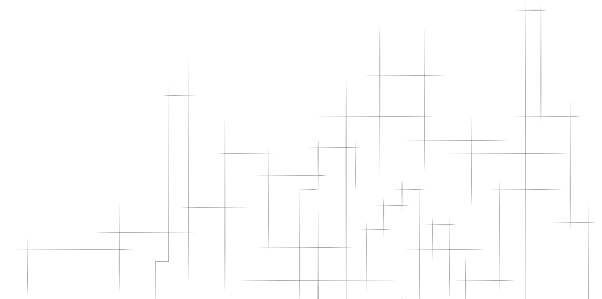
3) Setting rates

How should the size of the contribution be determined?

1) “Basket of goods” approach

The cost of all desired amenities is calculated and then divvied up between the applicable projects.

2) “Land lift” approach



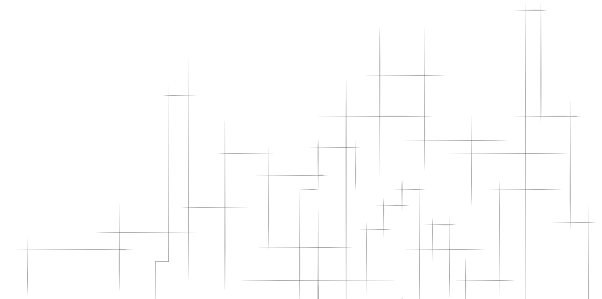
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How should the size of the contribution be determined?

1) “Basket of goods” approach

2) “Land lift” approach

The size of the contribution is calculated based on the project’s ability to pay.

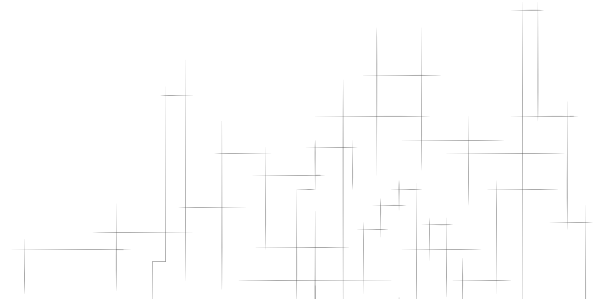


3) Setting rates

How should the size of the contribution be determined?

1) “Basket of goods” approach: Based on the contribution’s **purpose**

2) “Land lift” approach: Based on the contribution’s **source**.



3) Setting rates

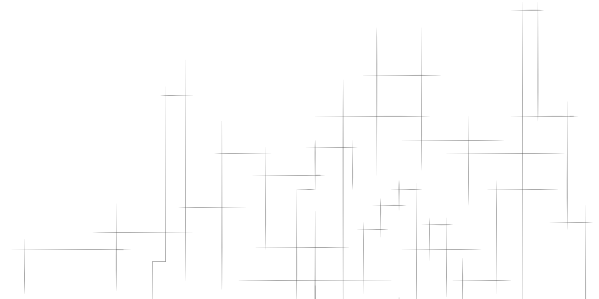
“Basket of goods” approach

Based on a set wish-list

Advantages: More defensible, better optics

Disadvantages:

- No limit to potential amenities, so this approach gives little guidance.
- Risk of asking too much.



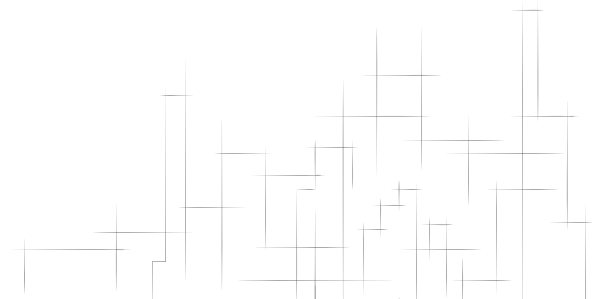
3) Setting rates

“Land lift” approach

Based on development’s ability to pay.

Advantages: Rate can be rationally and strategically determined to maximize public benefit and minimize developer risk

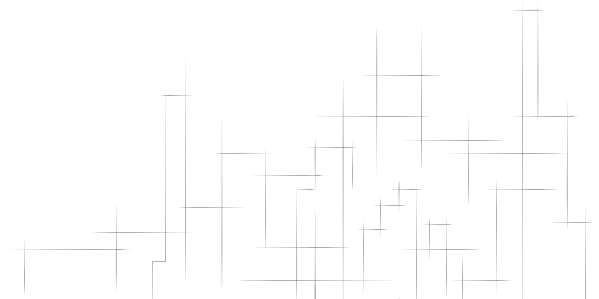
Disadvantages: Bad optics



3) Setting rates

Implication

Since the two approaches both have pros and cons, the best approach is to combine them: set contribution rates with both the basket of goods and the land lift approach in mind.

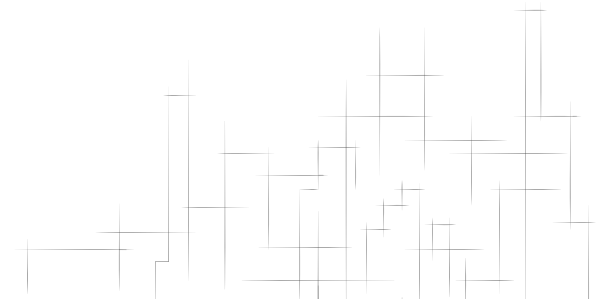


4) Land lift

What is the maximum size of an amenity contribution?

Since contributions are always voluntary and developers always have a lower-density option that doesn't require a payment, there's a point at which the bonus density isn't "worth it" to the developer.

This amount can be calculated.

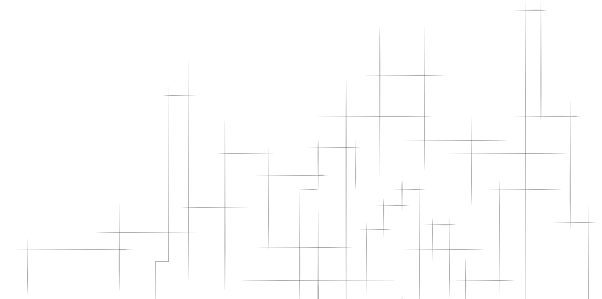


4) Land lift

Consider the following equation:

Revenue – project costs – profit = land price

The money for a CAC has to come from some combination of these four items.

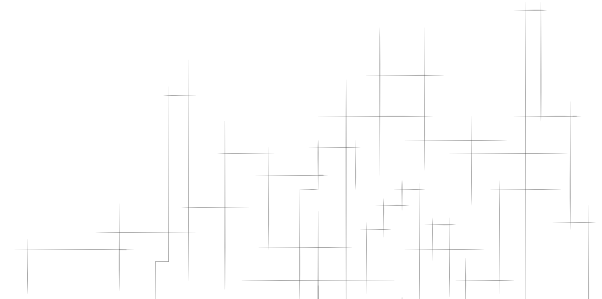


4) Land lift

Consider the following equation:

Revenue – project costs – profit = land price

Revenue is set by the market. If the developer could charge more, they already would have.

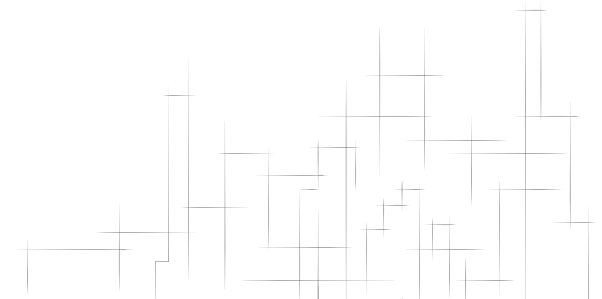


4) Land lift

Consider the following equation:

Revenue – project costs – profit = land price

Costs are set by the market. If the developer could lower them, they already would have.

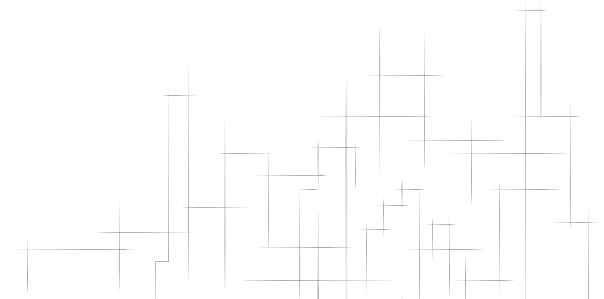


4) Land lift

Consider the following equation:

Revenue – project costs – profit = land price

Developers are not very willing to reduce this item.

