

## BBPDX: How to house more Portlanders

For businesses to grow, Portland needs better housing options, and a refresh in residential zoning rules helps.

By Erik Lawrence and Ashley Henry  
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In Portland, our business ecosystem is powered by our walkable neighborhoods. Our city supports 1,700 storefront businesses within three miles of the city center. But what happens when employees of those businesses look for an affordable place to live in the same part of town as they work?

In Portland, 77% of our residential land is zoned exclusively for detached single-family homes. Can't afford a single-family home or don't need that much space? Right now, you'll need to look elsewhere.

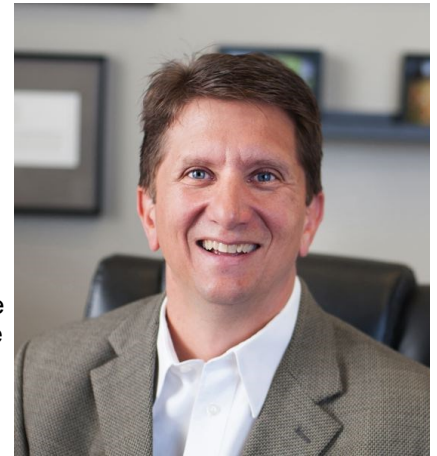
The lack of "missing middle" housing, such as duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes is one of the reasons that housing in many neighborhoods has become out of reach for people in a wide range of incomes and occupations. According to analysis from Metro, people in jobs that serve community needs — like teachers, nurses, police officers, and construction workers — are having difficulty finding housing they can afford. Many have no choice but to move further from where they work or leave the region entirely.

Far from being an isolated issue, the shortage of housing options in our city impacts all of us. The residential land reserved for single-family homes is also where many of our parks, schools and transit lines are located. As people are forced to move further from where they work, they have less access to community amenities and their commute times, as well as traffic congestion across the entire city, increase.

Thankfully, community leaders and elected officials are taking notice. This spring, the Oregon State Legislature passed House Bill 2001, which requires that cities allow duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes on land previously reserved for single-family houses.

This fall, the Portland City Council will be considering the City's plan to implement the state mandate while addressing the size of new buildings in residential neighborhoods. The refresh of Portland's residential zoning rules has been in the works for over three years, with leadership from a coalition of community advocates and affordable housing nonprofits. The changes have the potential to expand housing options for families of all sizes: from young couples to single parents and their kids, to seniors ready to downsize but who want to stay in their neighborhoods.

The business community has a clear interest in policy changes affecting the cost and quality of living in our region. Housing is no exception. Increasingly, many of Portland's rapidly-growing technology and creative services companies are competing for talent on a global scale. If employees of those companies are unable to find housing here, they'll choose to work somewhere else. And, if those same employees earn enough to afford housing in neighborhoods as they are, increasing price pressures could lead to the displacement of current residents. In either scenario, our economy and community are worse off.



**Erik Lawrence is president and managing partner of Ten Bridge Partners**

Of course, we're not the only city facing a housing affordability challenge. On a recent visit to the Bay Area with business leaders and public officials from across the Portland region, I met Ernest Brown, a young professional working with East Bay for Everyone, an organization devoted to fighting for the future of housing, transit, and tenant rights. Ernest shared with us the significant impacts of living in a city unprepared for explosive population growth. On Oct. 3, he will be in Portland, joining Dr. Marisa Zapata of Portland State University, Hope Beraka of Think Real Estate, and Adam Davis of Oregon Humanities in a conversation about the future of housing in Portland at the BBPDX Housing Options Forum.

By engaging in this conversation, we can help shape the future of Portland's residential neighborhoods in a way that expands economic opportunity and strengthens our community. If we're talking about housing, we've got to talk about buildings. But let's not forget, it's people who create our neighborhood's character we love so much.

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