



# Becoming a Housing-Ready City

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@strongtowns



**STRONG  
TOWNS**



# Two Housing Conversations

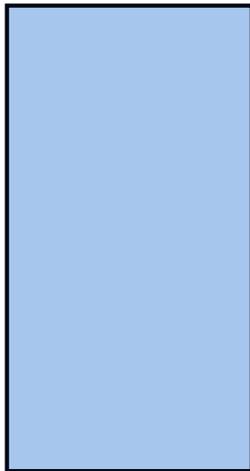
Housing prices

Housing prices

# Pre-Great Depression Housing



Home Value

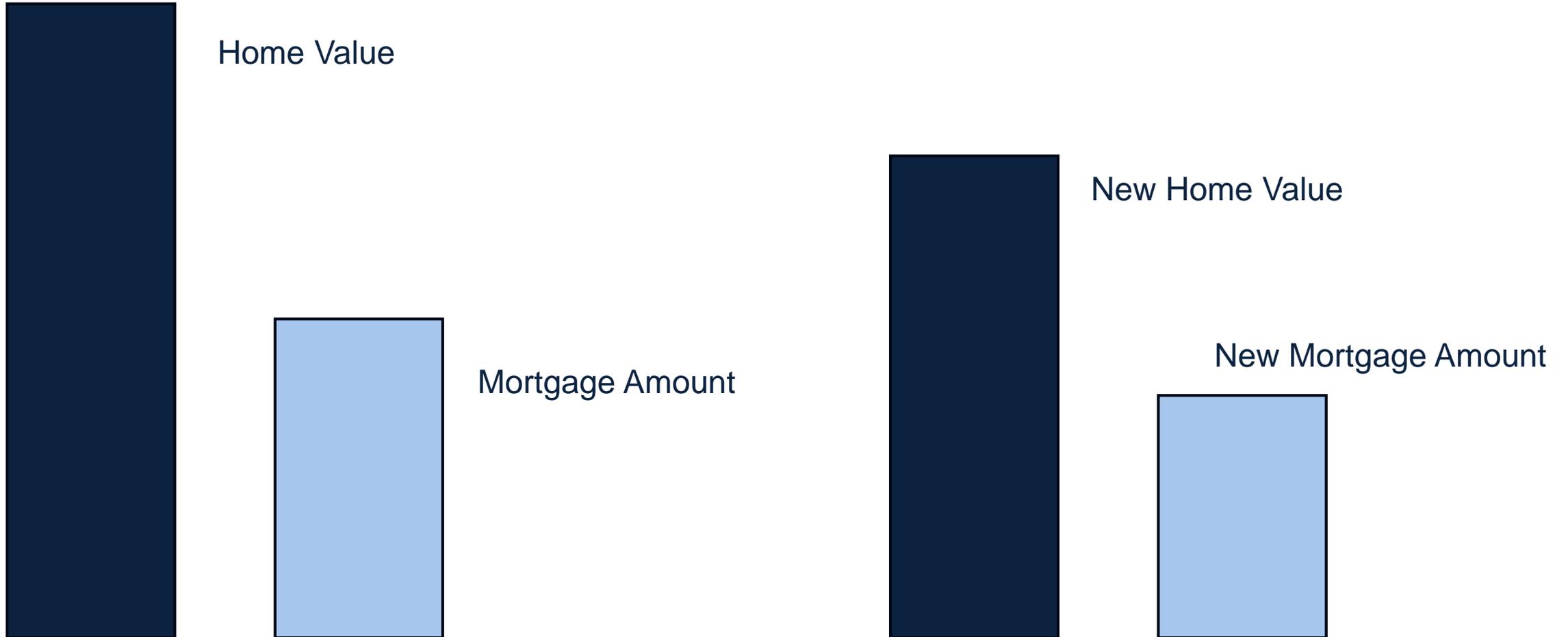


Mortgage Amount

- Local Banks
- 50% Down Payment
- Interest Only Loan
- 5-year Term w/ Balloon Payment