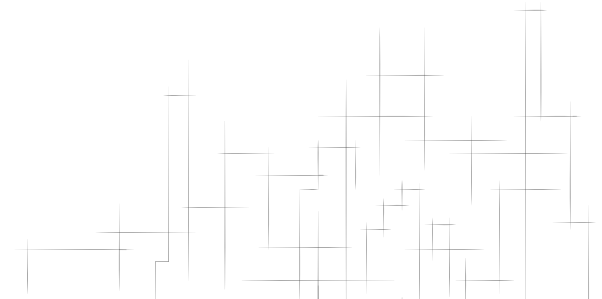


4) Land lift

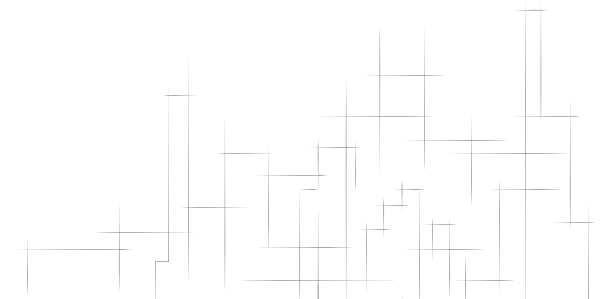
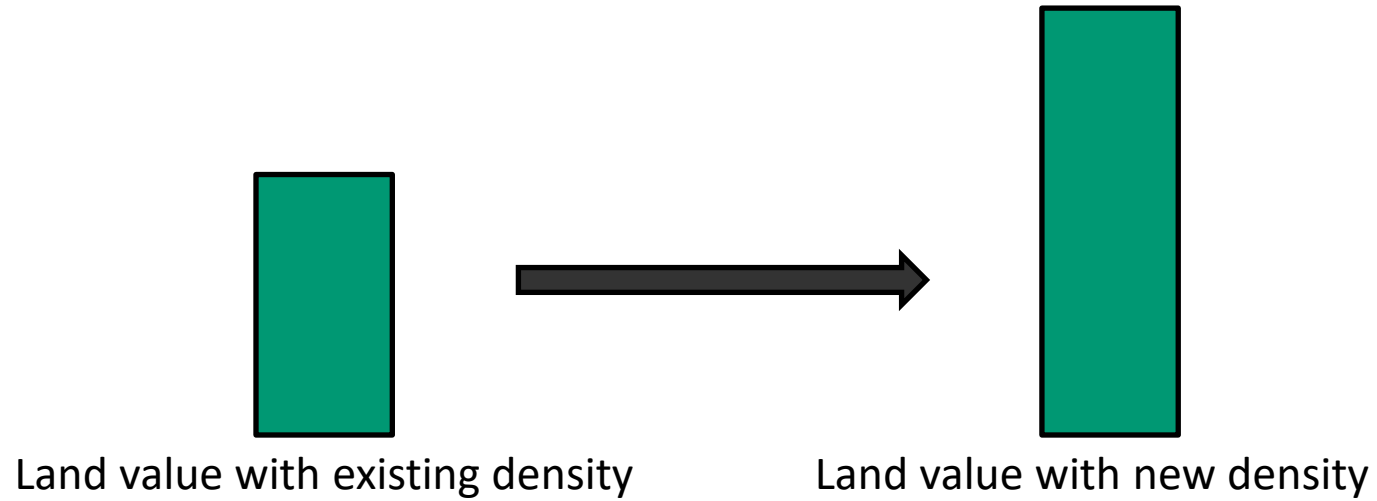
Consider the following equation:

$$\text{Revenue} - \text{project costs} - \text{profit} = \text{land price}$$

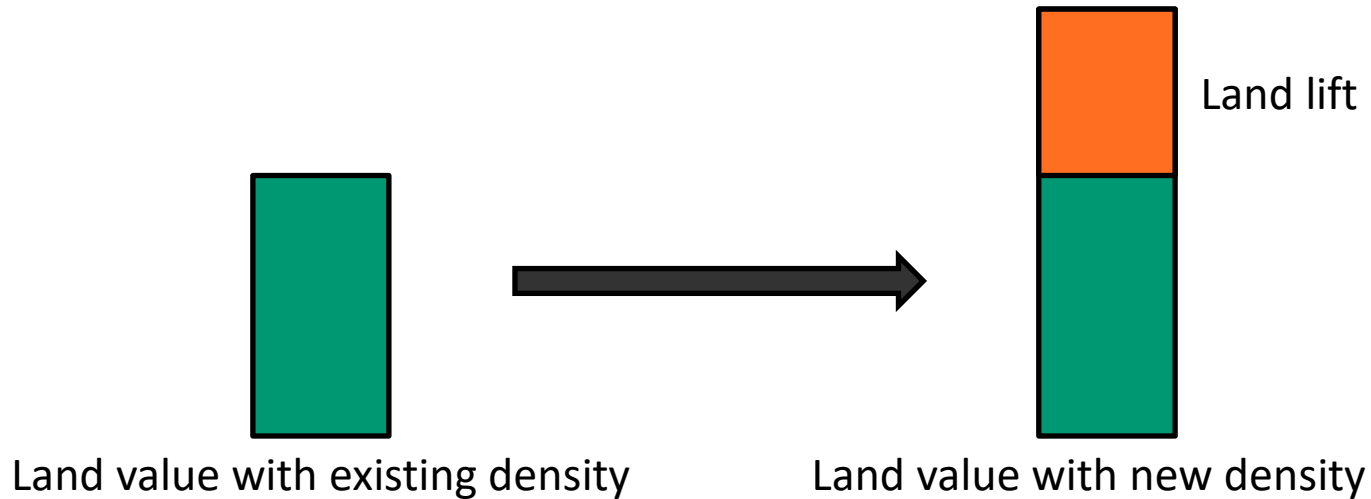
By process of elimination, CACs come mostly out of land cost.



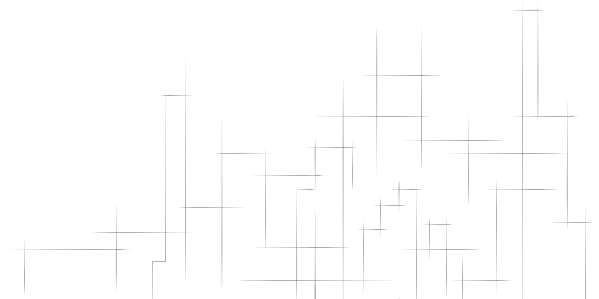
4) Land lift



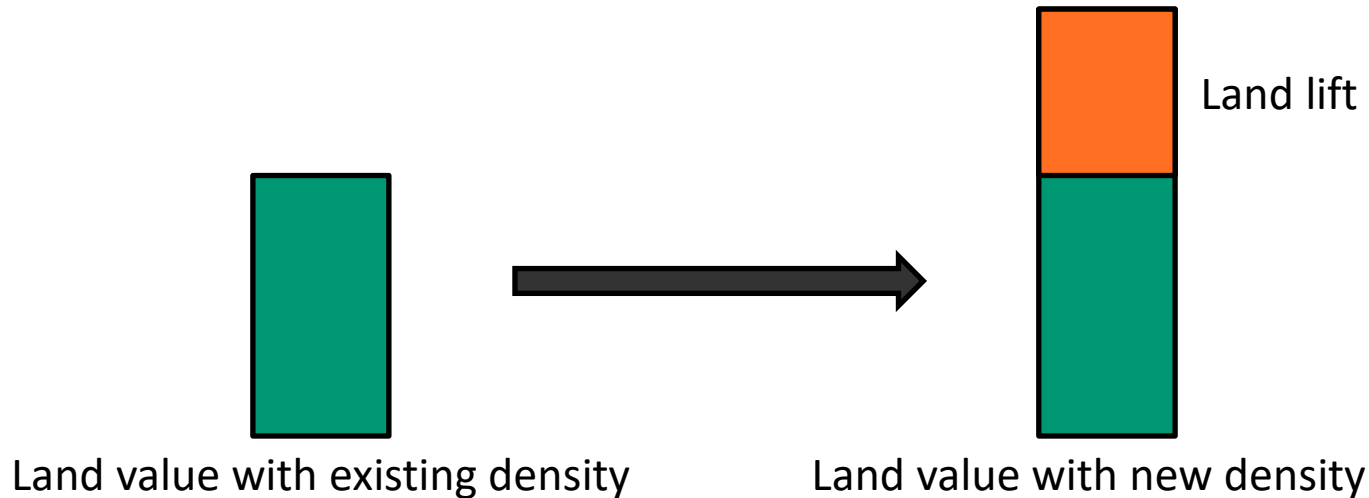
4) Land lift



With more density, the developer can afford to pay **this much** more for the land.



