A look at Seattle's Land Use and Tax Income
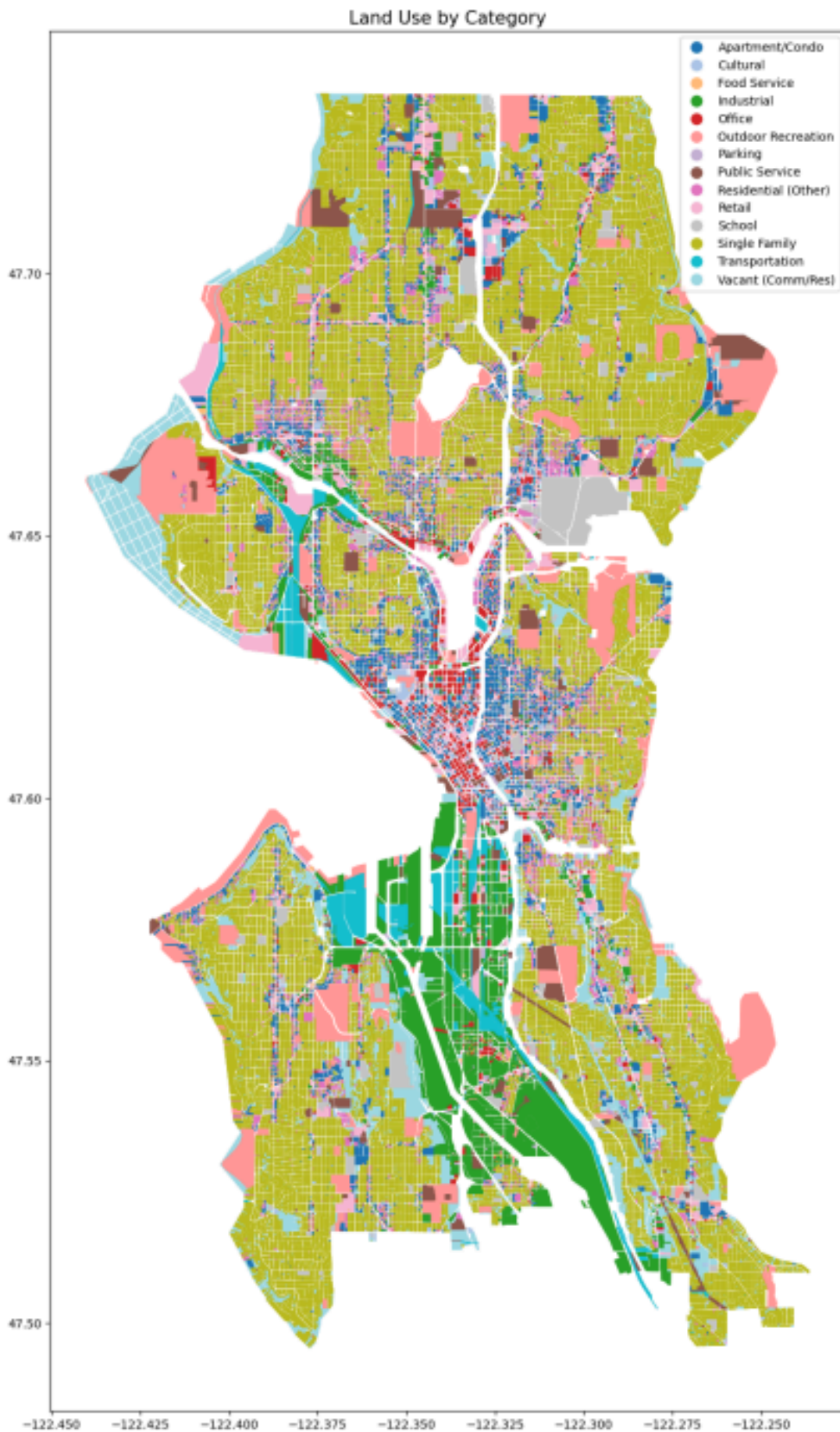
Aaron Schechter, amschechter.github.io

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Today we are looking at Seattle's Land Use and how it relates to its Tax income.

Thanks to King County, we have access to geographic data about each individual parcel in the entire county, which I was able to combine with a different data set containing information about each parcel's tax payments. A parcel is also known as a lot. One entire apartment building, for example, represents a single parcel.

The original data set categorizes each one of the 750,540 parcels in Seattle into one of 115 different sections with categories as mundane as 'Office Building' or 'Bank' to slightly more surprising land uses such as 'Fraternity/Sorority House' or 'Tavern/Lounge'.

For the sake of chart legibility, I aggregated those 115 categories into 14 different groups and charted the land use of them all.