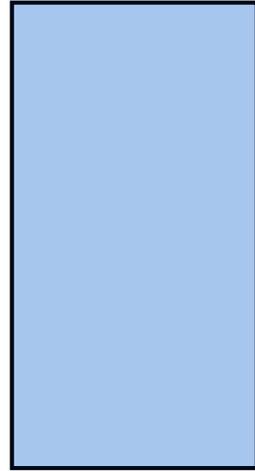


# Great Depression Home Value Decline

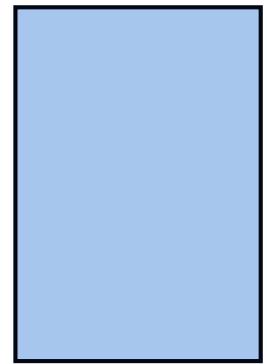


# Great Depression Home Value Decline

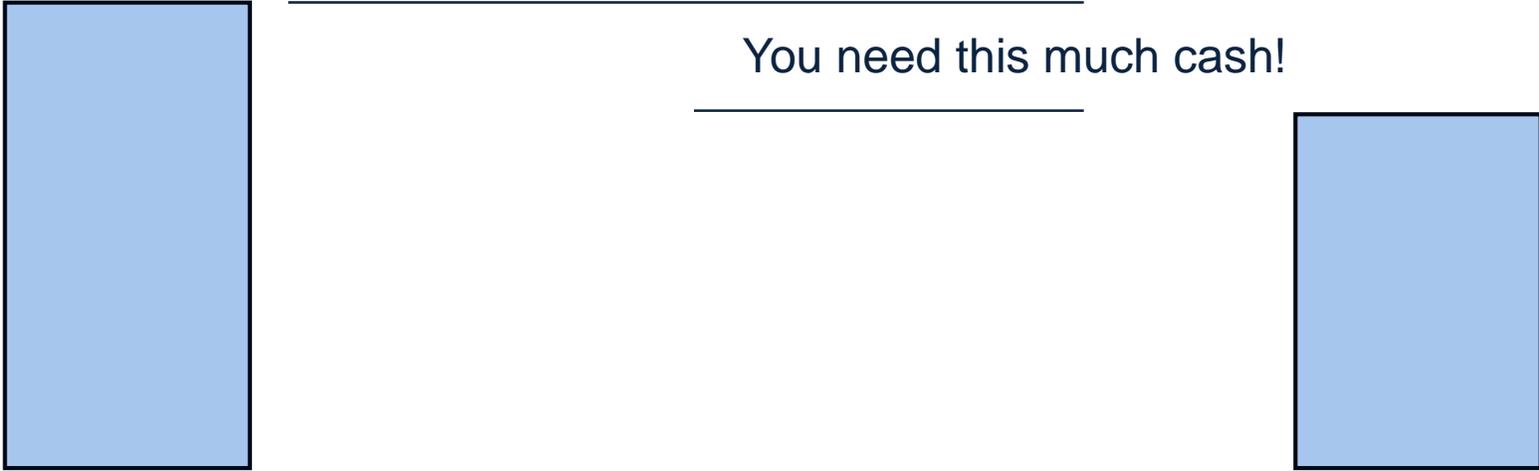
What you owe.



What the bank will  
lend you.