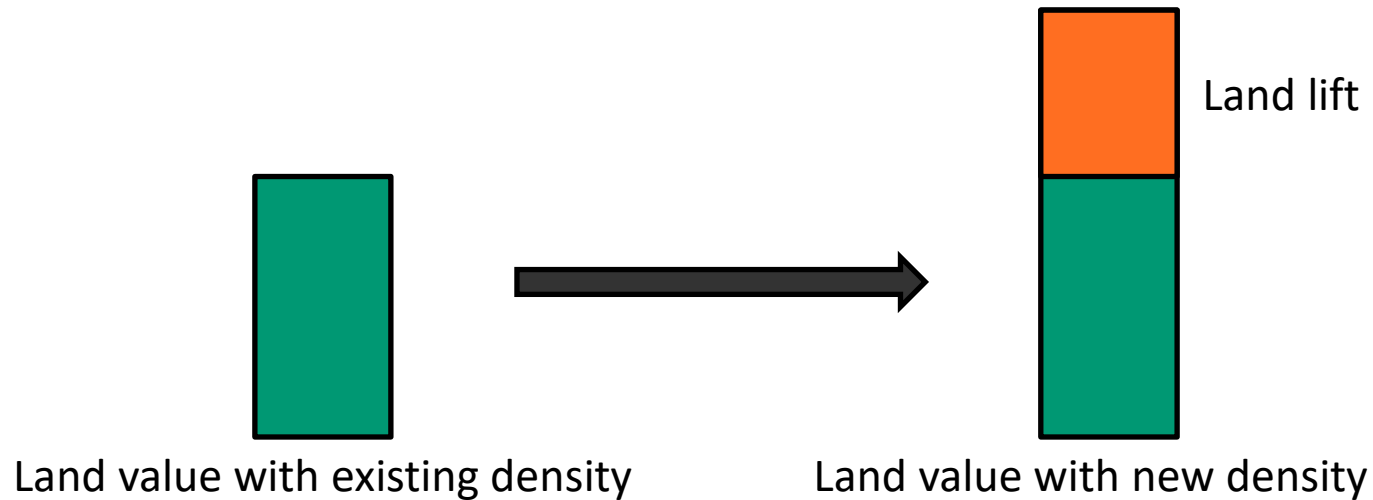
4) Land lift



So, assuming the developer did not pay too much for the land, they should be willing to part with **this much** money to access the higher density option.



4) Land lift



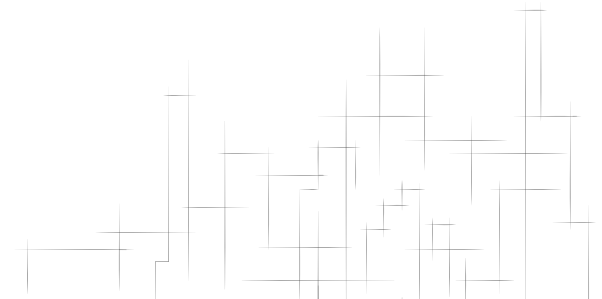
In summary, the land lift amount represents the maximum size of an amenity contribution.



4) Land lift

Land lift is always created whenever land is rezoned.

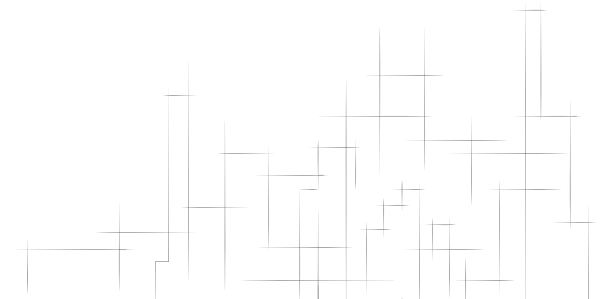
Without a CAC mechanism of some kind, this land lift is split between the developer who buys the land, and the previous landowner who sells it to them.



4) Land lift

There's nothing wrong with this arrangement.

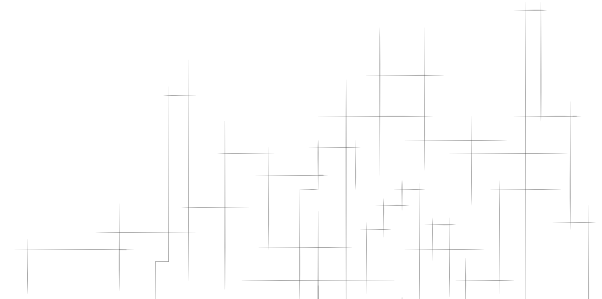
It has the advantage of giving landowners an incentive to support denser development since they stand to benefit from speculative value.



4) Land lift

But this new value is the direct result of a change in zoning – the community’s policy – and not a result of:

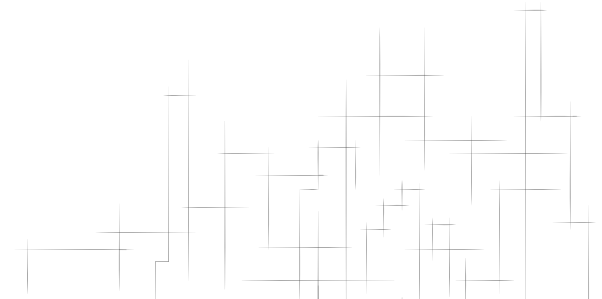
- 1) The previous landowner’s labour (all they did was wait)
- 2) The developer’s labour (the value they add comes later).



4) Land lift

So why shouldn't the community reclaim this value created through legislation?

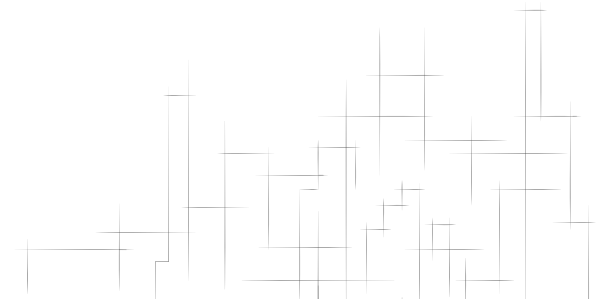
And why shouldn't new development fund the creation of the amenities it necessitates, such as fire halls, parks, etc.?



4) Land lift

Aside

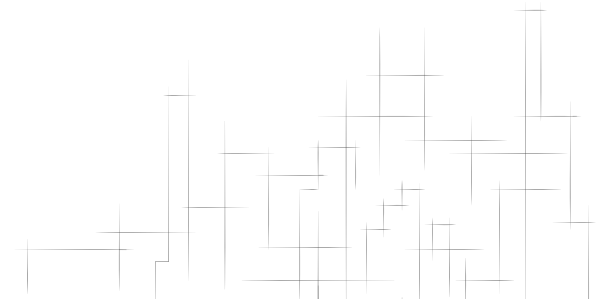
I should point out now that even when CACs are used to pay for infrastructure and amenities, there is usually still an “assist factor”: property taxes from existing development pays a share as well.



4) Land lift

Most municipalities don't ask for 100% of the land lift amount, but in the range of 25% - 75%. This has the following advantages:

- It leaves some room for error
- It leaves some land lift available for existing property owners and developers, as an incentive.

