
What a Planner Learned By Developing Missing Middle Housing

Payton Chung @ CNU 31, June 2023

Payton Chung

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Middle housing: just build it!

Maximizes 3 Es: economy,
environment, & equity

Economical, sustainable, & equitable

Economical

Lowest cost housing type; affordable to moderate incomes without subsidy

Sustainable

Lowest embodied & operational carbon of any housing type. Achieves 90% of land & transport footprint savings vs. high-rise

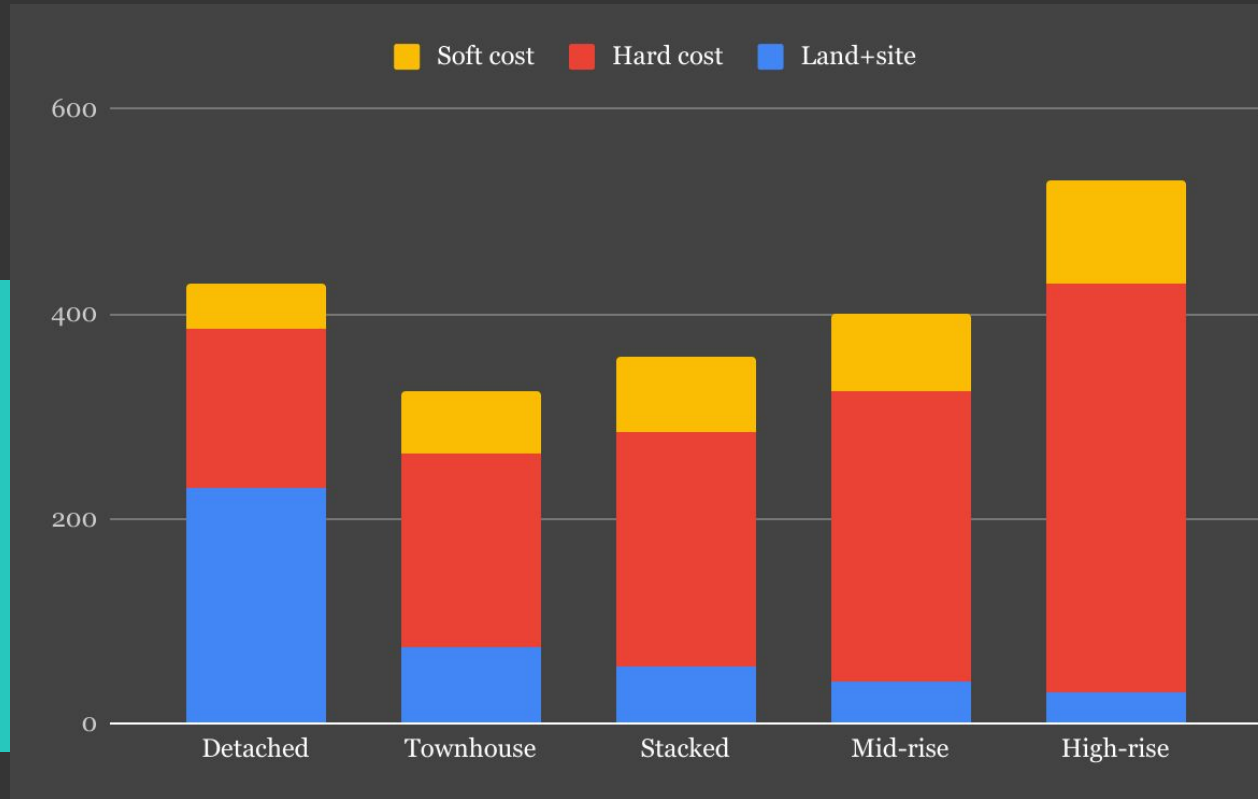
Equitable

Diverse housing types fit more households, at more prices – precisely why it was banned.

