Executive Summary: How Joliet's Development Patterns Shape Its Future

Joliet has grown dramatically over the past several decades - in both population and land area - and this growth has created opportunities as well as long-term financial challenges. Urban3's analysis helps us understand how different parts of the city contribute to Joliet's budget, how much our infrastructure costs to maintain, and where smart planning decisions can strengthen our community for years to come.

Key Insights About Joliet Today

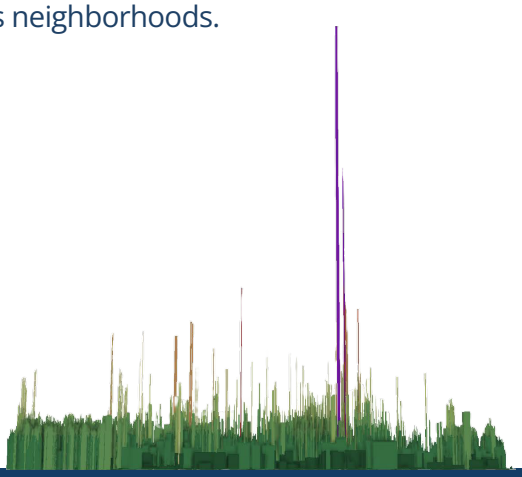
Downtown is the economic engine of Joliet.
Dense commercial and mixed-use buildings in the city center generate far more property and sales tax revenue per acre than other parts of the city. Some downtown parcels are among the most economically productive in the entire region.

Low-density, auto-oriented development costs more than it produces.
Big box stores, large industrial sites, and spread-out single-family neighborhoods generate relatively low revenue per acre, while requiring extensive infrastructure such as roads, water, and sewer systems.

Infrastructure costs are outpacing revenues.
The city currently underfunds longterm maintenance by an estimated $111 million each year. Every mile of road, pipe, and public system added increases future financial obligations. Compact development helps reduce this burden.

Development choices from past decades still shape today's outcomes.
Annexations since the 1970s expanded Joliet outward, lowering average productivity and increasing the cost-of-service delivery. Earlier, historic patterns -including redlining - contributed to long-term disparities in land value and economic opportunity across neighborhoods.

Most parcels in Joliet are "net negative."
When comparing revenue per acre to the cost of infrastructure and services, 91% of the city's land consumes more resources than it generates. The most fiscally positive areas are dense, walkable, mixed-use districts.



Value Per Acre, Joliet looking north.

Opportunities for a Stronger, More Sustainable Joliet

01

Strengthen Downtown and emerging "cores."

Building up downtown - and supporting secondary commercial hubs like the mall area and Ridge Road - creates high-value, walkable places that pay for themselves and help subsidize the rest of the city.

02

Encourage mixed-use and "Missing Middle" housing.

Buildings that combine housing and commercial uses deliver some of the strongest financial returns. Missing Middle homes (duplexes, fourplexes, townhomes) strike a balance between affordability and fiscal sustainability.

03

Prioritize infill over outward expansion.

Filling vacant lots and underused sites leverages existing infrastructure and improves neighborhood vitality, without increasing long-term costs.

04

Match land use decisions with long-term fiscal responsibility.

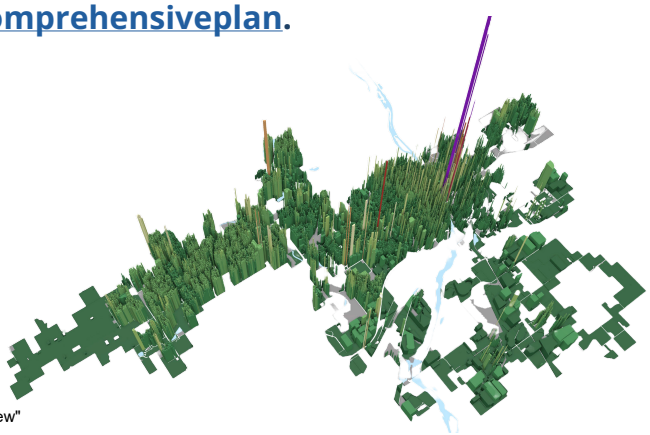
Not every neighborhood must be dense, but strategic compact development helps ensure Joliet can maintain roads, utilities, and services without placing increasing burdens on taxpayers.

Why This Matters for the Comprehensive Plan

The choices made in the Joliet Comprehensive Plan will shape Joliet's financial stability, livability, and growth for decades. By aligning development patterns with long-term fiscal health, Joliet can encourage vibrant neighborhoods, support local businesses, and ensure that existing and future infrastructure remains sustainable.

This analysis gives residents and leaders a clear roadmap: invest where land procudes the most value, grow in ways that pay for themselves, and make development decisions that keep Joliet strong - now and for future generations.

To view the full Urban3 presentation, or to receive updates on Joliet's Comprehensive Plan, please visit www.joliet.gov/comprehensiveplan.



Value Per Acre, Joliet "birds eye view"