# Great Depression Home Value Decline





THIS 135 ACRE /

**FARM**

*Will Be Sold at*

**PUBLIC AUCTION**

*ON PREMISES JULY 30 1 P.M.*

*DR. M.C. MOSES, OWNER,*

*New Carlisle Ohio*

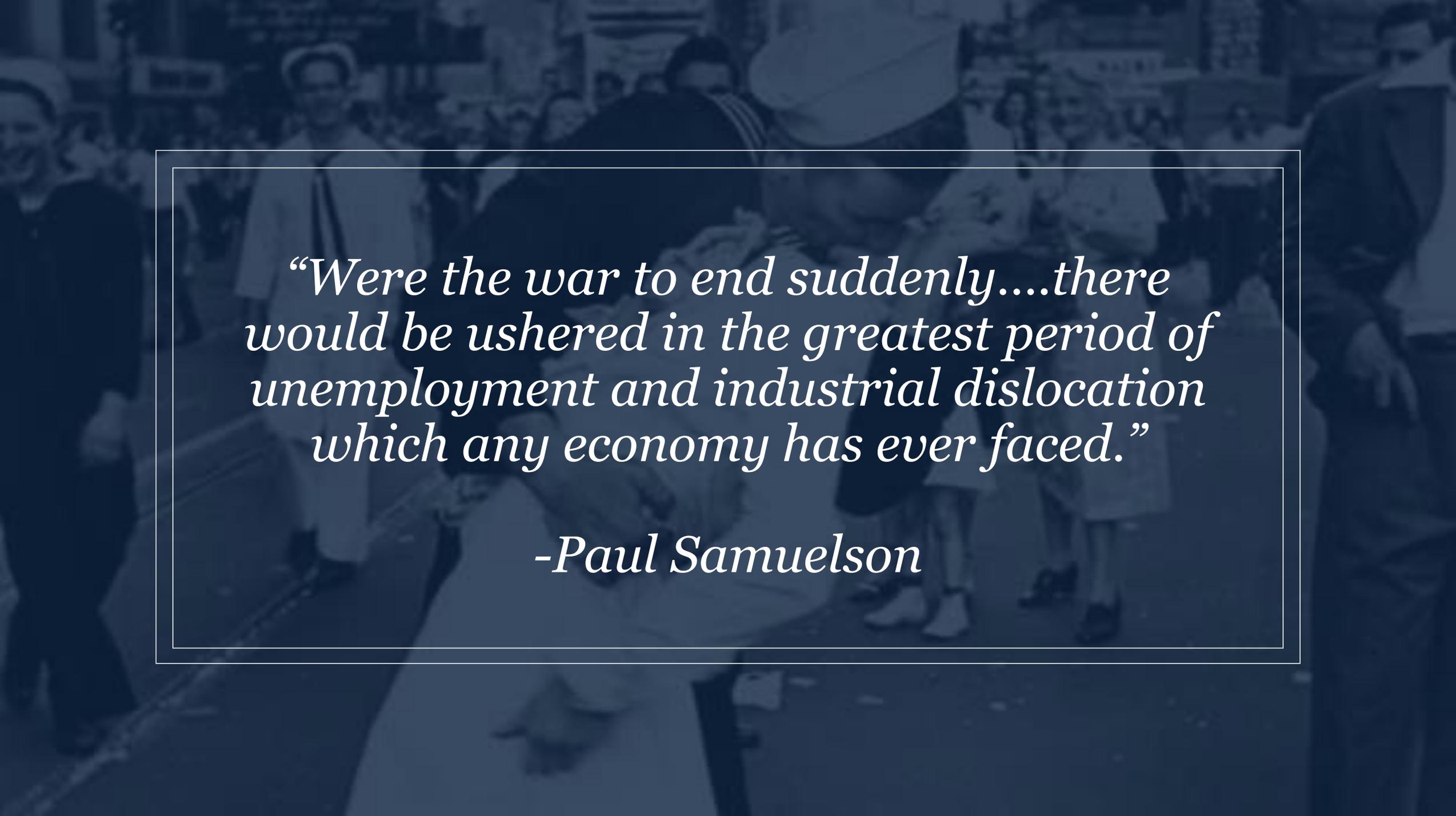
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# New Deal Housing Initiatives

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- Government purchase of mortgages in default
- Refinancing over 20 years
- Lower interest rates
- Principle + Interest
- Create a secondary market for 30-year mortgages (Fannie Mae)
- Lower down payments to 20%
- Provide mortgage insurance





*“Were the war to end suddenly...there would be ushered in the greatest period of unemployment and industrial dislocation which any economy has ever faced.”*

