

# **Gentrification as Urban Strategy: Evaluating Inequity & Portland's Urban Growth Boundary**

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In this normative research project we set out to examine the relationship between Portland's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and the ongoing process of gentrification in Northeast Portland neighborhoods. In order to understand the implications of such a question, and before we can even start to imagine solutions, it is necessary to understand growth management, processes and products of gentrification, and the goals of establishing an urban growth boundary.

## **Growth Management and Urban Growth Boundaries**

Growth management in the United States began in the early 1960s as backlash against the newfound threat of suburban sprawl. A commonly acknowledged example of early, city-led growth management policy is the city of Ramapo, NY, which in 1969 created an ordinance to permit development with a points-based system. This was criticized for excluding low-income families and deflecting problems to other states, which exemplifies many of the criticisms we still see today (Meck 2008; Anthony 2004). State-led programs have particular benefits over county or city-led programs, such as: maintaining power, enabling better distribution of consequences, and providing financial and administrative support (Anthony 2004). State programs began with Hawaii in 1961, followed by Vermont in 1970; then Oregon, Florida, and several other states jumped on the growth management bandwagon and have been going strong ever since. While several American cities are now seen as icons of the growth management era, Portland, Oregon's urban planning stands as one of the most well known and most studied.

There are several types of growth management strategies, including: zoning, green belts, and urban growth boundaries (UGBs). Zoning refers to guidelines that classify land for a specific use (commercial, residential, farmland, etc.), usually designated by local governments; greenbelts denote a physical space that includes preserved farmland, wilderness area, or otherwise "green" space surrounding a city; and UGBs serve as administrative boundary lines. While greenbelts have developed international popularity (appearing in many UK cities as well as Seoul and Istanbul), zoning and UGBs are more common growth management practices within the United States.

The goals and outcomes of growth management, and more specifically UGBs, are to: (1) preserve open space and farmland; (2) minimize the use of land by reducing lot sizes and increasing residential densities; (3) reduce infrastructure costs by encouraging urban revitalization, infill, and compact development; (4) clearly separate urban and rural uses; (5) ensure the orderly transition of land from rural to urban uses; and (6) create a sense of

community, and (7) direct new growth into the already built up areas through densification (Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, 2006; Long et. al, 2015). Growth management seeks to remedy the fiscal and environmental costs of sprawl. The fiscal costs of sprawl include additional roads, increased miles of sewer and water lines, and the construction of more social service facilities, supported on a relatively low density population base. Sprawling development has environmental effects as well, including heavy dependence on cars and imported oil for mobility, air and water pollution, and the loss of wildlife habitat, farmland, and forests.

We define UGBs as administrative lines that serve to contain sprawl and development for future population growth, usually accounting for at least several decades of growth in various stages. A UGB can be redrawn or amended to include more developable land within the boundary as population growth may exceed the rate that was once predicted. UGBs may control the timing of future zoning changes as well, specifying the boundary between non-conforming land uses and defining the location of future urban development projects (Knaap & Nelson, 1988).

### **Growth Management and Economic Theory**

Critics of UGBs frequently base their assertions on neoclassical housing market theory. It is thus important to understand the basis of this theory. In the monocentric model (the most simple model within the neoclassical framework) land prices are highest in the center of the city and decrease from the core. At every place in and around the city, land goes to the highest bidder. The city will have housing extended out until residential bids are below farming/rural use bids (O'Sullivan, 2003). UGBs may restrict those residential bids from being realized at the metropolitan fringe, distorting the land market.

The link between land values and UGBs is theoretically unambiguous, as UGBs are intended to constrain the amount and extent of developable land, thereby raising the price for the developable land for a given level of demand. Moreover, UGBs are also intended to protect natural amenities, and this protection of access to amenities may further raise land values. (Downs 2002). However, the link between housing values and UGBs is more ambiguous, since developers and consumers will respond to higher land values by economizing on land (e.g. building and living on smaller lots/in smaller units). Additionally, cities may employ policies to encourage densification through zoning policy with UGBs (Downs, 2002).

Supply-inelastic metro areas experience a percent increase in price greater than the percent increase in quantity of housing for a given percent increase in demand. Growth management policies, including UGBs, can be read as creating more supply-inelastic housing markets. Housing prices increase if demand is inelastic, for example if people need to live within the boundary to be closer to work, or if they need access to better public transportation. Lower supply and higher demand drives up price. However, if demand is elastic and people can choose to live elsewhere (making demand lower) prices will not be as high (because supply is higher)

(Zorn, 1986), (Mathur, 2014). Some studies have found that growth control has a significant impact on the price of housing and that growth control causes a significant exclusionary impact that price-mitigating measures cannot overcome (Zorn, 1986). This exclusionary impact can often be thought of in terms of gentrification.

### **Gentrification History and Theory**

Gentrification can be broadly defined as the upward shift in class of an area, expressed as “a significant rise in mean status or degree of inequality in the status of residents (and of businesses) and in the value of residential and non-residential property” (Morrill, 2008). This involves a combination of the buying and renovation of homes and commercial spaces in deteriorated urban neighborhoods by upper or middle-income families/individuals, and the concerted municipal reconstruction of the city core (Ibid.). It been a growing issue in American cities since the 1980s, and is predicated on the creation of a rent gap through historic disinvestment in the city core. Issues such as redlining, white flight, and federal policies to subsidize suburbanization led to significant disinvestment in American inner cities through the 1980s. This created a historically anomalous situation in which the suburbs were dramatically wealthier than the inner city. Central land was thus frequently undervalued in terms of the gap between realized value and potential value, creating profitable redevelopment opportunities and laying the ground for the later gentrification of/reinvestment in the urban core.

In terms of theorizing the causes and actors of gentrification, Morrill, drawing on the work of Neil Smith (1996) and David Ley (1996), classified gentrification as either (A) the “result of organized conscious public and private planning and coordinated investment and development, often quite large scale and involving marked densification, replacement and enlargement of structures”—core-redevelopment—or (B) enabled or encouraged by planning policies of smart growth, yet also the consequence “of individual decisions of buyers and renters, who for job, lifestyle choices or other reasons, desire to live in the central city” and “are very likely to be of higher ‘social class’”—gentrification-displacement (Morrill, 2008).

Gentrification is a fundamentally economic phenomenon with social consequences. Because of the strong association between economic status and race, gentrification brings to the fore racial dynamics and inequities. The reallocation and reconfiguration of space to maximize value will tend to displace economically-disadvantaged minority populations in favor of those able to pay higher rents. Gentrification has a tendency to spread spatially, spilling over from appreciated neighborhoods to still undervalued ones. This process continues as more and more neighborhoods become gentrified, pushing primarily racial minorities and low-income households out to the fringes of urban areas. Reinvestment and displacement are closely related to gentrification, though they may be defined in somewhat distinct manner. Reinvestment is defined as capital inflows into the built environment of, while displacement refers to the direct outflow of previous residents.

Gentrification also creates unequal benefits and imposes unequal costs. For example, municipalities benefit from increased property values, and developers profit from urban redevelopment, but local residents will frequently suffer from rising rents, loss of community identity, and direct displacement. Existing homeowners, in theory, economically benefit from appreciated housing values, though they have to pay increased property taxes. To some extent, this may lead directly to displacement, as increases in monthly costs on the order of \$100 or so are especially onerous for people living with little disposable income. Increased home values create a strong incentive for homeowners to “cash-in” on gentrification, especially as more community members do so. The combination of these push-pull factors helps create the displacement associated with gentrification. While in purely economic terms, homeowners have benefitted, they may not read their relocation as a positive thing, as they may have lost significant social/community value. Renters meanwhile, pay a high price for gentrification, with rising rents pushing them further and further from jobs or dislocating them from their community.

### **Our Framing Question**

In this project we set out to broadly explore the question: How might growth management policy exacerbate or relieve inequity in the housing market and affect displacement? We examine this question more in-depth in our Literature Review, and later narrow in on our situated context of Portland, Oregon for even further analysis of these issues.

### **Relevance**

Growing cities across the U.S. are facing rapid changes and affordability crises'. This is occurring as a socio-economic reinversion and “return to the city” movement upends the city-suburb dynamics of the mid to late 20th century. This “revitalization” of the city has been couched in sustainability narratives of smart growth, as central cities tend to have significantly lower carbon emissions per capita than their surrounding suburbs. Smart growth interacts closely with other growth management policies such as UGBs, as UGBs are frequently justified for their efforts to make cities more compact, sustainable, protective of rural land. The densification caused by UGBs and other smart-growth policies has been criticized for causing issues of affordability and gentrification in cities like Portland, OR. Examining and evaluating the equity effects of UGBs in terms of housing prices and gentrification is vital to assessing smart growth as an urban development strategy.

## **Literature Review**

### *Land/housing prices and urban growth boundaries*

Davis, CA implemented policies for growth control in the mid-20th century. A study found that the introduction of these policies resulted in a relative rise of housing prices. These growth control policies were implemented in the form of a boundary, where housing was made less affordable for families with less than median income. This meant that these policies reduced the quality of housing. "In Davis the decline in affordable housing (new and old) for households earning 80% and 120% of median income was 86% and 56%, respectively, while the comparable decline in the control communities was 79% and 39%." (Zorn et. al. 1986)

Knox County, TN has maintained an urban growth boundary implemented since 2001. A study in Knox County looking at data from 2001 to 2007 found that the values of newly developed houses after the implementation of a UGB are likely to be higher within the growth area than outside of it (Cho et. al. 2008).