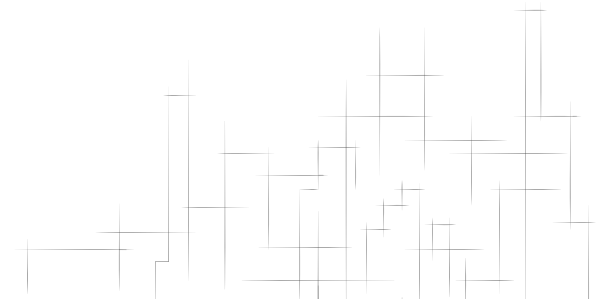


4) Land lift

Two approaches to land lift

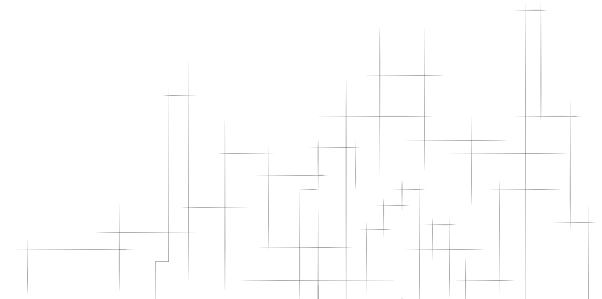
Site analysis: calculated based on the site's specific characteristics

Blanket rates: Apply the same rate or formula to all rezonings, usually based on generic analysis or case studies



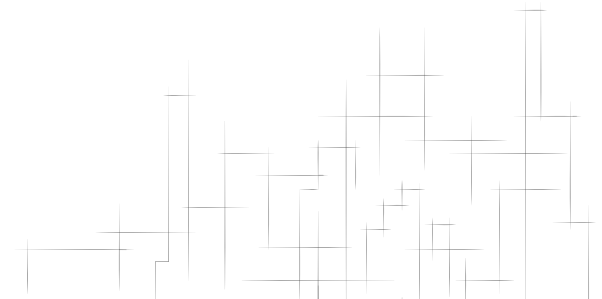
Site analysis:

- Technically preferable and more accurate, but time-consuming and costly.
- Developers also find it unpredictable and would rather know the CAC rate in advance so they can make business decisions.



Blanket rates:

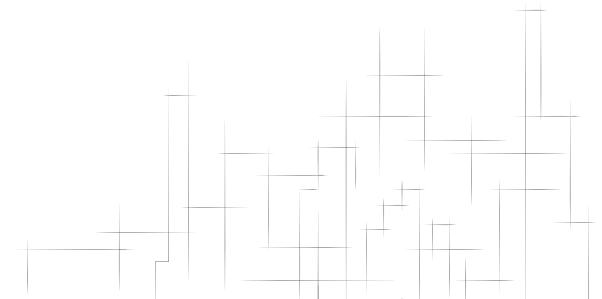
- Less accurate but more practical.
- Creates more developer confidence.
- Should be updated every 2 – 5 years.



4) Land lift

Amenity contributions can take the form of cash or in-kind spending, but **affordable housing on-site** can also be a CAC.

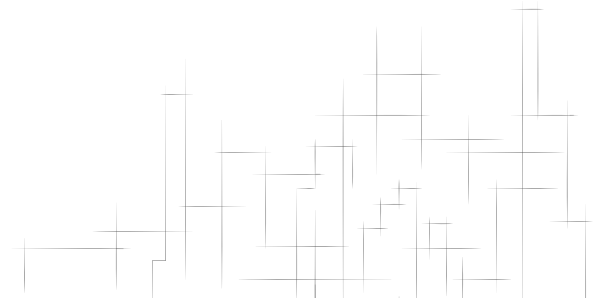
Instead of increasing costs, this just decreases revenue. The impact on land value is the same.



True or false?

Increasing the density of development by a certain proportion causes the residual land value to increase by the same proportion.

For example: a 20% increase in density causes a 20% increase in land value

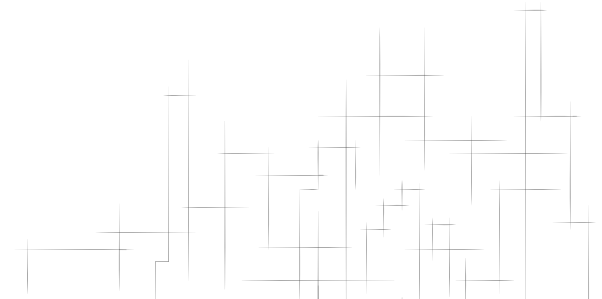


5) A common misconception

False

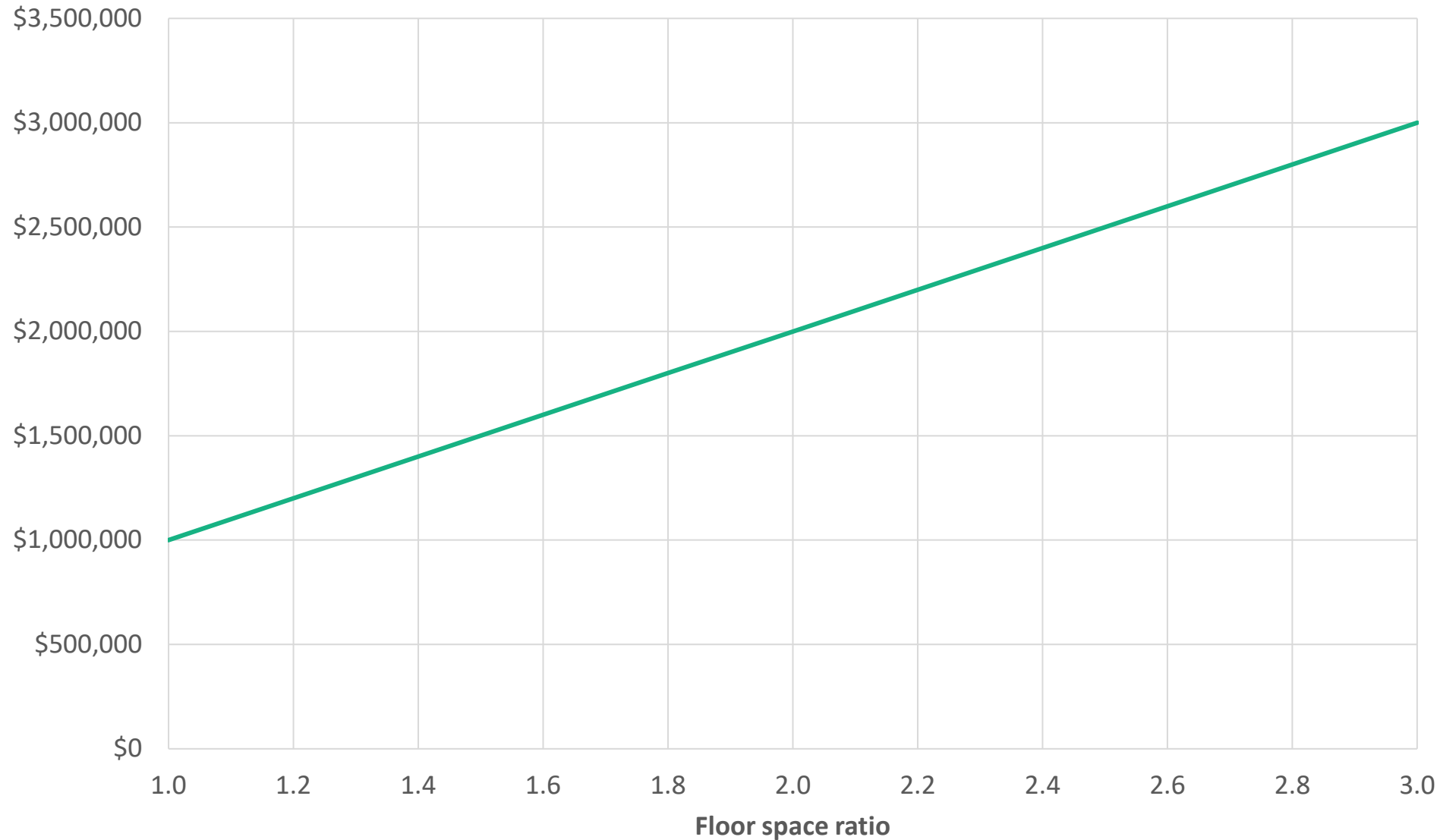
But many CAC policies in BC treat it as a given.