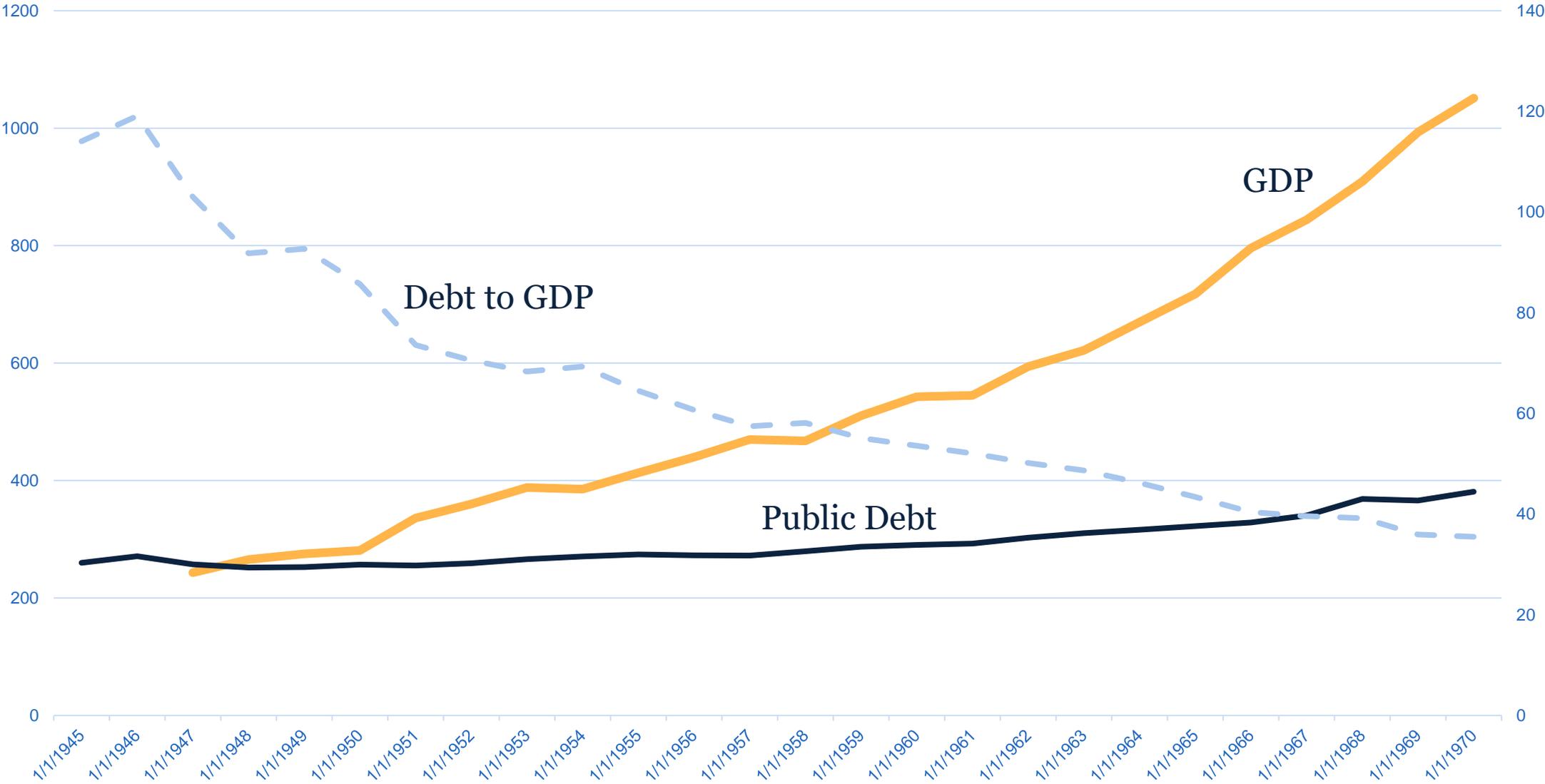
*-Paul Samuelson*



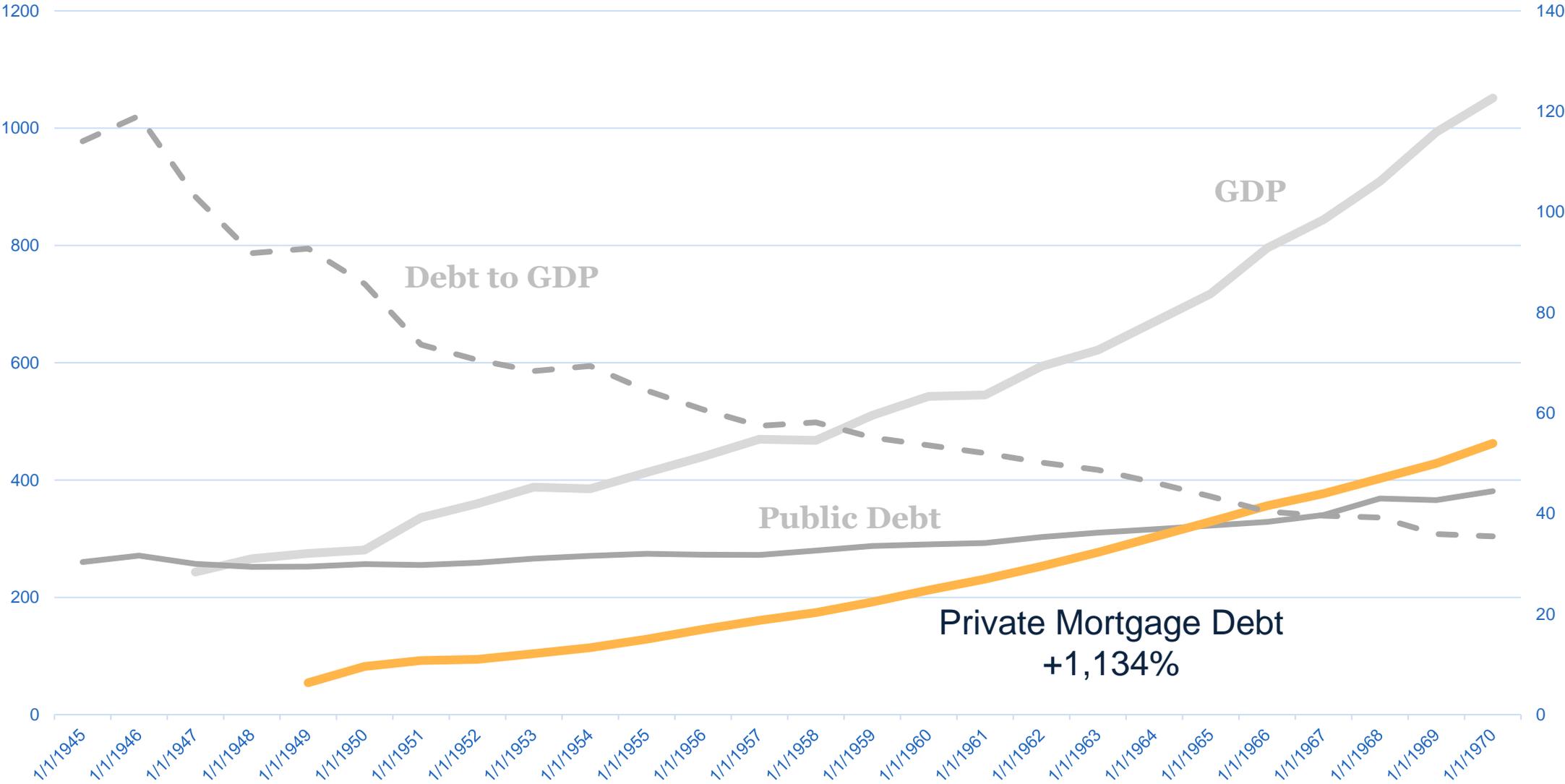
Make it easier for **more people** to  
**borrow more** money to **pay more**  
for housing.