Land Use by Category

Legend:
- ● Apartment/Condo
- ● Cultural
- ● Food Service
- ● Industrial
- ● Office
- ● Outdoor Recreation
- ● Parking
- ● Public Service
- ● Residential (Other)
- ● Retail
- ● School
- ● Single Family
- ● Transportation
- ● Vacant (Comm/Res)

Now lets take a look at the Amount of Tax each individual parcel generates. Note that the scale on this chart and the following charts are logarithmic, meaning that the values increase more quickly than on a

standard linear chart. Note the concentration of dark colors in various business centers around the city, including downtown. Also note that many of the largest parcels such as the Zoo near Greenlake, Magnusen park and many of the industrial parcels in SODO are high tax parcels.

In case you are wondering, the city's highest paying parcel is the Columbia Tower in downtown Seattle, bringing in a whopping $622,098,534 in just one years worth of taxes.

Property Tax paid by Parcel, Log scale
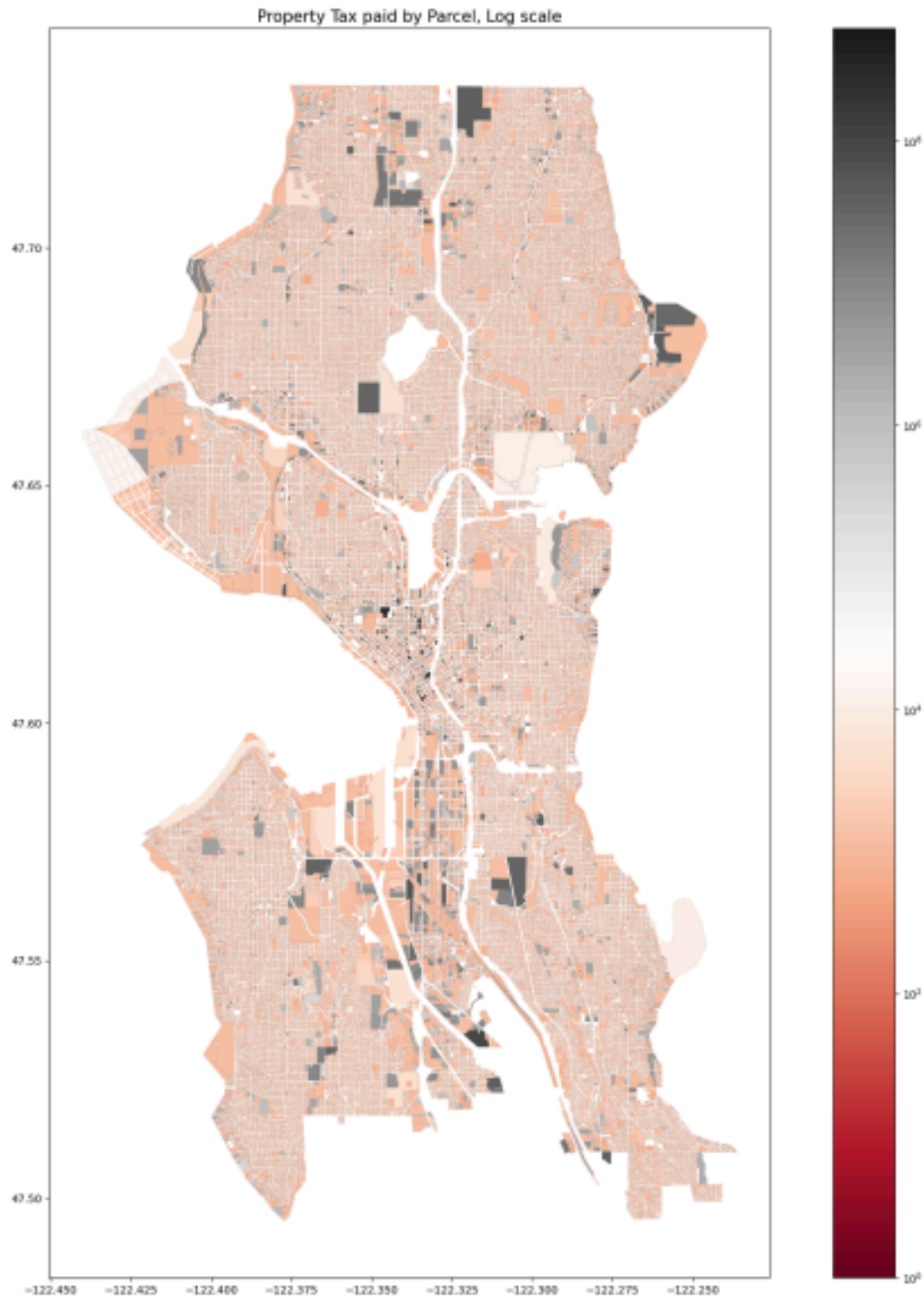
The next chart shows only single family homes, and wow there are a lot of them! 529,117 to be exact, representing a little over 70% of all land parcels in the city. Note that in the central business areas of the city there are almost no parcels designated as single family and also see that the deeper red color, signifying higher tax payments tend to be centered closer to the waterfront.