King County, WA has had an urban growth boundary in place since 1992. A 2014 study on the UGB of King County ran three different models to examine housing and land prices inside and outside of the boundary. The study found that the prices of vacant lots inside the UGB did not change as distance from the UGB increased or decreased. These lot prices were 230% higher inside of the UGB. Houses that were not on the municipal water supply were also sold for a lower price. Inside the UGB, land prices were higher, but housing prices were lower, the inverse was true outside of the UGB. This could be due to the fact that developable land inside the UGB is a commodity because it is closer to the city center, where the scarcity of open and developable land is increasing. Homes outside of the UGB were typically large and spacious country estates (Mathur 2014).

Melbourne, Australia implemented an urban growth zone in 2002. A 2014 study conducted in Melbourne analyzed all recorded property transactions made between 1996 and 2007. It found that land prices rose substantially in areas that were inside the urban growth zone, while land prices stayed mostly stagnant outside of the zone. The results suggested that the urban growth zone had a significant upward effect on the increase of housing prices within the growth zone. (Ball et al., 2014)

In the past couple of decades, housing prices in Portland, OR have fluctuated in accordance with population growth. In an analysis of the home price movements of 85 large metro areas in the United States conducted between 1980 and 2000, a study found that housing prices in Portland did not rise as fast as in several other metropolitan areas (San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Denver) without UGBs in place. The study utilized multiple forms of regression analyses, and found that home prices in several regions without UGBs were also rising at a rapid rate. Portland's UGB only had statistically significant effects on home prices in the first half of

the 1990's in comparison with the Western US median home prices, across the period of time that was under analysis (Downs 2002).

### *Development*

Beijing, China has utilized different forms of urban growth management since the 1970's. A 2015 study in Beijing that synthesized datasets from various sources, including records of location check-ins, transit card use, taxi meters, and residential travel surveys. In urban areas of China, land is used and developed at a high rate that is difficult to measure. This means that novel methods that could be used in the U.S are not necessarily as applicable. The study found that 96% of urban activity check-ins were done inside the UGB. These results show that the UGB was successful in containing sprawl and limiting transit outside the boundary. (Long et. al. 2015)

A study of Portland, OR conducted in 2004 looked at the effects that the UGB had on different components of urban sprawl. By analyzing patterns of urban development, mobility, and intermetropolitan comparisons, the study found that the implementation of the UGB did not lead to a slowdown of suburban sprawl, infill development and reduced car usage. Furthermore, the study found that Portland's UGB was a factor in diverting population growth from the metropolitan area into Clark County during the 1980's and 1990's. There was also little impact on determining locations for new housing construction projections during the same time period. (Jun 2004).

**Focus Question:** In what ways has Portland's urban growth boundary contributed to gentrification in Northeast Portland neighborhoods?

**Situated Context:** Portland, OR

### ***Portland's Urban Form History***

In the mid 19th century, most of inner Portland was constructed around streetcar lines. The rise of consumer car usage and the construction of highways throughout Portland became prevalent after World War II. This led to the deconstruction of streetcar lines, the historic structures of the old Lloyd Center, and surface parking lots in downtown. Policy revisions in the 1970's (The City Center Plan of 1972) and 1980s (The Comprehensive Plan 1980) encouraged the revitalization of downtown. These changes involved instituting various plans for downtown, replacing Harbor Drive with the Tom McCall Waterfront Park (1974) and implementing the Urban Growth Boundary (1979). A freeway revolt in the mid 1970's aimed at blocking the planned Mt. Hoot Freeway construction through Southeast Portland reallocated funds to construct the Eastside MAX line. More recently, The Pearl district and South Waterfront areas became upzoned to create upscale mixed-use areas from brownfield and industrial lands.

Portland has designated large portions of North Portland and the Center City as urban renewal zones. In these areas, targeted public investments funded by property tax levies on the areas in the zone, are made in order to increase the rate of private investment. There are currently major investment renewal projects being conducted in the Interstate Corridor of Northeast Portland. This area encompasses portions of Arbor Lodge, Boise, Bridgeton, Eliot, Humboldt, Kenton, King, Overlook, Piedmont, Portsmouth, Concordia, East Columbia, Friends of Cathedral Park, St. John's, University Park, Woodlawn, and Vernon. In December of 2015, the Portland Development Commission set aside \$1.2 million in grants to fund 18 projects in the region. These projects attempted to build larger capacity to support business growth, job creation, and social equity. As Portland's largest urban renewal area, the interstate corridor is significant to the city for its diverse collection of historic residential communities, commercial corridors, and industrial districts (Portland Development Commission).

### ***Sustainability Rhetoric***

The idea of Portland, and the Pacific Northwest, as a green utopia for white residents was an idea that has been historically supported. Ernest Callenbach wrote *Ecotopia* in 1975. The story used fictionalized journalism to depict a hypothetical utopia that saw the Pacific Northwest secede from the US. The people of Ecotopia advocate for and practice eating and living locally, sharing resources, the abolishment of government and private property, and being at one with nature. In a 2011 study, Jim Proctor claims that exceptionalism in the PNW praises the environmental conditions of the area. The perspectives of many Oregonians are consistent with Ecotopian ideals, where Oregonians are more likely to embody ecotopian values than Americans are (Proctor 2011). The Pacific Northwest was originally called Cascadia. The name was given as a means of preserving the natural beauty of the region.

Many citizens of Portland live lifestyles of perceived sustainability. Portland is one of the most bicycle friendly cities in the country, 7.2% of commuters rely on bike riding (the largest percentage of any large American city). Portland is also regarded as one of the "greenest" cities in the country, it contains the largest amount of forest cover of any city with a population of more than 200,000 people in the US. Investment in public transit has also increased in the recent past. Portland was seen as the ideal city by the Federal Transit Administration in the 1990s and was held as a model for urban growth, this meant that capital for the light rail and streetcars continued to flow into the city.

### ***Portland's Racial History and the Advent of Gentrification***

In terms of understanding the current racial makeup of Portland, it is imperative to examine the history of minorities in Portland. Up until the year 1926, black individuals were banned from the state of Oregon through actual Oregon Constitutional law. To this day, African-

American individuals still make up a small portion of the population both statewide (1.8% as of the 2010 census) and in Portland (6.3% as of the 2010 census).

One prominent historical black community in the Portland area was the city of Vanport, where racial minority workers were hired to build ships for WWII and were housed in poor conditions. The Vanport flood of 1948 caused many workers to relocate for work since there was very little government investment in infrastructure.

In addition to discrimination in Oregon's towns and instances of racial inequality, there was, for a long time, a much more immediate threat to black communities in Oregon due to a history of substantial KKK presence until the mid-1900s. Racial covenants were also in place until the 1960s, prohibiting black prospective homeowners from buying homes in white neighborhoods. There has also been a history of redlining in Oregon, redlining is a process in which mortgage lenders and social services refuse to lend capital to predominantly black neighborhoods. (Novak 2015)

A quote from Portland State University sums up the relation between minority communities and predominantly white neighborhoods as: "Housing was at the core of racial tensions... Neighborhood groups were up in arms at every suggestion or rumor that blacks might be moving to their areas...black workers found, that in segregated Portland, the close-in areas of Albina was virtually the only housing open to them" (PSU 44).

Historically, disinvestment in North Portland was followed by a rapid rebound in property values, this has led to increases in homeownership by white residents and the disproportionate displacement of black residents (Gibson 2007). Between 1990 and 2000 the number of black residents in NE Portland decreased substantially while numbers of white residents grew; over 5,000 housing units were added, while the percentage of black owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units decreased. Accordingly, the number of cost-burdened households increased (McGee 2010). By 2000, white households comprised over 50% of households reporting an income of \$25,000 or more.

The affordability of housing in the last few decades has worsened to the extent of a crisis. Portland features the fastest rising rents in the U.S., rent rates have been increasing by approximately 2-3% per year since 2010, while changes in incomes remain flat. These increases in rent prices are more severe in neighbourhoods that are closer to the city center. Less availability in housing leads to shortages in the rental market. At the same time, the amount of people moving to Portland has been increasing.

## **Methodology**

We employed several methods in this project, including archival textual analysis of official city planning documents; the creation GIS maps to examine land prices across the Portland metro area and recent demographic change; and interviews of residents with very different stakes in the housing and land markets of the greater Portland area.



For our textual analysis of Portland municipal planning documents, we examined the 1979 Comprehensive Plan and the 1993 Albina Community Plan. This analysis focused on the city's treatment of the economic and social aims of these programs and their awareness of the potential for gentrification/displacement as a result of urban revitalization drives.

