

EUGENE GROWTH TRENDS

Envision Eugene vs. the reality of compact growth

How has recent growth been shaping Eugene's neighborhoods? It's hard to know without data, and the city no longer provides reporting of residential building permits issued by year — let alone by type and neighborhood.

Getting answers required analyzing a city online database and integrating this with a special multi-family housing report provided by a helpful city planner. The result is a complete picture of residential development by year, type and neighborhood from the year 2000 to present.

The data show that Eugene has been growing much more compactly than was predicted in the Envision Eugene planning process. There has been a dramatic transition from single-family construction before the recession to multifamily afterward. In 2004, new housing was 57 percent single family. So far this year, 85 percent of new housing units were multifamily.

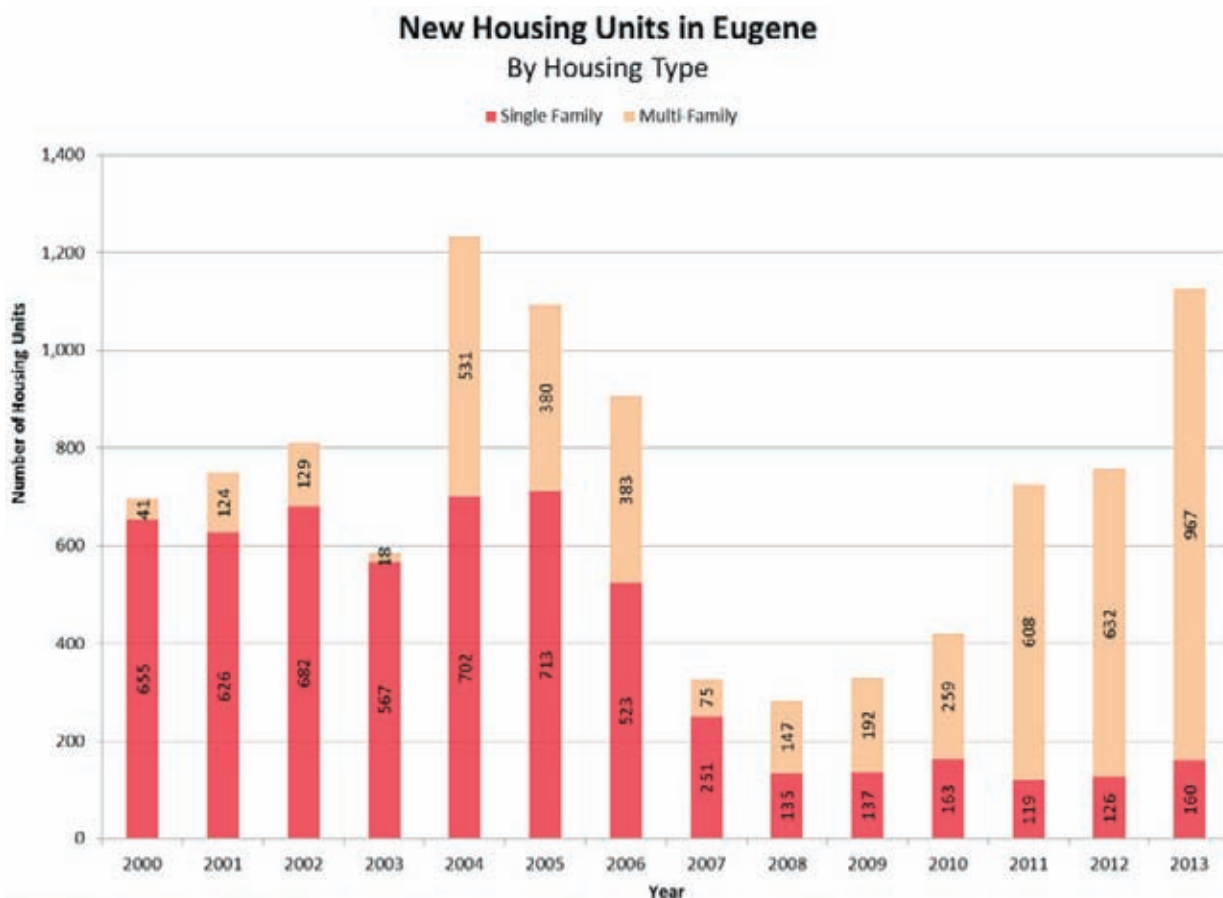
Equally dramatic is the shift in location of the growth from the urban fringe to the urban core. Growth that was taking place primarily in Bethel and Santa Clara before the recession is now occurring in the Downtown and West University neighborhoods.

The pace of growth is also surprising, given that the recession is still being felt in Eugene and around the country. Permit data for Eugene is incomplete for 2013; however, with two more months to go, it's possible that the number of housing units this year could exceed the recent peak in 2004 of 1,233 units.

The data show a remarkably speedy transition from sprawling single-family development on greenfields to denser multifamily in existing urban areas. Some of this is student housing attributable to past growth at the UO. Some may also be due to the new economic reality of lower wages and tighter housing budgets.

The transition to compact infill is much greater than forecast in the 20-year Envision Eugene process. Given these trends, the city should revisit the baseline assumption that 61 percent of new housing would be single family. It might not be necessary to expand the urban growth boundary at all.

Has Eugene become a "smart growth" success story? Certainly the environmental impacts of denser, urban-core development are preferable to those of sprawling fringe development. But the smart growth formula was intended



Source: Fodor & Associates LLC from City of Eugene building permit data. Data for 2013 is through Nov 1 only.

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to mitigate many of the impacts of intensified urban development by providing added amenities and infrastructure to support a high quality of life and to maintain neighborhood integrity and sense of community.

It's not clear whether any mitigating urban amenities are being planned in or around the impacted neighborhoods. The wonderful mobility we have enjoyed in Eugene may be coming to an end. It's easy to see that the critical arterial roads in the area, such as Pearl, Hilyard, Willamette, 11th and 18th, will soon be overloaded. There is no offsetting

increase in pedestrian and biking facilities or added parkland and recreational amenities to accompany this growth in the city core.

These changes may have caught city of Eugene by surprise too, and the improvements could come along eventually. In the meantime, it's smart growth without the "smart" part. ■

For more information on the data presented here, see wkly.ws/1mi. Note: The city does produce a federally mandated "construction report." However, this only shows aggregated, citywide data for completed development for prior years, so it is one to two years behind.

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- sundance stuffing
- vegan turkey loaf
- cranberry sauce
- thanksgiving desserts

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