Property Tax paid on Single Family Homes, Log Scale
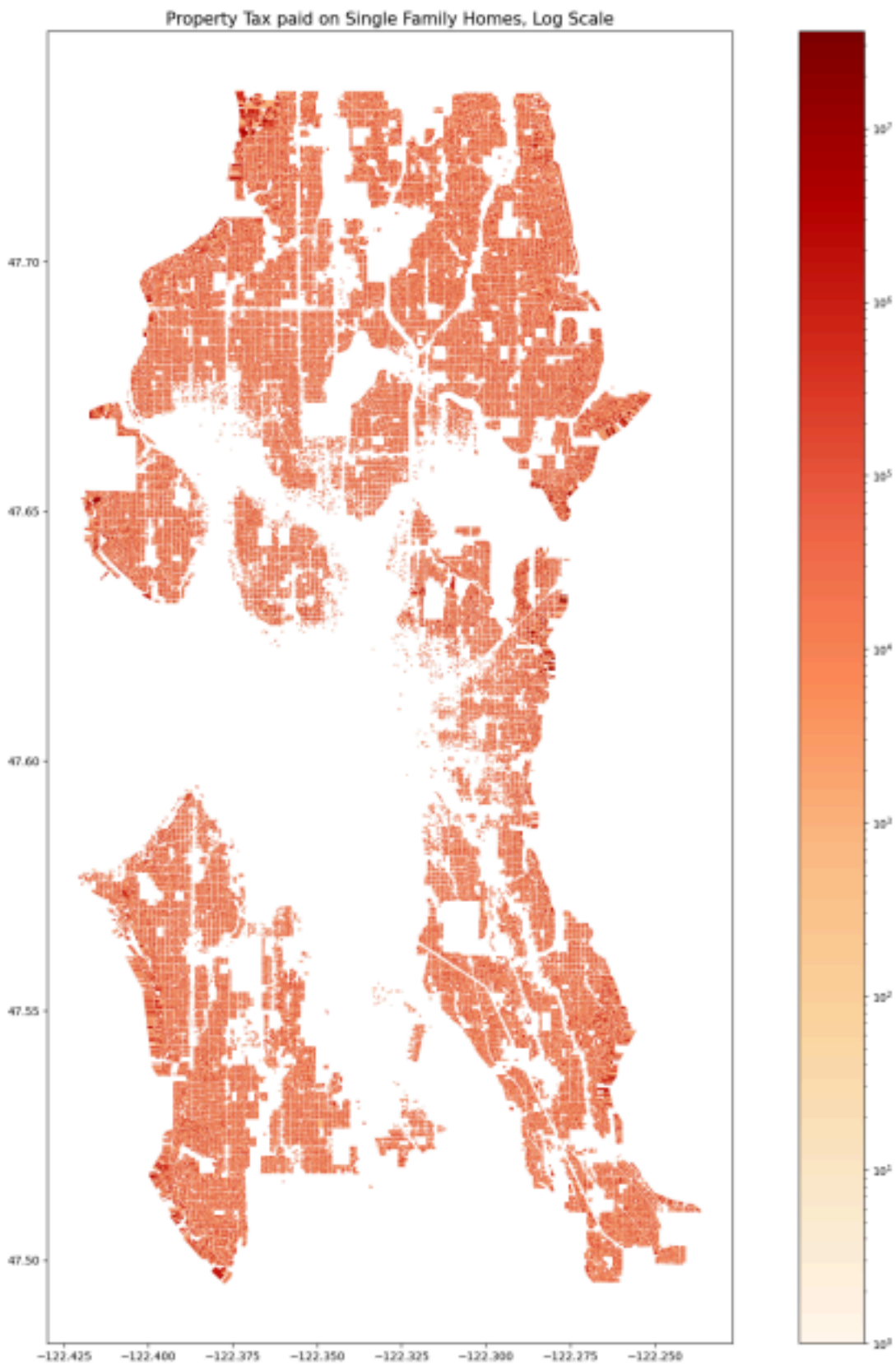
The final chart here is the tax value per square foot. It makes sense that a larger lot should generate more tax revenue, so now I am trying to control for that. We can still see darker colors centered towards business districts but a lot of the larger lots that in the prior chart looked like big earners are revealed to actually not bring in so much money per square foot!

