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

These slides are online at bit.ly/EugeneMiddle
Who am I and what is Sightline's deal?
Who am I and what is Sightline's deal?

- I'm a policy writer and researcher, focusing on housing and transportation.
Who am I and what is Sightline's deal?

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

- Sightline Institute is a regional sustainability think tank animated in part by a conviction that cities are good
Who am I and what is Sightline's deal?

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

- Sightline Institute is a regional sustainability think tank animated in part by a conviction that cities are good
Zoning reform: re-legalizing cities
Zoning reform: re-legalizing cities

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.

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
Zoning reform: re-legalizing cities

Courtyard apartments in Omaha. Image: Opticos Design.
"Middle housing" is a bedrock of smaller cities' housing markets.

"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
Portland's Residential Infill Project

Reduced Maximum Building Sizes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>3 &amp; 4plexes:</th>
<th>Duplexes:</th>
<th>1-plexes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Up to 3,500 square feet</td>
<td>Up to 3,600 square feet</td>
<td>Up to 2,500 square feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous maximum house size: 6,750 square feet

Accessory Dwelling Units
Allows up to two secondary cottages per lot.

Cottage Clusters
Legalizes cottage clusters, with the same building size and unit count constraints.

Parking
Makes off-street parking optional.

Accessibility
For 3 & 4plexes, at least one home must be "visitable": no-step entry, wide doorways, ground-floor bed & bath. Affordable projects need two such units.

Family-size 4&6plexes with affordability requirement
Allowed if half the units are rental units affordable to households with income that is 60% of area median income, or for-sale homes that are affordable to households with income that is 60% of area median income. Maximum building size: 6,000 square feet.

Basement Apartments
Legalizes street-facing doors for basement Accessory Dwelling Units

* Maximum building sizes based on floor area ratio allowed on a typical 50’ x 100’ lot in the R-6 zone.
$563,338

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

Public subsidy required per home
to create permanently affordable homes for buyers earning at or below 60% of Portland’s area median income

- Affordable Oneplex: $563,338
- Affordable Fourplex (3-bedroom units): $203,686
- Affordable Sixplex (3-bedroom units): $145,753

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

Public subsidy required per home to create permanently affordable homes for buyers earning at or below 60% of Portland's area median income.

- $563,338
- $203,686
- $145,753
- $53,992

Fourplex in Portland, built 1947.