We created several GIS maps, including broad scale land value inside and outside the UGB, 1998 Portland land value and race, and the change in land value and race between 1998 and 2015 in Portland. To create the UGB land value map, we used taxlot data from Metro containing information on land value and the size of the lot, to map value per square foot by lot. We compared this land value to a line shapefile of the UGB, obtained by Metro's RLIS website. To control for the effects of zoning on land value, we then joined the taxlot files by location to a shapefile containing the single family residential zones in the Portland metro area, obtaining a median value per square foot for each of the discrete single family zones. We then measured the distance from the center point of each of these zones (categorized as inside or outside the UGB) to the center point of the downtown census block group. To assess whether or not these zones display a break in land value conterminous with the theorized effects of a UGB on land value, we then graphed these results as a two-series scatterplot and added a linear trendline for zones inside and outside the boundary. We used this to examine how the UGB affects land value inside and outside the boundary, and to provide evidence of the spatiality of gentrification in Portland, which was made easy to visualize by both the graphical and map formats.

Our qualitative means of analysis took the form of interviews. We conducted interviews over email with Liz Foucher-Branch and Nya Branch, two black women, a mother and her daughter, whose family is historically from Northeast Portland and have seen the area change over time. Liz and Nya are actively involved in community organizations and, while not deeply involved with urban planning, explain life experiences and sentiments regarding gentrification and displacement in the city. Liz works with the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation and Multnomah County Citizens Involvement committee, and Nya volunteers with the Black United Fund, McKenzie River Gathering Foundation, and Playworks.

Another interview involved Tina Buettell, Linn Davis, John and Bev Martinson, members of two different white families, who own and operate the Mahonia Land Trust Conservancy just south of Oregon City. Tina, age 65, bought and founded the land trust just outside of the UGB in 1975. Her son, Linn Davis, spent his early childhood on the land trust and is now a student in PSU's Urban Planning and Policy program. John and Bev Martinson currently live on the land and take care of day-to-day operations. Mahonia includes 67.4 acres located in Oregon City, which is directly the opposite side of the city from Nya and Liz. Mahonia is a registered nonprofit with the goals of preserving greenspace, protecting wildlife habitat, encouraging community, conducting outdoor education, and promoting sustainable agriculture and forestry.

Questions asked for both sets of interviews can be found in the Appendix at the end of the paper. An area of limitation that should be noted is that the interviews with members of the Mahonia Land Trust were conducted in person, on site, and over the course of a day, making responses more extensive than the email interactions with Liz Foucher-Branch and Nya Branch. We interpret this as an expression of the difference in privilege between our interviewees; while all of our interviewees were open about sharing their perspectives, the Mahonia Land Trust members had more time and energy at their disposal to spend communicating with us than did Liz and Nya.

## Results

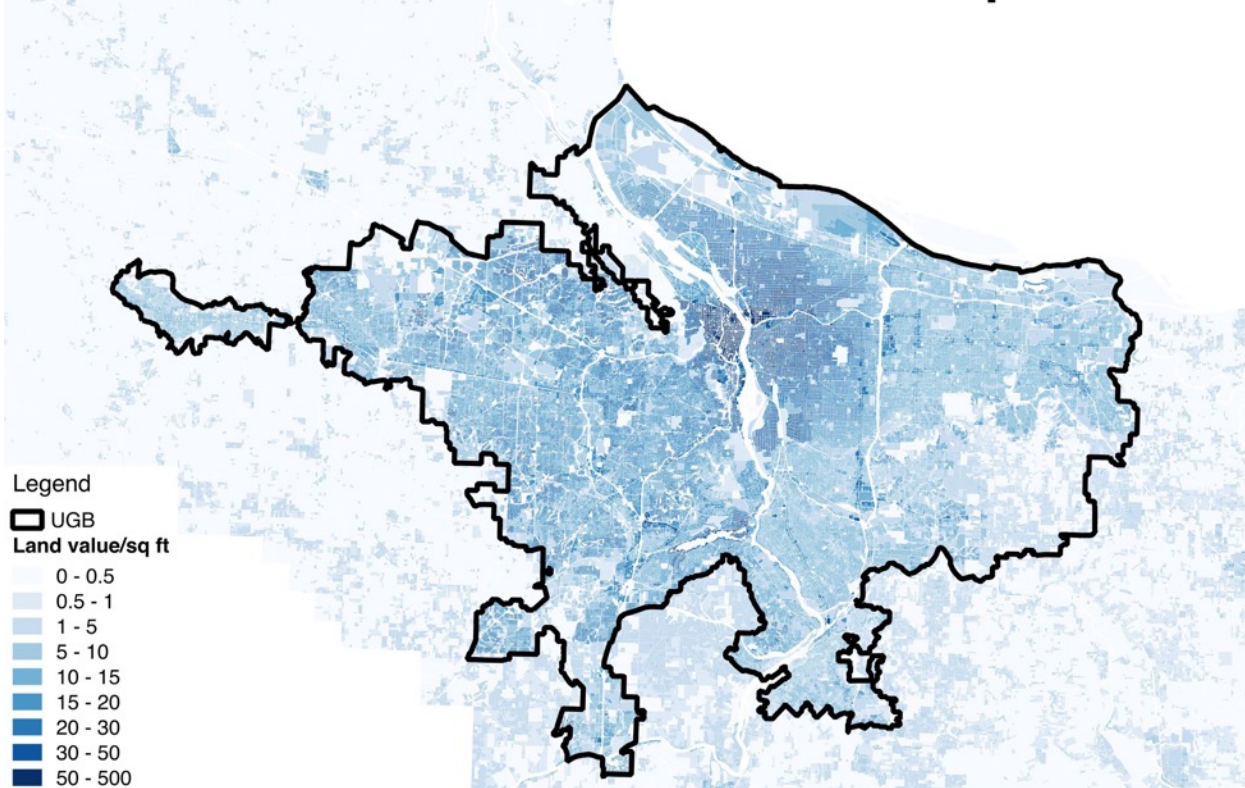
### *Spatial Analysis*

#### **Reexamining the Effects of the UGB on the Housing Market**

A cursory examination of land value by square foot reveals a significant relationship between Portland's UGB and land values, with values instantly plunging from approximately \$5 to \$10 per square foot inside the boundary to less than \$1 per square foot just outside the boundary. This holds true around most of the boundary, with the exception of the area around Forest Park in northwest Portland (protected parkland usually has a relatively low land value per

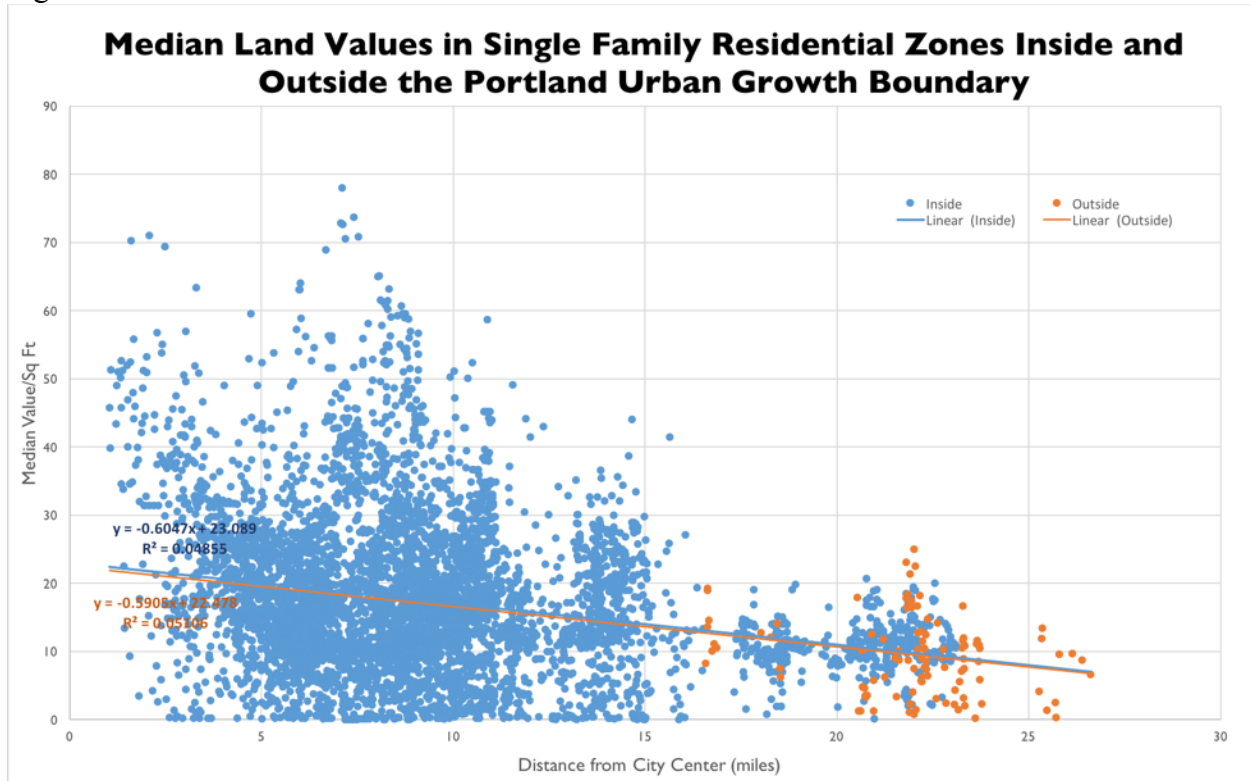
Figure 1.1. Portland Metro Area Land Value in 2015

## Portland Metro Area Land Value Per Square Foot



square foot) and in Damascus in the southeastern corner of the boundary. Interestingly, despite being brought inside the UGB recently, Damascus remains zoned rural and still reflects the land values seen outside the boundary. Additionally, there are several small towns outside the boundary which are zoned for urban usage, visible as small spikes in land value.

