Benjamin (Benji) Smith

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Education

PhD in Applied Economics, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania Dissertation Title: "Essays in Urban and Environmental Economics"

Expected 2025

Thesis Committee and References:

Prof. Fernando Ferreira
430 Vance Hall
43733 Spruce Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
fferreir@wharton.upenn.edu
Prof. Joseph Gyourko
448 Vance Hall
3733 Spruce Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
gyourko@wharton.upenn.edu

Prof. Arthur van Benthem 327 Vance Hall 3733 Spruce Street Philadelphia, PA 19104 arthurv@wharton.upenn.edu

BA in Economics, University of Southern California **BA in International Relations**, University of Southern California
Trustee Scholar, *Magna cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa Society

2016 2016

Teaching and Research Fields

Primary Fields Secondary Fields Real Estate and Urban Economics, Environmental Economics

Public Economics, Applied Microeconomics

Publications

[&]quot;Household Mobility, Networks, and Gentrification of Minority Neighborhoods in the United States" with Fernando Ferreira and Jeanna Kenney. *Journal of Labor Economics*, April 2024.

[&]quot;A Quarter Century of Mortgage Risk" with Morris Davis, William Larson, and Stephen Oliner. *Review of Finance*, May 2023.

Working Papers

"Impact Fees, Water Use, and Housing Markets: Evidence from Colorado" (Job Market Paper)

Abstract: A growing class of local land use regulations stem from local management of water scarcity; this paper measures their impact on new housing construction, house prices, urban form, and water use. I do so by collecting new data from the Front Range of Colorado on Water Impact Fees (WIFs), a measurable, salient, and ubiquitous policy set by water utilities. First, I show that real WIFs have doubled over the past two decades to nearly \$25,000 for an average single-family house, that irrigated landscaping is declining for new housing, and that the price structure of these impact fees has moved from a flat perhouse basis to a variable pricing regime where fees differ by estimated future water usage. Leveraging the staggered adoption of variable pricing regimes, I find that they cause developers to build on smaller, infill lots with less irrigated vegetation, and provide evidence of spatial spillovers of irrigated landscaping. Using changes in the costs of WIFs induced by variable pricing regimes, I also find that WIFs are fully capitalized into new *and* existing house prices. To explain these findings, I develop a micro-founded equilibrium model of new housing supply with endogenous choice of housing type. I plan to use this model to estimate the counterfactual housing outcomes and the distributional effects on water use across water utilities, considering expanded variable pricing regimes and bans on new water-intensive landscaping combined with lower fees.

"Paying for Proximity: Housing Markets and Charter Schools"

Abstract: Charters school have grown over the past several decades, yet questions on the effects they have on the neighborhoods they serve are still mostly unanswered. Using the entry, exit, and moving decisions of thousands of charter schools over 20 years, this paper estimates their impact on housing prices using a staggered difference-in-differences research design. I find charter schools have a small negative capitalization effect on average, but this hides substantial heterogeneity in their effect over time, in different neighborhood types, and by school quality. The findings are relevant for economists, policymakers, and charter school regulators.

Selected Works in Progress

"Housing meets Hotelling: Urban Land Development as a Resource Extraction Problem"

Research Experience and Employment

2020-2021

Research Assistant for Prof. Fernando Ferreira The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania

2016-2019

Research Associate for Stephen Oliner American Enterprise Institute Housing Center

Teaching Experience

Spring 2024

Spring 2022, 23, 24 Housing Markets (MBA and Undergraduate)
TA for Joseph Gyourko

Environmental & Energy Economics and Policy (Undergraduate)

TA for Arthur van Benthem

Fall 2021 Managerial Economics (Undergraduate)

TA for Eduardo Azevedo and Gilles Duranton

Honors and Fellowships

2023 Wharton Doctoral Travel Award

2022 Lincoln Institute of Land Policy's Babbitt Dissertation Fellowship

2020 Amy Morse Prize (Wharton Applied Economics Program)

2019 Wharton Doctoral Education and Research Fellowship

Conferences, Seminars and Workshops

2024

Wharton Real Estate and Urban Seminar (planned), Wharton PhD Student Seminar Series, University of Pennsylvania Urban Studies Graduate Colloquium

2022

North American Urban Economics Association Meeting, Columbia University Interdisciplinary PhD Workshop in Sustainable Development, American Water Resources Association Summer Conference

2022

Wharton Real Estate and Urban Seminar, Babbitt Center for Land and Water Policy

2021

Wharton PhD Student Seminar Series

2020

Wharton PhD Student Seminar Series

Refereeing

Journal of Urban Economics

Skills

STATA, ArcGIS, R, SQL, MatLab, SAS

Personal Information

U.S. Citizen