

Portland for Everyone Residential Infill – A Way Forward

Portland is a place where all are welcome and everyone’s interests matter, regardless of background, income, or age - whether renter or homeowner. The greatest asset of our city is its people. To ensure that Portland remains a welcoming place, we must ensure we have housing for all.

Most of Portland’s residential land supply is locked up in zones that only allow a single dwelling unit on each lot. As a result, new houses tend to be large – 2,500 square feet on average. However, nearly 2/3 of Portland’s households are now just 1 or 2 people. People of all ages are looking for a variety smaller homes – these homes are more affordable, more environmentally friendly, and fit our household sizes better. Yet housing options like duplexes, triplexes, courtyard cottages, smaller attached homes, and rowhouses are prohibited in much of Portland. This exclusionary zoning means low and middle-income families are disproportionately burdened by higher home costs. To be truly welcoming, Portland must offer families more choices in between a large single dwelling and an apartment in a multi-story building.

Portland for Everyone supports abundant, diverse, and affordable housing options in every neighborhood. We also recognize that the scale of housing must be compatible with existing neighborhoods. Therefore, we support reducing the overall scale of single-dwelling infill housing while applying these policies in all single-dwelling zones citywide:

Housing Types

Portland for Everyone supports the allowance of a broader palette of housing choices, including:

- Accessory dwelling units. Allow both an internal and a detached ADU on a single residential lot.
- Triplexes. Allow up to 3 units within the envelope of a typical single family home.
- Cottage clusters.
- Incentives to encourage development of small, age-friendly housing so older Portlanders can transition to housing within their neighborhoods.
- Density bonus if the dwelling is affordable, and/or in exchange for constructing smaller units.

Narrow Lots

Portland has historically narrow lots of 25 to 33 feet wide scattered throughout the city, many of which are currently vacant. These offer a ready supply for infill housing. Portland for Everyone supports allowing development of these lots if the housing is kept to a smaller scale consistent with the neighborhood, and if street-facing garages are not allowed, as these detract from neighborhood character.

Demolitions

Portland for Everyone supports changes to decrease the frequency of demolitions.

- Allow internal conversions of existing homes into 2 or more units, if they retain their single-dwelling appearance.
- Allow second homes on lots when the total square footage of both homes is no more than the size of a single home that would be allowed on the same property. This improves the financial viability of preserving small existing homes, which are those most likely to be torn down.
- Make it easier for builders to flex site plans to preserve existing homes, trees, and natural features.

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