Figure 1.2. Land values for SFR zones inside and outside the UGB



After accounting for the influence of zoning on land values, a very different picture emerges. The median land value for single family residential zones inside and outside the boundary is substantially undifferentiated after controlling for the distance from the zones to the city center. The lines of best fit (see figure 1.2) for single family zones as categorized by whether they are inside or outside the boundary are essentially identical, with y-intercepts of 23.089 and 22.478 and slopes of -0.6047 and -0.5905 respectively. These results provide an indication that residential land inside and outside the boundary displays no marked split and acts as a single land market. This parallels previous empirical studies (Downs 1997; Jun 2006), which found little effect of the UGB on housing values. The extent to which the UGB maps onto land values is reflective only to the degree that the UGB reflects and solidifies urban and non-urban zoning designations.

## Racial Restructuring in Portland

Portland has undergone significant gentrification of its inner neighborhoods concomitant with an internal racial restructuring in which poor and minority residents have been displaced from relatively central neighborhoods to the decidedly suburban locales east of 82nd Avenue. (Goodling, Gamal, McClintock 2015) This pattern is visible in a map of the change in percent of white residents by census tract from 2000 to 2014 (figure 2.1). The driver of this restructuring of the spatio-racial shift was rapid land appreciation in historically black North Portland.

Figure 2.1. Regional change in percentage of white residents by census tract, 2000-2014

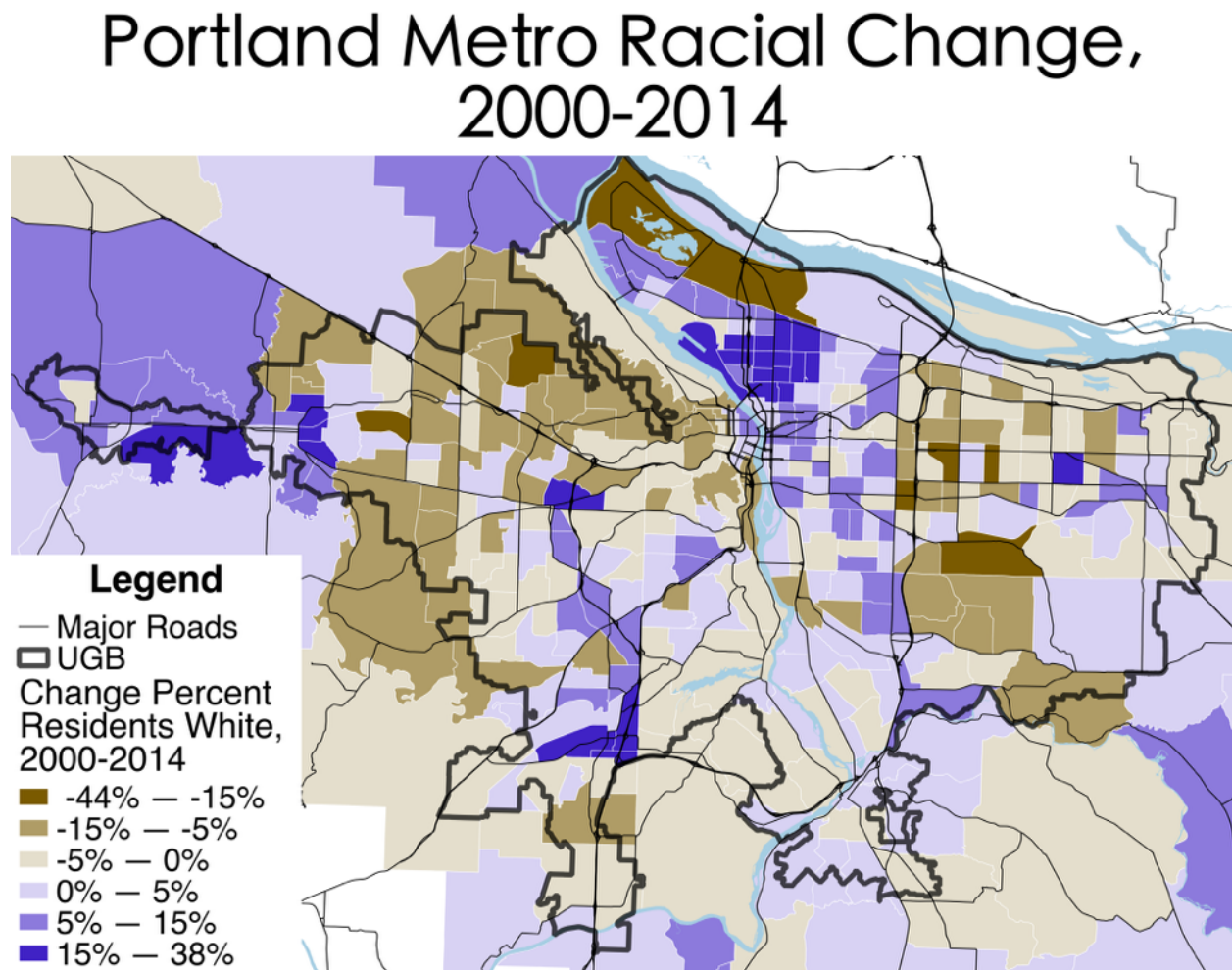


Figure 2.2 shows land appreciation of all of the taxlots in the Portland metropolitan area between 1998 and 2015. North Portland taxlots experienced land value appreciation above 500% for the whole seventeen year period, with many lots appreciating between 1,000% and 1,500%. These areas of intense appreciation were significantly devalued in 1998 (figure 2.3- to the right), providing visual confirmation of the presence of a rent gap in North Portland in 1998,

Figure 2.2. 1998-2015 land value appreciation

# Portland Land Value Appreciation 1998-2015

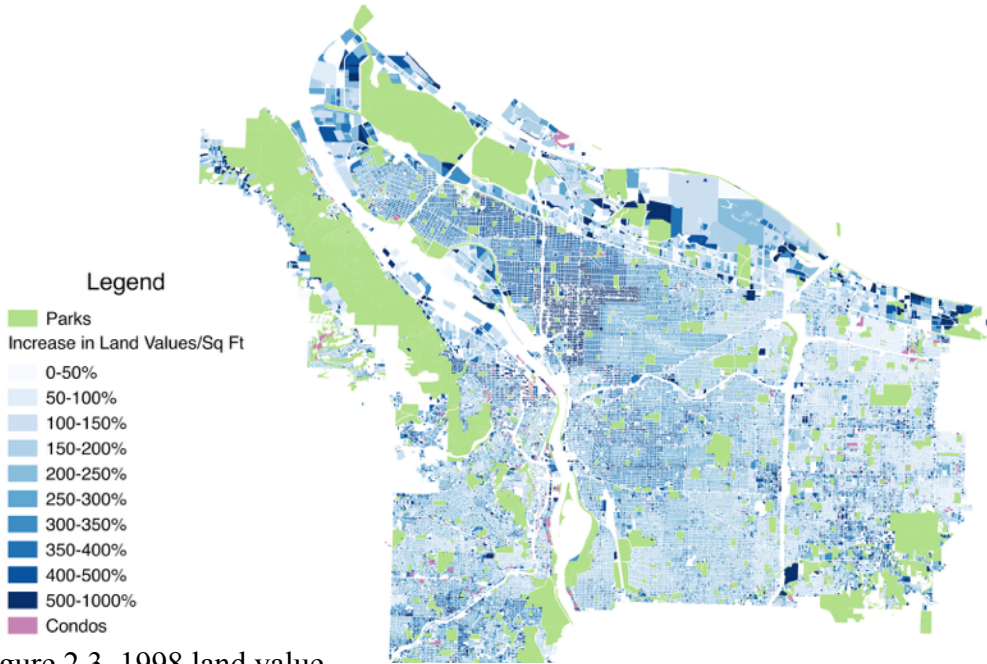
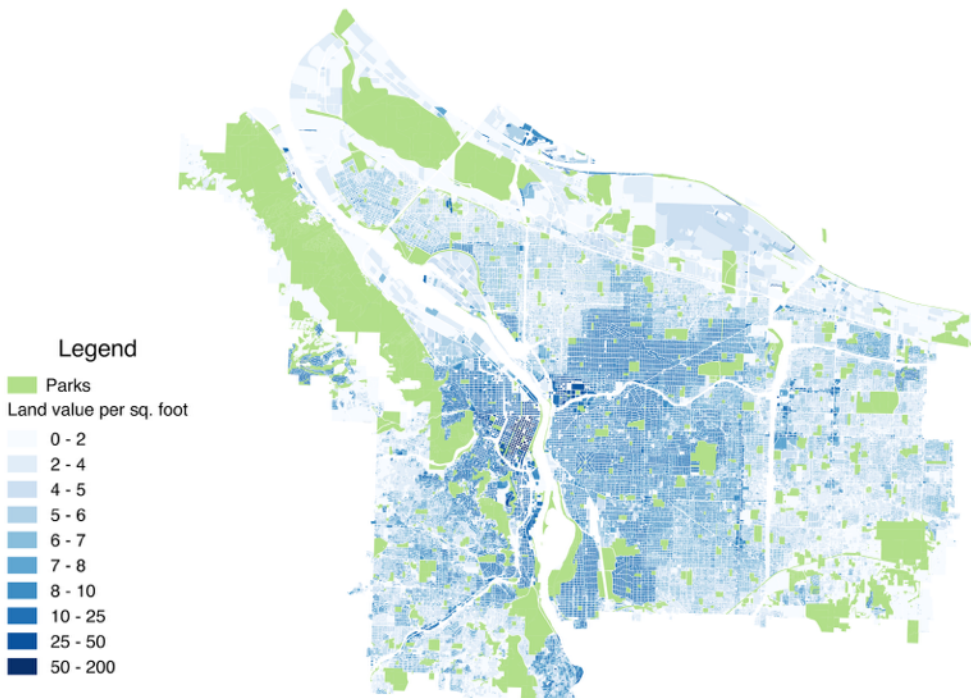


