

605 Davis Planned Development is Wrong for Evanston

Gul Agha

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at Urbana-Champaign

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Member, Environment Board, City of Evanston

Member, Board of Directors, Downtown Evanston Residents Association

President, Optima Views Condominium Association (Evanston)

Significant Problems with 605 Davis Proposal

- Project is contrary to Evanston's Climate Goals
- Project would make the City Center Dangerous with Wind Tunnels

The Fallacy

- Increasing population density near transit hubs will reduce the carbon footprint from transportation.
- Highrise buildings would increase population density
- Many densely populated and vibrant cities have height limits (Paris, Madison WI, Sante Fe NM, Washington DC, ...).
- *Paris has a density of 50,000 people/square mile, or 5 times greater than Evanston even though **highrise buildings are banned in Paris.***

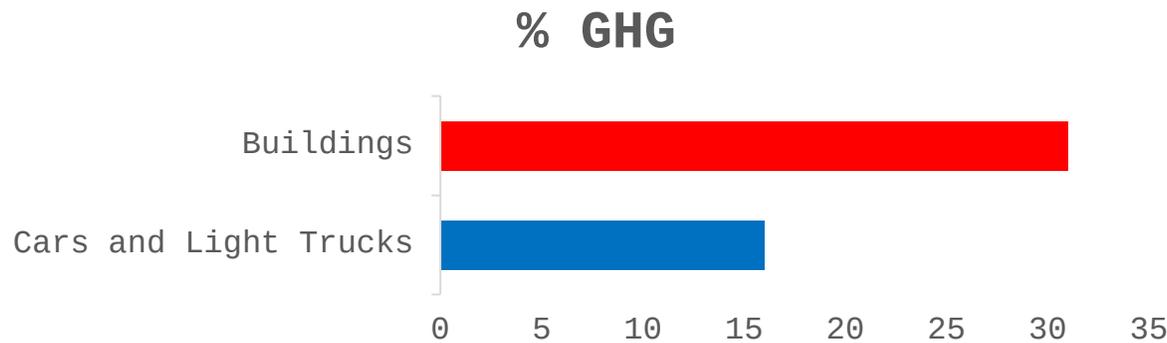
➤ Zoning should encourage

8/13/2025

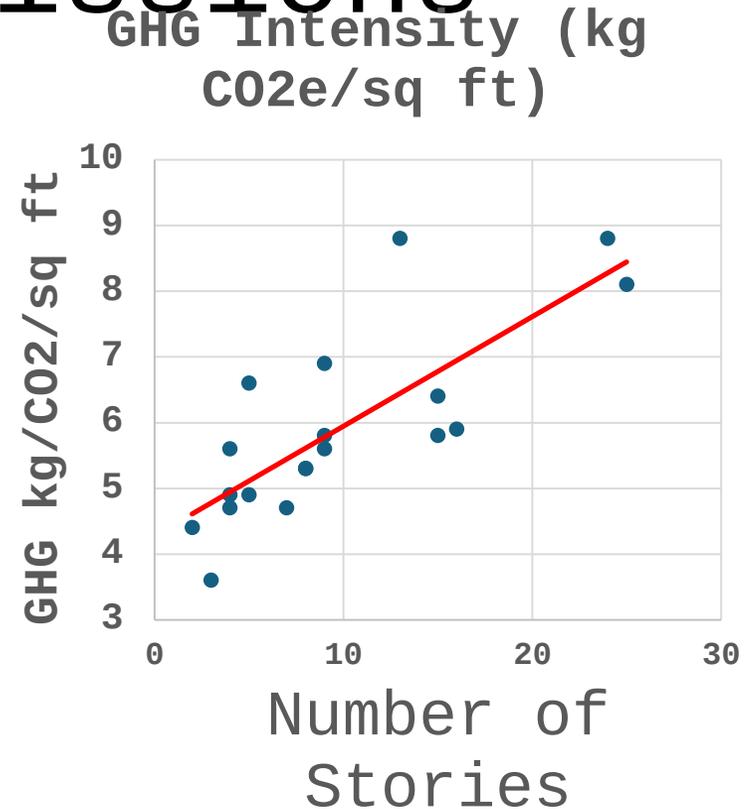
highrise buildings

Why Highrise Buildings are Not Sustainable

Building Operations and Greenhouse Gas Emissions



- *Buildings account for 80% of GHGs generated within Evanston*
- *GHG emissions in a high-rise buildings are more than twice as high per square foot as in a low-rise.*

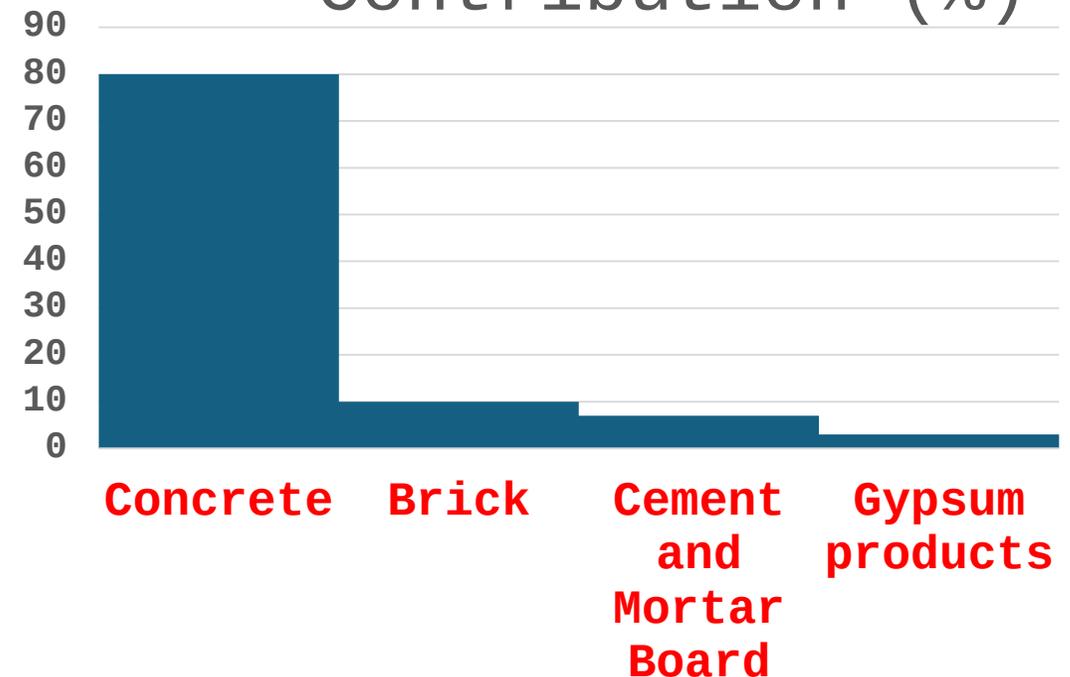


2019 Data from Evanston, Illinois

The Climate Impact of Building Construction

- About half of lifecycle GHGs are from construction and materials
- Highrise buildings require the use of concrete—an energy intensive material, and more steel
- Per square foot of floor space, construction of buildings > 20 stories creates double the GHGs

Embodied Carbon Contribution (%)

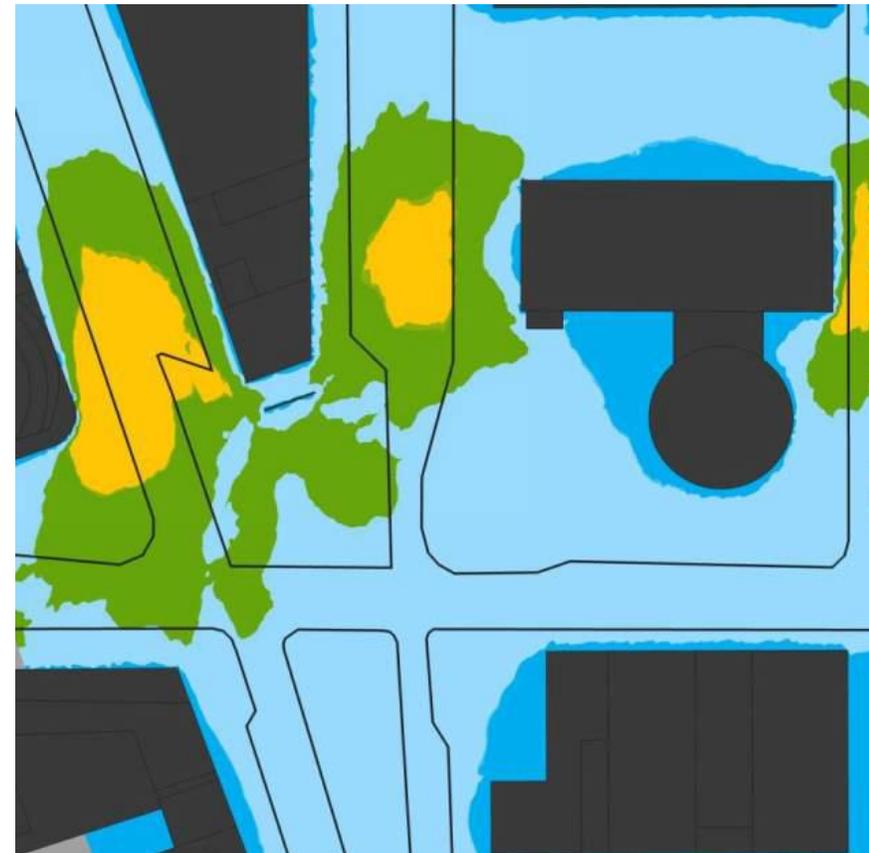


Transit oriented does not address the problem

- *The increased GHGs of a 1500 sq ft unit in a highrise building over GHGs of the unit in a 3 story building are equivalent to driving at least 46,000 miles per year (based on 2023 mpg).*
- *The average annual automobile mileage in Illinois is ~12,000 miles.*
- *The city staff simply misunderstands the facts when asserting that the project will aid in the city's environmental goals.*