In truth there is no consistent relationship between density and residual land value.



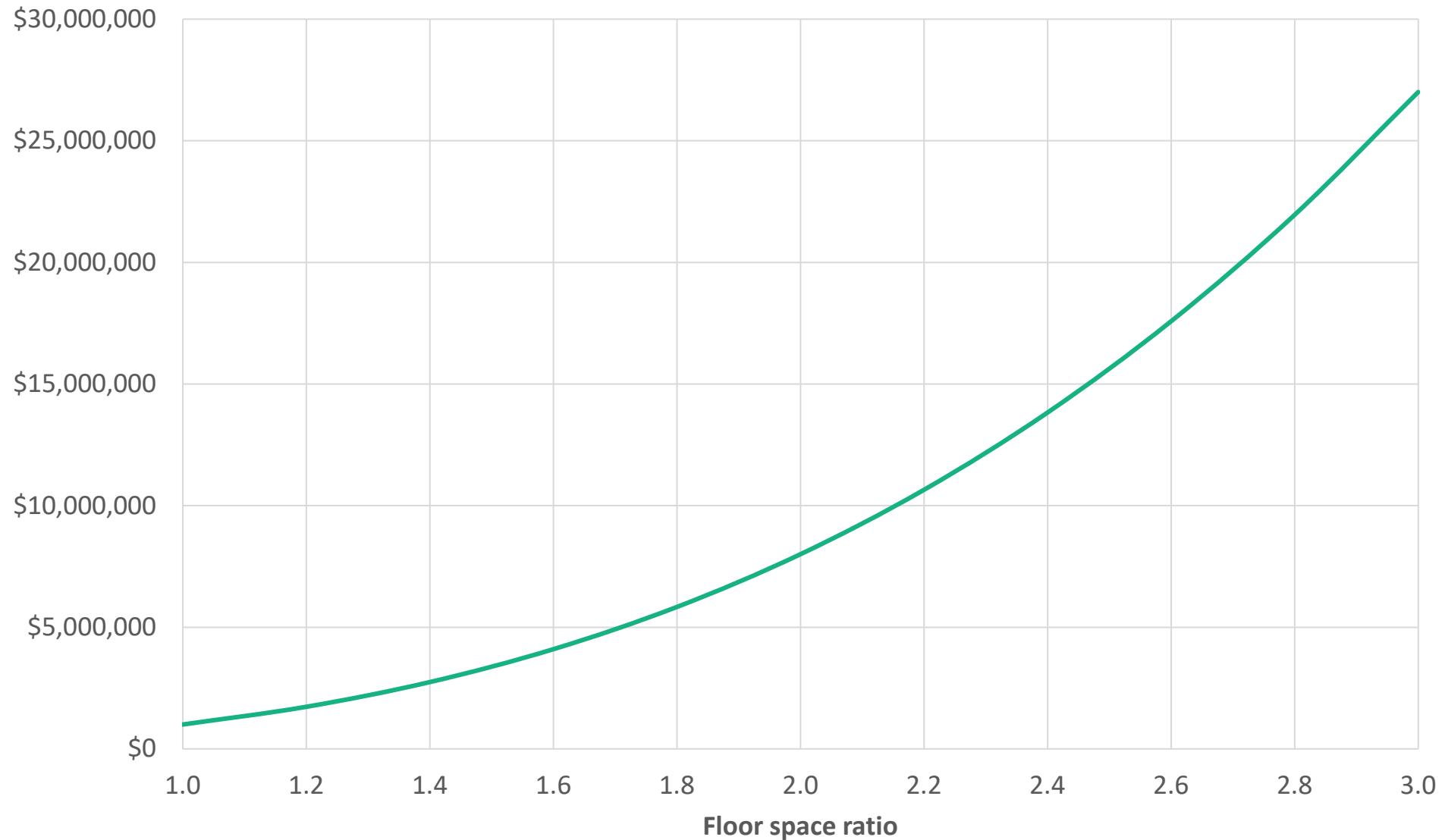
5) A common misconception

Land value per ac



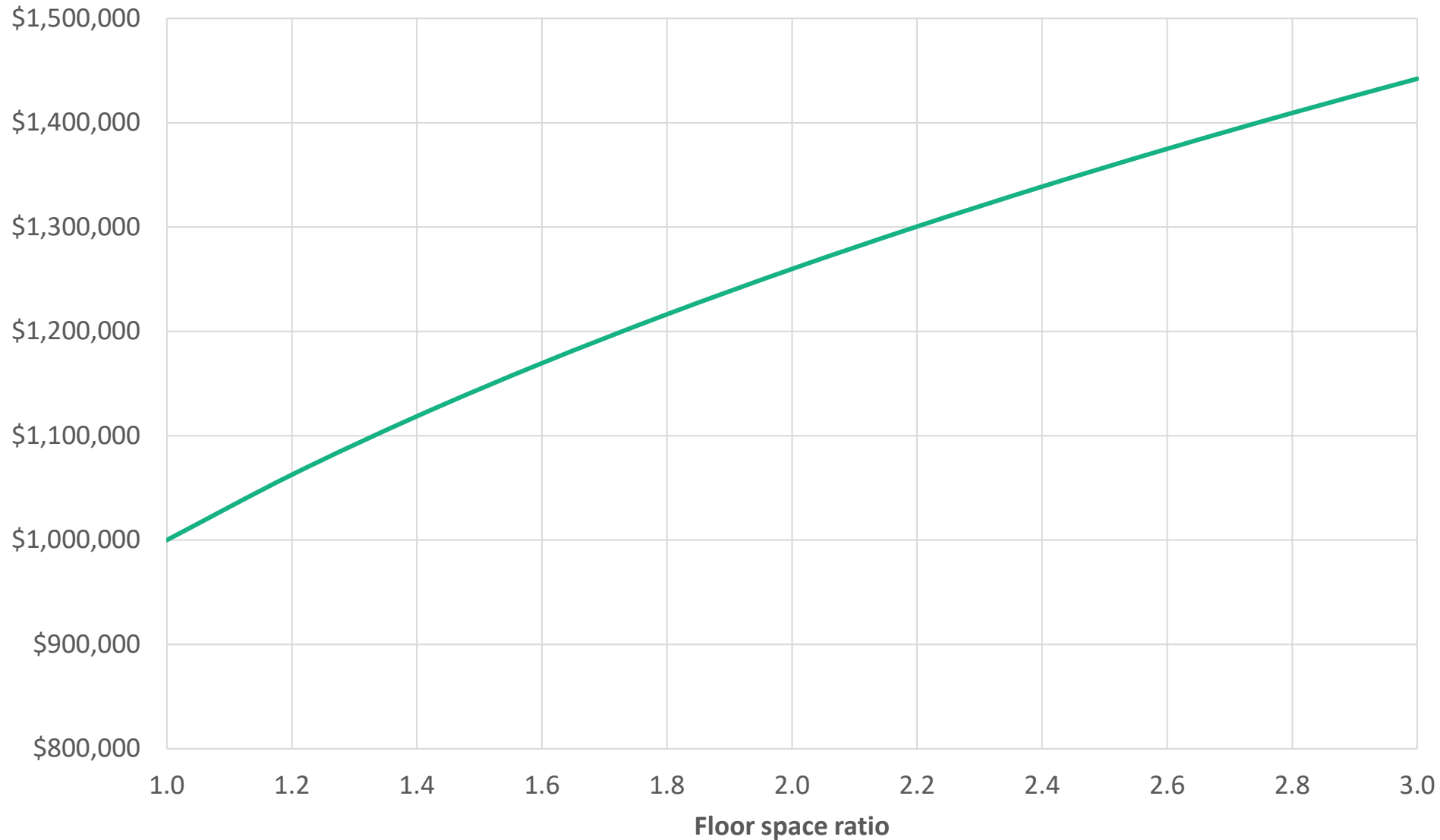
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Land value per ac



