

From: [Mitch B](#)
To: [CITYCOUNCIL-List](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Written comment for item 7C of 12/2/25 City Council Meeting
Date: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 10:14:54 AM

Hello,

I will be making a public comment on item 7C for the 12/2/25 City Council Meeting and wanted to share a written copy with linked citations.

We've had 4 great workshops detailing all of the important things our city needs to fund. I wish we could spend just as much time discussing how we will acquire these funds, because I believe what we take money from is just as consequential as what we put money towards. While we should acquire grants when we can and issue bonds when we must, almost all municipal funds ultimately come from taxes and some taxes are better than others.

Just like how the things our city decides to fund are an expression of our values and priorities, where we choose to draw taxes from are also an expression of what we deprioritize. This is not an empty expression as economists have shown time after time that taxes discourage whatever economic activity they tax. Sales taxes discourage consumption of goods and services, income taxes discourage work and employment, and capital gains taxes discourage investment. And while I appreciate that measure E passed last year to fund our schools, we must acknowledge that because that parcel tax taxes floorplan square footage, it now discourages residential development, which is quite a shame because the number 1 issue our city currently faces is the housing crisis.

Two workshops ago, I suggested that a new parcel tax should instead be applied on lot area. This idea is strongly supported by many economists who research parcel taxes as taxing land causes the least market distortion (<https://www.ppic.org/publication/parcel-taxes-as-a-local-revenue-source-in-california/>). Theoretically, taxing land would discourage land area, however, with some very limited esoteric exceptions, land area is finite and cannot gained or lost. What taxing land does instead is encourage people to do more with less of it, actually improving the economy rather than stifling it.

Taxing lot area has a strong tax benefit linkage as well. Larger lots are surrounded by longer roads, and underdeveloped land means further distances between destinations making a larger proportion of trips done by motor vehicle for longer distances causing more road damage costing the city more in maintenance. Underdeveloped land including vacant lots, parking lots, and single-story big box stores are the largest hotspots of crime according to the APD's 2024 annual report (<https://www.alamedaca.gov/files/assets/public/v2/departments/alameda/police/apd-annual-report-2024-for-upload.pdf>), and so we should expect the owners of that land to contribute more to the police force. Regarding today's discussion, it's very reasonable that if you own more land, you should pay more for its flood protection.

Lastly, while prop 13 prevents taxes upon assessed values, making progressive taxation more challenging, taxing lot area is still progressive. As opposed to taxing number of units or floorplan area, a lot area parcel tax puts very little burden on multi-story apartment renters and condo owners, a somewhat similar burden on single family homeowners who tend to be

wealthier residents, but a lot more burden on large commercial land owners of big box stores, parking lots, golf courses, and vacant land.

I understand that the referendum for an infrastructure tax may not come from the city itself, but as private citizens you are still all leaders of our community, so I encourage city staff and councilmembers to advocate in whatever manner is appropriate, for a smarter, fairer, and more equitable form of taxation in the form of a lot area parcel tax.

Thank you,
-Mitch Ball