

### **Overview of Four-Part Term Project: Central City Neighborhood Housing Analysis**

The purpose of this term-long project is to analyze housing conditions in the residential neighborhoods existing and emerging in and around Portland's Central City, as the basis for making recommendations to address a key housing problem facing that neighborhood.

POLICY CONTEXT: The policy context for this assignment is *Portland's Comprehensive Plan Update 2014 (Comp Plan Update)*, which sets the framework for the physical development of the city. [See: <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/57352>] Within the Comp Plan we will refer in particular to "Chapter 3: Urban Form" [<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/497231>] and "Chapter 5: Housing" [<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/497395>]. The *Urban Design Direction* illustrates how the city intends to grow [<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/65430>].

A key goal of the *Comp Plan Update's* is to focus household and employment growth in the Central City and other centers and transit corridors and also stabilize existing lower-density single-family residential neighborhoods. Thus, the Central City—the historic core of the city and region—will be a primary area for growth and change in Portland over the next 20 years. A component of the *Comp Plan Update*, the new *Central City 2035 Plan (CC2035)*, will guide investment, land use and development decisions for the Central City. The CC2035 Concept Plan, Quadrant Plans and background reports provide essential resource material for this term project. See: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/304042>].

BACKGROUND: The desire for a more residential Central City dates back to the 1972 Downtown Plan, which provided the blueprint for the vibrant urban core Portland is known for today. By the 1960s, American cities were in a cycle of decline as jobs and the middle class fled urban problems, spurring sprawling suburb growth. In the 1960s, Portland's downtown population dropped by 20 percent, and since 1945 nearly two-thirds of the housing stock in the central city had been torn down to make way for urban renewal and highway projects.<sup>1</sup> Rather than continue such car-friendly policies, to stem decline the overarching goal of the 1972 Downtown Plan was to make the central city a place where people of all socio-economic classes would want to work, shop and live.

Limited progress was made toward this goal, however, during the following 15 years. In 1988, the Central City Plan, which expanded the boundaries of the Downtown Plan to include the eastside, adopted more effective implementation measures that resulted in a significant increase in housing and the creation of new mixed used residential areas such as the Pearl District and the South Waterfront.<sup>2</sup> CC2035 is an update of the 1988 Central City Plan that will help ensure that past planning successes continue, additional growth is accommodated, and new opportunities—e.g., addressing sustainable development and climate change—are pursued.

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<sup>1</sup> Griffin, Anna. 2012. "Portland downtown plan update begins with nationally renowned blueprint of 1972 as the guide." *Oregonian*, October 20. Accessed 9/16/14:

[http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2012/10/portland\\_downtown\\_plan\\_update.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2012/10/portland_downtown_plan_update.html)

<sup>2</sup> For a concise history of these planning efforts see: *Central City 2035 Subdistrict Profiles*, May 2010, Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, pp. 14-20.

**DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND CULTURAL CHANGES:** The successes of the Central City Plan were enabled by significant demographic and cultural shifts, notably the coming of age of the large, diverse, millennial generation and the ageing of the baby boom generation. Growing numbers of young adults and retirees are rediscovering the advantages and pleasures of urban life. These demographic groups and their cultural preferences will drive housing demand in the Central City over the next decade.<sup>3</sup> The Central City’s housing stock must be diversified in order to be compatible with the needs of young adults, young families, and seniors of all incomes and abilities.

However, these broad demographic trends that are driving changes in housing demand and supply will play out differently in the many residential neighborhoods in and around the Central City, each of which has distinct characteristics. A detailed community analysis is required to determine the housing challenges facing a particular neighborhood and the opportunities available in that place for intervention and innovation.

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** A primary goal of the *Comp Plan Update* is to “ensure that community members have meaningful opportunities to participate in and influence all stages of planning and decision-making.”<sup>4</sup> One policy to achieve this goal is to encourage community-level data gathering and information sharing in land use planning processes. This requires that community members and City representatives develop skills in inventorying, mapping, data analysis, understanding trends and needs, and the development of alternative strategies as appropriate.

**The four inter-related assignments of this term long project model such a process.**

Assignment 1: Housing Profile

Collect and organize census data — using a census tract as a proxy for a neighborhood— that will be needed to study the factors that affect housing supply (housing stock) and demand (demographics), and how they have changed over time (1990, 2000 and 2010).

Assignment 2: Housing Trend Analyses

Analyze the trends (changes over time) in supply and demand factors and their relationships. Identify four significant trends and explain them using texts and charts.

Assignment 3: Neighborhood Housing Field Survey

Expand your understanding by doing: a visual analysis of the neighborhood; conducting an interview with a stakeholder; and reviewing background material about the neighborhood. Identify a key housing challenge and/or opportunity to achieve a CC2035 housing and neighborhood policy goal— which you will address in Assignment 4.

Assignment 4: Neighborhood Housing Proposal

Develop a proposal for an intervention or innovation to address the housing problem or opportunity within the policy context of the CC2035 plan.

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<sup>3</sup> “Executive Summary,” *State of the Nation’s Housing 2014*, Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University. p. 3. Accessed 9/17/14:

[http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research/state\\_nations\\_housing](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research/state_nations_housing)

<sup>4</sup> See “Chapter 2: Community Involvement,”

<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/497230>]