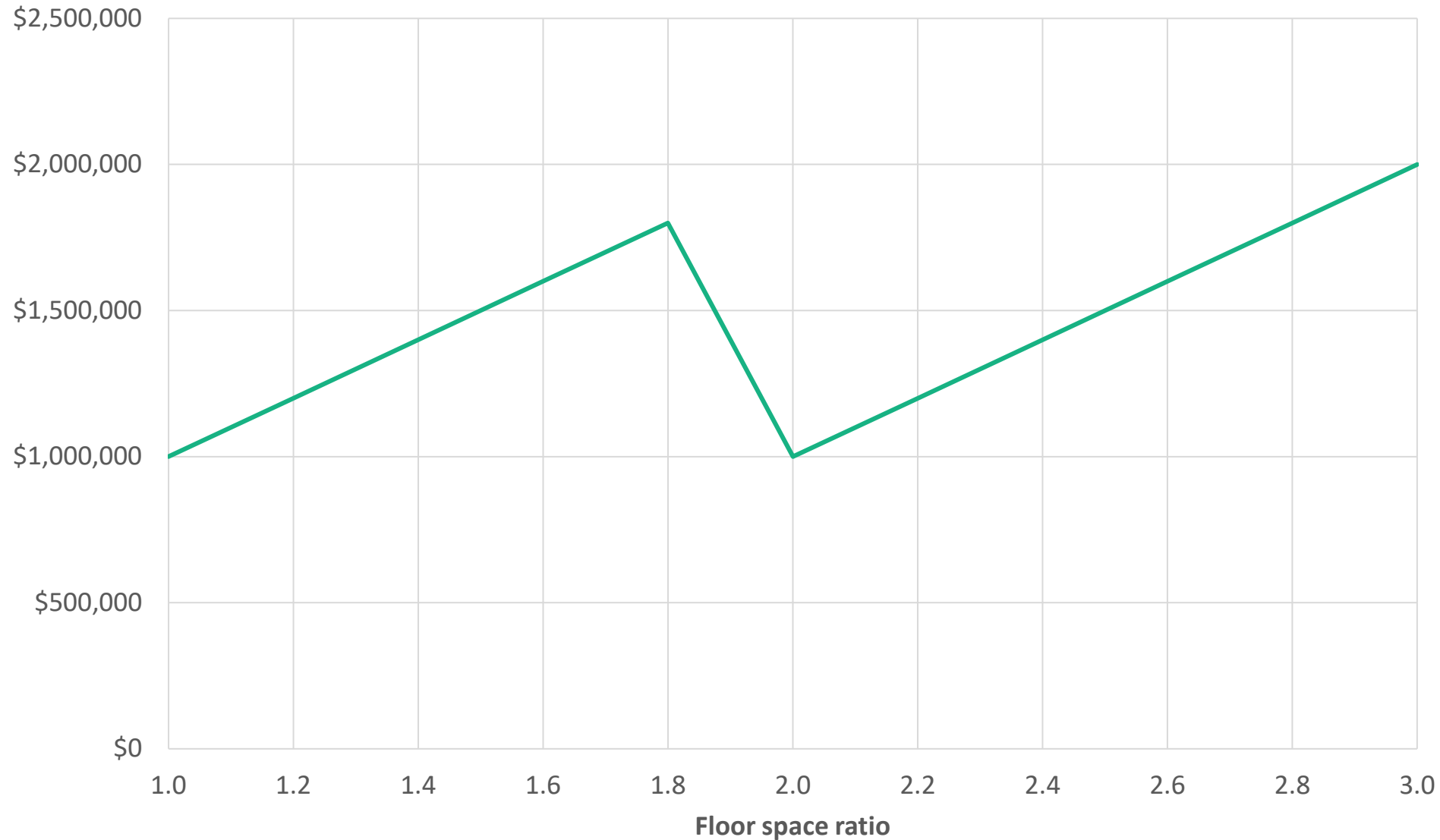
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Land value per ac



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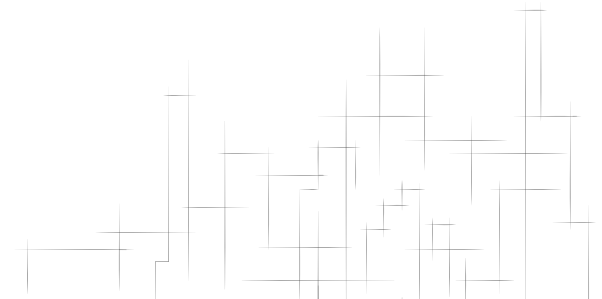
Land value per ac



5) A common misconception

If doubling the size of the project simply doubled the costs and revenues, this would be true.

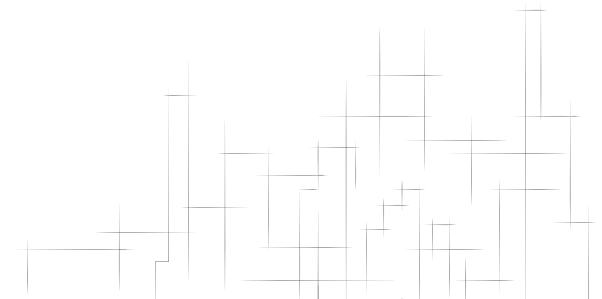
But the reality is more complicated.



5) A common misconception

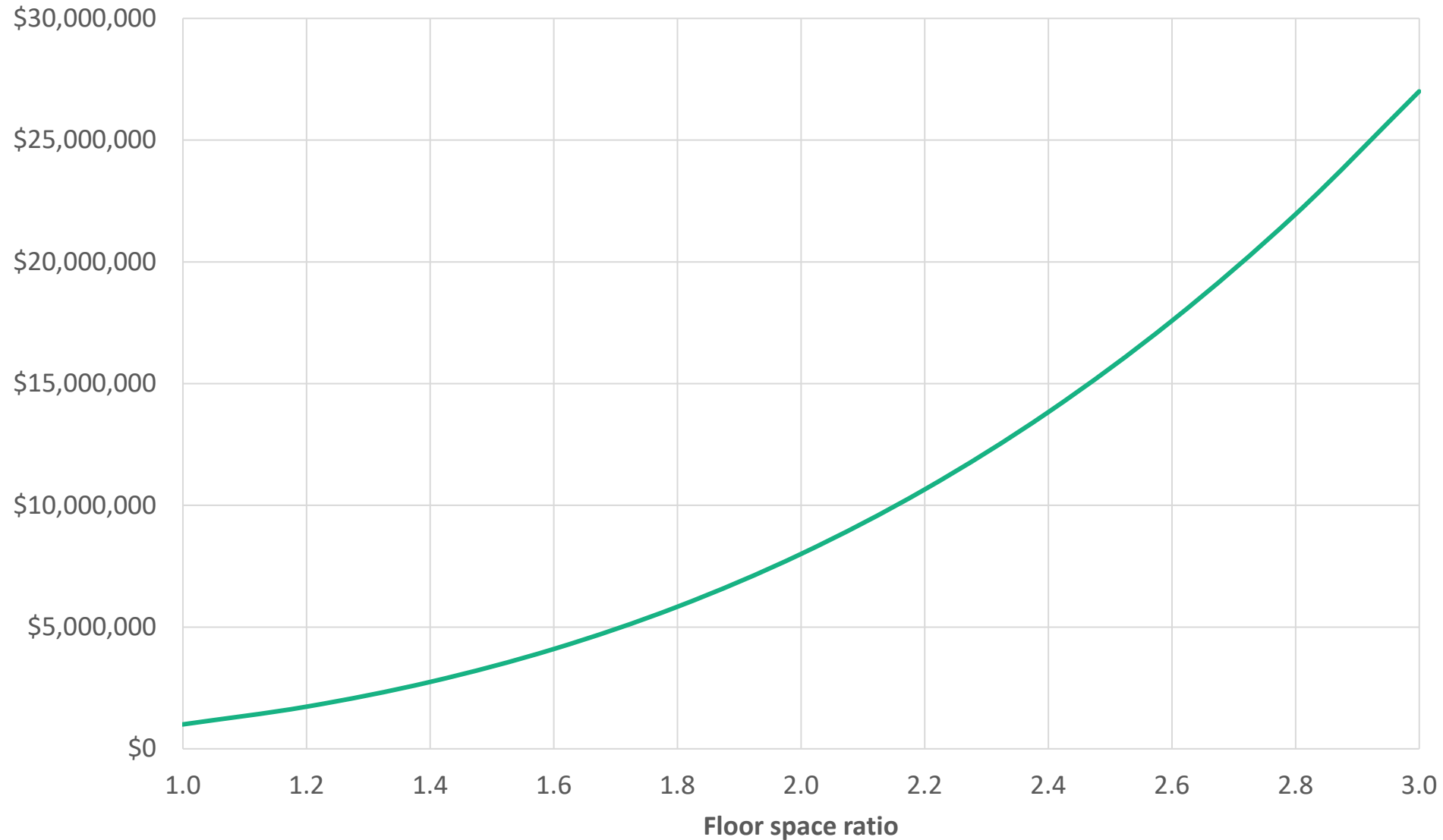
Complicating factors:

Economies of scale: Some cost items don't scale to density. For instance, a DCC that is proportional to land area, or a traffic or commercial study.