Wind Tunnels

- Winds are dangerous: people have suffered fatalities due to high wind due to tall buildings
- Fountain square is the beating heart of Evanston
- At least 20% of summer days one could not comfortably sit, stand, or stroll around fountain square or walk near it
- Wind study does not show how often one could not comfortably stand or sit



b) PROPOSED SCENARIO -
SUMMER

COMFORT:



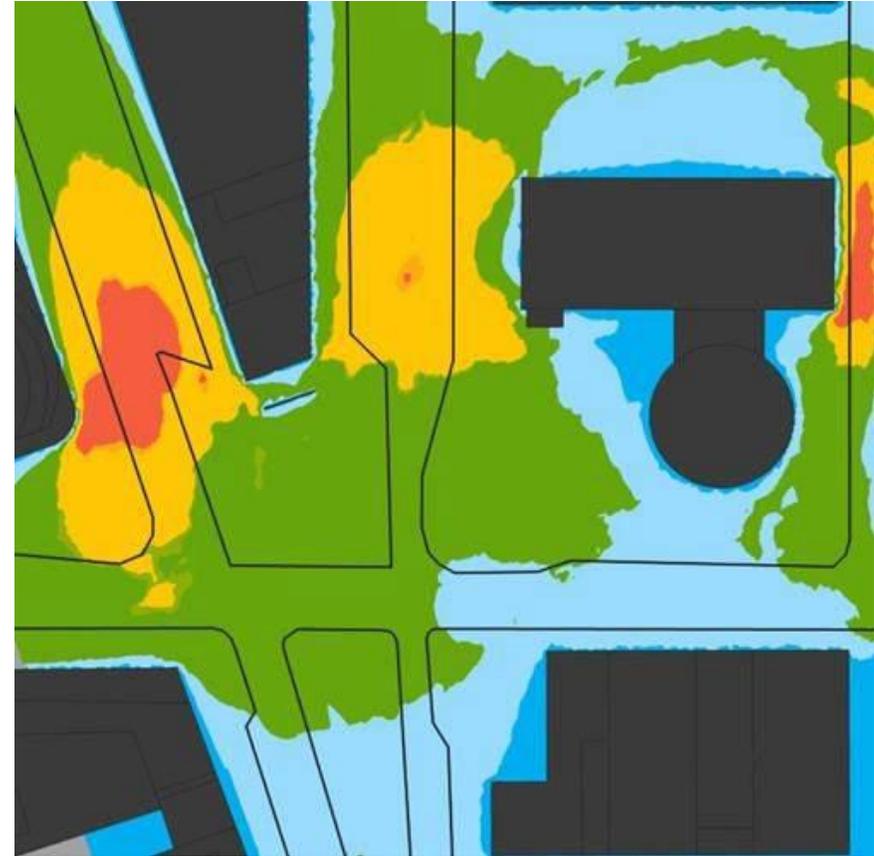
What does it mean for Frail Adults and Children?

	Average Adult	Children & Frail
Standing	< 20 mph	<10 mph
Strolling	< 25 mph	<15 mph
Walking	< 30 mph	< 20mph

- *For frail and older individuals, as well as children, it's advisable to avoid walking in winds above **20 mph** to prevent falls and injuries*
- Wind study should model the precise impact on children, and frail adults.

Danger to Children and Frail Persons

- *LUC must demand a thorough wind data:*
 - *Safety of children at Bright Horizon including the playground*
 - *Consider the use of Fountain Square: sitting and standing*
- *Simulations must be validated by a wind tunnel study—the gold standard.*



(b) PROPOSED SCENARIO - WINTER

LUC Needs to Push Back!

*"I think, I mean, can we be honest?
[Looking to the Camera] It's not like
anyone's watching! They both [Church
Street Plaza and for Davis Street
developers] propose more floors than
they know is gonna fly 'cause they
expect a negotiation."*

---Mayor Daniel

Biss, 3/6/2025 at a
downtown forum

SUMMARY

Reasons to Reject Proposed Project

- An enlightened, environmentally conscious community should prioritize environmentally *sustainable* growth.
- Increasing density with buildings 6 stories or less, near mass transit stations, is environmentally friendly, has lower building costs, allows solar rooftop panels, and creates more affordable housing.
- The City's downtown should not be stifled with traffic congestion, a canyon without sunshine, and have dangerous wind tunnels caused by adding more tall buildings.
- Evanston deserves a downtown that is a *welcoming space* with wider sidewalks, bike lanes, and pedestrian only streets not more



Elizabeth Williams <ewilliams@cityofevanston.org>

Continuance Request - 605 Davis Street

ARTHUR ALTMAN <artaltman4041@comcast.net>
To: Elizabeth Williams <ewilliams@cityofevanston.org>

Wed, Aug 13, 2025 at 8:27 AM

- 1- Parking space limited on Davis. The new building will make this worse
 - 2- Traffice on Chicago Ave turning west on Davis always a backup waiting for green light. No turn west when waiting pedestrian traffic to cross.
 - 3- cars leaving and entering building will add to slowing of traffic on Davis
 - 4- No Oother building as tall as. Sets bad pressadent.
 - 5- Over 20 story building turned down on Chicago Avenue because no space for cars to wait e.g.mail delivery, Fe3d Ex and emergency ambulances.
 - 6- This building is not beautiful no matter what builder says.
 - 7 While being built massive traffic slow downs
- Submitted by Arthur Altman
Last meeting presenters for builders went over their allotted time

On 08/11/2025 2:42 PM CDT Elizabeth Williams <ewilliams@cityofevanston.org> wrote:

[Quoted text hidden]

 **ARTHUR.vcf**
1K

Continuance Request - 605 Davis Street

bruce.baumberger@gmail.com <bruce.baumberger@gmail.com>

Mon, Aug 11, 2025 at 3:22 PM

To: Elizabeth Williams <ewilliams@cityofevanston.org>

Cc: Sam Hubbard <shubbard@cityofevanston.org>, Jeremiah Bebo <jbebo@cityofevanston.org>, Meagan Jones <mmjones@cityofevanston.org>, Sarah Flax <sflax@cityofevanston.org>, Brian George <bgeorge@cityofevanston.org>, jklindwall@comcast.net, Clare Kelly <ckelly@cityofevanston.org>

Thanks for the formal notification of my continuance related to the 605 Davis project. The reason stated on my continuance is analysis of the impact of the project on the adjacent alley. My analysis included a visit on August 1 with the manager of the Bright Horizons daycare business at 1629 Orrington. They have about 100 students being dropped off and picked up Monday through Friday, all through the alley. My contact with the manager was the first she had heard about the 605 Davis project, contrary to what is noted in the July 23 LUC minutes. Since talking with the local Bright Horizons manager, I have been in touch with their regional management team. I spoke with them as recently as today and learned that they have not had time to review the plans and the impact on their business.

Since Bright Horizons was not formally notified about the 605 Davis project and are only now developing an understanding of the project, I request that my continuance be extended to the LUC meeting on August 27 to allow Bright Horizons reasonable time to review the 605 Davis plans. The key areas of concern for them will be alley traffic impact (I observed the alley last week and saw the manner in which garbage trucks delay parents accessing the Bright Horizons parking lot).



Another major concern for Bright Horizons is the wind Venturi impact on their rooftop playground, an important feature of the school that is not visible from the ground. I am not an engineer, but I think the 605 Davis Wind Study should include the playground. This photo shows the playground:



Thanks for consideration of a continuance to August 27 for discussion of the impact of the 605 Davis project on Bright Horizons.

