

## Jenna Kay

---

**From:** Don Steinke <crvancouverusa@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 12, 2024 8:42 PM  
**To:** Jenna Kay; Martinelli, Domenique; Small, Rebecca; Stacey Dalgaard; Monica Zazueta; Ann Foster; Sunrise  
**Subject:** Climate, GMA and Land Use Planning

**EXTERNAL:** This email originated from outside of Clark County. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

From Don Steinke  
To Those working on Climate and GMA in Vancouver and Clark County

Re: Climate, GMA and Land Use Planning

David Roberts has been my favorite climate blogger and podcaster for 14 years.

His recent podcast suggests that if a community is growing , then **amenity rich compact infill development** is an essential climate solution even if a community has already sprawled out, like ours has.

Here's a [link to his pod](#), but for a condensed version see below.

Condensed:

It might be helpful for someone to make an inventory of all the vacant or under-utilized property near a transit route.

It has become common among urbanists to say that the climate movement should embrace urban land use policy as a major area of focus. After all, it is well-established that communities in which people live closer together drive less and emit less carbon dioxide. Solve the housing shortage and the climate crisis at once!

Relative to car-focused sprawl, dense communities are amenity rich, more economically vibrant and more conducive to physical, psychological, social, and even political health.

But are they the fastest, most economically efficient, or most efficacious way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions? Can they match the speed and scale of, say, electrifying the light vehicle fleet?

According to RMI, we're going to have to both reduce VMT vehicle miles traveled in the United States by 20%, along with getting 70 million EVs on the road.

Dense infill reduces emissions 5 ways:

- Less need to travel
- Less need to manufacture cars
- Less embodied energy in multifamily developments than in single family residences.
- On average, single-family homes use twice as much energy as multifamily homes.
- Less loss of carbon sinks

Between 1992 and 2016, urban expansion globally led to direct forest loss of about just over 3 million hectares. Indirect forest loss was something like 18 million hectares,

So, think of vacant lots or derelict ones or massively underutilized ones, and then transit-oriented development.

And of course, these impacts would be much, much bigger if you made complementary transportation system improvements eg better transit service, better bike infrastructure, more rational road and parking pricing, then those impacts get even bigger.

The pattern that seems to repeat itself is that you have a majority of the public initially opposed to the change, and then basically the same majority in favor of it once it's been implemented.

Policymakers and politicians should anchor on and should take heart in the fact that you see this play out over and over again. It might be unpopular when you implement it, and then it becomes pretty damn popular when you do. And Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo has been reelected.

And so I guess that's what my response would be: Politicians and policymakers need to be brave enough to try. And those that are quite often see pretty decent political returns.

It's really hard to find anyone who wants to go back to the old way once you do these things. And yet all that evidence never seems to convince the next group of people to embrace it.

If cities are going to be places that people want to move to and live and work and play, that they need to be walkable and amenity rich.

I think some of the ones we've seen happen recently, I mean, you mentioned Montana. I think it's a really good example to talk about. They took this approach, it was nonpartisan, and it was all about deregulation and freedom and choice. They, you know, the Montana governor basically charged the legislators with cutting the red tape that, in his words were "stymieing new development."

You know, Amory Lovins at RMI had a phrase that sort of became a bit of a mantra for us, which was "focus on outcomes and not motives."

I think it would be a mistake to focus and communicate only the climate impacts. I think the beauty of it is, as you said, that in the American context, this is about freedom and choice and deregulation.

Electrification is not the silver bullet, land use reform is not the silver bullet, but they complement each other and both are needed.

This serves as a force multiplier for the other stuff. It makes it easier, faster, cheaper to get to 100% EV's, to get to 100% clean energy, to reduce the emissions associated with building materials, you name it.

So those are the three reasons: We're doing it because it's necessary, there's actually some political momentum because it appeals to so many constituencies, and it makes everything else, if we do this right, it makes everything else that much easier in the context of the transition.

Don Steinke