Figure 2.3. 1998 land value

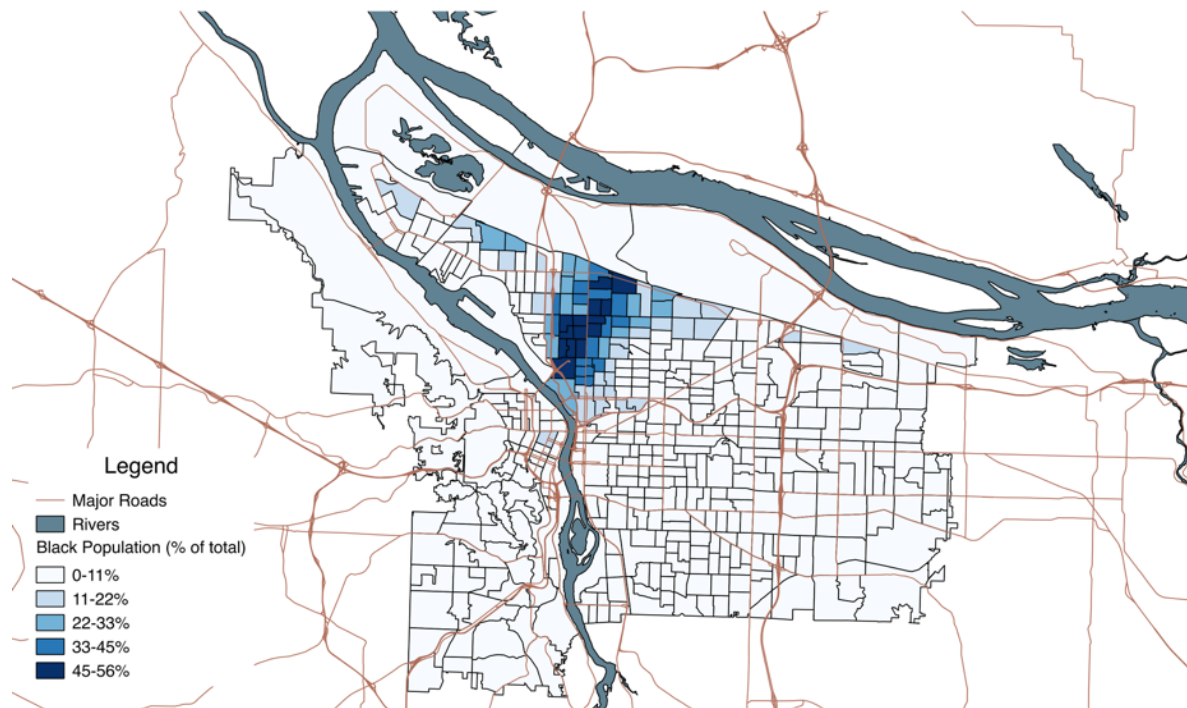
# Portland Land Value in 1998



and its subsequent exploitation through gentrification. These geographies accord closely with the areas of black population in the 2000 census (figure 2.4) and the boundaries of both the Interstate- Corridor urban renewal area, instituted in 2000 (Appendix A.1) and the Albina Community Plan, created in 1993 (Appendix A.2). These municipal projects are intended to the upgrade areas perceived to be underutilized and in need of reinvestment. This reinvestment and filling in of the rent gap has equated to substantial racialized displacement.

Figure 2.4. 2000 black population in Portland by block group

## Black Population in Portland, 2000



### *Text analysis of historical municipal planning documents*

In our analyses of the 1979 Comprehensive Plan and the 1993 Albina Community Plan, we sought evidence of Portland urban planner's awareness and intentions regarding housing prices and gentrification. We examined each document for words, phrases, and other rhetorical devices indicating the motivations for revitalization, as well as the potential effects of revitalization on residents and future aspirations for development

### **1979 Comprehensive Plan**

The 1979 Comprehensive Plan officially laid out the goals of the UGB and its implementation. Its discussion of the UGB remains very broad; its most specific point about the

UGB is its goal to “identify and adopt an urban planning area boundary outside the current city limits. The City will conclude agreements with abutting jurisdictions, establishing a process for monitoring activity within this boundary” (D-1). This lack of specificity may be due to the other policies and papers that served similar purposes, and may have elaborated more. We focus the rest of our analysis on the parts of the Comprehensive Plan relating to diversity and housing.

Overall, the Comprehensive Plan seems to be directed at an audience of Portland residents at the time, residents with concerns about the stability of their place of belonging as the city attempted to expand. As such, the Comprehensive Plan takes intentional strides to state the importance of measures to retain Portland’s character. Nevertheless, its introduction clarifies: “We must accept some changes or we run the risk of losing all the things that make Portland ‘one of America’s most livable cities’”(B-1). Throughout the report, this motif of inviting change while maintaining the security and character of current neighborhoods and residents continues strongly.

Perhaps because of this audience that seems sensitive to change, the Comprehensive Plan highlights the conservation of diversity over time. When discussing neighborhood improvement, one priority is: “Provide and coordinate programs to promote neighborhood interest, concern and security and to minimize the social impacts of land use decisions” (D-5). Another specifies: “Promote neighborhood diversity and security by encouraging a balance in age, income, race and ethnic background within the cities neighborhoods” (D-5). With regard to housing, the plan uses words such as “fairness” and “equal access” liberally, including specific mention of race, color, national origin, and more (D-6). Finally, the plan gives particular, spelled-out steps towards the maintenance of citizen involvement in city planning (D-16).

### **1993 Albina Community Plan**

The Albina Community Plan begins by laying out its intentions and the problems perceived by its authors (the City of Portland Planning Commission, with the help of the broader Portland City Council and Bureau of Planning staff, as well as the North/Northeast Economic Development Alliance). The plan “is intended to combat the loss of employment base, disinvestment and dilapidation in the Albina area” (1). While this introduction mentions the “interrelationship” between infrastructure and “social and family issues,” the entire report remains broad and unspecific when discussing any social (particularly racial) elements. Also worth noting is the prioritization of improving the “appearance” and “character” of the Albina neighborhood, which could (but does not necessarily) imply a redesign process that fits the desires of a different residential base (9). Finally, the introduction acknowledges that “the past practice of redlining properties...and the failure of traditional lending institutions to provide mortgages to potential home buyers” makes neighborhood recovery difficult; however, it never explicitly mentions racial discrimination and does not open space for the suggestion that redlining could still be continuing (2).

While the report sets out goals and policies for a wide range of categories (including transportation, business growth, education, and more), we focus on housing proposals for this analysis. The section on housing opens by describing the “diversity” of architecture in the community; it suggests that the presence of Victorians, bungalows, and Edwardian homes make Albina’s development worth respecting and preserving. Many of these homes in the area are “vacant and abandoned” (51). The report goes on to highlight several goals, including: protecting distinctive architecture, promoting home ownership, and preserving affordable housing so that “a portion of the housing stock in Albina remain affordable over the next 20 years” (52). Regarding new housing production, the Commission proposes producing “3000 new housing units over the next 20 years,” taking advantage of vacant land, and increasing density to make the area “more desirable.” In place of the current single-dwelling detached houses, the report suggests mixed housing. Regarding affordable housing, the Commission acknowledges the presence of low-income Albina residents and notes that affordable housing is “critical to ensuring that the current Albina residents can stay in the community” (52). The Commission suggests that affordable housing be preserved partially through assistance programs provided by the city, including homeowner, rental rehabilitation, and urban homesteading programs. The report insists moreover that affordable housing benefits families because rehabilitation is cheaper than reconstruction. Finally, the city suggests the stabilization of neighborhoods through the promotion of home ownership. It gives examples of employers who help their employees with purchasing homes, but does not suggest any further options for city involvement.

