

# Re-legalizing Eugene

**Various thoughts about how cities  
banned middle housing and why it might  
be time to rethink that**

Michael Andersen, Sightline Institute  
Eugene Review Panel, Middle Housing Code Changes Project  
Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2020

# **Who am I and what is Sightline's deal?**

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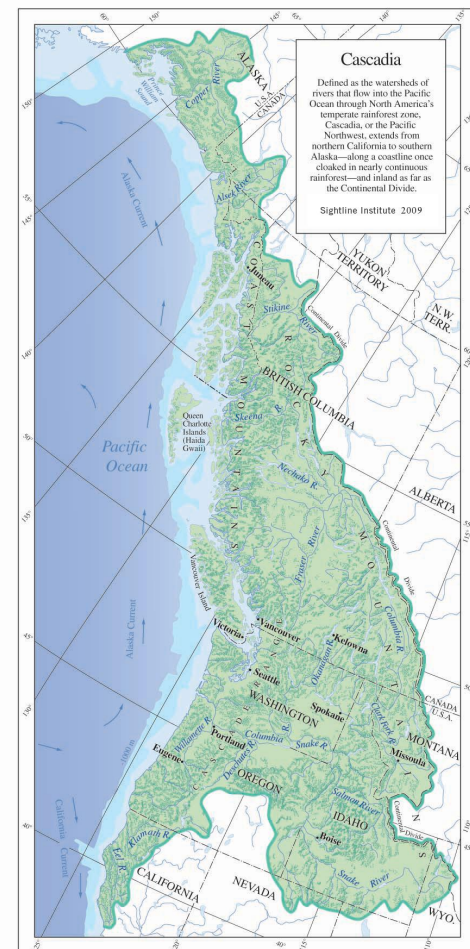
- I'm a policy writer and researcher, focusing on **housing and transportation**

# Who am I and what is Sightline's deal?

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- **Sightline Institute** is a regional sustainability think tank animated in part by a conviction that cities are good

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# Zoning reform: re-legalizing cities



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## 40 Percent of the Buildings in Manhattan Could Not Be Built Today



These are buildings that do not conform to New York City's zoning code for at least one reason.

Image: New York Times.

# Zoning reform: re-legalizing cities





# Zoning reform: re-legalizing cities

## Duplex



*Duplex Conversion, Downtown Neighborhood,*



*Cottage-Style Duplex, Eugene*

# Zoning reform: re-legalizing cities

## Plexes



*Regency Revival Four-plex, Downtown Neighborhood, Eugene*



*Four-plex, Downtown Neighborhood, Eugene*

# Zoning reform: re-legalizing cities



Duplex in Albany, built 1870.

# Zoning reform: re-legalizing cities



Triplex in Portland.

# Zoning reform: re-legalizing cities



Fourplex in Portland, built 1947.

# Zoning reform: re-legalizing cities



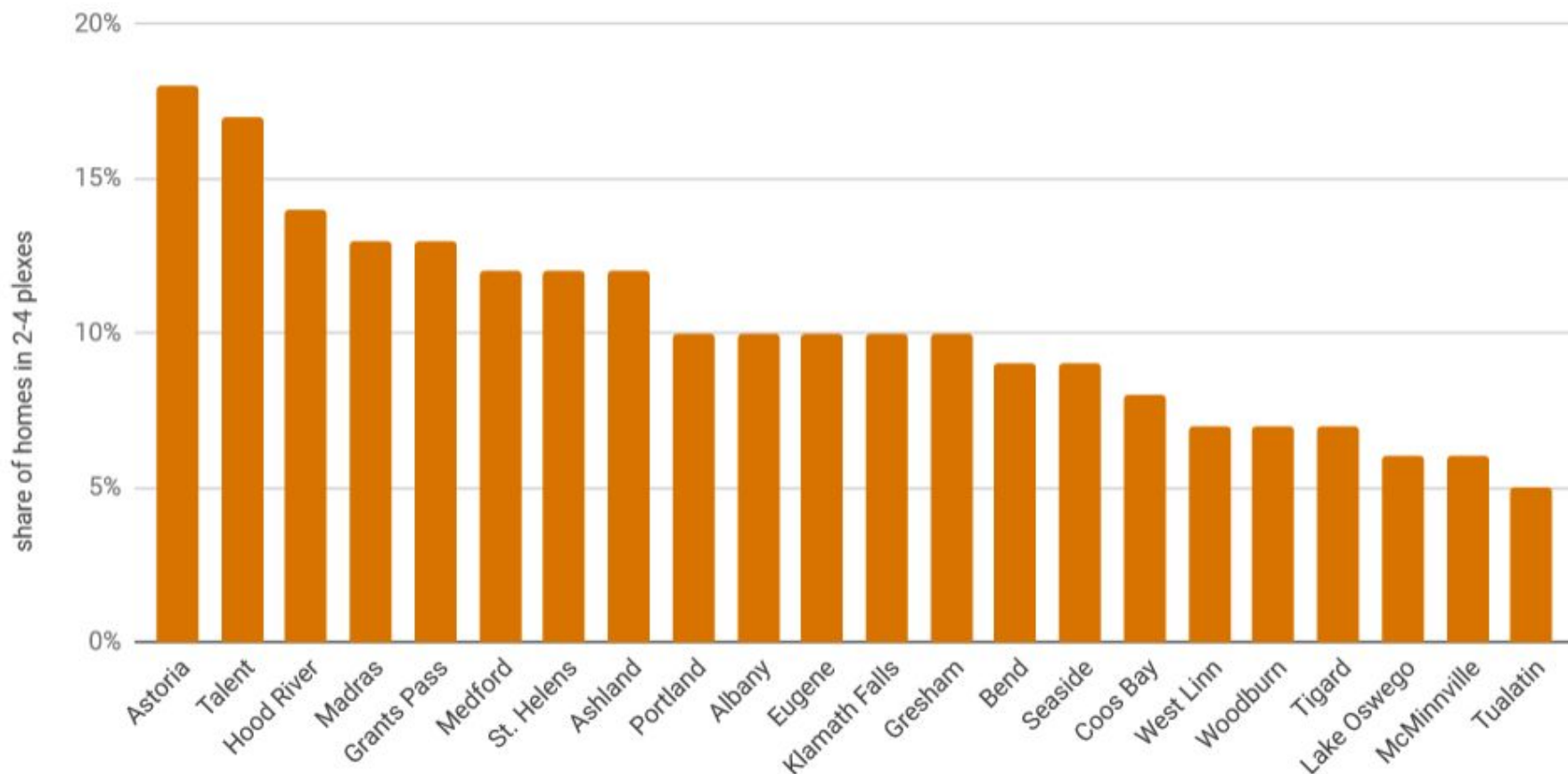
Duplex in Shorewood, Wisc.

# Zoning reform: re-legalizing cities



Courtyard apartments in Omaha. Image: Opticos Design.