5) A common misconception

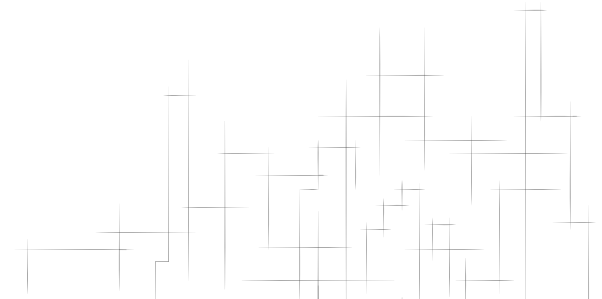
Land value per ac



5) A common misconception

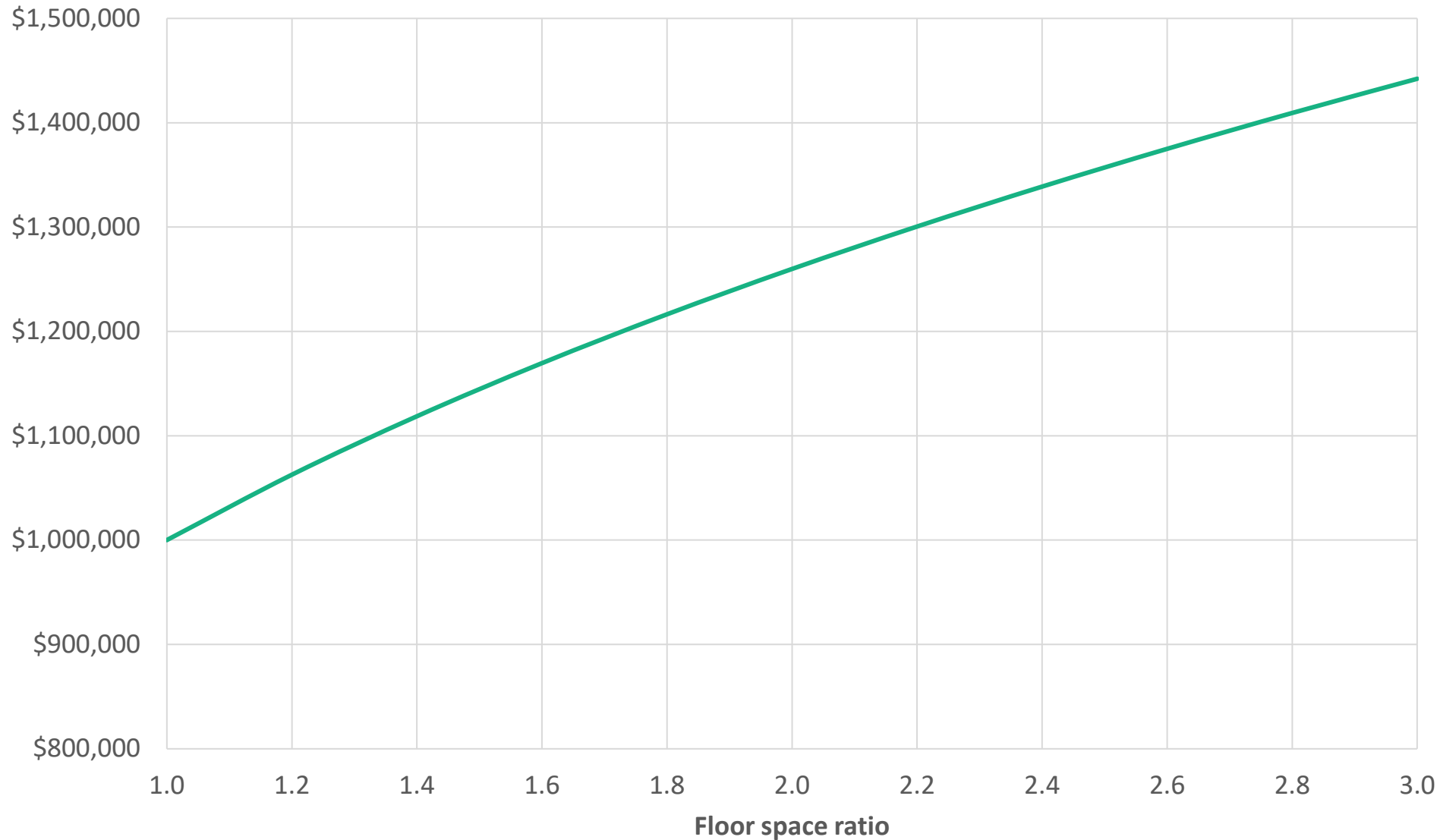
Complicating factors:

Diminishing returns: Each additional unit of density is worth slightly less in present dollars.



