



Cost of Community Services Studies: Making a Case for PACE

Julia Freedgood April 24, 2025



The Big Case for PACE – Protecting Ag Land Supports:

- Ag Viability
- Economic opportunity
- Ecosystem services
- Fiscal stability
- Food security
- Rural character

And more ... so much more!!

Fiscal Impact Assessments

- Analyze the financial effects of proposed development projects on government revenues and expenditures
- Determines if a project's expected revenue will cover its costs
- Helps decision-makers understand the fiscal implications of new development choices



Build Out Analyses

- Estimate a community's development potential based on current zoning and land use regulations
- Project the maximum development that could occur if all developable land were built out according to current regulations



Cost of Community Services Studies

- Examine fiscal impacts of all land uses, including:
 - Working lands and open space
 - Commercial
 - Industrial and
 - Residential development
- Case study approach to current conditions
- Descriptive not predictive





- AFT developed COCS to defend Current Use Assessment
- The approach has been widely replicated
- It's often used to advocate for PACE



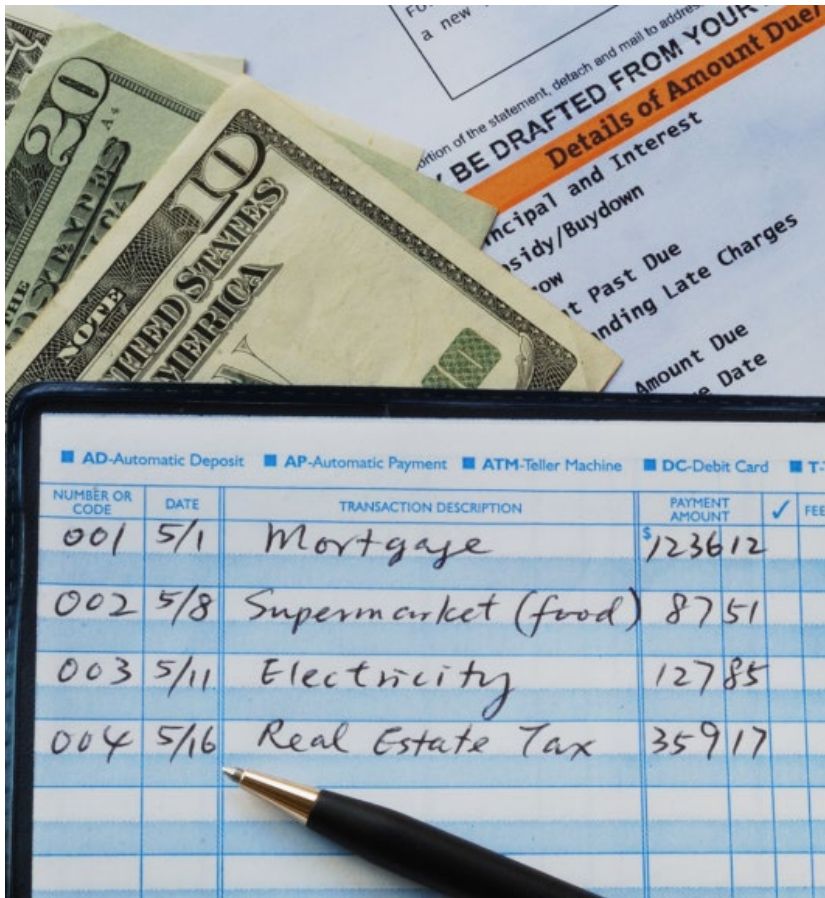
We Wanted to Dispel Myths:

Farmland is an interim
land use that should be
developed to its “highest
and best” use