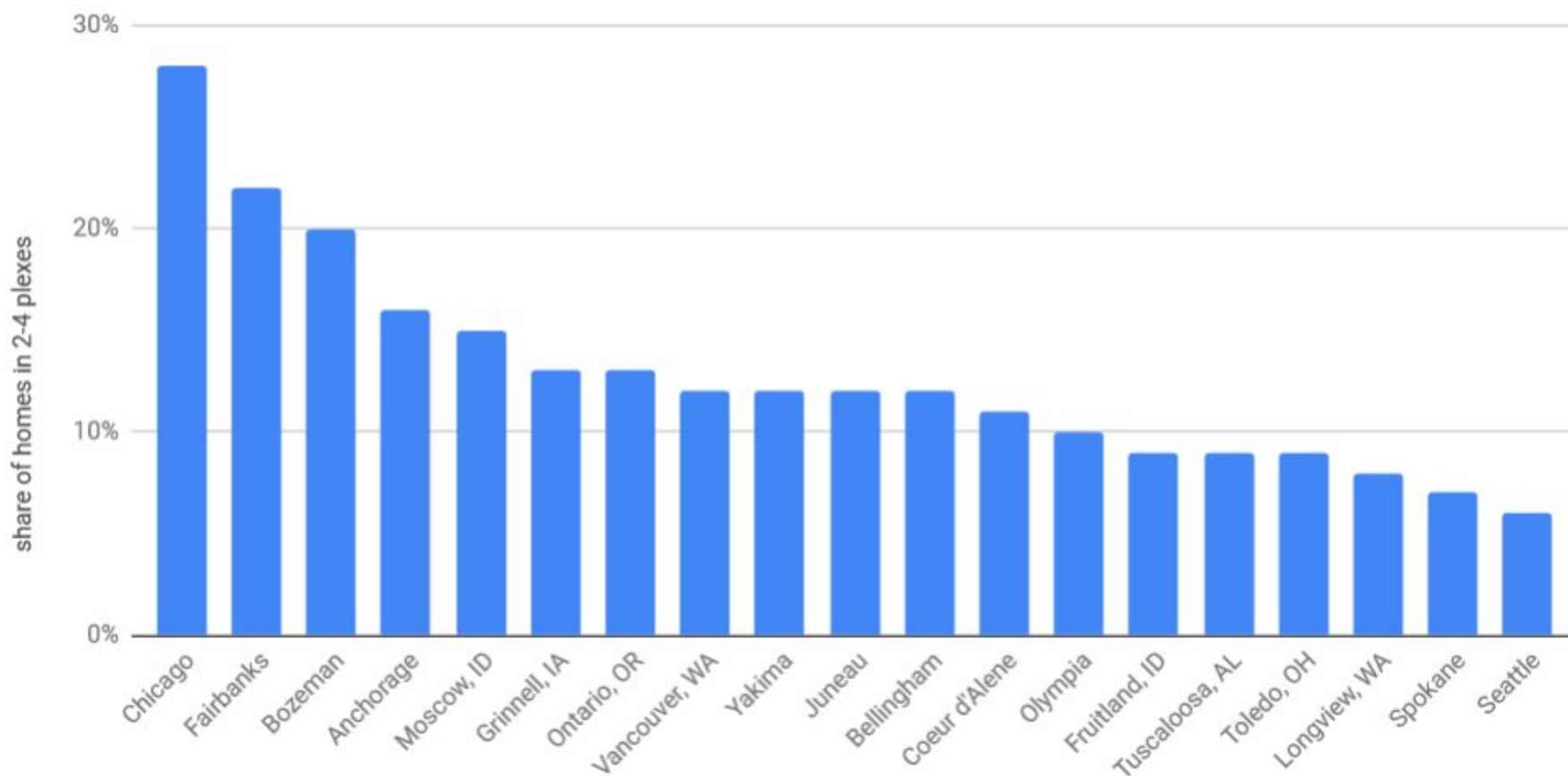
## "Middle housing" is a bedrock of smaller cities' housing markets.



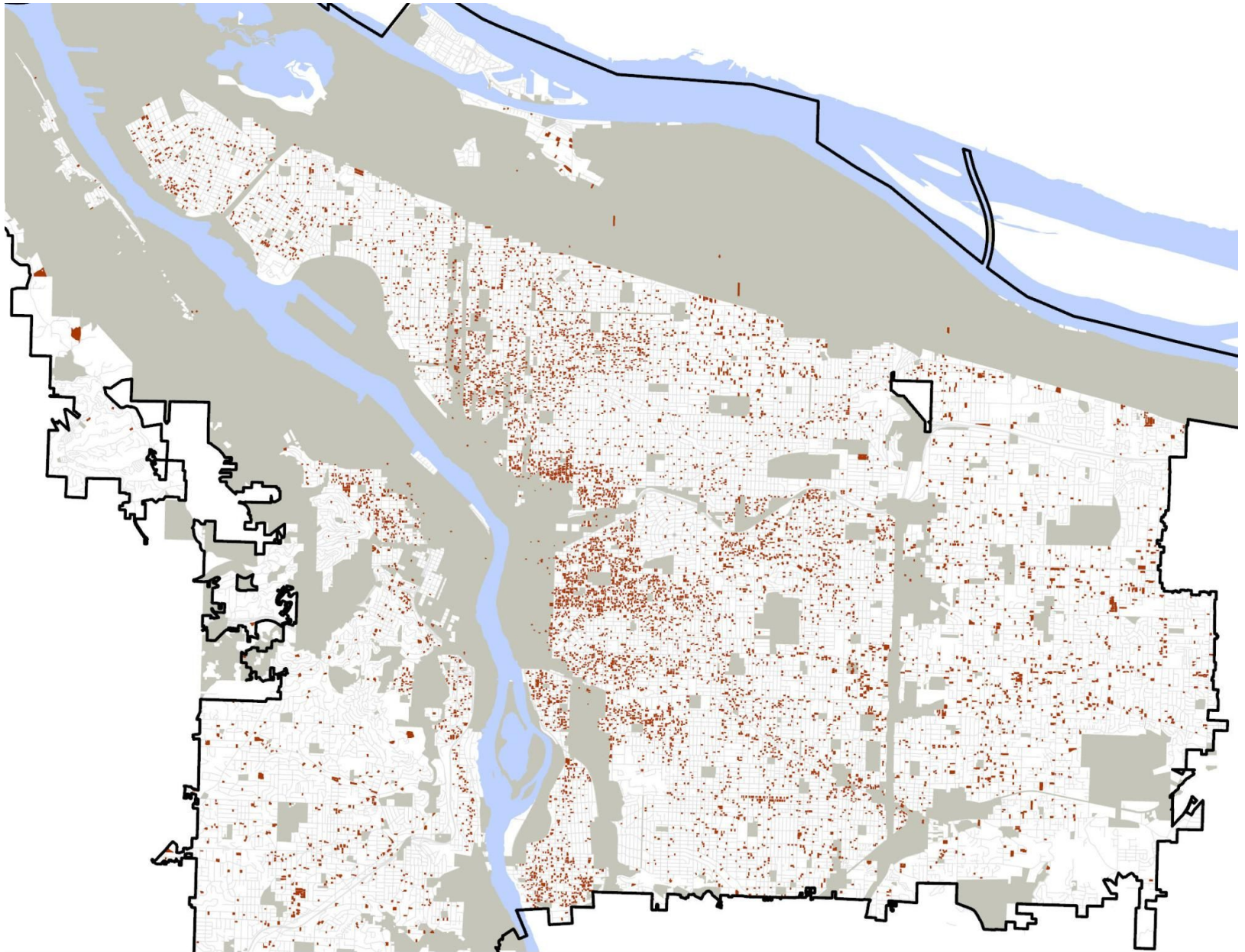
Source: American Community Survey 2013-2017.



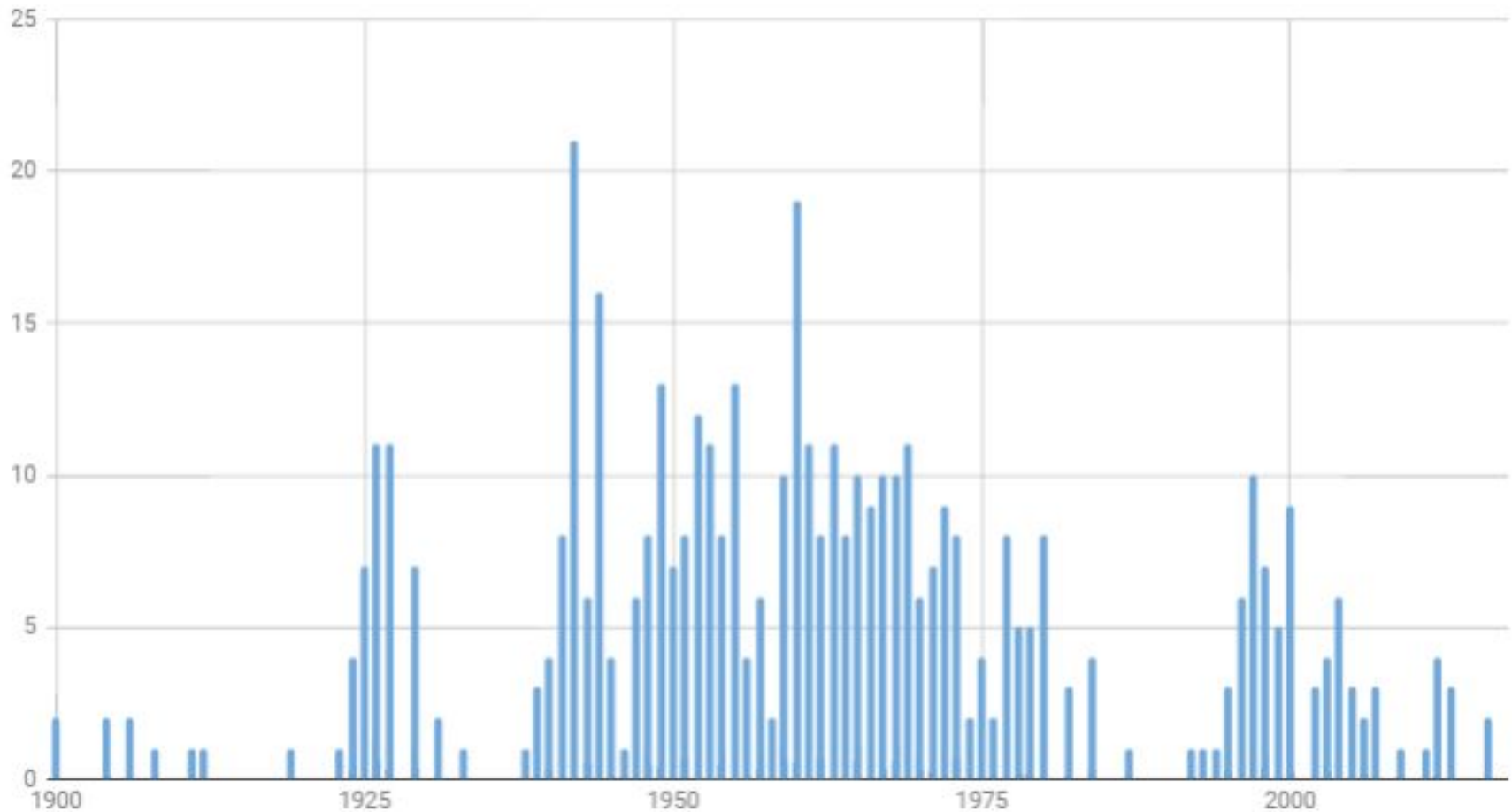
## "Middle housing" in a few more selected cities