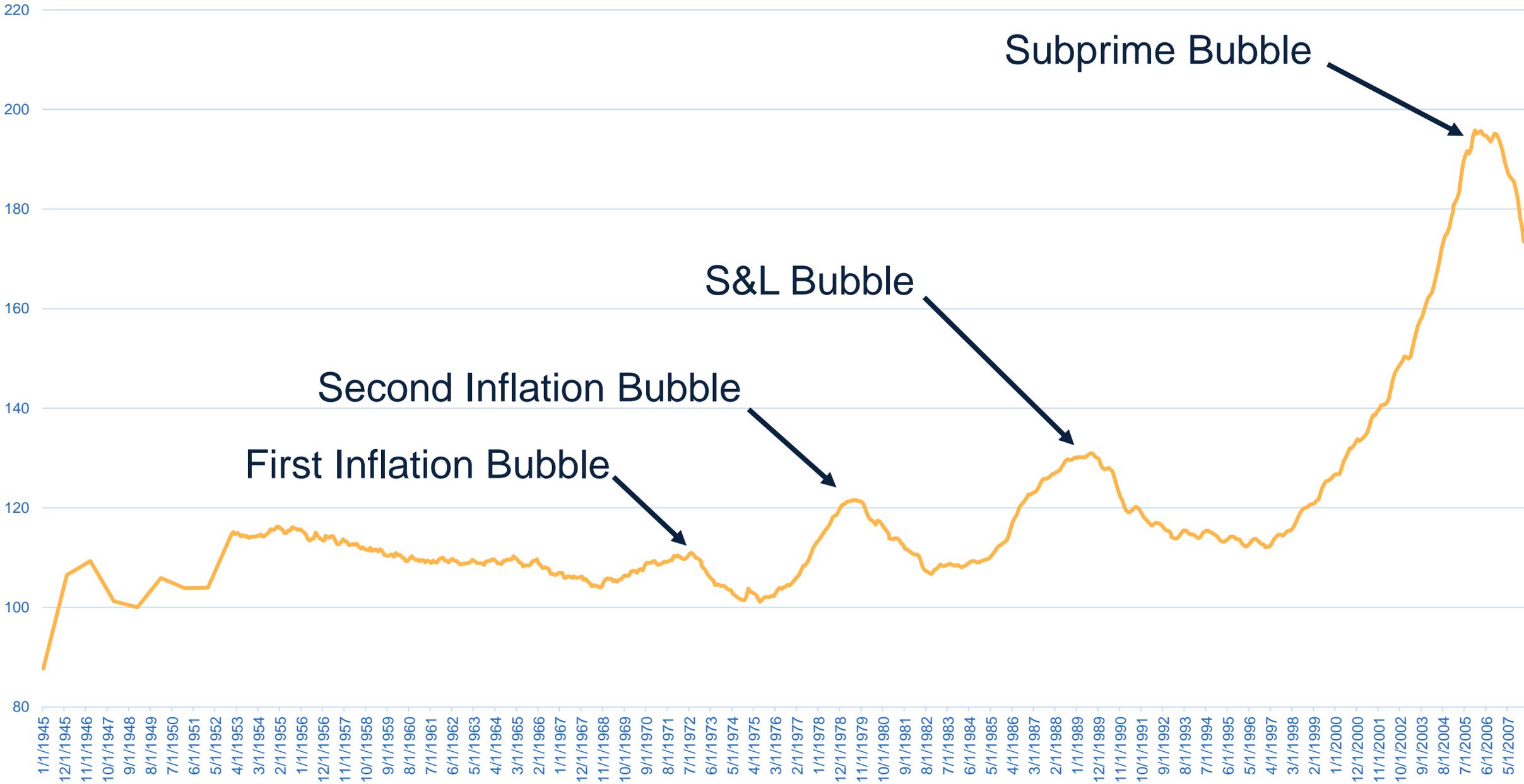
# This was wildly successful!



# This was wildly successful!



Case Shiller Home Price Index  
January 1945 to December 2007



First Inflation Bubble

Second Inflation Bubble

S&L Bubble

Subprime Bubble



# These are Financial Products

(secondarily, they serve as shelter)



