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What we need to build more housing

Every Oregonian deserves a home they can afford, that meets their family needs, and is well-located in a livable neighborhood near schools, stores, parks, transportation options, and more. Oregon is short approximately 140,000 homes for people who are living here today. [Most of the housing we're missing is for people with moderate and lower incomes.](#) That means people going without appropriate housing in Oregon include medical technicians, mechanics, teachers, day-care providers, store clerks, care givers, young people just starting out, older people on fixed incomes, people experiencing homelessness, and more.

We can meet the housing needs of Oregonians, and quickly. Here's how:

Invest in infrastructure for housing, especially housing for those of moderate and lower incomes

Oregon's cities already have tens of thousands of acres designated for residential use inside their UGBs, but the lands lack some or all infrastructure – roads, sewers, water, sidewalks. Investing in these lands is the most important step the state can take now to unlock large parcels and get them “shovel-ready” to quickly produce housing.

Our housing *underproduction* is even more dramatically skewed: Ninety-five percent of the current housing underproduction is impacting people with moderate and lower incomes. Affordable housing providers often need relatively small amounts of financial assistance to extend a sewer line, build a sidewalk, provide access to a parcel, or consolidate land and then they can do what they do best – build many units of housing for those who need it most.

Incentivize housing production on the lands and buildings we already have

Oregon has great redevelopment opportunities that need relatively small infrastructure upgrades to bring thousands of homes online, including affordable homes, well-located near stores, schools, and transit. This includes the thousands of homes planned for areas like Lloyd Center and the Broadway Corridor in Portland, the Core Area in Bend, and underused parking lots and commercial lands and buildings in almost every city and town. Many of these are in great locations to redevelop with housing. Now, there's even [federal funding](#) to help, which can be combined with state and local investments to produce even more housing while revitalizing buildings and neighborhoods

Invest inside current UGBs, to build more housing, faster

Spending limited infrastructure dollars goes farther and faster inside UGBs to produce more houses than spending those dollars in a UGB expansion. Residential lands inside UGBs are often closer to existing infrastructure or have some of the infrastructure in place, but need just a bit more. This means less cost and less time to get more homes on the ground than through a UGB expansion.

Use OHNA to achieve better housing results, sooner

The state legislature directed the Department of Land Conservation and Development and other state agencies to quickly enact the Oregon Housing Needs Analysis program, and it's already underway. OHNA requires every city, working with the state, to adopt zoning; streamline UGB expansions, urban reserves, and land swaps; and enact other measures to ensure diverse housing meeting the needs of all residents is actually built. When the OHNA program fully kicks in in 2025 and 2026, many cities will be implementing their housing production strategies and will be able to use quicker, streamlined land use processes.

What won't help produce the housing Oregonians need

Overriding land use and environmental laws will not produce the housing Oregonians need, where they need it, anytime soon

Sidestepping land use laws to expand UGBs to build primarily private-sector, higher income housing will take many years to build, will not result in many homes, and will not provide the housing Oregonians need. It puts more people farther away from the services, stores, and jobs they need, and makes affordable *living* even more unattainable. Trickle down housing doesn't work.

Lands inside current UGBs should not have to compete with UGB expansions for scarce infrastructure dollars

Adding more land, when so many cities need investments in the lands they already have, exacerbates existing infrastructure funding gaps and fails to make the most of the land we have. It is not a responsible use of Oregon's resources.

Building at the edge increases climate change and wildfire risks to lives, livelihoods, and homes

Homes at the edge are farther away from schools, stores, and jobs and therefore require more roads and driving, resulting in more greenhouse gas emissions, heat islands, and stormwater runoff that ends up in rivers and streams. It paves over carbon sequestering farm lands and natural areas.

In many areas of Oregon, expanding the urban footprint means developing into the wildland urban interface. This puts more lives, livelihoods, and homes at risk of wildfire – and it increases the likelihood that more catastrophic wildfires will occur.

Building at the edge exacerbates inequality and racial and economic injustice

Housing policies and investments should open up existing neighborhoods to those who have been racially redlined and economically excluded from areas of opportunity: those of lower incomes, people of color, Black people, indigenous people, and those on fixed incomes. Those who cannot or choose not to drive a car also deserve well-located housing choices inside UGBs with active transportation options.

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