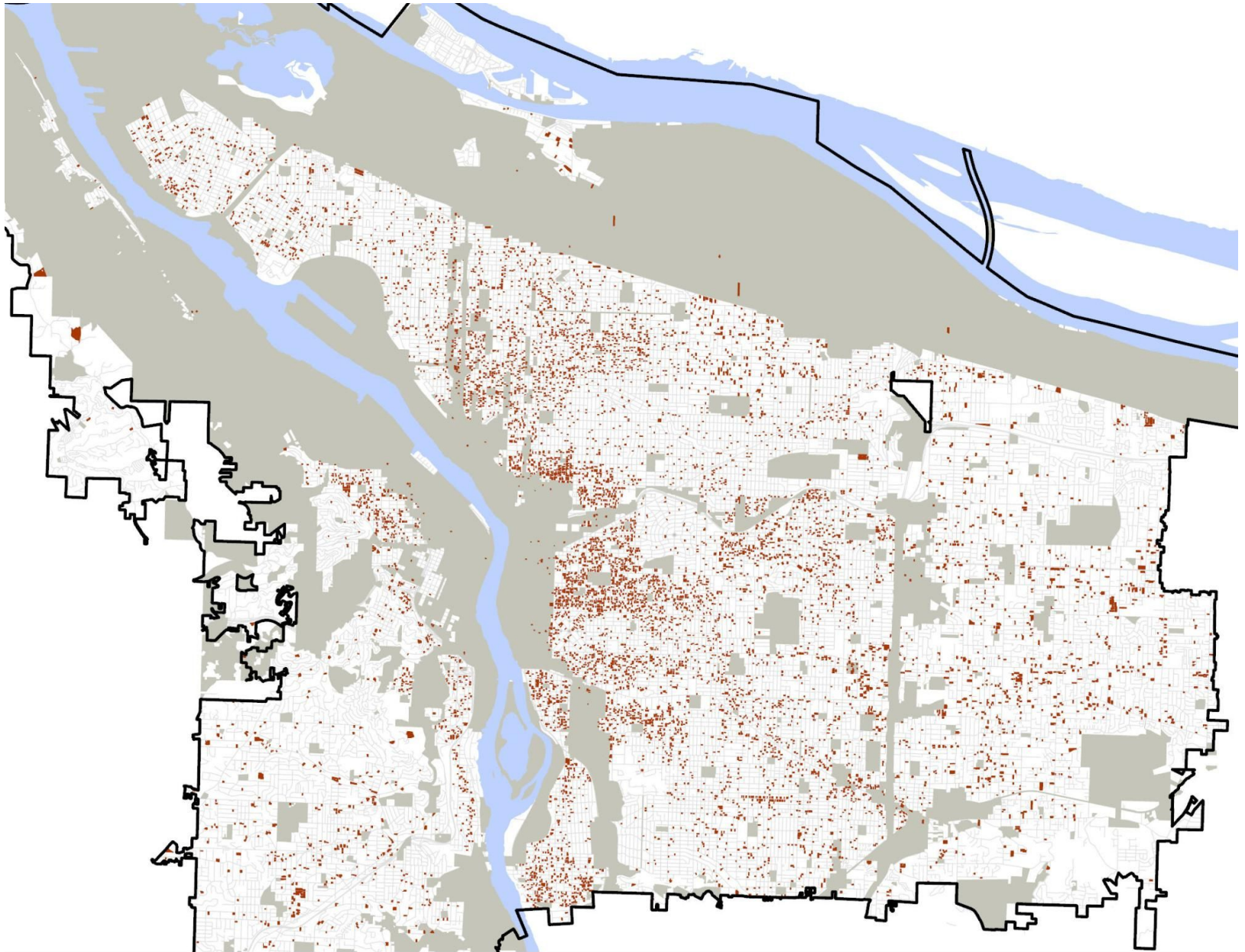
Source: American Community Survey 2013-2017