Overall, the Albina Community Plan prioritizes development but does not provide convincing and accountable dedication to current and non-white residents. While the term “diversity” is used frequently, its use is always in reference to architecture and “historical character.” The report never directs this valuation of diversity and character towards current residents and their lifestyles. While the report touches on issues of affordability and briefly acknowledges the possibility of displacement, its policy and planning suggestions are ambiguous. For example, the report lists as an action: “Revisit the housing affordability issue in the Albina Community neighborhoods in 10 to 15 years after the Albina Community neighborhoods have stabilized. Seek to increase opportunities for affordable housing and reductions in displacement that might otherwise result from neighborhood stabilization and rising property values” (54). This plan of action lacks a way to ensure accountability to current residents. While the report emphasizes that resident representatives were involved in editing the draft (noting particularly that “a special outreach effort was made to special needs populations” (5)), there are many possible situations in which participation could have (but was not necessarily) skewed or misrepresented.



## *Interviews*

### *Mahonia Land Trust*

Our interviews with members of the Mahonia land trust John and Bev Martinson, Tina Buetell, and Linn Davis reflected a zoning success story. All four interviewees expressed their observations of “creeping” development and their appreciation for zoning that protects valuable farmland. Overall, while these members of the Mahonia land trust acknowledged tension between their values of affordable housing, social justice, and open space preservation, they seemed to perceive zoning restrictions as necessary for maintaining important community resources.

During our drive from the city, over the UGB, and to Mahonia, Tina and Linn told a story of consistent and noticeable change. “From the beginning until now,” Tina reflected, “it’s just been a continuous creep of development closer and closer, in areas that were orchards or vacant lots or big lots with houses and gardens and open land” (Interview, Tina Buetell). Similarly, Linn noted the “Boom” that sounded in his head as we passed over the UGB, a reflection of the visible difference between developed and undeveloped land. The UGB seemed to represent the ability to hold on to precious, productive land that would otherwise be paved over. Tina summarized: “Thank goodness for the zoning and all these restrictions, because we’ve been able to not have such high land values, keep it forest land, because that’s what it’s good for. So it’s been to our advantage to have the zoning the way it is” (Interview Tina Buetell).

According to John and Bev, the UGB has been successful in protecting productive farmland from development (despite minor setbacks). While unfortunately neighbors sometimes “sell out” (sell their land and move somewhere where subdivisions are unrestricted), the UGB actually helps minimize this trend; neighbors outside the UGB often feel joined in a community of like-minded people, and are therefore discouraged to move in order to protect community structure. Additionally, by preventing excessive subdivision of plots the UGB protects against what John calls the “gentrification of farmland,” in which rich people buy land to create “hobby farms” that produce goods only for their own pleasure. On a personal level, John values his ability to be a part of a land trust; as someone who started out with few assets, this option allowed him to explore interests such as farming, architecture, and community building in an environment that did not force him to prioritize money making.

The primary problem that stands in the way of maximizing the productive success of land outside the UGB, according to John and Bev, is that restrictions on subdivision can harm new farmers and struggling farmers. Because plots are large and subdivision is heavily restricted, new farmers are forced to take on more land than they can handle, often leading to failure. Farmers struggling to pay for extra expenses (such as education, for example) may also resent the restrictions on subdivision that prevent them from selling just one acre to pay the bills. When asked about proposed solutions to these problems, Bev suggested that the county government

could provide startup money to cushion new or struggling farmers during their learning or adjustment curves. In response, John reflected that any changes in zoning policies (including the UGB) should be “tweaks” rather than systematic changes. In his opinion, the inability of new and struggling farmers to subdivide their properties is not a huge problem, because overall the goals of zoning to preserve farmland and open space against development (and hobby farms) are upheld.

Finally, when asked who the “losers” have been in the creation of the UGB, John noted that every decision has positive and negative effects. He said, “In our society, you can assume that poor people and minorities will feel the negative effects most.” While John did not elaborate on what their negative experiences might be, he implied that the UGB could raise housing prices within the city. John and Bev agreed that if the population in the Portland area continues to rise, the presence of local farms (and the food they produce) would be essential. The benefits of local land for productive farming provide an asset to all.

Tina and Linn provided more outright thoughts regarding gentrification and housing affordability within the UGB. Linn, who is currently studying the effects of the UGB on housing price at Portland State University College of Urban and Public Affairs, believes that the UGB creates minimal impact on housing affordability. He said, “[the UGB] confines development, rather than restrict it. So it prevents there from being little subdivisions way out in the boonies here and there, but it doesn’t really constrict the development inside it” (Interview, Linn Davis). Nevertheless, gentrification is occurring and Tina and Linn both mused about its causes. Both agreed that the pressure to develop probably comes, at least partially, from people with disposable income moving from places like California, where housing is more expensive. Overall, they agreed that “The point was not to try to gentrify these inner urban areas” (Interview, Linn Davis).

### *Liz Foucher-Branch and Nya Branch*

Liz and Nya tell negative stories of change in their NE Portland community. While both Liz and Nya say explicitly that they do not “know much about urban planning,” they have clear opinions about the social and infrastructural changes they have observed and experienced firsthand (Interview, Liz Foucher-Branch). When Liz was seven years old (around 1959), she and her family were forced to move due to urban removal. The neighbors in her new neighborhood “begged” her and her family to move out, but they stayed. “That neighborhood is now one of the most expensive areas on the NE side,” she says. “Thank God, they bought the house in the sixties, they wouldn’t be able to afford it now” (Interview, Liz Foucher-Branch). Similarly, Nya has felt discrimination firsthand. She states, “I have been told that the people pushed out did not deserve to live in the area because they did nothing with it, and when I have explained that the resources to the people from this area were limited that I was making an excuse...The subject is

tough, touchy and painful. No one cares except for the people that once called this area home” (Interview, Nya Branch).

While Liz and Nya appreciate that some positive revitalization has happened in North Portland industrial areas and the Lents community (particularly, the presence of more small businesses), they see many problems with urban development and injustice in their neighborhood. According to Liz, these problems include: displacement, gentrification, loss of sense of community, loss of historical sites, badgering by developers, poorly constructed homes, and "overbuilt rental structures that are ugly and expensive." (Interview, Liz Foucher-Branch). Liz notes the systematic and continuous ways in which injustice and discrimination seem to be embedded in urban planning, saying, "The features of urban development, [particularly its interest in] making lending easier for outside groups and leaving communities out of the discussion around urban planning, has been going on most of my 63 years" (Interview, Liz Foucher-Branch). Nya, too, notes gentrifying features in the neighborhood: "Neighborhoods that were once described as unsuitable for “regular” Portlanders have become hot commodity locations, thus pushing out families that have lived in neighborhoods for generations" (Interview, Nya Branch).

Liz and Nya have not engaged much with thought about Portland's UGB (and both acknowledge this in their interviews). Both told stories of the development of gentrification that did not include the UGB as an active player. When prompted about who benefits most from Portland's UGB, Liz answered that developers are the largest beneficiaries, and Nya suggested that “rich people (usually developers and landowners) and politicians” are the greatest beneficiaries (Interview, Nya Branch). This suggests that perhaps they conflates the UGB with urban planning in general, or even with gentrification. This association may come from previous ideas about the UGB, or it may simply be a reflection of the questions we asked over email. Nonetheless, Liz’s perception that urban development "has nothing to do with supporting communities, people of color, seniors or people with disabilities" shows that she, and the people in her community, have been left out in the discussion of development in Portland. Liz sums up, "I don't believe urban developers or city planners care much for this population and their needs" (Interview, Liz Foucher-Branch). Nya agrees, saying “To me city planning and the Urban Growth Boundary is just a vehicle to push “undesirable people” from their neighborhoods in order to make money” (Interview, Nya Branch). Finally, Nya sums up her perceptions of solutions to this gentrification. She says, “There really is no remedy. What’s done is done." Minority owned businesses should "have access to some of the development money that has been pumped into the area" (Interview, Nya Branch).

Overall, Liz and Nya’s occupation with the condition of their neighborhood serves as a testament to the problems of gentrification, displacement, and racism in Portland. These interviews on their own do not provide us with answers about the relationship of the UGB to

gentrification, but provide an important counterpart to the narrative told from the perspective of the Mahonia Land Trust members. When compared with the Albina Community Plan, these interviews suggest that many of the goals of the plan (including the preservation of historic sites and the inclusion of residents in decision making) have not succeeded.

## **Discussion of Results**

Our various methodologies, when combined, show that Portland's UGB has not directly distorted housing values in Portland, but forms part of a broader urban strategy of densification, urban revitalization, and gentrification. Contrary to the rosy, win-win framing of municipal renewal documents, this gentrification has amounted to massive, continual displacement with racial and class implications, as evidenced by both our interviews and spatial analysis. While members of the Mahonia Land Trust value the UGB for protecting important communal resources, they acknowledge that minorities, such as many residents of Northeast Portland communities, are likely to pay the steepest costs for its existence. This shows the inherent contradiction in the nature of the UGB and how it serves well a select few (primarily planners, developers, and residents who are already higher up in power relations in their respective communities) by placing the burden of all the negative externalities on individuals at the bottom of the power structure (primarily minorities and the poor).

## **Exploring Some Possible Solutions**

While we realize that there is not one right way to go about addressing issues of growth management and gentrification, we believe that some proposed policies and tangible changes prove better than others. In this section we explore three possible mechanisms for addressing these issues and discuss the merits and drawbacks of each.