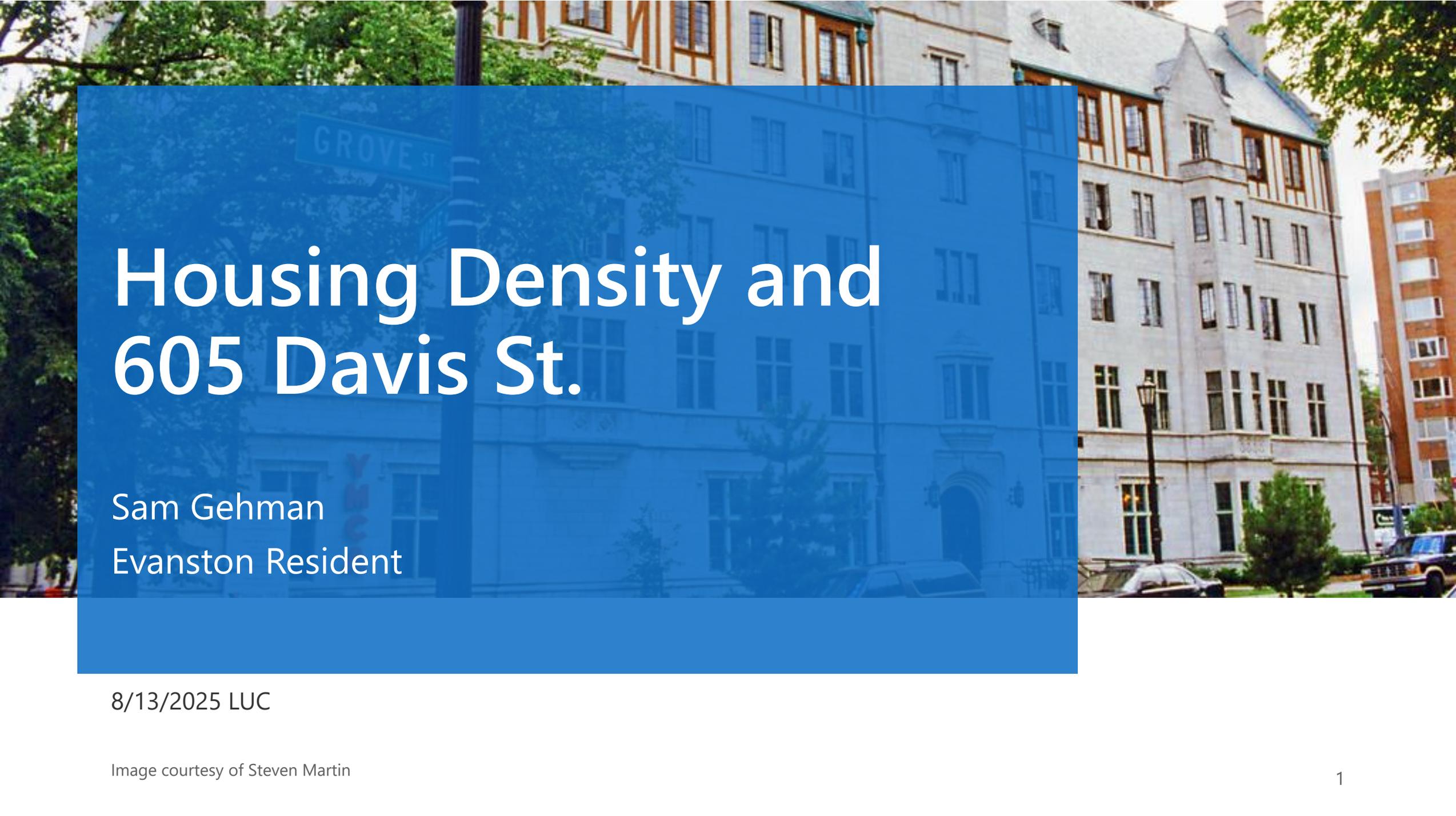
Best regards,

Bruce

Bruce Baumberger

Organizer, Downtown Evanston Residents Association (DERA)
807 Davis St., Unit 1009
Evanston, IL 60201-7100
bruce.baumberger@gmail.com
847-370-3515

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Housing Density and 605 Davis St.

Sam Gehman
Evanston Resident

8/13/2025 LUC

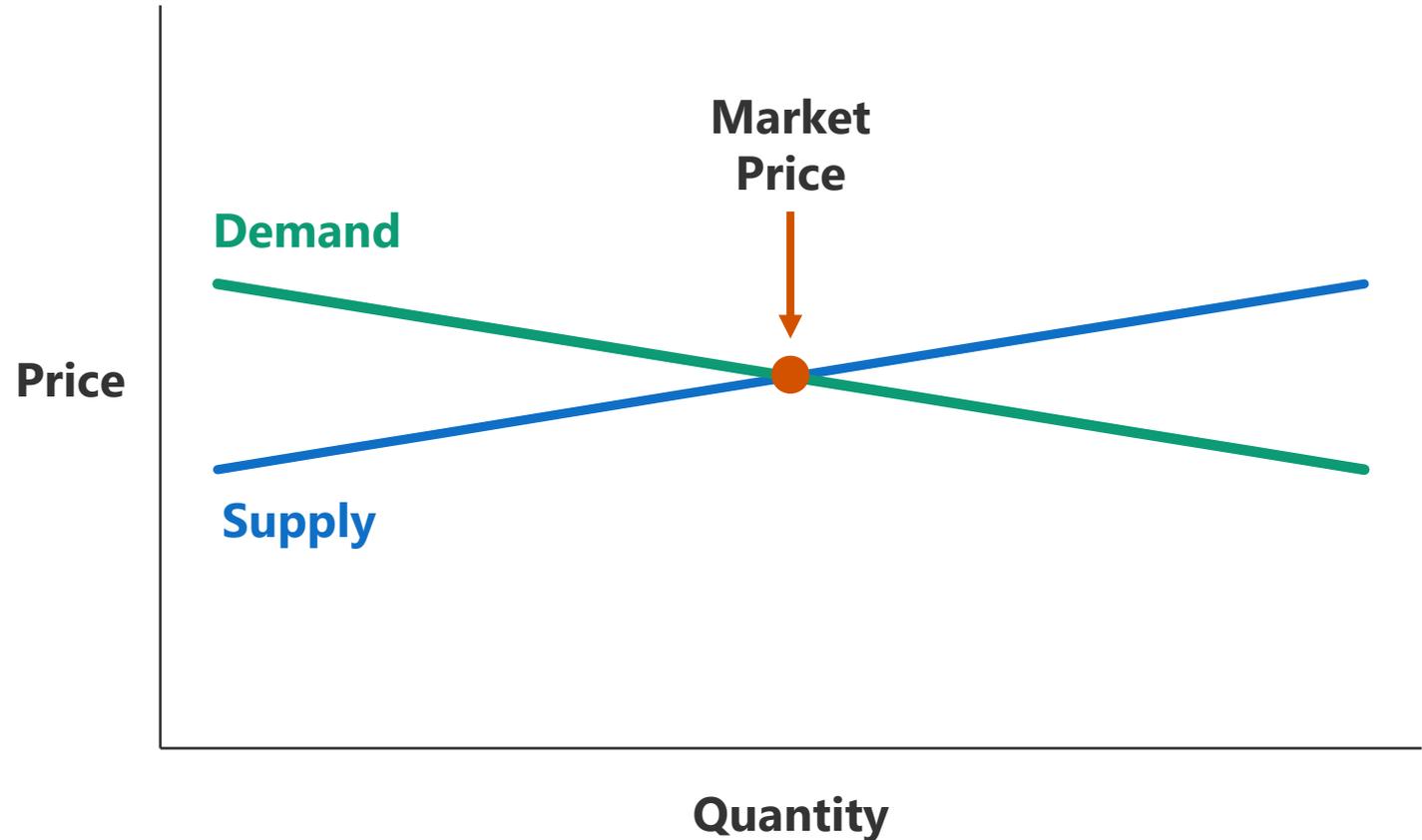
Image courtesy of Steven Martin

This development is good for Evanston

- 1 Increased supply = more affordability**
Housing follows the principles of supply and demand
- 2 Growth strengthens the local economy**
A strong downtown drives a prosperous Evanston
- 3 605 Davis is consistent with prior developments**
The proposed structure fits into downtown's footprint