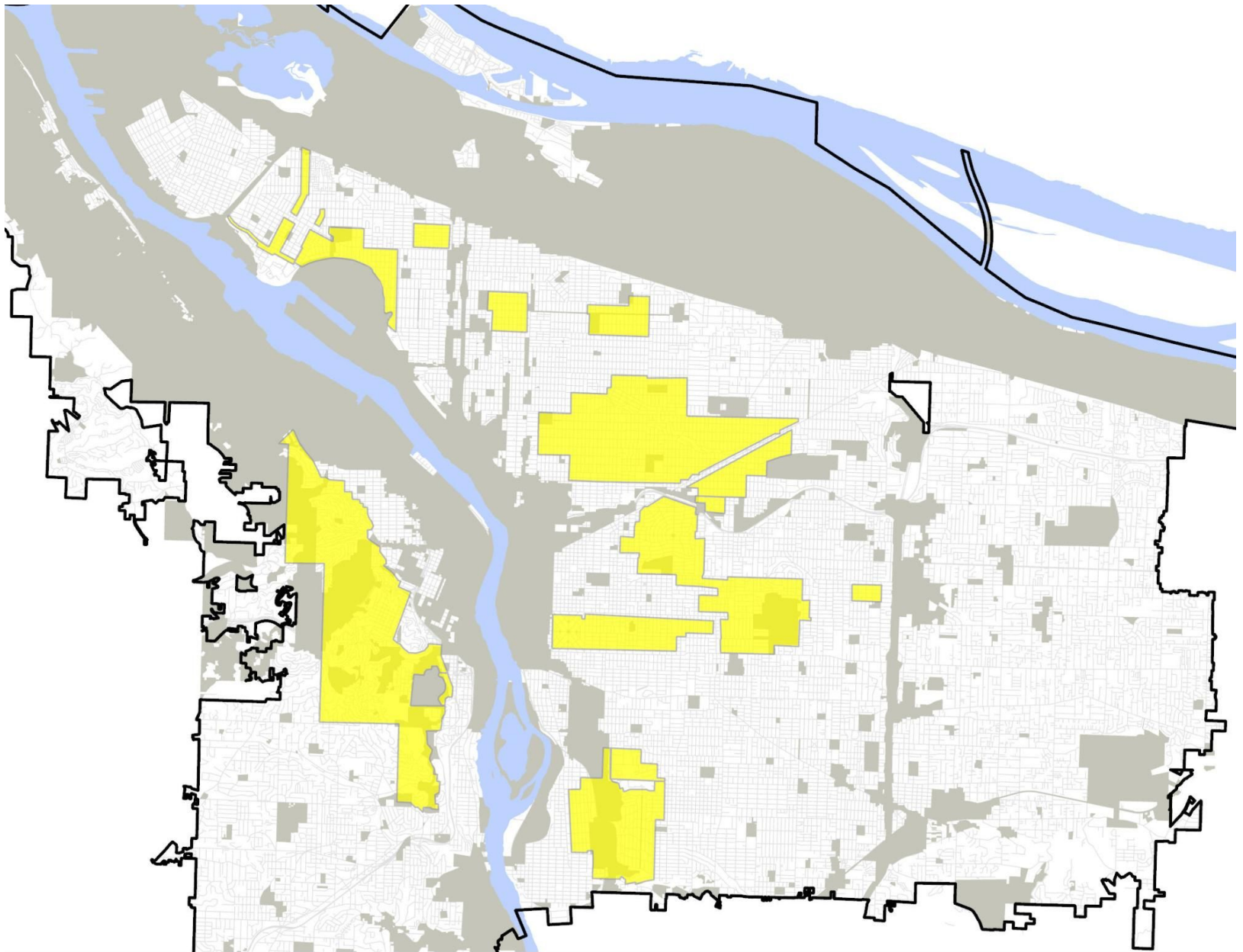


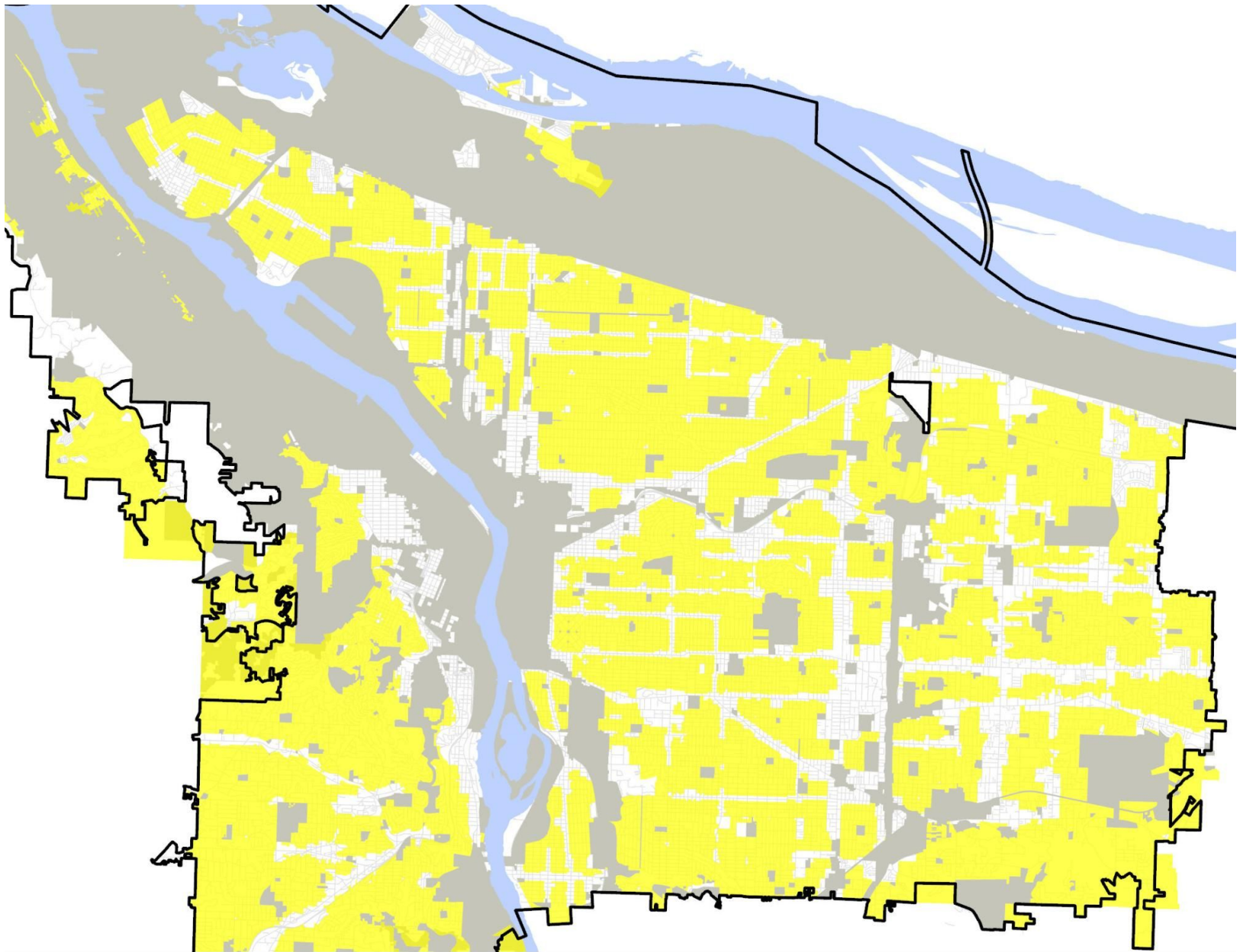
## Construction date for four-plexes in Portland, 1900-2017

