

Homes for Young Families: Fact Sheet on Urban Growth Boundaries

Our report, [***Homes for Young Families: A Pro-family Housing Agenda***](#), highlights one set of policies that imperil housing affordability: urban growth boundaries. UGBs are rules or policies setting hard limits about where land can be developed, with development beyond those limits requiring hard-to-get special exemptions or permissions. In some areas, UGBs are impenetrable barriers, while in others they simply increase development cost and [restrict how much housing can be built on undeveloped land](#).

UGBs Are a Major Source of Unaffordable Housing for Young Families

- UGBs increase land prices near the boundary by 8- to 20-fold, with sharp discontinuities near boundaries.
- 19 of the 20 least-affordable housing markets have UGBs. On the other hand, *none* of the most affordable markets have documented UGBs.

UGBs May Imperil the Types of Housing Young Families Want Most

- By limiting the amount of land available, UGBs may incentivize developers to build more tower-developments with small apartments, instead of single-family homes that our report reveals to be the overwhelmingly desire of young Americans.

Federal Land Ownership Sometimes Acts as UGBs

- Many cities, especially in Western states, may not have an *official* UGB but are hemmed in by federal lands.
- The government often retains agriculturally fallow, ecologically unexceptional, and recreationally unused lands on the fringes of developed areas and roadways for much longer than is reasonable.

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Policy Fixes for the UGB Problem

- Official UGBs dramatically worsen housing affordability and could be repealed in order to unlock more land for housing that is suitable for family life.
- De *facto* UGBs created by enormous federal landholdings blockading development on the urban fringes of especially Western cities could be addressed by creating an orderly process for the transfer of these surplus federal landholdings to local governments for private development.

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