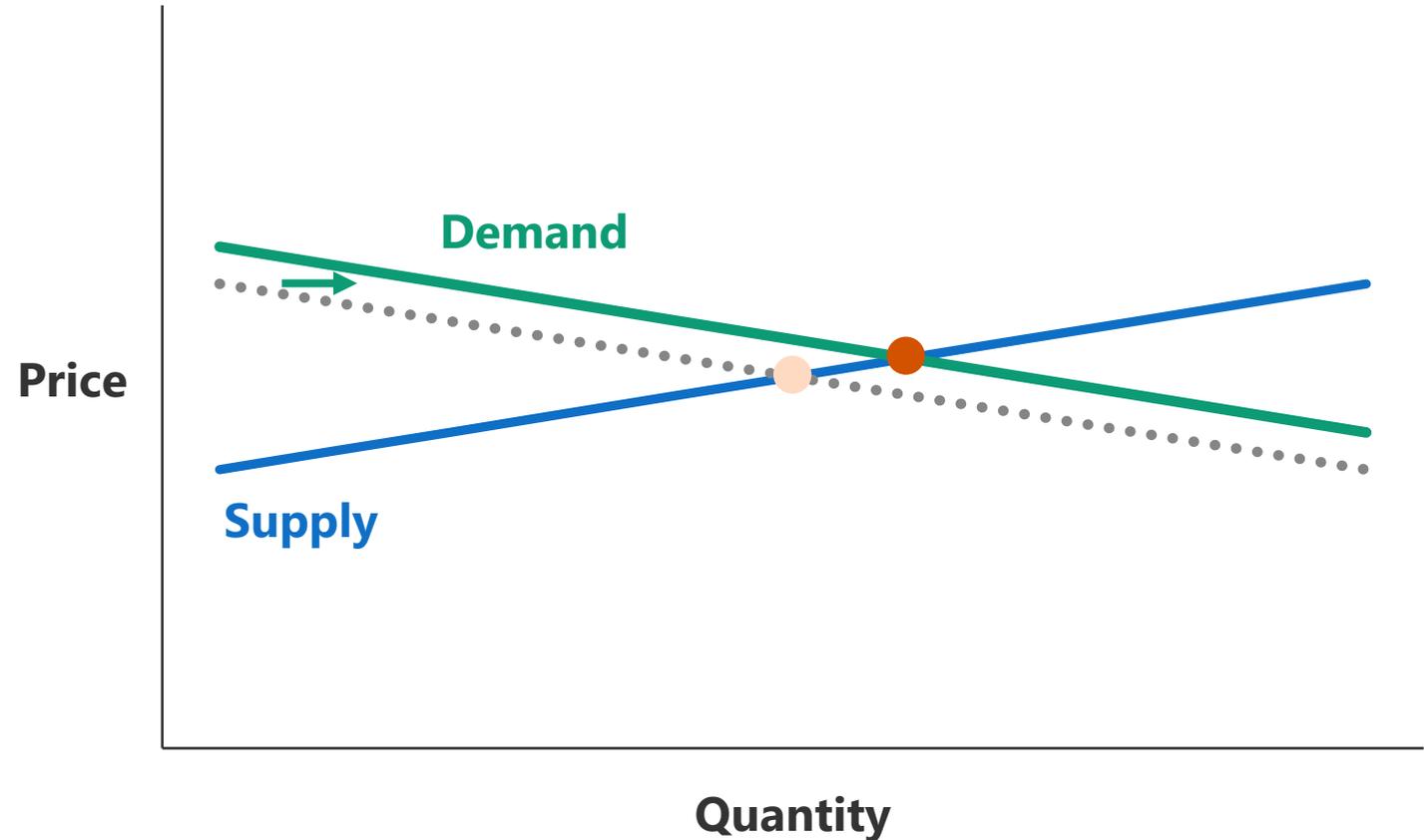
Supply and Demand | The laws of supply and demand apply to housing

The market price is determined by the intersection of supply and demand



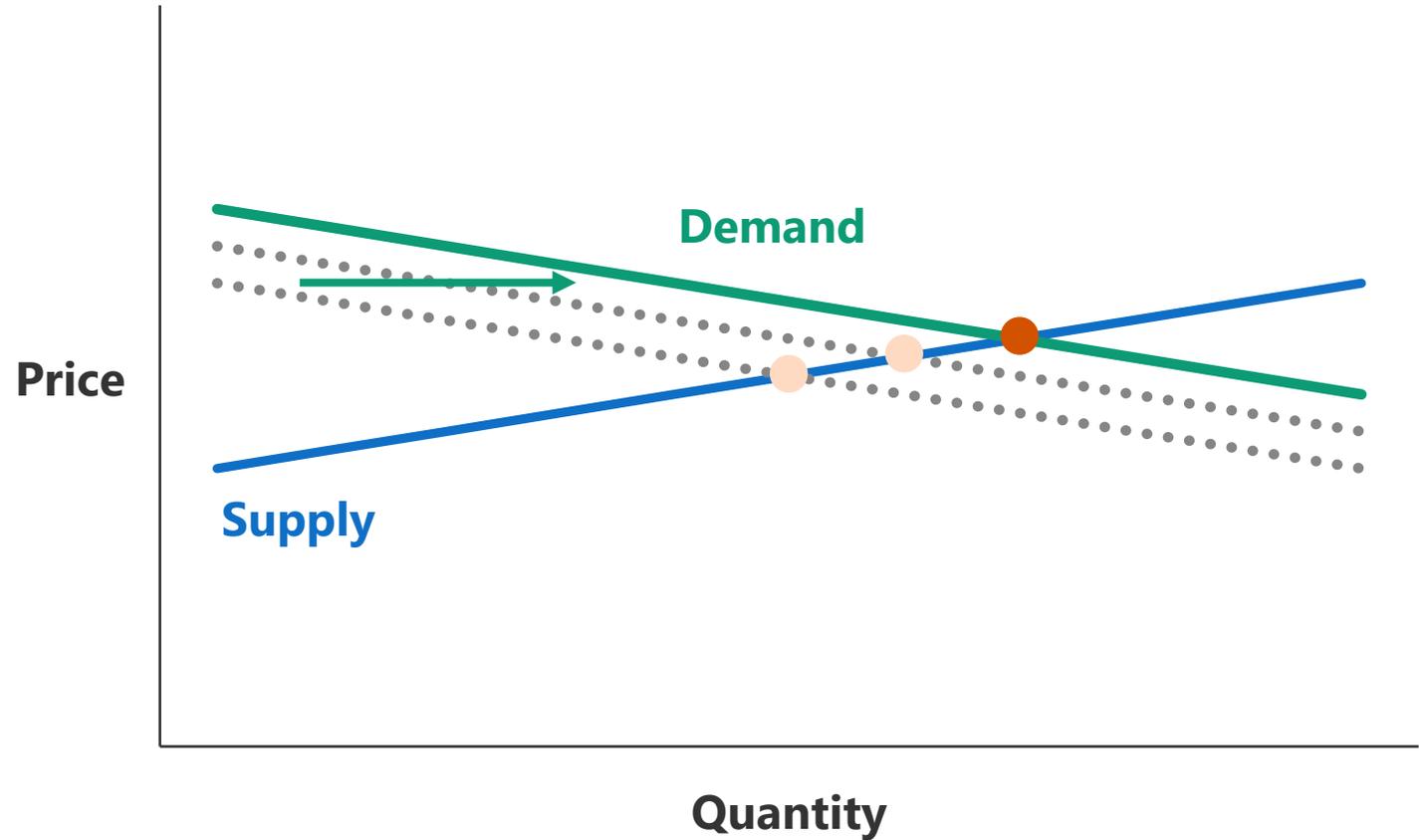
Demand for housing increases with population