Seattle Tax Income per Square Foot by Parcel, Log Scale
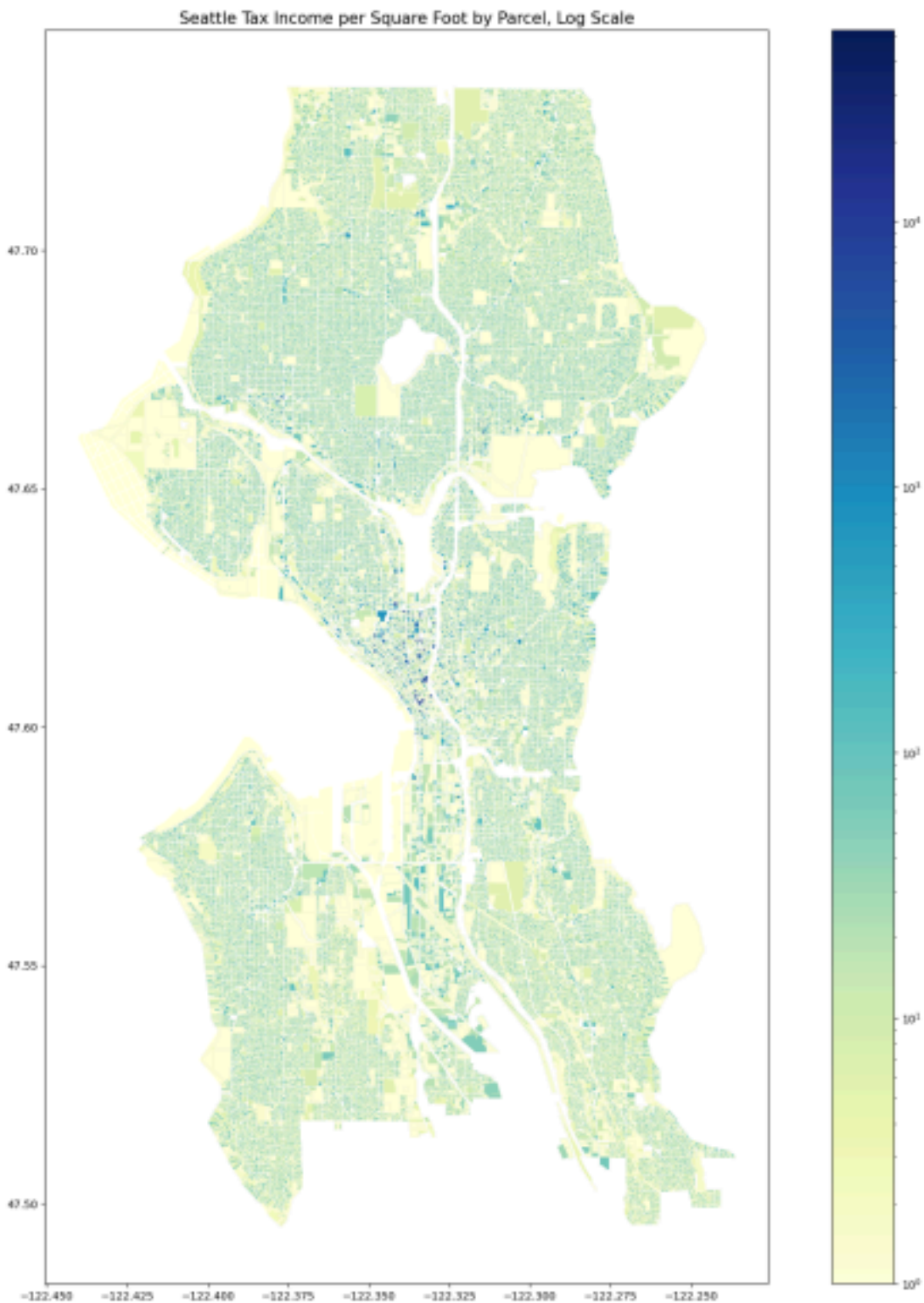
To wrap things up, I have included a table with lots of numbers! This table has grouped the data by the 115 different distinctions made by the city and has the mean and total tax income for each category, the mean and total square footage by category the total number of parcels in each category and finally the most important column, the mean income per square foot! This final column was calculated by dividing the total tax income of the category by the total square footage of the category. Note that the table is ordered by the final column, meaning to most revenue generating per square foot categories are at the top of the table, and the least are at the bottom. Office buildings in historic zones are really money makers! Golf courses on the other hand…

Thanks for reading! All data was provided by King County, find the tax data here, and the parcel data here. All the tax data is from 2023.

Also, check out the code I used to make this post here!