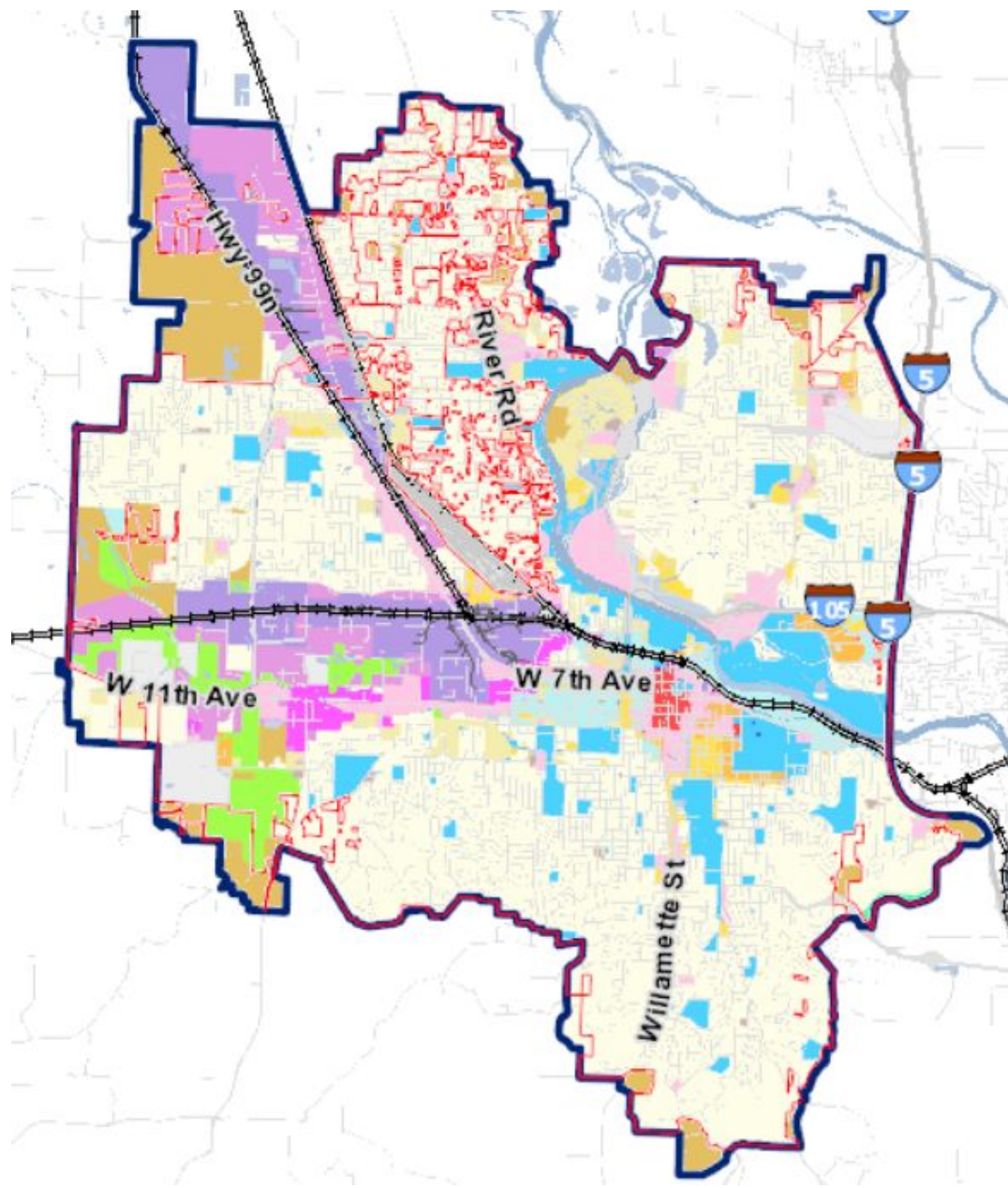


**What the heck  
happened?**

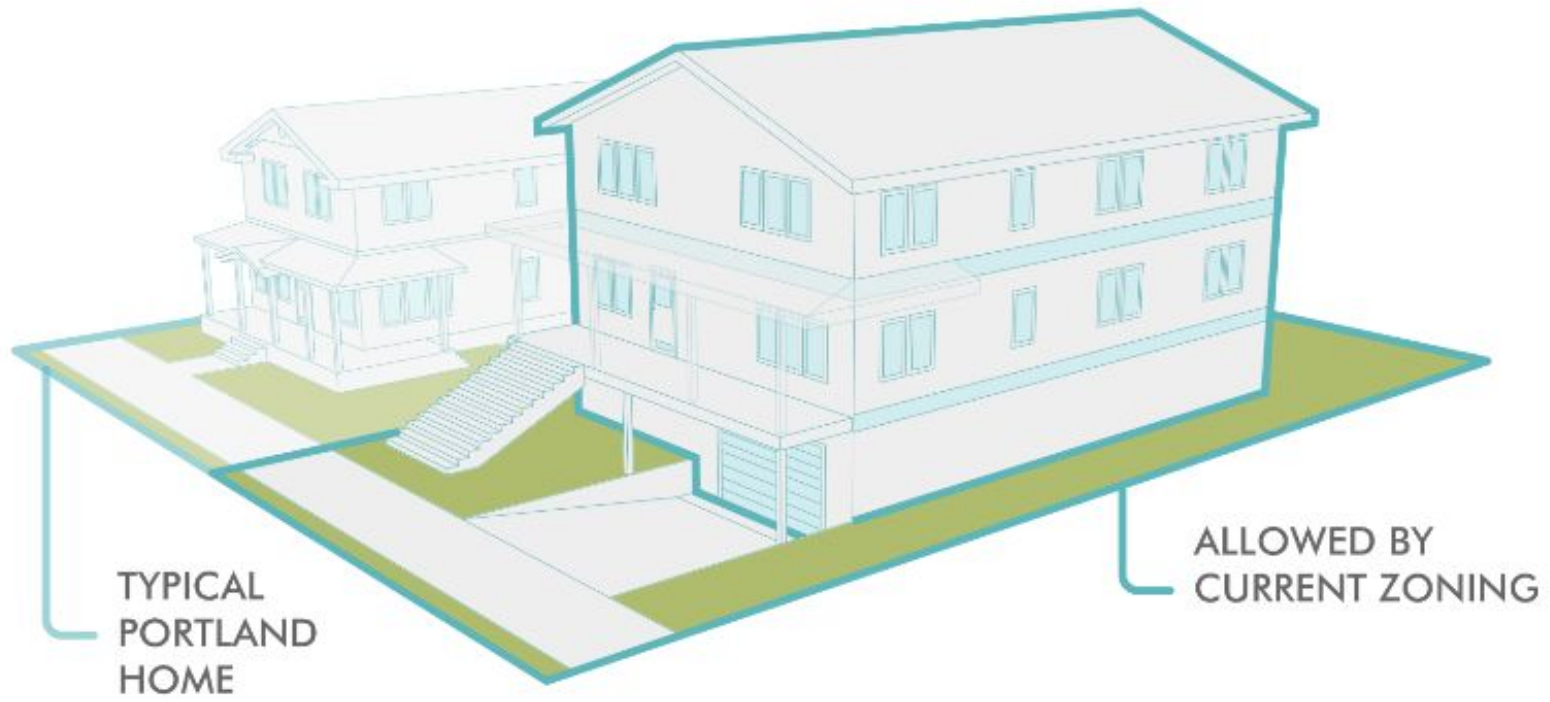


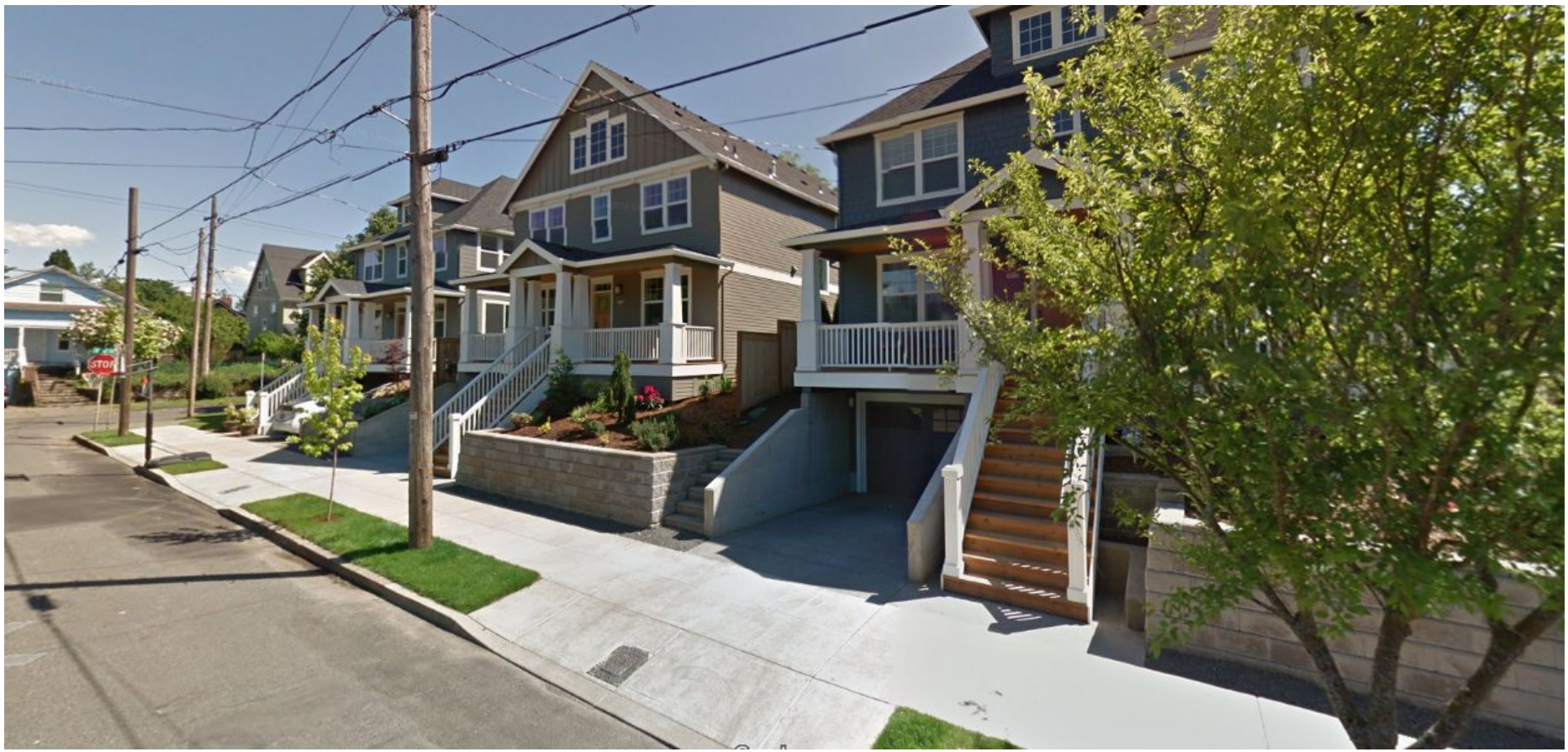












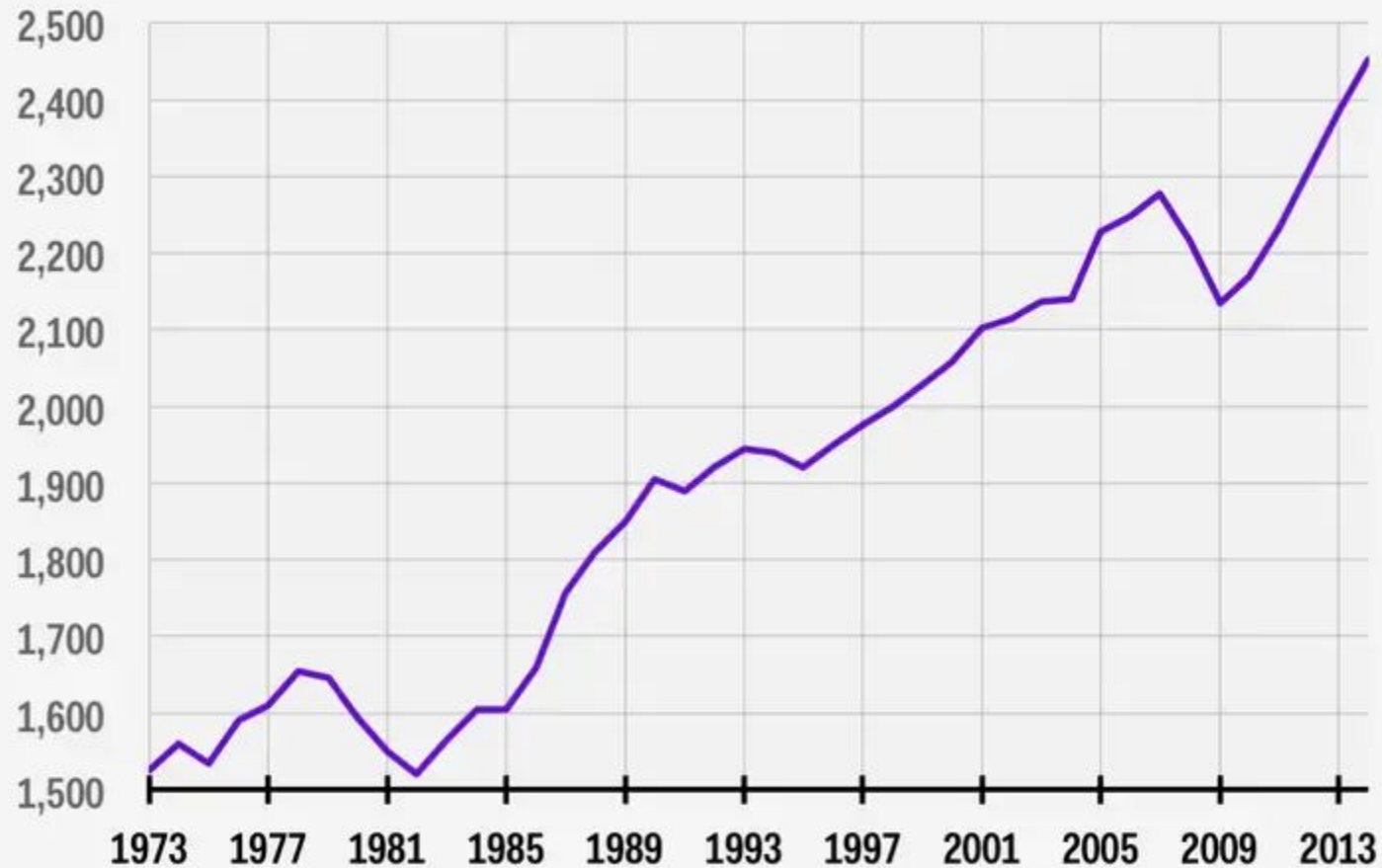


Valued at \$379,180 in 2016.



Valued at \$922,850 in 2017.