Farmland gets an unfair
tax break when
assessed at current use

Housing development
lowers property taxes by
increasing the tax base

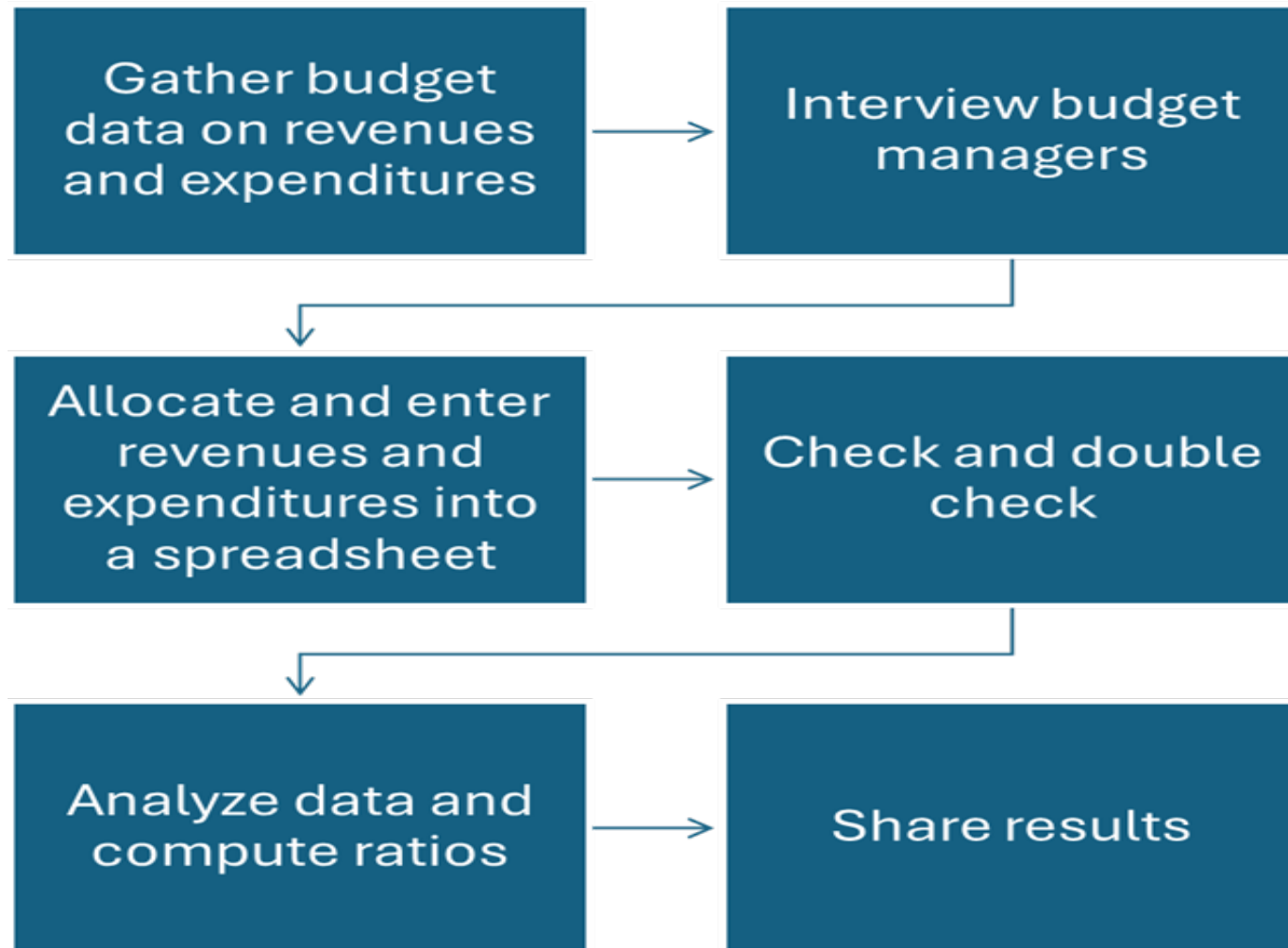
COCS Studies Basically Balance a Community's Checkbook



They ask:

