

# Private ownership is vital to maintaining a free society

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We will soon be adopting a new zoning code in Tulsa, following the lead of many other cities in the United States and Europe. Even before they have been adopted, I have heard of one project that has been cancelled because the developer's plan for his property differed with the city's idea of how it should be developed.

Several years ago I wrote an article regarding property rights because I was concerned at the direction we were taking toward their restriction and violation with new zoning laws regulating land use. It is easy to forget the things that have been said in the past by those who do not believe in liberty as we do, but the passage of time does not make their intentions to take our freedoms away any less threatening; like many adversaries, they are very patient in achieving their goals, but their tenacity does not diminish with time.

I wrote this article primarily in regard to housing; but since then we have seen enormous intrusion on all kinds of property rights, not the least of which regards fair trade; energy development with oil, gas and coal; and restriction of trade to conduct a faux battle with our "greatest enemy" – man-made climate change. We have seen headlines about outright land confiscation from private individuals by the federal government, and it is obvious that if our land use rights can be eliminated or controlled, virtually anything in our economy can be controlled.

Here is part of that article that I wrote in 2009:

"The United Nations began to formulate their land development policies as early as 1976. At the 1976 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, more commonly known as Habitat I, the concept that personal property was something that must be eliminated was introduced in its preamble, which read as follows:

"Land...cannot be treated as an ordinary asset, controlled by individuals and subject to the pressures and inefficiencies of the market. Private land ownership is also a principle instrument of accumulation and concentration of wealth and therefore contributes to social injustice; if unchecked, it may become a major obstacle in the planning and implementation of development schemes. The provision of decent dwellings and healthy conditions for people can only be achieved if land is used in the interests of society as a whole. Public control of land use is therefore indispensable...

...The implication that land "cannot be treated as an ordinary asset, controlled by individuals" means that the land must be controlled by the government, not by the property owners. Eventually, "ordinary" individuals will not buy their own homes if they cannot enjoy its full-intended use or they may ultimately be prohibited by law as has been the case for many centuries in other countries, and still is in some.

Land must remain an ordinary asset in this country, but the high degree of control that will be exercised by the new comprehensive plans and codes within cities will create a powerful disincentive to home and property ownership. Furthermore, control of land via other projects, such as the Wildlands Project, will eventually make land ownership outside cities difficult or impossible.

The statement implies that private land ownership is evil because it allows citizens to build wealth for their family and their heirs, leading to “social injustice.” What does that mean? That if one works hard, takes risks, builds wealth and creates jobs, it must mean that he has stolen something from those who have not done the same?

And if land ownership is a major obstacle to planning and implementation of development schemes, then land ownership, or at least the control by individuals, is not far away.”

The adverse effect of land use regulations do not just apply to housing, but to virtually all aspects of society, including free trade.

An article from the Heritage Foundation expresses this well: “Free trade is imperative to a free society, as it fosters economic growth and improves human well-being.” Free trade, at least between individuals or private companies depends on their ability to maintain private ownership and control of the land they use. Without those property rights, free trade and innovation become highly regulated, as we see in other countries, such as China.

Americans are being trained to disregard their own self-interests at the guise of benefiting society as a whole, when in fact personal property rights are the keystone to a healthy society.



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