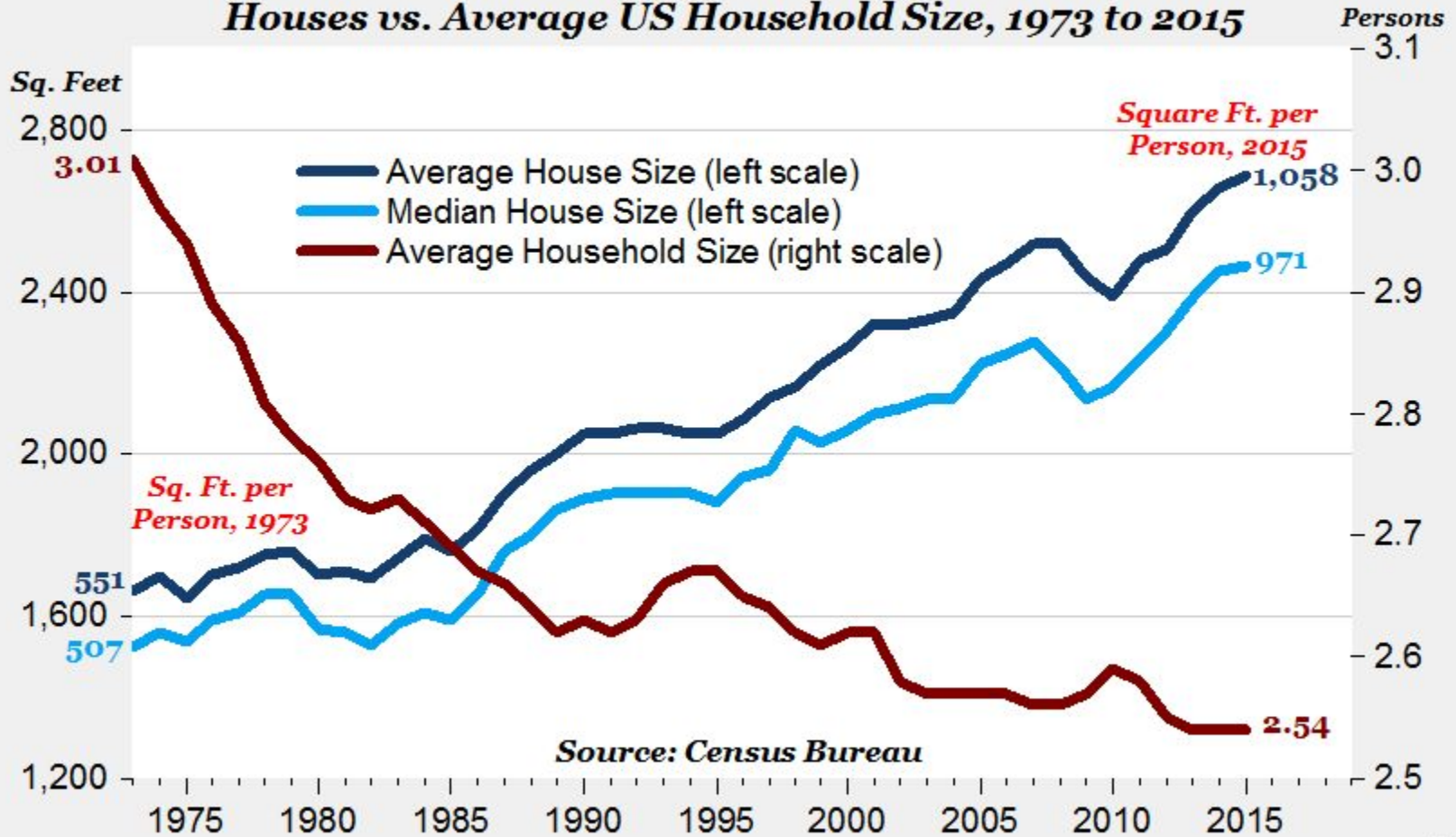
# Median square footage



Source: US Census Bureau

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## Average and Median Square Feet for New Single-Family US Houses vs. Average US Household Size, 1973 to 2015