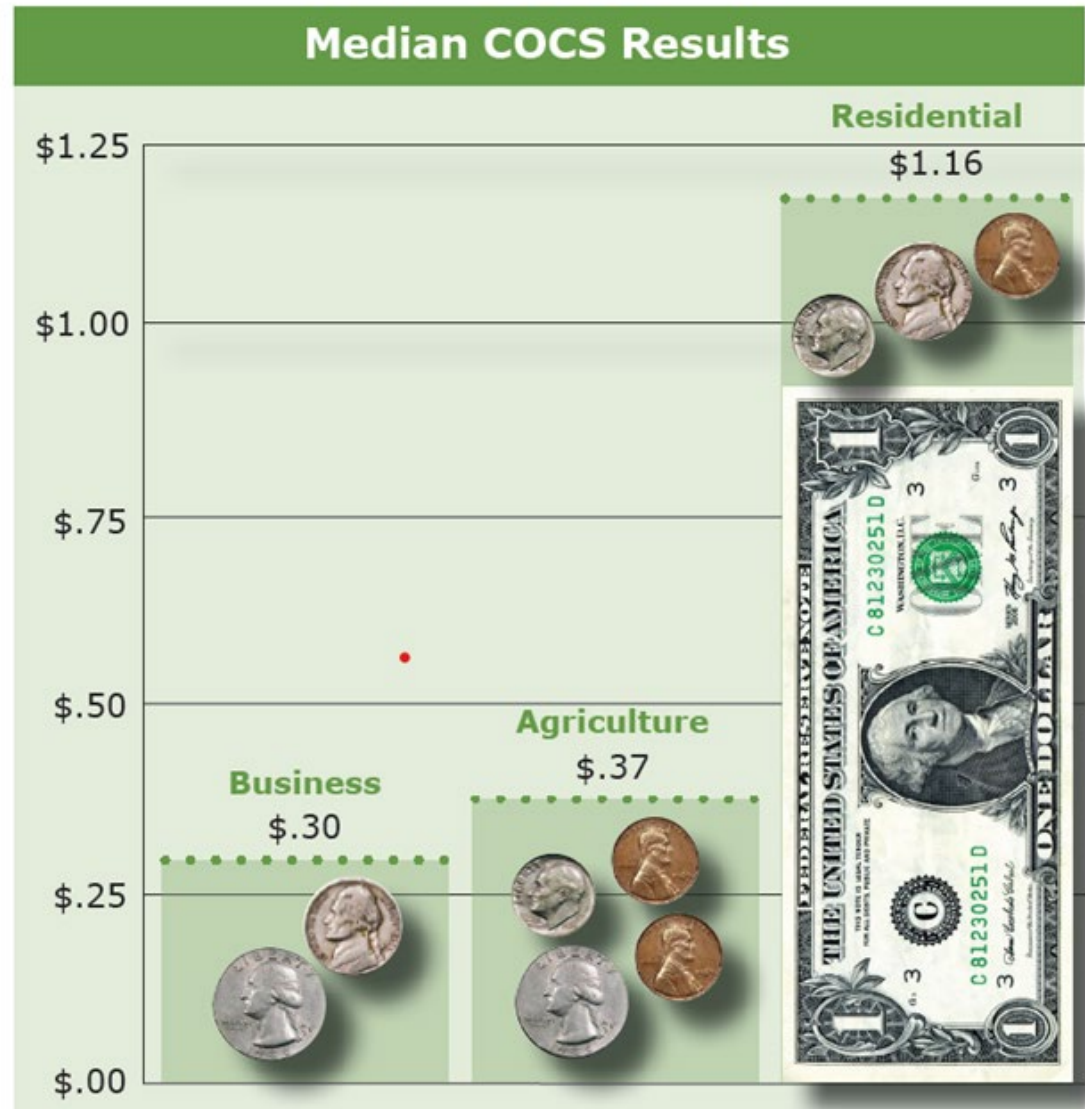
- Where do revenues come from?
- How are they spent on a land use basis?
- How much does each land use contribute to local coffers?

Approach



Findings are remarkably consistent

Working Lands Support Fiscal Stability



Median cost to provide public services
for each dollar of revenue raised.

Considerations



- COCS works best in places where property taxes are closely tied to public service delivery
- Not all local tax structures support the approach
- Studies rely on support from a local sponsor to open doors and provide access to local data and budget managers

Thank You!



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