Economical

Lowest cost housing type;
affordable to moderate
incomes without subsidy

(Rough 2023 costs per unit in
Raleigh, NC)



Sustainable

Lowest embodied & operational carbon of any housing type. Achieves 90% of land & transport footprint savings vs. high-rise

(via C. Drew, AS+GG)

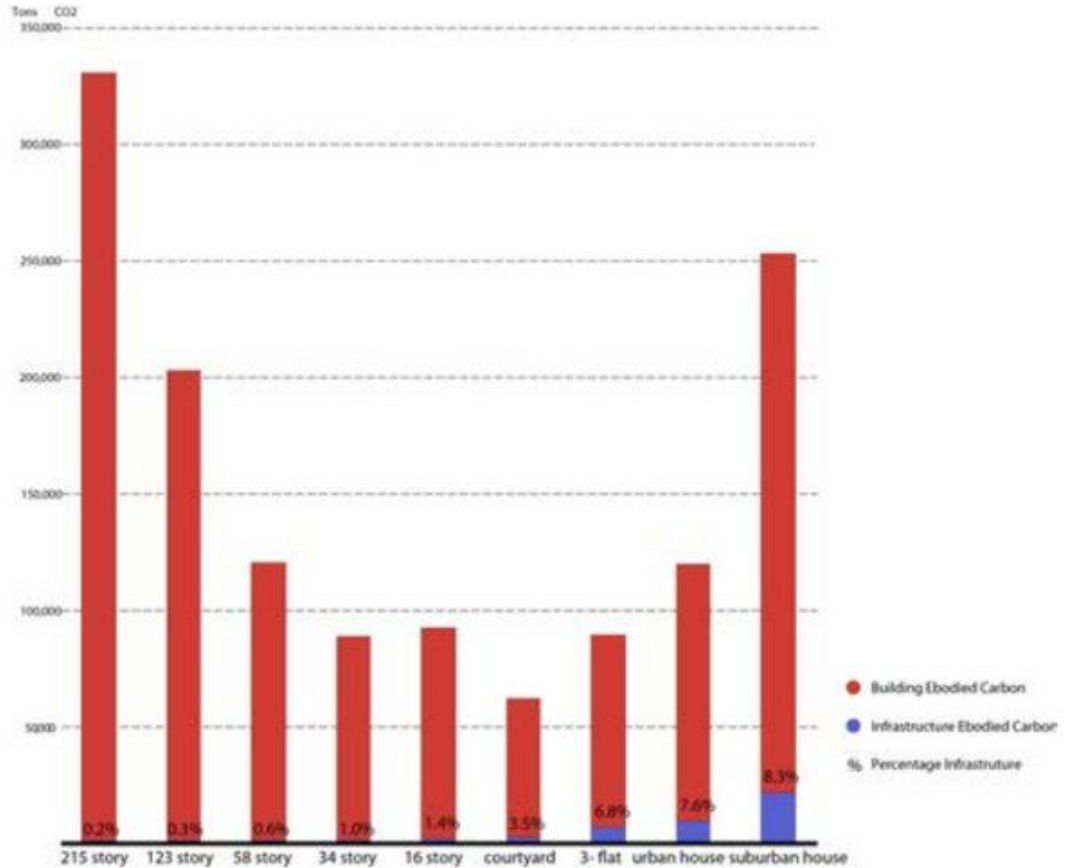
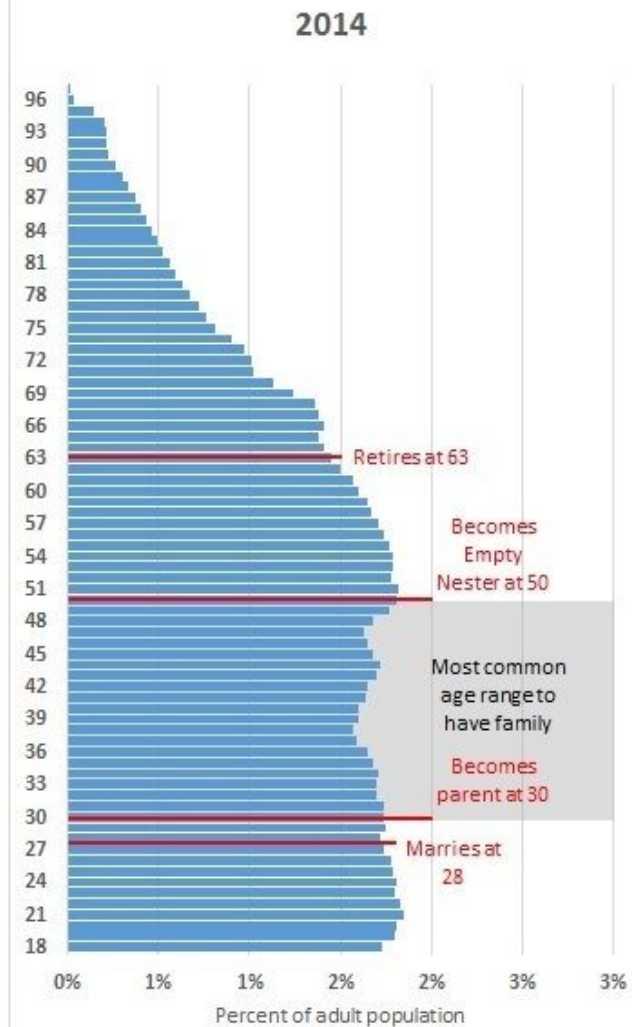
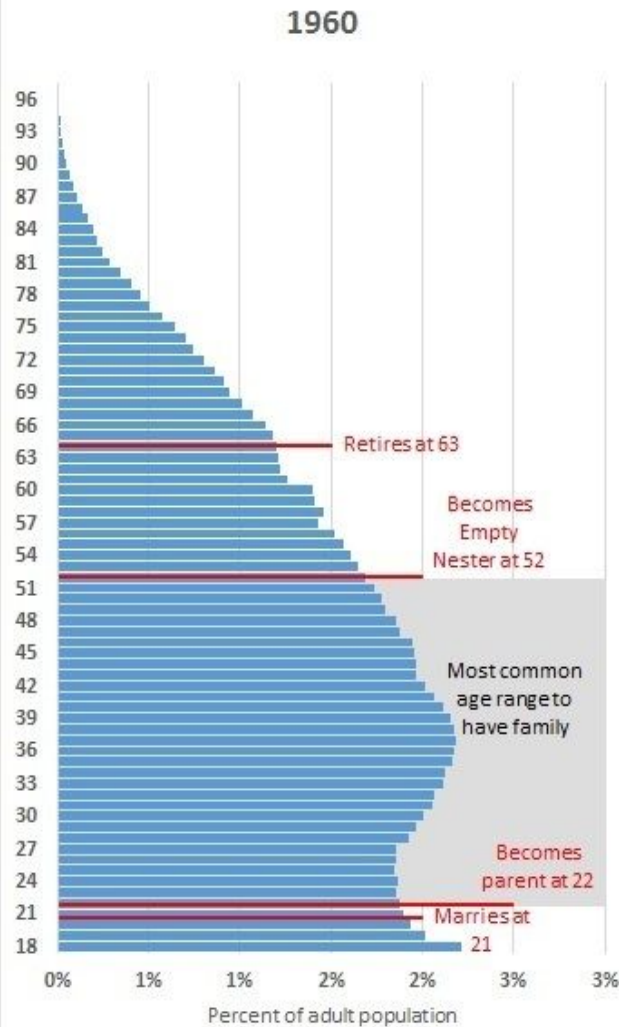