As housing demand increases, the demand curve moves to the right



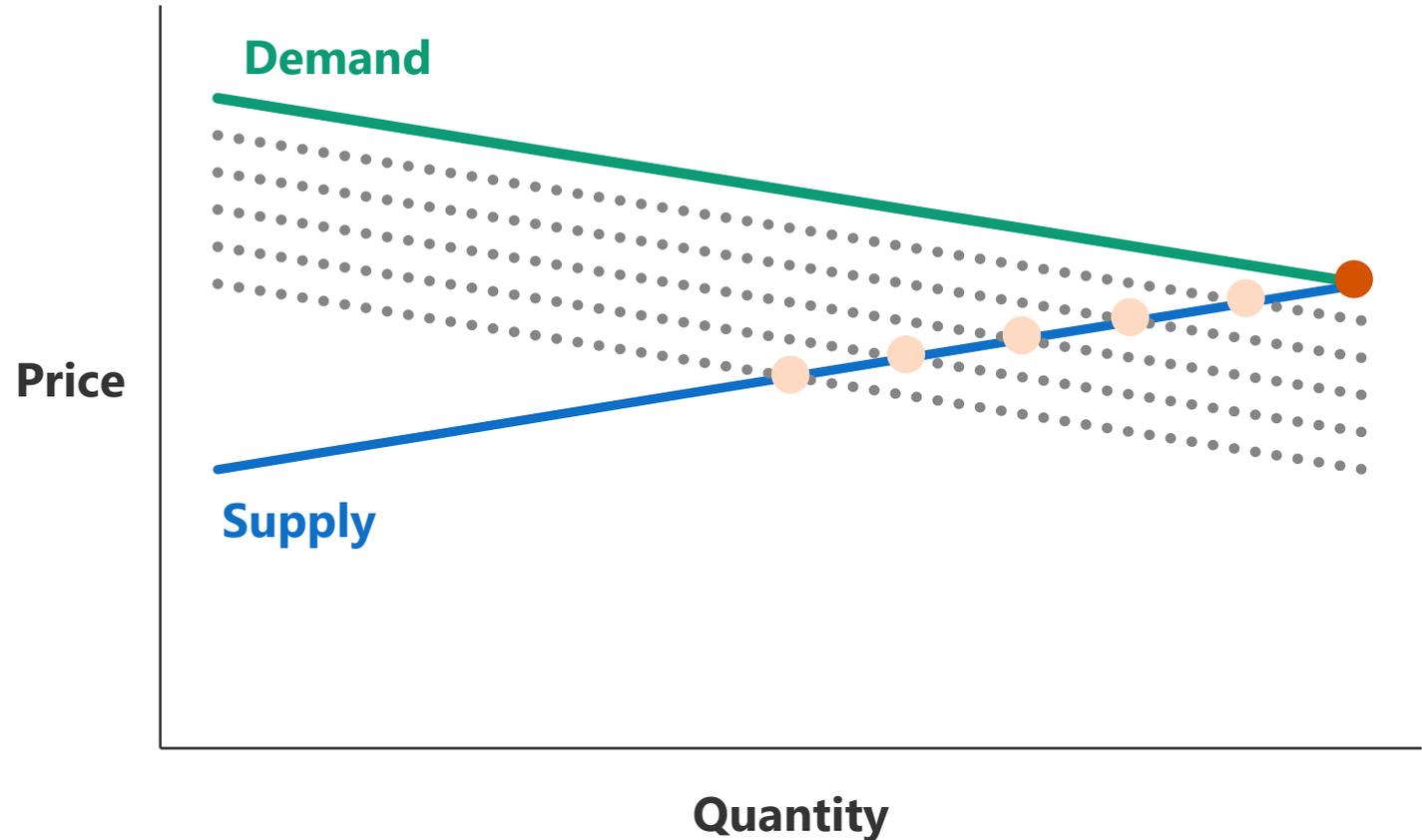
Demand increasing is a persistent trend

Places like Evanston are desirable places to live



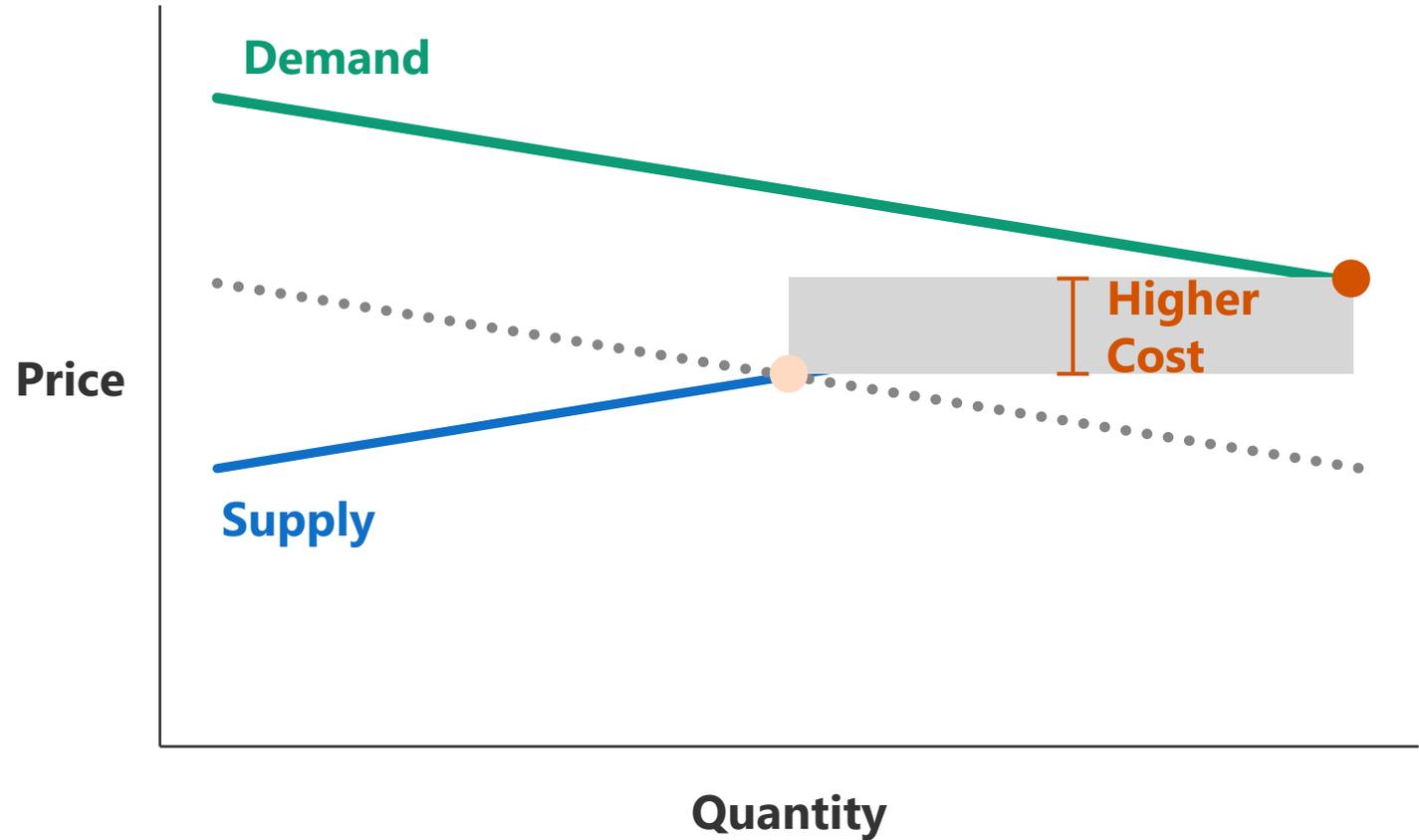
Effects of higher demand build over time

Demand increases have very large impacts over longer time horizons



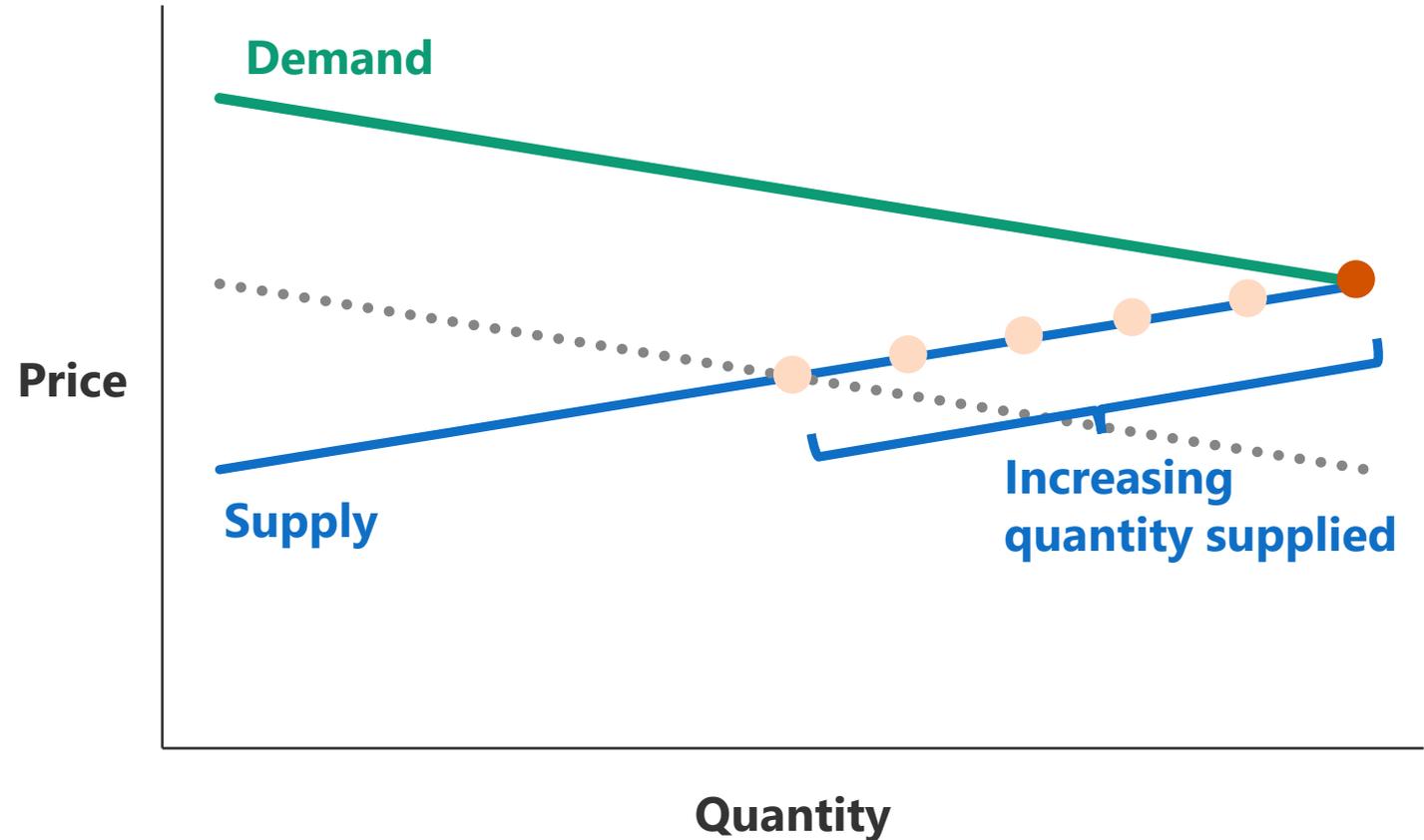
Increased demand leads to higher housing costs