### ***1. Relaxation of the UGB***

One possible solution is relaxing the UGB, or in other words, expanding or eliminating the boundary in order to allow more sprawl. Some argue that the boundary has not had much of an effect on sprawl, if at all, and that the UGB is simply a strategy of growth management that has minimal effect (Jun, 2004). More concrete policy changes and changes in land use, such as the creation of land trusts within the boundary (which we explore later), could have much more of an effect on creating more equality in the housing market.

The boundary places limitations on housing and land markets, preventing extension of some public services beyond the boundary to communities that could benefit from increased infrastructure. The UGB may indirectly contribute to increased gentrification in Portland as well. Removing the boundary would not inherently solve this problem and could have no effect at all on the damage already been done in terms of housing inequality. However, relaxing the UGB could theoretically slow the process of gentrification by leaving land further from the city center

open for development, as housing prices in the city center could stabilize (not including factors such as inflation) as a result. The boundary has already been expanded 3 dozen times since its creation.

In addition to these issues, there have actually already been attempts to reduce the boundary by residents of Damascus and Boring, though these did not get passed. That these residents wanted to retain the rural character of their towns enough to protest the UGB shows that some people have strong interests in constraining the UGB or keeping it as is. Overall, relaxing the UGB is not the only solution, nor necessarily the best solution, to limiting sprawl and creating denser cities.

## ***2.Changes in Zoning Policy***

Another proposed solution changing zoning policy at the municipal level. Liberalization of zoning can be used to mitigate the inflationary effect of the UGB on housing prices by facilitating an adequate housing supply, including: minimum density requirements, zoning for multifamily housing throughout the metro area (as opposed to designated single-family units), and ordinances enabling the construction of accessory dwelling units. All of these changes in policy, when combined, would help in farmland preservation, infrastructure cost savings, reduction of air and water pollution, compact development, and promoting housing affordability, lessening the equity gap previously discussed (Mathur, 2014).

Zoning liberalization and densification tends to be unpopular with existing homeowners, however, who object to the aesthetics of new development or worry that it will increase traffic, make parking more constrained, and bring in crime or undesirable elements. Upzoning and redevelopment policy are also in and of themselves contested on the grounds of equity, as new units tend to be less affordable than older units. And, while according to classical economic theory, increasing supply will decrease the price, denser neighborhoods and their associated urban amenities are also in strong demand in certain places, thus serving as an example against the prevailing theory.

Another suggestion is to expand inclusionary zoning/incentive zoning to make private developers provide affordable housing. Abolishing exclusionary zoning unites the causes of environmentalists and affordable housing advocates (Liberty 2002).

## ***3.Creation of Community Land Trusts***

Another more tangible, rather than theoretical, solution to the issues of inequity and gentrification to which the UGB indirectly contributes is the creation of community land trusts both on the scarce amount of land within the boundary which still remains undeveloped, as well in areas right on the fringes of or just outside of the boundary. Community land trusts often act as a means of increasing resident resilience for those who are threatened by gentrification and increased housing prices (Moore & McKee 2012).

These programs separate the ownership of land from the ownership of housing, making housing units more affordable on land with high prices. Under this model, a land trust agency purchases real estate and is able to resell it to prospective homeowners, the homeowner then pays the cost of the house and not the land and agrees to a long-term lease. The difficulty in this lies, however, in raising the initial capital to purchase the land in the first place. Some argue that the time and effort put into raising the funds could be better used for other means.

Proponents of land trusts argue how positive effects can be achieved for the local community in terms of housing affordability, and a heightened sense of community. For example, when families are ready to sell their land, the community land trust can buy back the house at a formulated appreciation value to make the following re-sell as affordable. Community land trusts are popular in areas of gentrification because they maintain affordability while protecting the land from market increases and inflation.

An example of a successful land trust is the Burlington Community Land Trust in Burlington, Vermont. The land trust has bought land and sold it to community organizations since 1984. These transactions between the land trust and community members not only include houses but also social service providing establishments such as health centers, food coops, homeless shelters, child centers, and senior centers. The positive social effects, at least in the case of the Burlington land trust, have reverberated and been felt by the surrounding community. If executed properly, this model could function well in other situated contexts as well, combatting issues posed by growth management, and also aiding minority communities in cities that are starting to experience increased gentrification.

### **A Consideration of Larger Implications**

While the work done in this project is important as a base to addressing this problem, it is evident that the scope of this project could not go into too much detail on any one of the problems addressed. There are also, possibly more importantly, several overarching issues that we were not able to touch on in areas of this project- such issues are addressed in the following.

UGBs and other growth management policies have been in place throughout cities for several decades. It's important to assess the relative successes of such programs in accordance with their goals, as well as their long-term effects. How does the implementation of the UGB affect or control sprawl vs. other systems of growth management? Are UGB's purely responsible for economic growth/decline, or are they only a contributing factor in larger schemes of models for urban development?

More broadly, we see that growth control policies have inevitably come to shape the state of cities around the globe and have almost inadvertently created dynamics of inequality in urban culture. This culture will come to shape the ways in which people interact with their built environments for some time to come and also contribute to the creation of future ideas and technologies, which tend to come out of the heart of major cities. Planning, as the word suggests,

molds our future. UGBs contribute to gentrification not necessarily through direct effects on land values, but rather through their existence as part of a larger set of urban strategies.

Not only do different growth management strategies need to be addressed and re-studied 30-40 years after their implementation, but inherent in this work is also the question of smart growth plans. Bigger picture conceptualizations to “smart growth” includes assessing the importance of gentrification and issues of racial justice in urban environments. To what extent should smart-growth policies incorporate the needs of minority groups? How does reinvesting in city centers actually contribute to gentrification? These are all questions that are being asked but are yet to be studied in enough depth to be answered. Interestingly, it is found that international studies of smart growth have little to no relevance with racial justice, so could it be that these issues are not necessarily universal and are symptomatic of larger socio-political issues in the Pacific Northwest and/or the United States.

In addition, we can question if displacement itself is problematic. Or, is it really the inequality that displacement creates the main problem? Further, we can question if displacement is almost planned, if urban planners are either consciously or subconsciously racist or otherwise biased. What can be done to monitor these issues? Is displacement inevitable as more people migrate to urban areas, as gentrification becomes more prominent in nearly all American cities? Or is this symptomatic of poor planning?

Even farther beyond the scope of this project, one can come to question equity in the realm of planning. To what extent should governments utilize planning and social services to equally enhance the livelihoods of everyone? Ideally equity, or at least equal opportunity and access to municipal resources should be the goal, but is this always the best route for a city to take in their goals and planning measures? To some extent issues of equality are opposed to commercial interests and many economic forces. Perhaps we need to question to what extent equality can exist in conformity with commercial interests? Should equity always be the goal? We believe that more equality not only helps to lessen some social issues inherent in economic and racial inequality, but studies have shown that when there is more equality, people are happier, more productive, more creative, and the economy thrives (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010). So, why not shoot for equality? The question that is left however is how to best go about achieving this seemingly unachievable outcome.

### **Looking Forward**

The efficacy of the UGB vs. other growth control measures has not been studied much, and was not covered in our project. An interesting study could compare other planning tools, such as green belts, with UGBs to shed a light on which strategies are better and in what contexts. An interesting field of inquiry into the growth management field could see what effects different control measures have on different demographic groups as well as on the region’s economy.

It would similarly be interesting to see if it is possible to incorporate the well-being of disadvantaged groups into the planning process through urban policies. How can low-income housing be advocated for? And how should cities monitor for housing discrimination and violations? It is proposed that planners can take additional measures to support racially integrated neighbourhoods that consist of a variety of housing options such as subsidized and affordable renting. There have been many articles about effects of rising housing prices on black vs. white populations, but most do not consider other races or mixed-race people. Further studies can look at the gentrification of other ethnic neighborhoods as well.

It is also interesting to consider the hegemony of the UGB in cities in which one has been established. Why are cities not re-evaluating zoning and administrative boundaries as they move farther along into the 21st century and continue to expand? A critique of current planning systems and strategies, how cities review past measures, may be in order and could provide more of a context and an interesting lens from which to view this project and continue work in the areas of growth management and gentrification in the future.



