
 Housing Rural Oregon

# ROOM TO GROW

Hit hard during the recession, Prineville is now in the midst of an economic boom. Home construction is soaring – but so are rents. And low-income housing remains elusive.



PHOTO BY AMANDA WALDROUPE

A 76-acre lot in Prineville used to house the Ochoco Lumber Co.'s sawmill. Josh Smith, Prineville's senior planner, hopes the site will be used to develop multi-family housing.

**BY AMANDA WALDROUPE**  
STAFF WRITER

**P**RINEVILLE, Ore. – On the eastern edge of Prineville is a 76-acre piece of land where the Ochoco Lumber Co.'s sawmill once processed millions of board-feet of lumber. The site is now vacant, save for a lonely fire hydrant, sagebrush and desert grasses.

Zoned for mixed use and industrial, it's considered by some the perfect spot to build high-density housing – even a 100-unit apartment building.

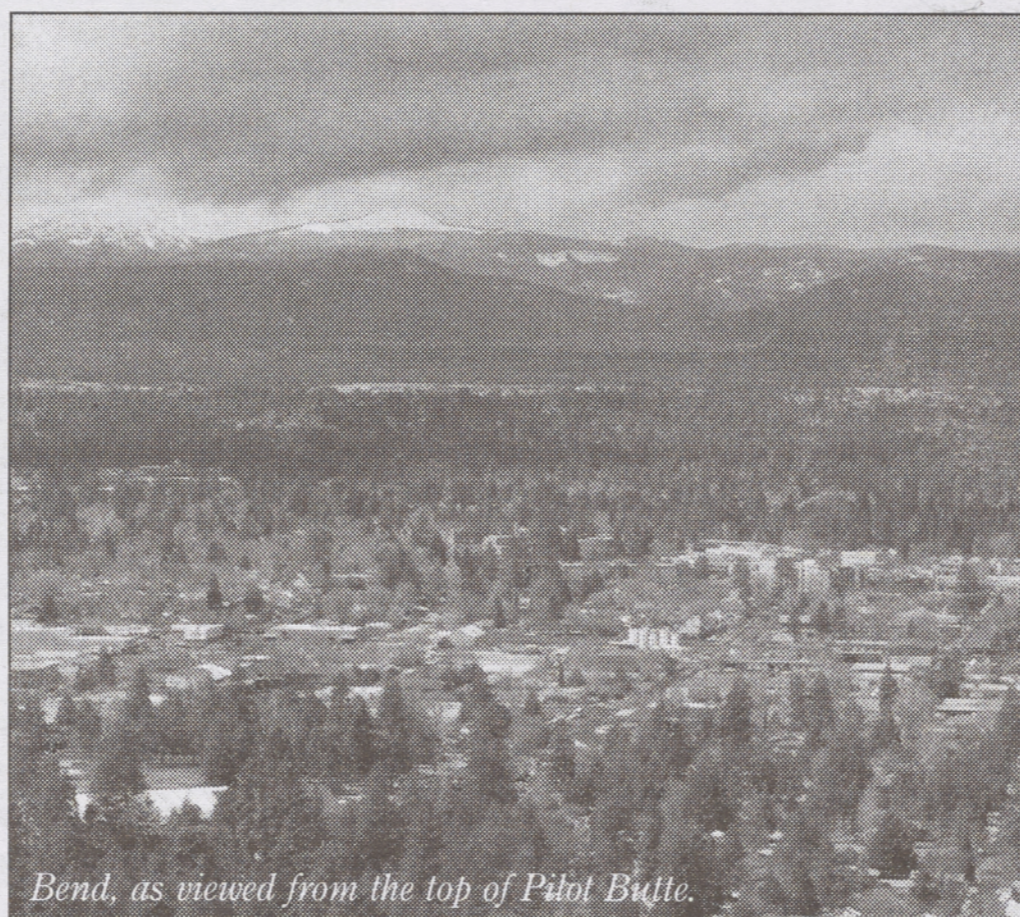
In Prineville?

“Why not?” said Josh Smith, Prineville's senior planner. “You could easily put 100 units there. We've had a few people kind of poke around at that idea, but no one's pulled the trigger ... because it's Prineville.”

Smith is right. Prineville, a city of 9,928, is not a place where one would expect to see large apartment complexes. But until a few years ago, people would not have expected Prineville to have one of the country's highest rent increases either.

Between 2011 and 2016, according to a report released this year by Lending Tree, the average rent in Prineville grew by 45.7 percent – the second-highest increase in the country. Bend had the highest, with rents increasing by 54 percent.

The steep increases in the price of rental and for-sale housing, combined with the construction of the Apple and



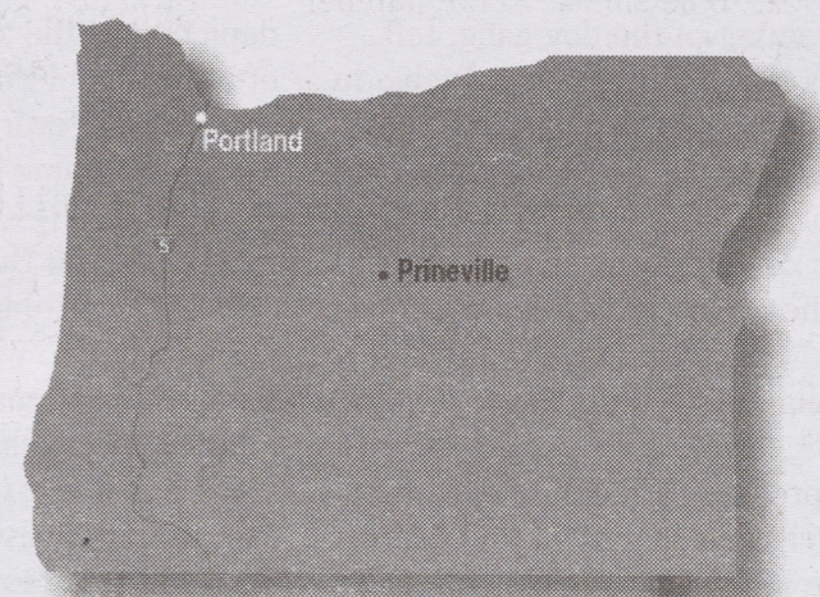
*Bend, as viewed from the top of Pilot Butte.*

PHOTO BY AMANDA WALDROUPE

## Poverty – with a view

Part Three: Prineville

Once a rural timber and agricultural region, Central Oregon is now beset with a housing shortage and an increase in homelessness. How will the region respond as it continues to grow?



### About this series

This article is part of Street Roots' Housing Rural Oregon series. It is the third in a collection of stories looking at Central Oregon. Street Roots received funding from Meyer Memorial Trust's Affordable Housing Initiative to develop dedicated reporting on rural housing issues. Read previous articles from the series at [news.streetroots.org/ruralhousing](http://news.streetroots.org/ruralhousing)

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