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Letters to the Editor
The Washington Post
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Re: Why the Stormwater Cost Debate Is Missing the Point

The article titled "Building a new house? This little-known rule could cost you thousands," published on February 4, 2026 tried to make the argument that stormwater regulations are the main driver to rising residential development costs.

The reality is people want safe, reliable housing that isn't going to jeopardize the health and safety of their family when severe weather hits. Stormwater management is critical to preventing local floods and pollution. Families want to know the major life investment they made in a home is one that they can count on and not have hidden costs pop up later when a flood happens. Sound stormwater management is an essential community service – just like fire protection services or road maintenance -

that keeps communities safe at reasonable cost.

Even though the cost of stormwater management can be justified by the protection it provides, it is important to note that it is not actually a significant source of home price increases. Strained supply chains and inflationary cost increases to building materials are a much larger source of housing cost increases. Furthermore, effective stormwater management actually saves communities money in deferred damage costs. A study published by the American Society of Civil Engineers found that stormwater damage to interstate highways due to non-existent and poor stormwater projects costs over \$1B annually. Well-funded and high quality Stormwater management would reduce these costs.

Beyond infrastructure impact costs, many studies show that the economic and environmental benefits of sound stormwater management offsets a portion – and sometimes all – of the costs for stormwater infrastructure for residential development.

It is clear that weakening stormwater protections does not eliminate the costs of under managed stormwater runoff; it transfers them to taxpayers, ratepayers, and future generations. The real question today is whether communities in the future will choose to invest in the resources needed to address the problem up front, or suffer the problems –flooding, pollution, reduced property values, and infrastructure failure - later.

Sincerely,

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