

Gregory W. Dobbels

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Office Contact Information

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Department of Economics
Princeton University
Princeton, NJ 08544

Graduate Studies

Princeton University	<i>2018-present</i>
PhD Candidate in Economics	
Dissertation: <i>“Essays on Regulation, Supply, and Demand in Housing Markets”</i>	
Expected Completion Date: May 2024	

Princeton University	<i>2018–2020</i>
M.A. in Economics	

REFERENCES

Professor Jakub Kastl
Department of Economics
Princeton University
(609) 258-4012
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Professor Stephen Redding
Department of Economics
Princeton University
(609) 258-4016
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Professor Eduardo Morales
Department of Economics
Princeton University
(609) 258-3866
ecmorales@princeton.edu

Undergraduate Studies

Cornell University	<i>2008–2012</i>
B.A. in Economics and Government	

Fields

PRIMARY	Industrial Organization
SECONDARY	Urban Economics, Economic Geography

Job Market Paper

“Not in My Back Yard: The Local Political Economy of Residential Land-Use Regulations” with Suren Tavakalov. 2023.

We provide evidence that local preferences for neighborhood characteristics play an important role in shaping the political economy of residential land-use regulations and their distributional consequences. We leverage a land-use regulation reform in Houston, TX that reduced the minimum lot size—permitting denser single-family housing—while allowing incumbent property owners on individual city blocks to opt out of the change and adopt higher alternative minimum lot sizes. Initially wealthier, whiter neighborhoods were more likely to opt out and adopt higher minimum lot sizes after the reform. Supply of denser housing increased in areas that did not opt out. We develop a model where incumbents set minimum lot size. Incumbents trade off potential gains from redevelopment and local spillovers from housing density. The local nature of block-level regulatory decisions allows us to distinguish between preferences for neighborhood density and alternative political economy motives for regulation. Model estimates reveal large, negative local externalities from density that vary across incumbent socio-economic groups. Our results suggest that local control can tailor regulation to heterogeneous incumbent preferences, possibly making reform more politically feasible. However, doing so will likely limit supply in areas where housing demand is the highest.

Work in Progress

“Renting the American Dream: Institutional Investors and Consolidation in Single-Family Rentals.” with Felipe Kup Barbieri de Matos. 2023.

Research Experience & Other Employment

Pre-Doctoral Fellow, Climate Impact Lab, University of Chicago	2016–2018
Research Associate, Innovations for Poverty Action	2016
Program Associate, Innovations for Poverty Action	2013–2015
Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist, USAID West Africa Trade Hub	2012–2013

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant, Princeton University	
ECO325: Organization and Design of Markets, with Professor Jakub Kastl	Fall 2021, 2022

Honors, Scholarships, Fellowships, and Grants

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship	2018–2023
Princeton University Graduate Fellowship	2018–2024
Princeton International Economics Section Summer Fellowship	2020–2023

Last updated: October 2023