Figure 9. Embodied carbon of buildings and infrastructure for the Tbase communities (Source: AS+GG).

Equitable

Longevity = population growth without transplants. Smaller houses needed not us, not “them.”

(via Hamilton Lombard, StatChatVA)



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Planners can maximize
opportunities.

Climate delay is climate denial.

Mother Jones

May + June 2023

Yes in Our Backyards

It's time for progressives to fall in love with the green building boom.

BY BILL MCKIBBEN



Chicago Zoning map 1923



Apartment districts

Coach houses allowed



Residence districts

Single-family district, with coach houses allowed



Commercial districts



Manufacturing districts

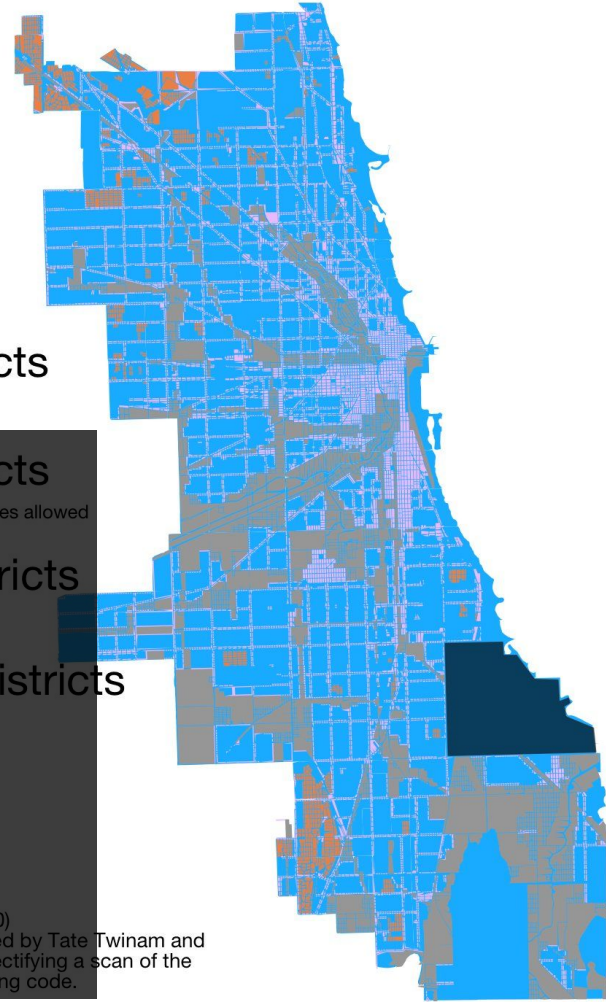


No data

Zone abundantly.

“Making the perfect the enemy of the good is more like making the perfect the enemy of anything at all.” - Bill McKibben

Map created by Steven Vance (February 17, 2020)
GIS data for the zoning district boundaries created by Tate Twinam and Allison Shertzer, derived from digitizing and georectifying a scan of the 1923 zoning code of Chicago, the city's first zoning code.

