

Freedom Matters

An Occasional News & Opinion Paper

Our mission is to restore, perfect and maintain our government as a constitutional republic that is dedicated to defending our unalienable rights as individuals to life, liberty and property.

Dane County, Wisconsin

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I WANT MY CAKE AND I EXPECT TO EAT IT, TOO

by Michael Byrne

As the nation is in the midst of a significant economic crisis, it would be good to get some perspective on the root causes—some of which are an outgrowth of the kind of land use policies *Freedom Matters* has written about for years.

Although land use planners try very hard to advance the environmental arguments for restricting development in the rural areas outside of our large cities, their real motivation lies more in desperate attempts to check the flight of tax revenues out of the city.

Urban leaders know that when people become more economically secure and start looking to acquire their two-car garage and a decent yard for the kids in a safe neighborhood, that sort of environment is out of their jurisdiction and so are the tax dollars these “sprawl” offenders would have been paying to municipal governments.

Since these local revenues cannot be just printed (like the federal boys do) the states and counties and cities are finally up against the wall of their own design, receipts are falling and obligations continue to rise.

The results of this planning are obvious: large, dense neighborhoods where the government literally has to hold out all kinds of carrots to induce people to live. Most prominent amongst those carrots is the kind offered by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac where, dare I say, people who have no business or credit worthiness to obtain hundreds of thousands of dollars have been doing so with- you guessed it- your money.

Every one of us felt the impact of dramatically higher gas prices in 2008. Those of us whose personal economic plan had some insulation against unexpected expenses were able to survive those few months with minimal disruption to the larger picture of our home budgets. Not so for many people who had obtained one of those questionable home loans. Instead, they were lurching from month to month with very little margin of error, so when it suddenly cost nearly twice as much to fill their gas tank, they took that money from the most available category in their budget, and

simply stopped making their mortgage payments.

After all, if you can't pay the government and you're the kind of person who wants to assign blame to forces outside of your control, then it's easy to rationalize that the government that gave you the loan in the first place will just have to get its act together and make things better so you can resume paying.

Government obsession with land use controls resulted in large masses of people who now are very dependent upon the government for their very survival. Unfortunately, no one is going to confront this head-on until we as a people confront ourselves and re-define what we expect our government to do for us, and most importantly, what we demand our government to leave alone.

A review of the construction statistics available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics reveals just how the economic downturn is affecting Wisconsin. What is harder to track but nonetheless a statistic which is out there is the percentage of economic growth that was taken off the table by restrictive land use policies designed to “defeat sprawl.”

Human nature is inevitable, in that people will decide what they want out of life, out of employment, and out of their environment and make moves to achieve it. Anyone who lives along several major road corridors leading into Dane County can see that over the years thousands of people have opted to live out of the county so they could achieve either the space they wanted or a suitably affordable living arrangement. In future issues we will use data collected by Dane County Planning and Development to reveal how many people could have lived in Dane County if Dane County had allowed them to choose the building site they preferred.

If the government bailout bill “stimulates” nonsensical proposals such as commuter rail, which are really designed to be a tool for land use and settlement policies, then we will be in a position to continue to fund our own economic disaster. The stimulus bill is really a giant government spending bill, and the spending is under the control of people operating under an agenda which has more to do with a messianic complex dominating the current political leadership.

Please don't save us from ourselves, Mr. Obama.

WISCONSIN	May 2008	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.
Construction (3)	123.4	122.9	121.8	122.3	120.4	(P) 119.5
12-month % change	-2.5	-2.5	-2.7	-2.5	-4.0	(P) -4.5

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