The new equilibrium results in higher prices



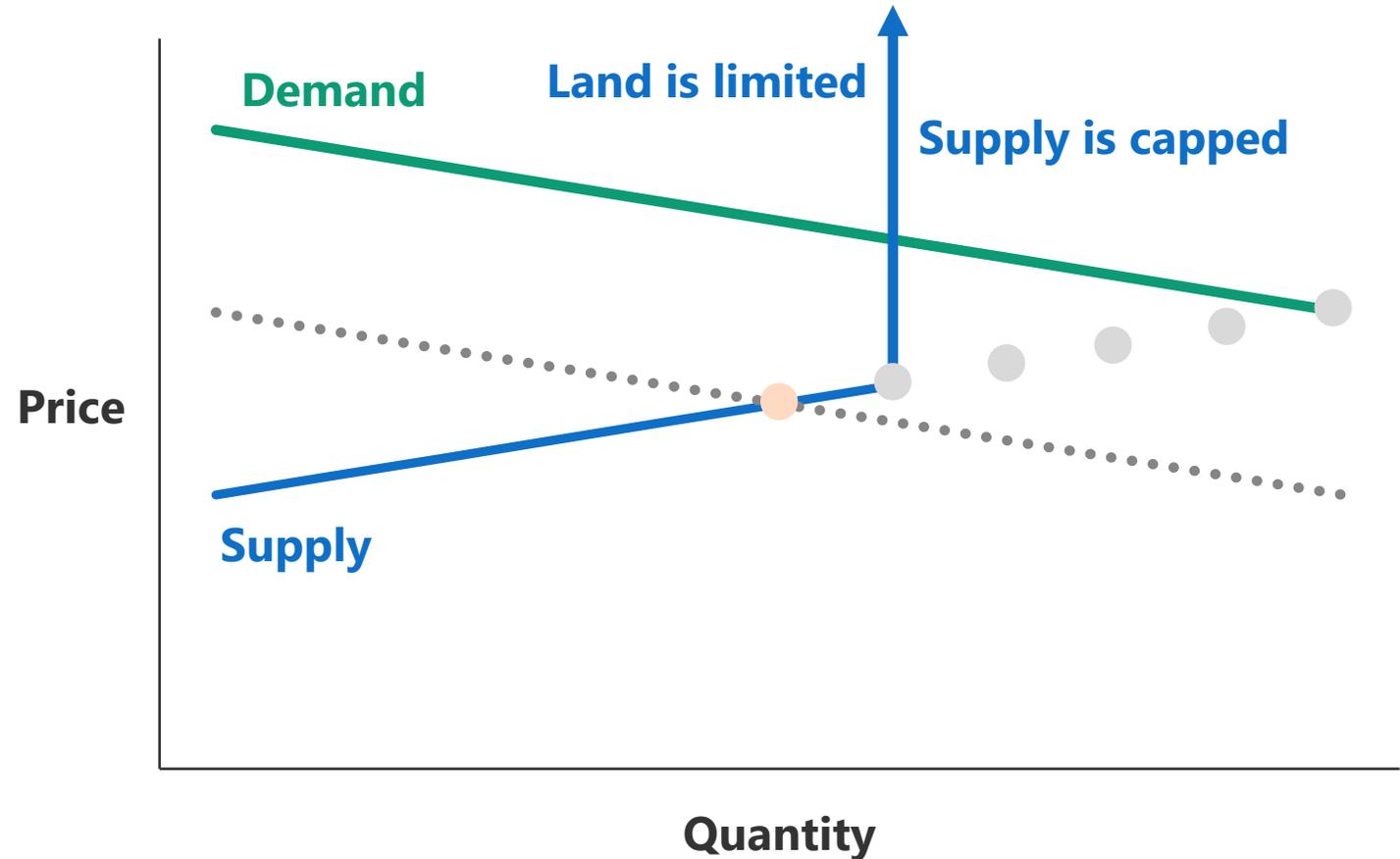
Prior charts assumed there is available supply...

Prior examples made a critical assumption that vacant units can meet increased demand



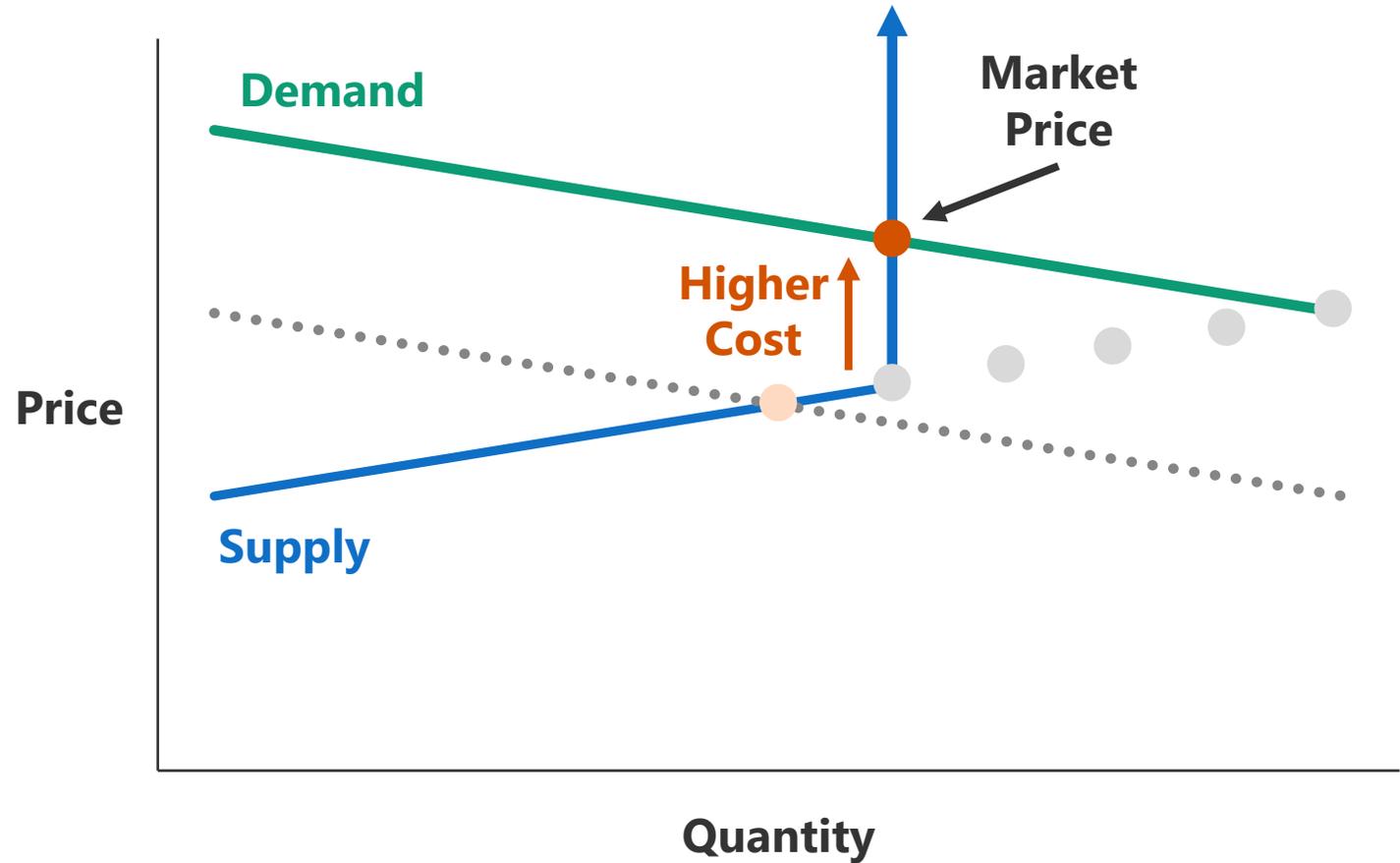
...but Evanston's supply is capped due to limited available land