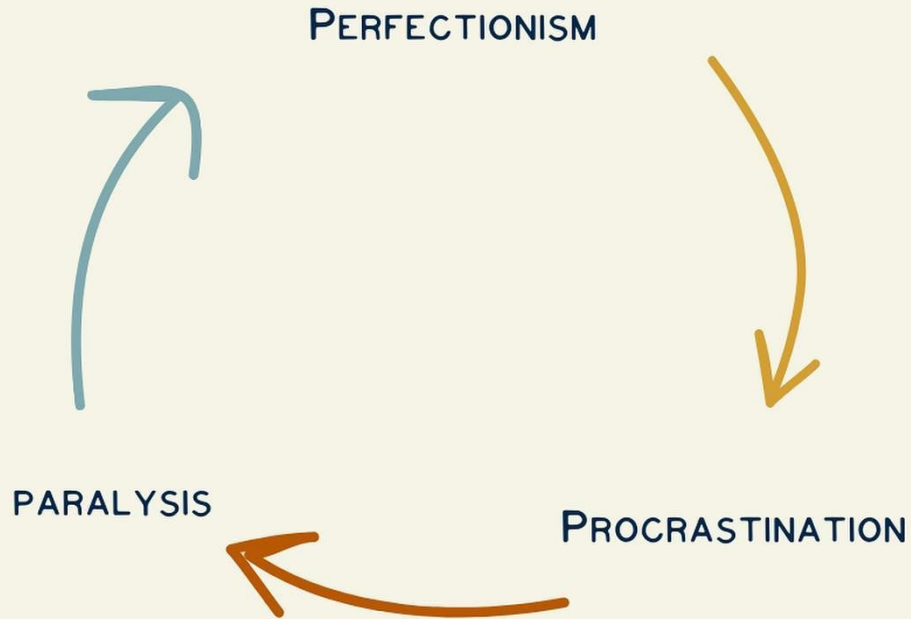




Life is messy


Thriving living systems are always evolving – a forest, not a tree farm. Embrace the jarring juxtapositions between growth and decline. “There is... constantly a mixture of buildings of many ages and types” - J. Jacobs

How to break the cycle of perfectionism



Quit the
perfectionist
doom loop

Take it from a perfectionist:
don't overthink it. Just get it
done.



Think outside the “bullseye”

Urban land is abundant, so zone like it. 4% of houses sold in 2022.

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Middle housing: just build it!

Infill > redevelopment.

Seek scale.

Legal living options in Portland as of 8/1/2021 and what it'd cost to build them*

* Affordability ratios, via Portland Housing Bureau, vary by bedroom count. Assumes a 5k sqft lot in R5 zone. A, C, & D demolish existing 784 sqft home. B & F remodel existing homes. E & G develop backyard with no demolition or remodel.

These four options **can't be built** in most cases at Portland's current rents and costs. But if rents rise, the less expensive options would start to be built first:

Demolition = opportunity cost

Redevelopment means paying to buy something valuable, only to throw it away. Existing buildings are too valuable for all but much higher scale redevelopment.

(via Neil Heller)

A. New single-detached
1,500 sqft, 5 bedrooms.
Buildable if rent reaches: \$7,500
(244% of affordability at area median income).

B. Remodeled older home
784 sqft, 2 bedrooms.
Buildable if rent reaches: \$3,581
(165% AMI).

Buildable if rent reaches: \$3,252
(131% AMI).

D. Fourplex
875 sqft/home, 2 bedrooms.
Buildable if rent reaches: \$2,478
(116% AMI).

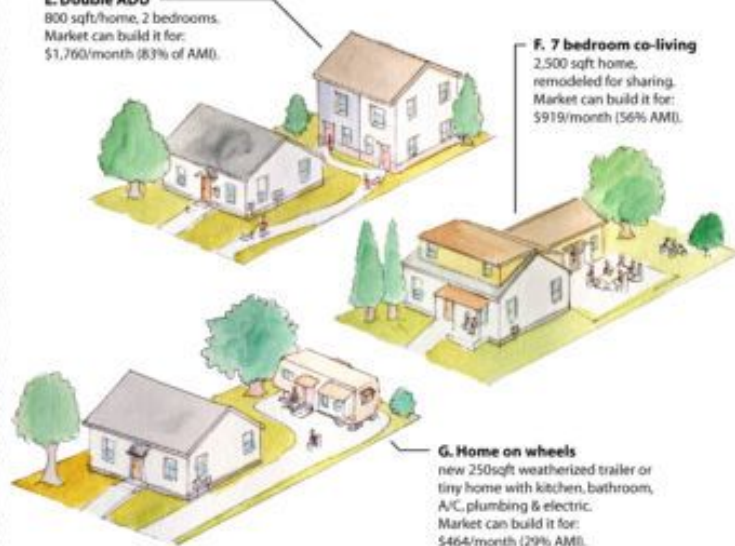


These three options **can now be built** on many lots at Portland's current rents and costs. They should soon be helping prevent prices from rising further:

E. Double ADU
800 sqft/home, 2 bedrooms.
Market can build it for:
\$1,760/month (83% of AMI).

F. 7 bedroom co-living
2,500 sqft home,
remodeled for sharing.
Market can build it for:
\$919/month (56% AMI).

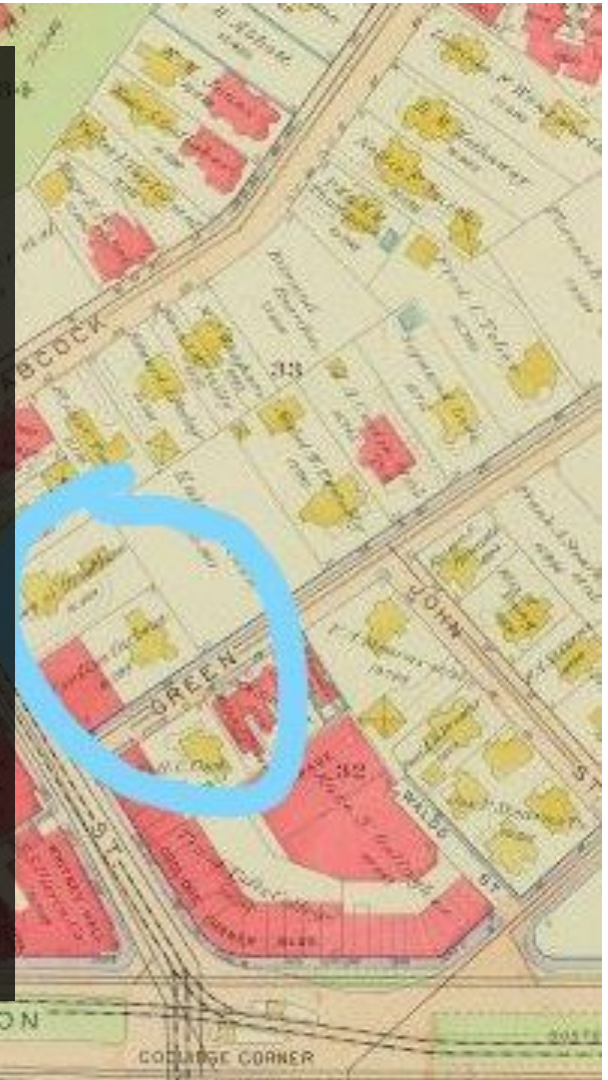
G. Home on wheels
new 250sqft weatherized trailer or
tiny home with kitchen, bathroom,
A/C, plumbing & electric.
Market can build it for:
\$464/month (29% AMI).





Historic MMH
was mostly infill

Transit-oriented sites were abundant, and houses were often moved to create sites.



Repetition is good


Cost curves require learning through mass production. Brooklyn brownstones “were mass-produced... pilloried as oppressive, monotonous”.






“Maybe we don't need to be so concerned about the look of housing because looks are just a small part of why we value things.” - Uytae Lee

NA PRODEJ TYTO DOMY

na měsíční splátky.

... v těchto městech, kde budou majetky vždy v ceně, jelikož jsou poblíže pouličních a zvýšených drah, kde se dobře rentují a obchody soustředí.



 \$3200	 \$3200	 \$4600	 \$5000	 \$6000
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Tyto se prodají všechny na měsíční splátky.

loty 30x125 v čáře na západní 20., 21., ul. 21. Plave a 22. ulici, mezi jižní 42. a 44. Avenue — Cementové chodníky, voda a stoky, vše botové a zaplacené. —

FRANK KIRCHMAN, 3149 záp. 22. ulice
TELEFON LAWDALE 2919.
Odbočky: 22. a 42. Ave. — 22. a 56. Ave. — 22. a 60. Ave.

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Zoning is just one piece of the puzzle.

Rezoning won't fix:

Building code

Residential vs. commercial
building codes, permitting

Sprinklers, add'l engineering

Single-stair design

+20% hard cost

Approvals

Small projects can't shoulder
high legal/design fees

Small developers can't afford
to wait

Geometry

Driveways, or streets?

Broken/nonexistent grids

Fire, trash, mail access
standards

Tenure

Fee-simple simpler, cheaper,
more flexible, appraises
higher than condo

Buyers have cheaper \$ than
renters

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