5) A common misconception

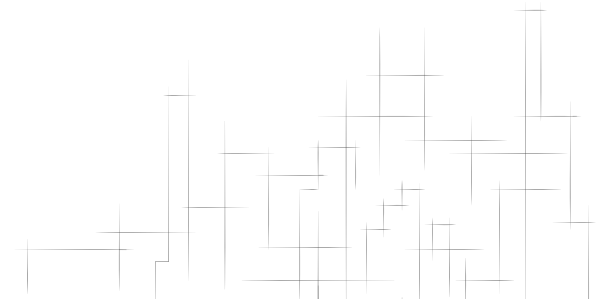
Land value per ac



5) A common misconception

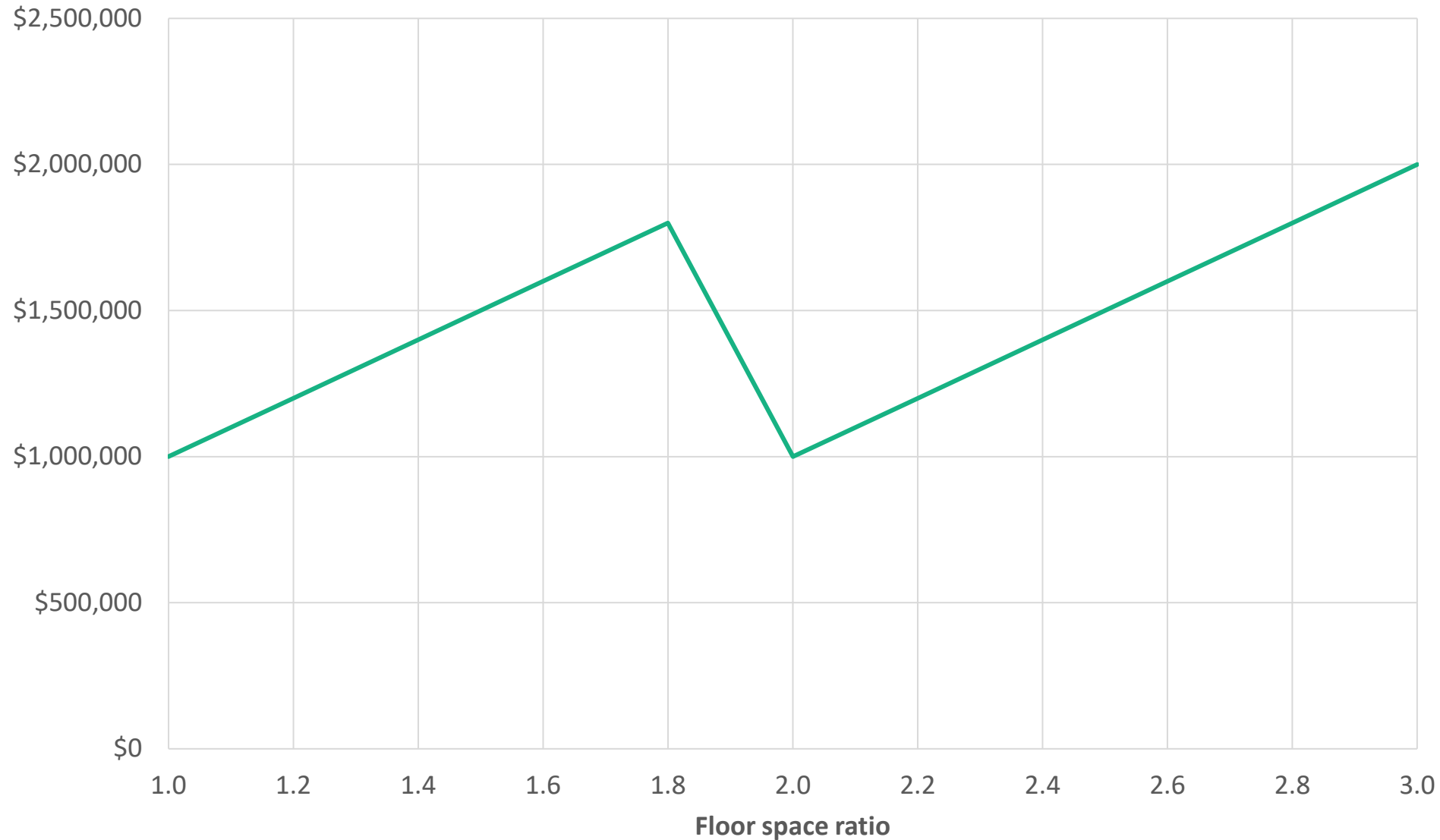
Complicating factors:

Construction materials: Concrete construction costs more than wood, so beyond a certain FSR land value can actually decrease at first.



5) A common misconception

Land value per ac

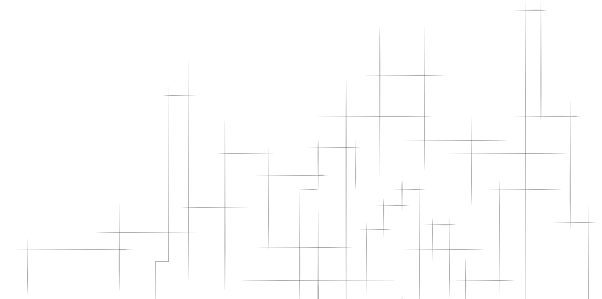


5) A common misconception

Implication

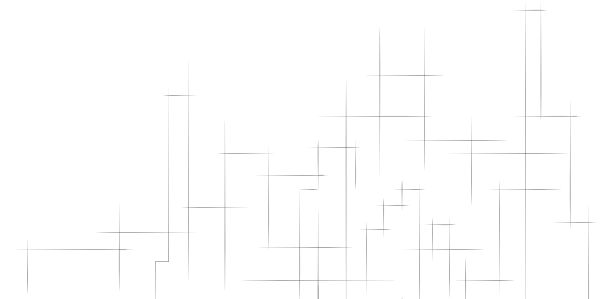
The shape of the curve depends on so many factors that there's no one-size-fits-all solution.

Rather than have a single $\$/\text{ft}^2$ rate, it's better to have tiers with different rates.



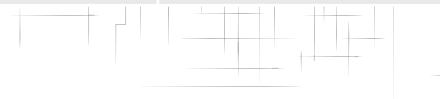
5) A common misconception

FSR range	Amenity contribution
2.0 – 3.0	\$100 per ft ²
3.0 – 4.0	-
4.0 – 5.0	\$200 per ft ²
5.0 – 6.0	\$250 per ft ²



6) Conclusion

Municipality	Type	Basis	Objective	Eligibility	Successful?
Surrey	Density bonus	Per unit; per land area	Police, fire, library, parks, paths, facilities	Varies by location and use	Somewhat
Richmond	Both	Per built area	Affordable housing, child care, park, pathway, & facility development, heritage conservation	CAC: All rezonings DB: CDT zone	Yes
Coquitlam	Both	Per built area; per unit; FSR steps	Neighbourhood amenities, capital projects, affordable housing	CAC: All rezonings DB: Certain zones	Yes
Township of Langley	CACs	Per unit; per land area	Parks, greenways, public art, heritage preservation, police, fire, library	All rezonings with residential or in certain parts of Willoughby	Yes
District of North Vancouver	CACs	Per built area; FSR steps; land lift	Affordable housing, community facilities, seniors care & facilities, child care & facilities, heritage conservation, public art, parks, etc.	All rezonings	Yes
Maple Ridge	Both	Per unit	Parks, trails, civic facilities, public art, heritage conservation, affordable housing	CAC: All rezonings DB: Albion Area	Yes
City of North Vancouver	Both	Per built area; FSR steps; land lift	Seismic upgrades; public facilities; secured and non-market rental housing; employment generation; heritage conservation; child care facilities; park improvements	CAC: All rezonings DB: Certain CD zones	Yes
White Rock	Both	Per built area in FSR steps; land lift	Public space, transportation improvements, public art, civic buildings, underground parking	All developments	Yes
Pitt Meadows	CACs	Per unit	Facilities, public art, affordable and special needs housing, parks, trails, significant ecological features, other projects	Rezoning in the Urban Containment Boundary, excluding affordable and special needs housing and accessory dwellings	No
Abbotsford	Density bonus	FSR	Affordable housing, underground parking	Certain zones in OCP-defined area	No
Kelowna	Density bonus	FSR	Underground parking, car sharing, programs, public space, green roofs	Mixed-use commercial developments in certain zones	No
Langford	CACs	Per unit	Affordable housing, underground parking, parks and open space	All developments	Yes



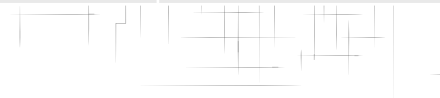
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Pitt Meadows	CACs	Per unit	Facilities, public art, affordable and special needs housing, parks, trails, significant ecological features, other projects	Rezoning in the Urban Containment Boundary, excluding affordable and special needs housing and accessory dwellings	No
Abbotsford	Density bonus	FSR	Affordable housing, underground parking	Certain zones in OCP-defined area	No
Kelowna	Density bonus	FSR	Underground parking, car sharing, programs, public space, green roofs	Mixed-use commercial developments in certain zones	No
Langford	CACs	Per unit	Affordable housing, underground parking, parks and open space	All developments	Yes



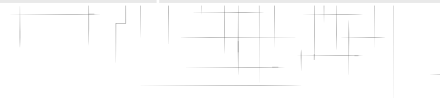
6) Conclusion

Municipality	Type	Basis	Objective	Eligibility	Successful?
Surrey	Density bonus	Per unit; per land area	Police, fire, library, parks, paths, facilities	Varies by location and use	Somewhat
Richmond	Both	Per built area	Affordable housing, child care, park, pathway, & facility development, heritage conservation	CAC: All rezonings DB: CDT zone	Yes
Coquitlam	Both	Per built area; per unit; FSR steps	Neighbourhood amenities, capital projects, affordable housing	CAC: All rezonings DB: Certain zones	Yes
Township of Langley	CACs	Per unit; per land area	Parks, greenways, public art, heritage preservation, police, fire, library	All rezonings with residential or in certain parts of Willoughby	Yes
District of North Vancouver	CACs	Per built area; FSR steps; land lift	Affordable housing, community facilities, seniors care & facilities, child care & facilities, heritage conservation, public art, parks, etc.	All rezonings	Yes
Maple Ridge	Both	Per unit	Parks, trails, civic facilities, public art, heritage conservation, affordable housing	CAC: All rezonings DB: Albion Area	Yes
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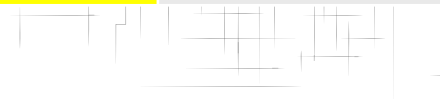
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