

Danger! New Construction

The allegation that new construction doesn't carry its' weight in taxes has been dragged out with depressing regularity by various advocates of draconian planning.

In one communication Maile Johnson cites a \$20,000 to \$30,000 figure as the infrastructure load per new unit but no explanation or reference for the figure is given. We doubt such statistics are derived from Orcas data. For a single-family home on an existing road with its' own water and septic system it's hard to see how this figure could be accurate.

As with any statistic, the result depends entirely on the sample and methodology that is used. As a blanket statement, its' truth is questionable.

But for the sake of argument let's say it's true; there are still some interesting conclusions we can draw:

Since the cost of local and state government rises every year (it has since the late 40's) are we really supposed to believe that this is only due to new construction? Even in the downturn years? How many cost over-runs, erased documents, airport road-work bungled, and other costly errors did we see in county government in the recent past? Should we really blame all this on new construction?

Also, if paying your way through taxes is really going to be an issue, shouldn't it be applied uniformly to all groups and citizens? That would cause some shake-ups to be sure.

Last but not least, if all new construction is a drain on the community, where does affordable housing fit in? Most of the AH I've seen is new construction. Not only that, but in addition to the load on services that all new housing is *supposed* to generate, AH is even more costly since it requires massive subsidization just to get built. In honesty, this must be added in to the normal call on services, including water, sewer, road use, school enrollment etc. before the true cost is reached.

Given the recent state of our economy the most pertinent question about Affordable Housing is affordable to whom?