No open land to build
= no more housing



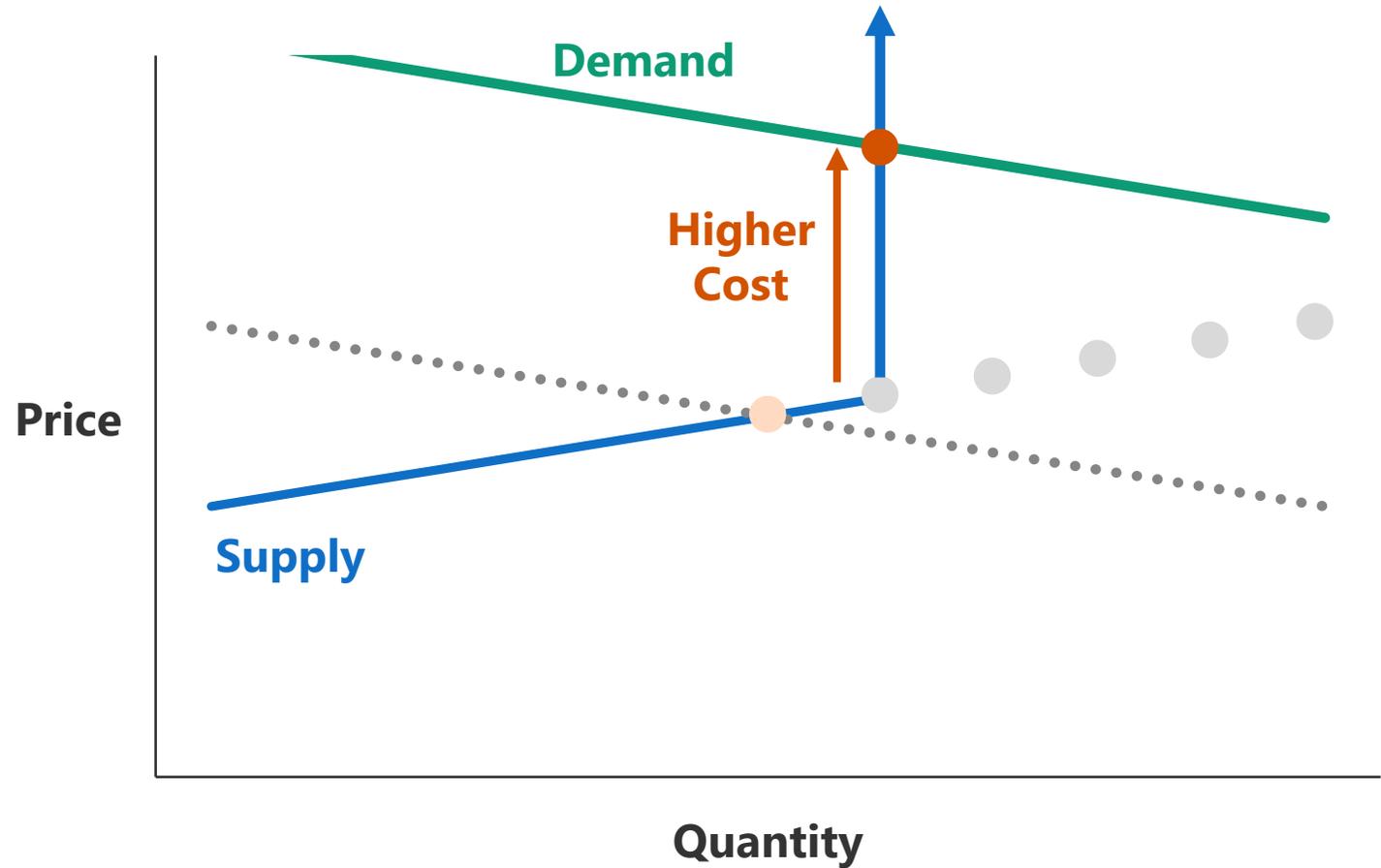
A capped supply results in higher costs

Housing costs increase faster when supply is fixed



The problem will only get worse

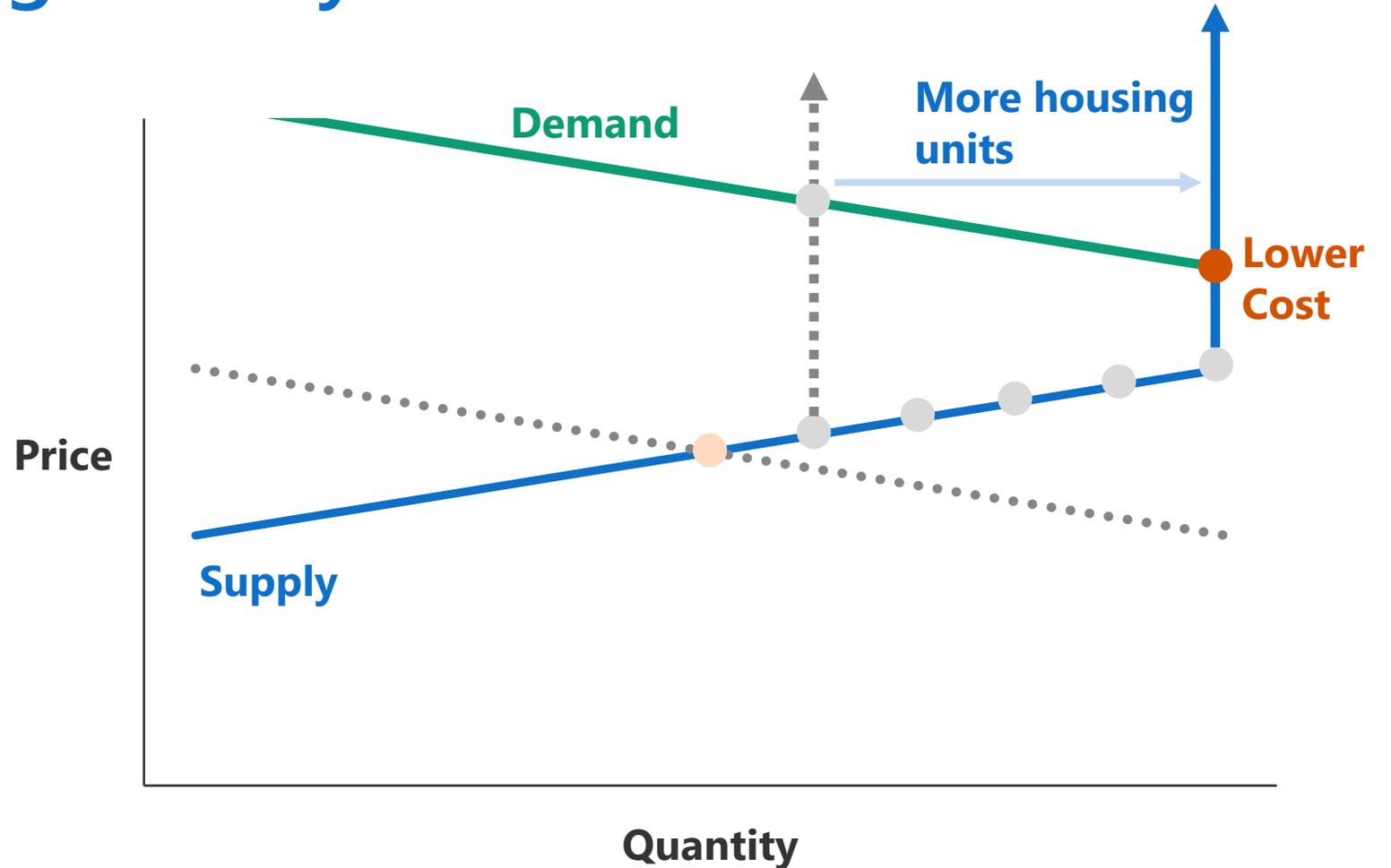
Costs will continue to quickly increase if supply remains fixed



Increased housing density offers a solution

More units on each lot creates more supply and lower costs

Every floor of the proposed development has a positive impact



Supply and Demand | Recap

- 1 Demand is likely to keep increasing**
Evanston is a great place to live (*that's why we're here!*)
- 2 Land is limited**
No one is creating new land downtown (or elsewhere)
- 3 Increased density helps meet the natural growth in demand**
More units per lot helps avoid a cap on supply

Growth | Density drives growth downtown

~600 residents living downtown and spending thousands annually on restaurants, coffee, entertainment

New building will generate over \$12 million more tax revenue than the empty lot over 15 years

Brand new development replaces empty lot and improves look and feel of neighborhood



\$1 million annual boost (likely much more) to local businesses

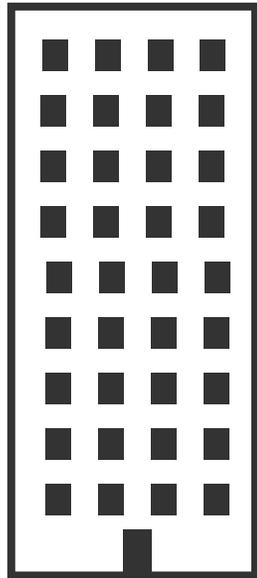
Significant benefit to underfunded pension and school systems

Large investment sends positive signal to others looking to open businesses or develop downtown

Growth | Recap

- 1 The density of 605 Davis improves the local economy**
New residents bring their incomes downtown with them
- 2 The development is good for the tax base**
Tax revenues will increase even after adjusting for tax breaks
- 3 The development removes an eyesore**
Replacing an abandoned drive-thru is good for the neighborhood

Footprint | 807 Davis is a comparable building loved by its residents



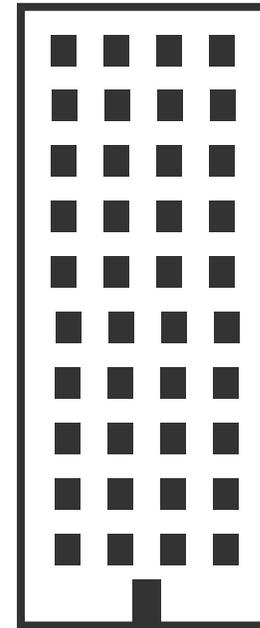
807 Davis

Shared Concerns at Development

- Increased street traffic
- Impact on skyline
- Creation of wind tunnels
- “Luxury residences”
- Increased package volume
- Over ~240 feet tall

Key Shared Benefit

- Dense downtown housing



605 Davis St.

Final Thoughts | Opposition is easy, but Evanston needs housing now

- 1 If not this building, what?**
Is there any design which meets all demands and makes economic sense?
- 2 If not this developer, who?**
Would any others willingly invest the time, effort, and money if this proposal was shot down?
- 3 If not now, when?**
Would there be any benefit to further delays? *Are delays the only goal?*

605 Davis St proposal

- Parking
- Loading dock bays for moves, packages and garbage
- Drop off spaces

Presented at LUC 8/13/2025 meeting by
Valy Lev
807 Davis St Unit 2502
Evanston

Item 1: Parking

Quote: the proposal was modified in order to *“making sure that the building is appropriate for empty nesters and families”*.

