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How the Tacoma Business Improvement Area Shapes Urban Space

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Introduction:
The Tacoma Business Improvement Area was established in 1988 and is a not-for-profit organization with a 501(c)(4) status (Tacoma BIA, 2010). The boundary encompasses an 84 block radius in the Downtown Tacoma Area including 502 parcels. The BIA is dependent on taxation from business owners within the area, and functions under the direction of a board of directors also known as the Local Development Council (Tacoma BIA, 2010). The organization operates to improve property values, decrease crime, and clean the streets of trash. The overall purpose of this research is to test the hypothesis that the BIA increases property values and compare the results to areas directly outside of the boundary.

Purpose:
The purpose of this research was to
((1) Identify whether or not the BIA holds a high concentration of taxable property values, and if so, compare this to the outlying regions identified in Figure 1;
(2) Examine the economic makeup of the BIA in relation to concentrations of producer services (high end), consumer and cultural amenities (low end), and low sector employment (low end);
(3) Divide the tax parcel classifications into 27 sectors and examine each boundaries makeup.

Objectives:
The objectives of this study were to
((1) Find any discernible differences in taxable land value between the Tacoma BIA and three designated classifiers of business sectors (Low end, Middle, and High End) identified in Table 1;
(2) Randomly partition the parcel data into 27 main categories identified in Table 1 and observe the concentration of these categories in relation to each sector area; and
(3) Examine the business makeup within each region in relation to these designated classifiers of business sectors (Low end, Middle, and High End) identified in Table 1.

Methodology:
For the objective (1) analysis, the use of the Inverse Distance Weighting (IDW) interpolation tool within ArcGIS provided a good visualization of the concentration of taxable land values to each business sector (Low end, Middle, and High End) identified in Table 1. To further enhance the visualization, the color scheme of the IDW analysis was altered to provide a good representation of the relationship between boundary size per acre and taxable land value.

Results:
Starting with the first objective, the taxable value of the study area was interpolated via Inverse Distance Weighting to show the areas with high concentrations of land value. Accordingly, the highest region represented the BIA boundary with 39.9% of the total taxable value. The analysis further corroborates that the BIA has the highest taxable value overall—and per acre—with a decline in the middle regions between MLK and the BIA.