The abundance movement is having a moment. Abundance policy reformers call for legal and policy reforms to advance more housing, energy, and other infrastructure. Abundance advocacy has motivated a Yes In My Backyard (YIMBY) movement that has pushed for major changes to local land-use regulation to build more housing in states across the country. One of the most popular non-fiction books in 2025 was titled "Abundance," authored by two journalists who have led the charge for abundance policy. Abundance framing is at the heart of efforts to undertake federal permitting reform, and claims that an affordability crisis can be addressed with abundance policies have been made on both sides of the political aisle.

The prominence of the abundance movement raises a range of important questions: Is there a real problem that the abundance movement is focused on? If so, is the abundance movement focused on the right solutions? What is the political feasibility of the proposed solutions in the abundance movement? And what do the answers to those questions tell us about the future prospects of abundance reforms, and where the movement should head next?

I have a new article out (available here) that examines these questions. I'll provide brief summaries of my (tentative) answers in the article in these blog posts.

The first question is the easiest to answer, at least for me. Yes, there is a real problem that the abundance movement is focused on. One need only look at the housing crisis in California, and many other places, where housing costs over the past few decades have risen substantially. The result has been a range of negative social impacts, from homelessness to long commutes for many lower-income workers. America in general, and states like California in particular, have not and are not building enough houses in general to meet the needs of residents, let alone to meet the demand to move to higher-income and higher-productivity areas such as the Bay Area. And the impact of housing limitations in constraining the ability of people to move to higher-income and higher-productivity areas is bad for those who cannot move (who lose out on increased lifetime earnings) and for the country as a whole (as it reduces overall economic output).

Or take another issue: climate change. Addressing climate change requires completely replacing our current energy infrastructure with an entirely new one focused much more on carbon-free energy sources. That in turn means we have to do a lot of construction – involving some mix of solar, wind, batteries, geothermal, nuclear, transmission lines, electric vehicles and associated charging and more. As

JB Ruhl and Jim Salzman have well documented, the level of energy infrastructure investment required to achieve standard climate goals has little historical precedent, and faces daunting obstacles in the form of environmental and other legal requirements.

Finally, consider claims around equity in the context of housing. There is a long history of de jure and de facto housing segregation in the United States by race and class, segregation that has produced unequal outcomes in terms of access to quality jobs and education, the potential to build wealth through homeownership, and exposure to pollution. Regulatory systems – like zoning – the protect the status quo effectively entrench this unequal status quo. If you believe the current status of housing in the United States is unjust (as many progressives profess), then you should be seeking change to the legal regime that created that inequality and maintains it.

In my next post, I'll consider whether the solutions proposed by abundance advocates address the problems they document.