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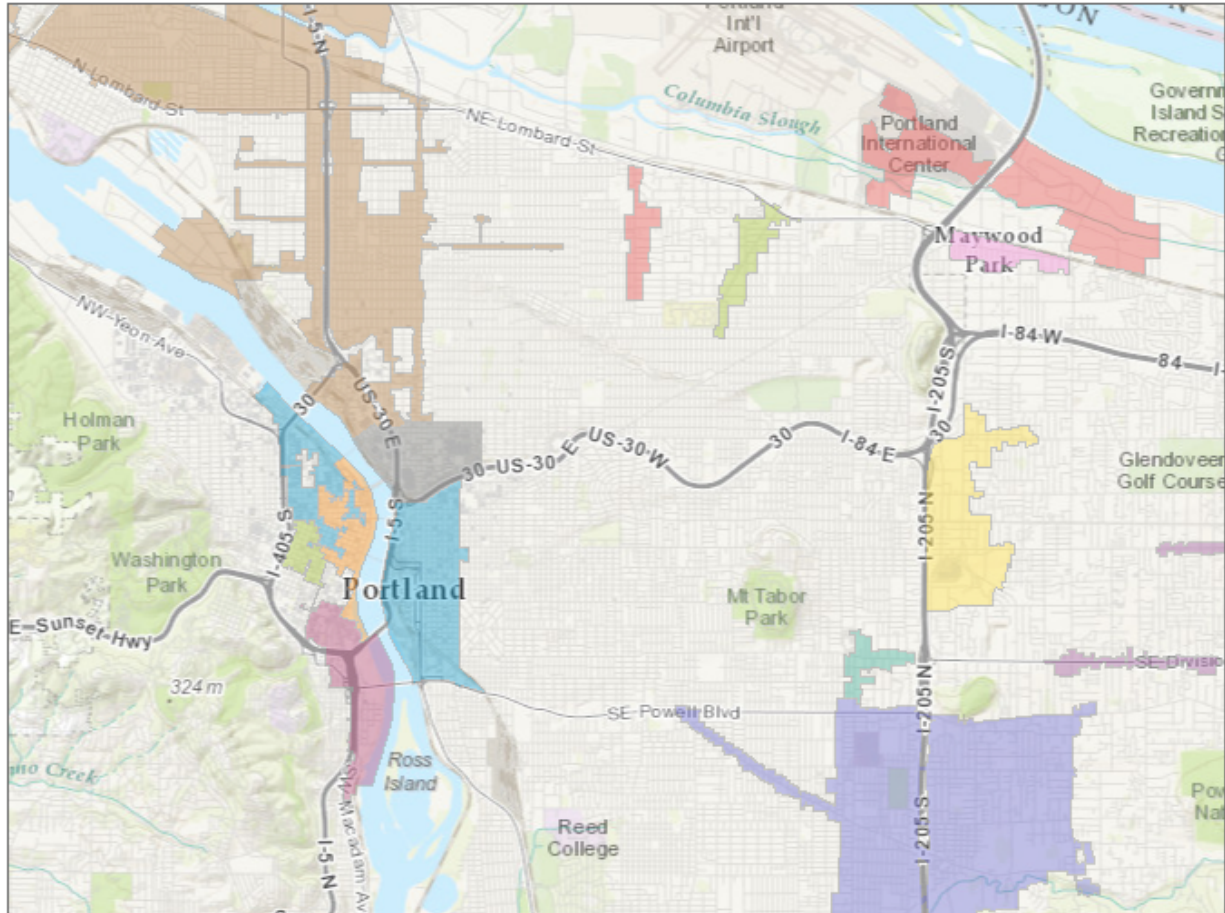
## Appendix

### A. Additional Maps

#### 1. Portland Urban Renewal Areas—Interstate-Corridor is shown in brown

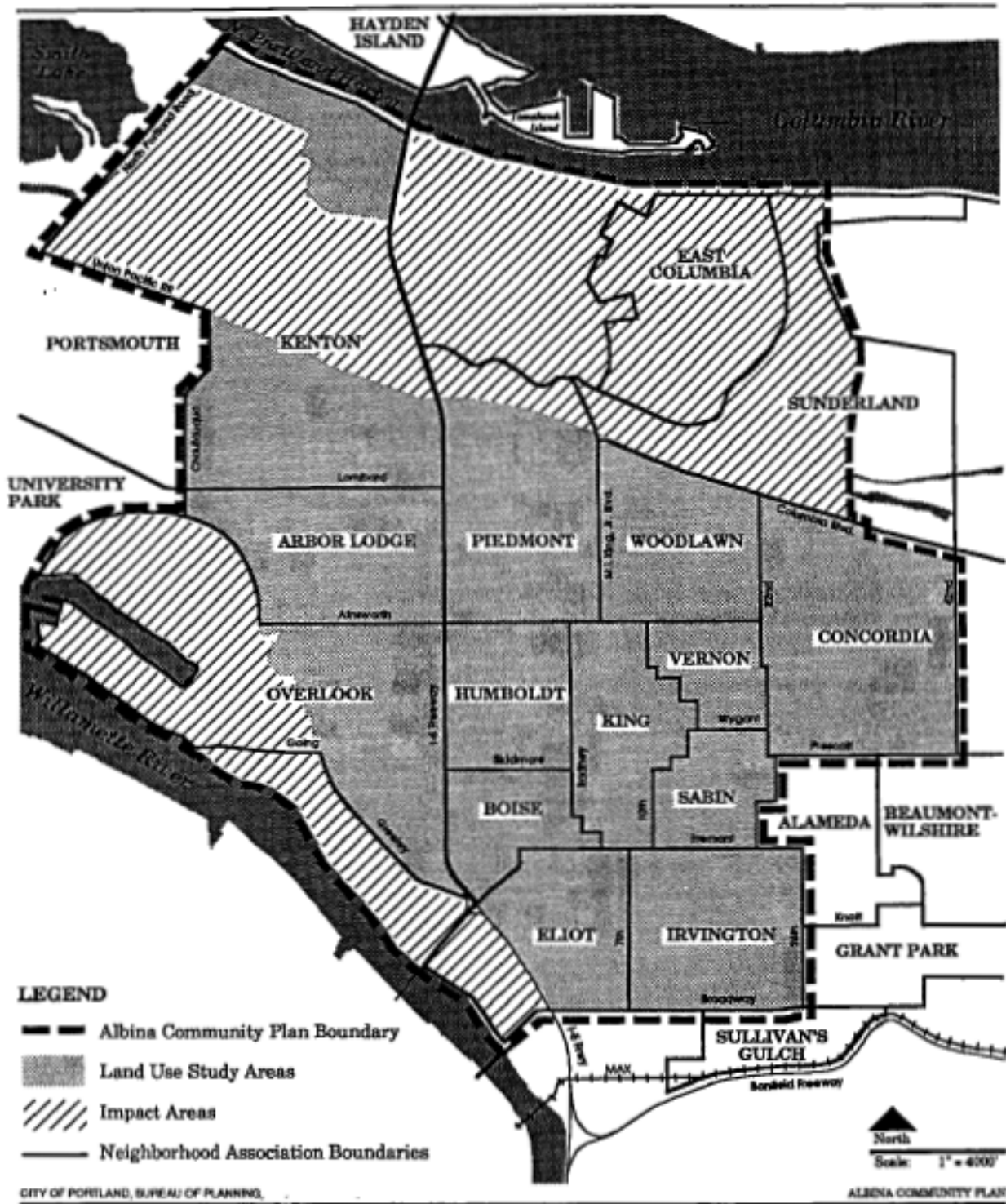
### PDC Urban Renewal Areas

Map of PDC Urban Renewal Areas



MRLC, Bureau of Land Management, State of Oregon, State of Oregon DOT, State of Oregon GEO, Esri, HERE, DeLorme, Intermap, USGS, NGA, EPA, USDA, NPS, U.S. Forest Service

2. 1993 Albina Community Plan Area



Albina Community Plan Area and Neighborhoods

## B. Interview Questions

### Questions for Nya and Liz:

1. In what ways have you seen neighborhoods in NE Portland change over time? Please describe any changes you have noticed. Do you see neighborhood changes as positive, negative, or somewhere in between?
2. What is your experience with gentrification and displacement in NE Portland (this could be directly personal experience, observation, participation in community organizations or politics, or anything else)?
3. What do you believe are the primary causes of gentrification and displacement?
4. How would you propose remedying any of the problems you have experienced or observed in your neighborhood (or in Portland more generally)? Do you believe that different urban planning strategies could help solve issues such as gentrification or displacement? What other solutions can you imagine?
5. Do you have an opinion regarding city planning in Portland (or, more specifically, Portland's Urban Growth Boundary)? If so, what do you see as the positive and negative aspects of the Urban Growth Boundary? Does the UGB affect your life?
6. From your experience, do you believe that Portland's Urban Growth Boundary improves the accessibility of local food and outdoor recreation opportunities? What do you think about the opinion that the Urban Growth Boundary helps prevent urban sprawl and protect the environment?

### Questions for Tina, Linn, John and Bev:

1. Story of the land trust--how did it come to be? What values is it founded on, and how does it operate?
2. What is the relationship between Mahonia and the Urban Growth Boundary? Has this relationship changed over time, between 1979 and now?
3. Do you have an opinion regarding Portland's Urban Growth Boundary? If so, what do you see as the positive and negative aspects of the Urban Growth Boundary? How does the UGB affect your life?
4. I noticed from your profile on Food For Oregon that Mahonia provides programs for community development, low income housing and land reform. What do these programs look like? What are their aims, and are they successful in achieving results?
5. From your experience, do you believe that Portland's Urban Growth Boundary affects housing prices within and outside the city? Do you see any relationship between the UGB and gentrification in Portland?

6. In what ways have you seen your neighborhood and land change over time? Please describe any changes you have noticed. Do you see neighborhood changes as positive, negative, or somewhere in between?
7. How would you propose remedying any of the problems you have experienced or observed in your neighborhood (or in Portland more generally)? Do you believe that different urban planning strategies could help solve environmental or social issues? What other solutions can you imagine?
  - a. Do you think that creating land trusts within the UGB could help alleviate housing inequalities?