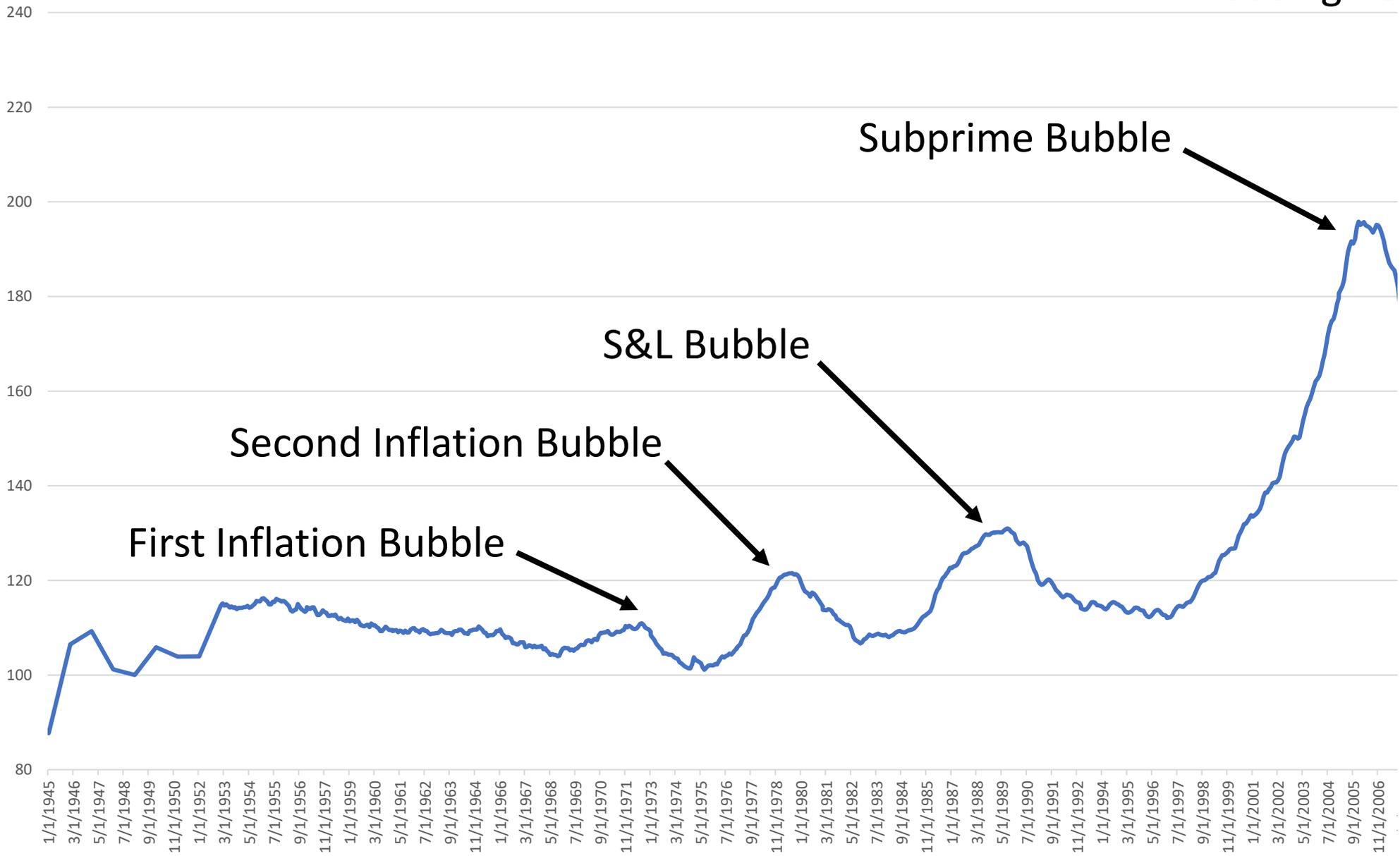
What is the product?

# Who is the product?



Case Shiller Home Price Index  
January 1945 to December 2022

Housing Re



Making it easier for more people to borrow more money to pay more for housing is not the answer.



Making it easier for **more people** to borrow more money to pay more for housing is not the answer.



Making it easier for **more people** to  
**borrow more** money to pay more  
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Making it easier for **more people** to  
**borrow more** money to **pay more**  
for housing is not the answer.