	Units	Parking spaces	Parking spaces in use	605 Davis should have
807 Davis	251	303	291 (1.15/unit)	494 spaces
1580 Sherman	103	144	135 (1.31/unit)	563 spaces

	Units	Parking spaces	Parking spaces in use	605 Davis should have
807 Davis rentals	53	53	42 (0.79/unit)	340 spaces

Info from developer's Parking Study

Location	Spaces/unit
Park Evanston	0.35
Evanston Place	0.40
The Albion	0.62
1717 Apartments	0.54
Link	0.40
E2	0.46
828 Noyes	0.50
Tapestry Station	0.40
Average	0.46

Comments

5 of the 8 are student housing (low parking needs)

Using **Average** understates the real/full parking demand

Revised analysis

- Kept the 8 data points from Parking Study (* designates student housing)
- Added 2 data points:
 - rentals at 807 Davis
 - the lower of spaces/unit at 807 Davis and 1580 Sherman (buildings for “empty nesters and families” less than 1000 ft away)
- Used 85-th percentile method

Location	Spaces/unit
Park Evanston	0.35
Evanston Place *	0.40
The Albion	0.62
1717 Apartments	0.54
Link *	0.40
E2 *	0.46
828 Noyes *	0.50
Tapestry Station *	0.40
807 Davis rentals	0.79
807 Davis (1)	1.15
(1) The lower of the spaces/unit at 807 Davis and 1580 Sherman	
85th-percentile	0.73
In-building spaces required: 314	

Item 2: Loading dock bays

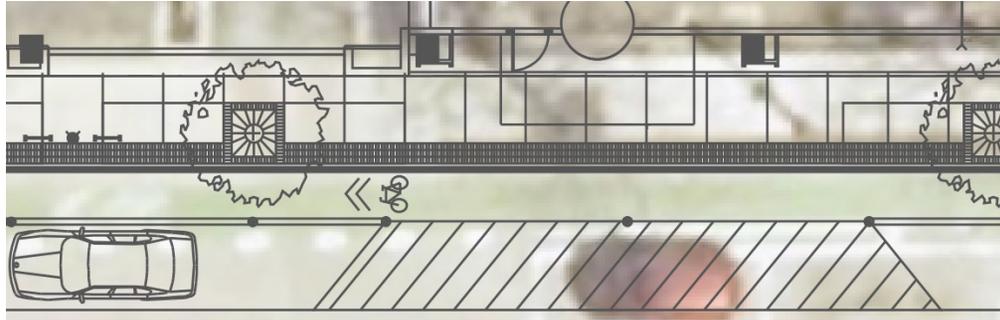
	Packages/year	Turnovers/year	Dumpsters/day	Loading bays
807 Davis	29,372	46	5.5	3
605 Davis	50,318 (+71%)	176 (+383%)	10 (+80%)	2 (-33%)

Pro-rated actual 2024 data for **packages** and **dumpsters** at 807 Davis used to determine the numbers for 605 Davis building (430 units).

Turnover calculation:

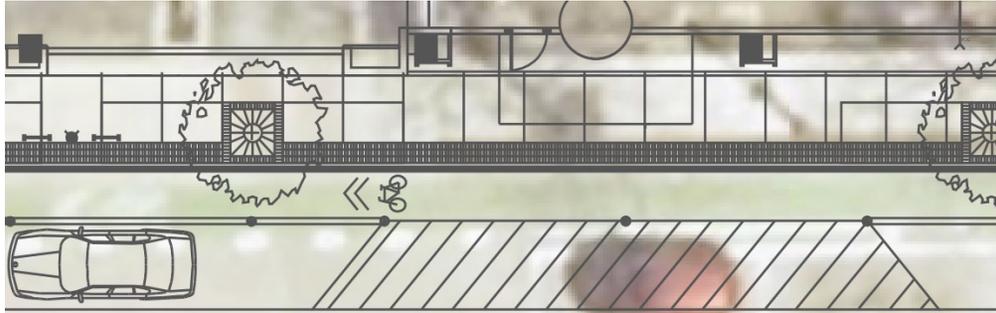
- total turnovers (rental + non rental) at 807 Davis in 2024: 46
- of these 22 were turnovers for 54 rentals i.e., 41%
- using 41% rental turnover rate makes 176 for 605 Davis (430 rental units)

Item 3: Drop off spaces



605 Davis: 2 spaces and 430 units

- Bicycle lane INSIDE the loading zone; a bicyclist can easily hit elderly people with packages, etc. as they get out of their cars
- Double parking (extremely likely with only 2 spaces) will block Davis St

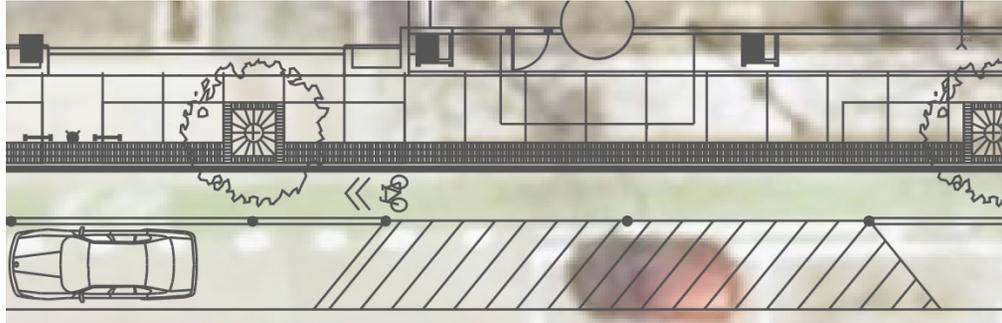


605 Davis: 2 spaces and 430 units



1580 Sherman: 3 spaces (50% more) and 103 units (76% less)

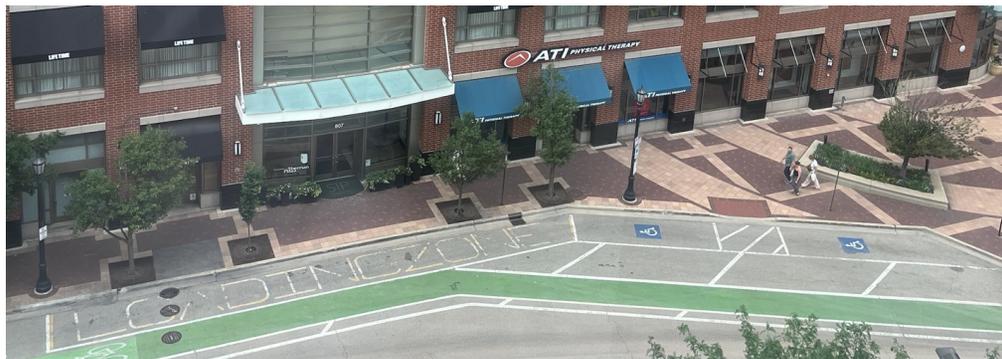
- Additional drop-off area at the entrance of resident parking
- With 1580 Sherman as benchmark, 605 Davis loading area should be 13 spaces (prorated by number of units)



605 Davis: 2 spaces and 430 units



1580 Sherman: 3 spaces (50% more) and 103 units (76% less)



807 Davis: 3 regular + 1 handicapped space (100% more) and 251 units (42% less)

- Bicycle lane OUTSIDE the loading zone.
- Double parking does not block Davis St.

If we use 807 Davis as benchmark, 605 Davis loading area should be 7 spaces (prorated by number of units).

Conclusion: using the smaller number, 605 Davis loading area should be 7 spaces, not 2

Summary

The 605 Davis proposal is totally inadequate in these areas:

- **Parking spaces: 80 in building and 114 at Evanston City parking garages instead of 314 in building**
- **Loading dock bays for deliveries, garbage and moves: 2 instead of 3 required**
- **Drop-off spaces at the main entrance: 2 instead of 7 required**

This is actual data based on real, similar buildings in Downtown Evanston on the same street.