

Why a “Ban” on Single-Family Zoning Should Be a Good Thing

Recently, the state of Oregon has moved to use the power of policy to influence housing affordability, diversity and flexibility. In what some are calling an effective ban on single-family zoning, the state is requiring that multifamily units be allowed on land previously reserved for single-family homes.

Oregon [House Bill 2001](#) effective as of August 8, 2019, mandates that each city with a population greater than or equal to 25,000 allow all middle housing types, and/or a duplex on each lot or parcel that previously allowed for the development of detached single dwellings. This language has led to many sensationalized headlines labeling the move as a [ban elimination](#) of single-family zoning. While this policy mandates the allowance of multifamily units on land previously only available for single family, it does not, in fact, outright prohibit single family zoning or development. One can still build single-family houses in Oregon.

In fact, the bill should give builders and developers more flexibility and opportunities to build an expanded range of housing types in the state.

The bill also requires that metropolitan service districts with populations of more than 10,000 and less than 25,000 allow duplexes and middle housing types on sites that were previously available only for single-family units.

Under the Oregon law, middle housing is defined as duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, cottage clusters and townhouses. NAHB recently released a [report](#) **Diversifying Housing Options with Smaller Lots and Smaller Homes** that details these “missing middle” housing types, and how the lack of it has exacerbated housing shortages and acted as a barrier to housing affordability.

The report details how in Pasadena, California, two single-family lots were combined to create Meridian Court. The project, a houseable condominium building comprised of 10 townhouse units, improved site density to 26 units per acre. Mews Townhouse Units in South Jordan, Utah, similarly increased site density while providing 2 housing affordability and meets the varied needs of an increasingly diverse housing population.

Oregon is in fact following a national trend in updating city codes that for years have led to a majority of land use being dedicated to single family homes. Minneapolis, for example, has made