1,500  
SQUARE FEET

2,500  
SQUARE FEET

4,461  
SQUARE FEET

6,750  
SQUARE FEET

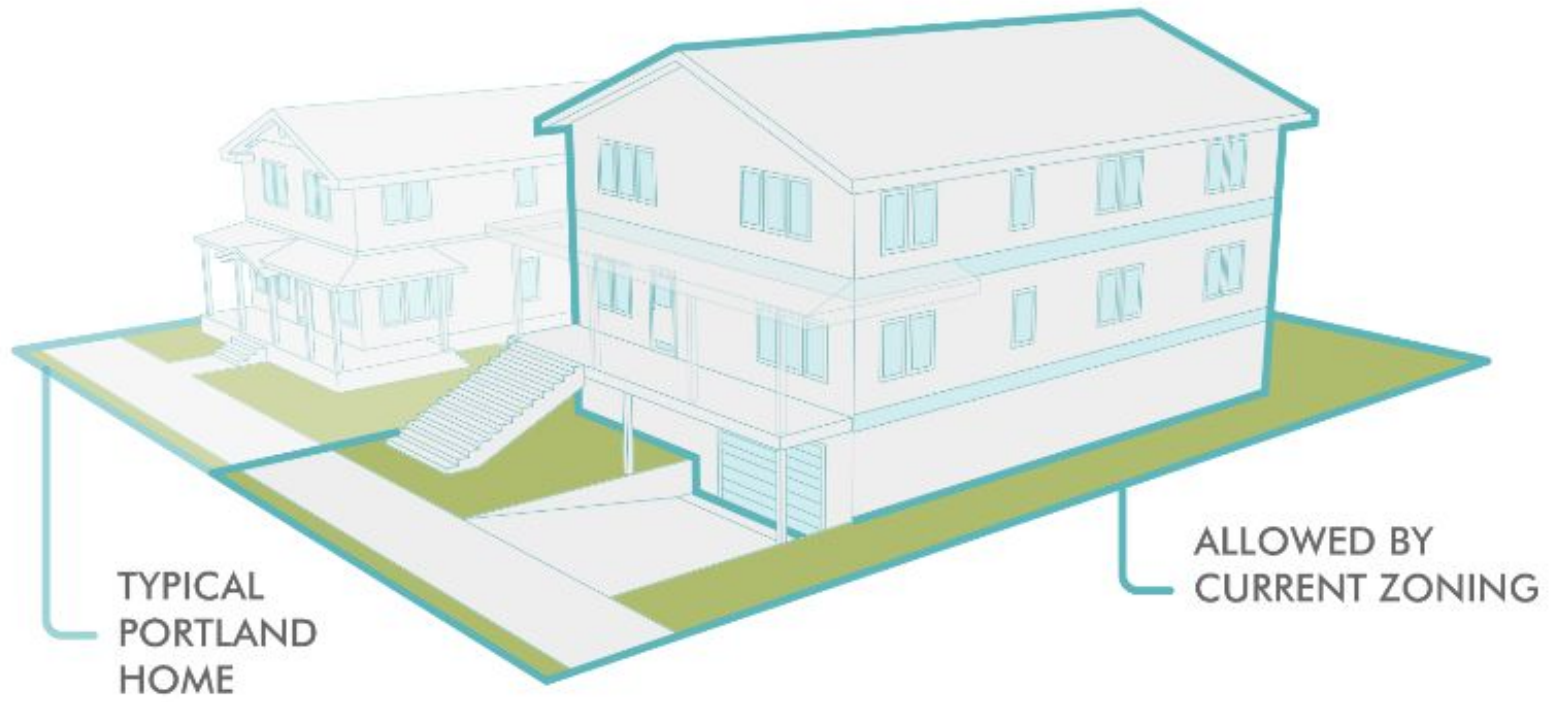
TYPICAL  
OLDER  
HOMES

RECOMMENDED  
MAX

2013  
BUILT  
MAXIMUM

CURRENT  
CODE  
MAXIMUM





TYPICAL  
PORTLAND  
HOME

ALLOWED BY  
CURRENT ZONING





# Portland's Residential Infill Project



\* Maximum building sizes based on floor area ratio allowed on a typical 50' x 100' lot in the R-5 zone.

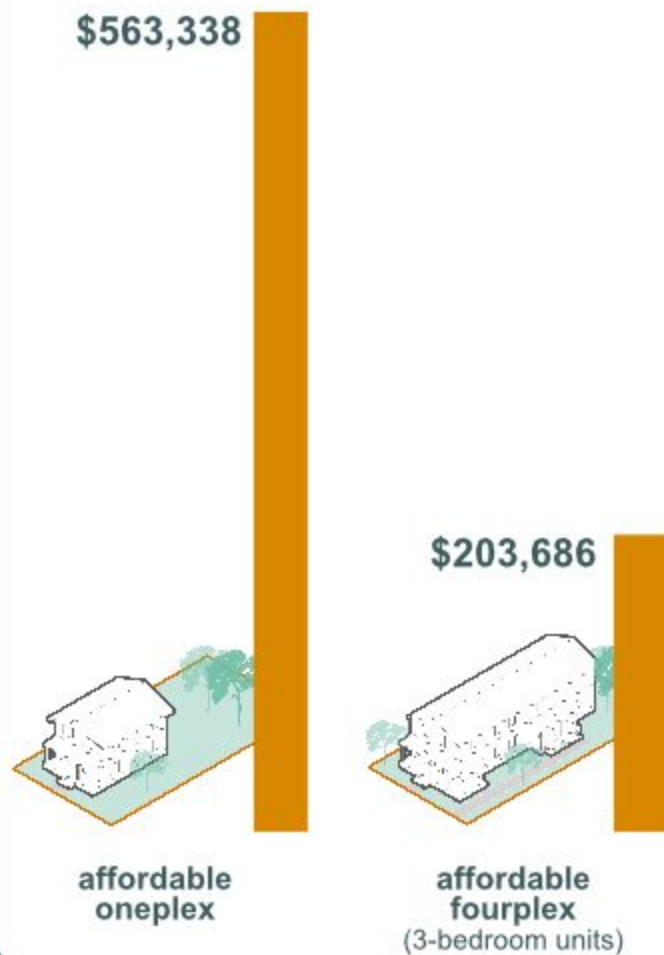
\$563,338



affordable  
oneplex

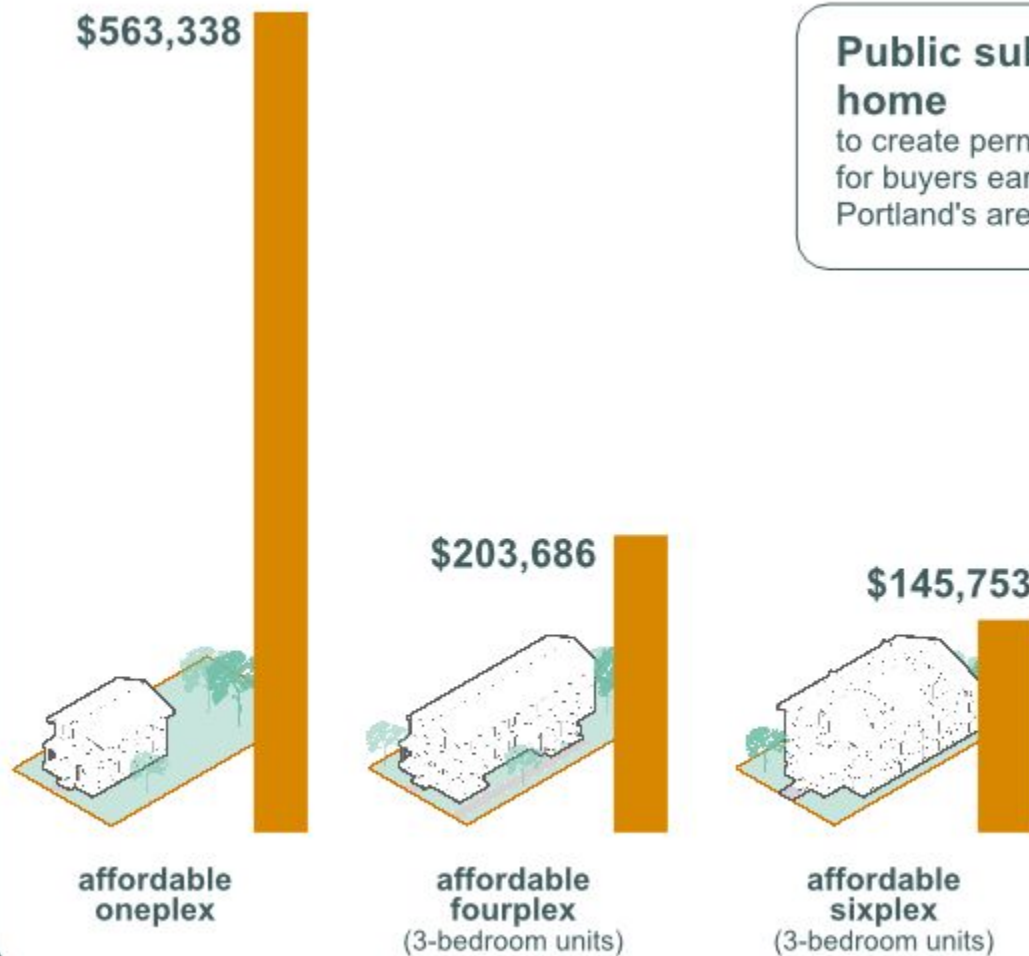
### Public subsidy required per home

to create permanently affordable homes for buyers earning at or below 60% of Portland's area median income



**Public subsidy required per home**

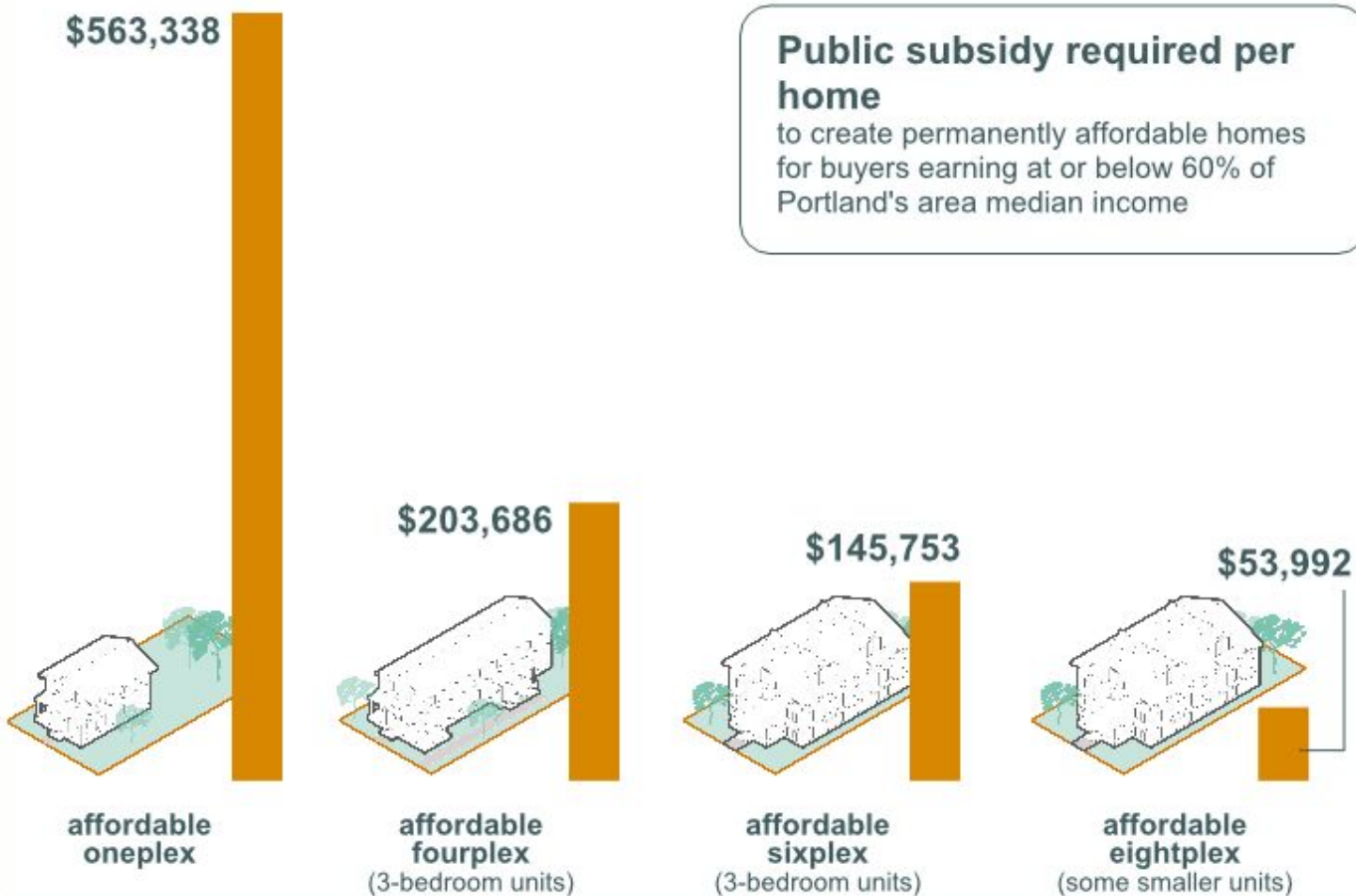
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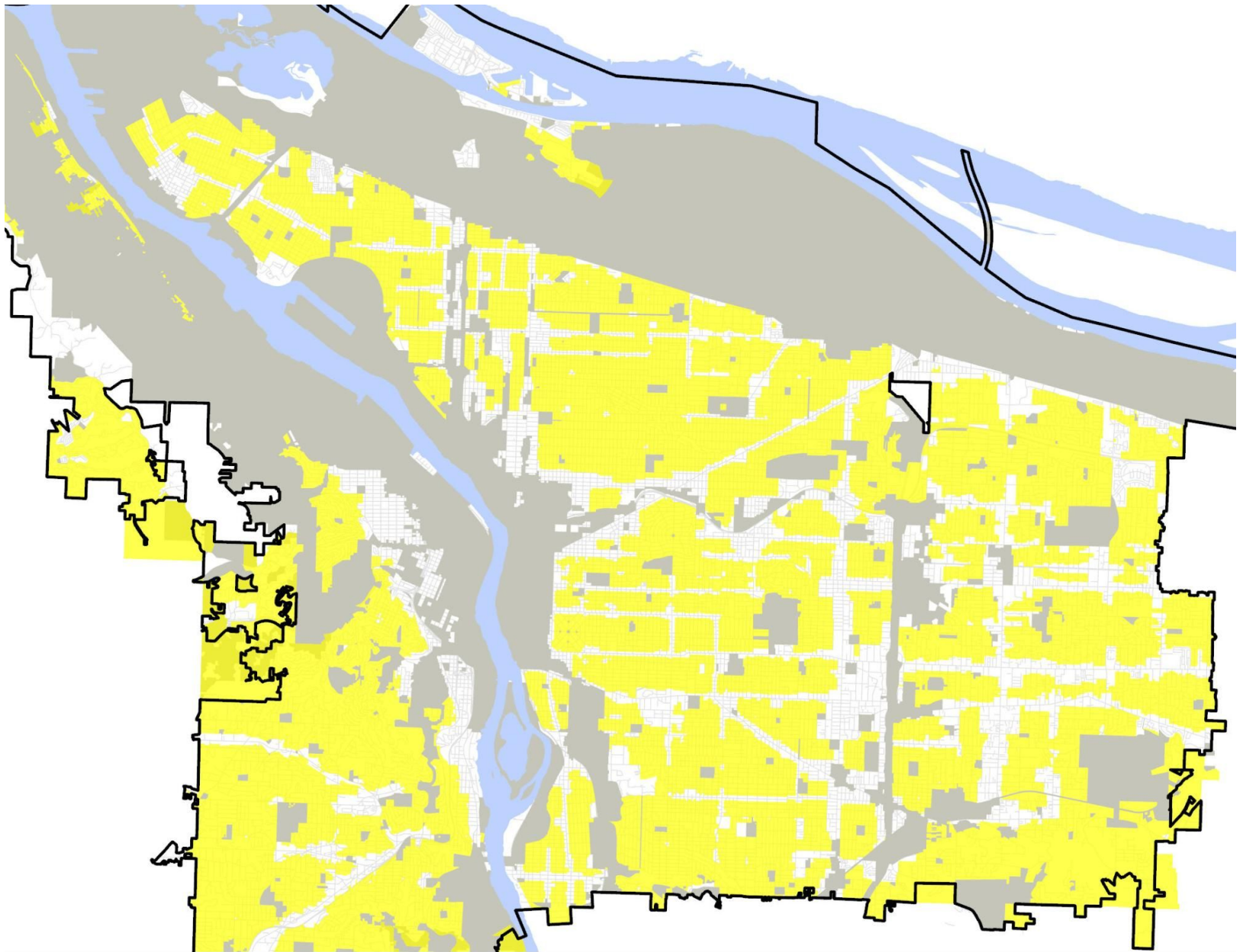


**Public subsidy required per home**

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Letting nonprofit developers build bigger is the same as cutting a big check for affordable housing — except it's free.

















Fourplex in Portland, built 1947.









**Sightline**  
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