# Trump proposes 50-year mortgage plan as housing costs soar

*The plan would lower and elongate the monthly payments needed to buy a home.*



By **Mason Leath**

November 10, 2025,  
5:43 PM ET

• 6 min  
read



Trump administration moves forward with plan to introduce 50-year mortgages. Some longtime allies of President Donald Trump are not on board with the idea, and experts warn the proposal could drive up prices. Nathan Howard/Reuters

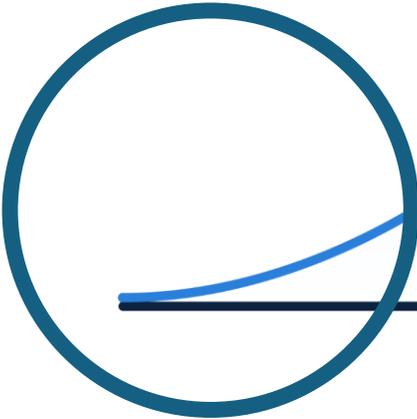
The American Dream may have just gotten a five-decade payment plan.



# These are Financial Products

(secondarily, they serve as shelter)

# Distribution of Investment Capital for Housing





# Accessory Apartment



# Backyard Cottage

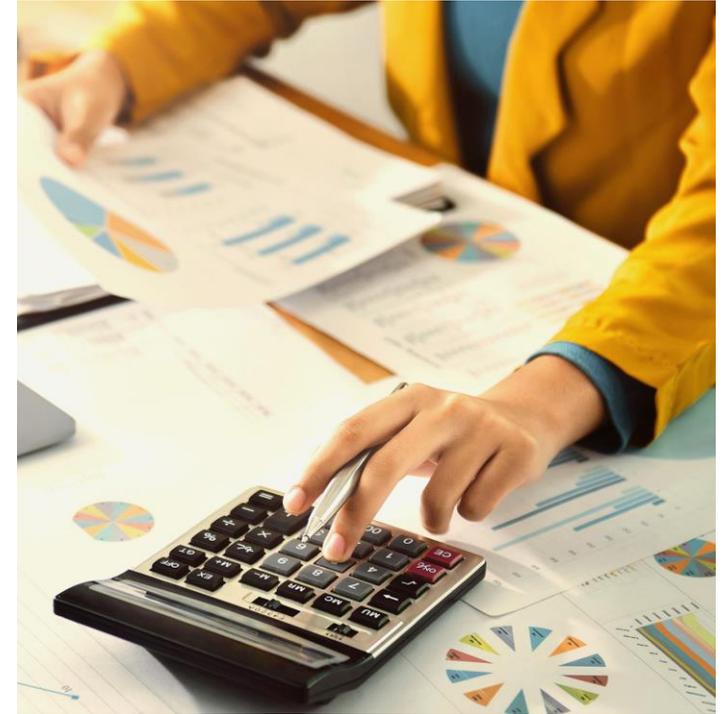
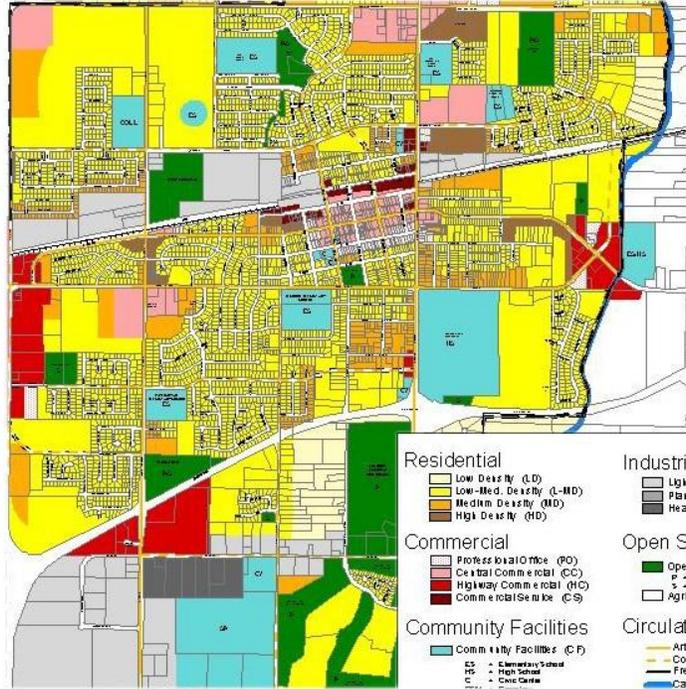
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(Not an ADU)

A photograph of a single-story white house with a dark roof and a brick chimney. The house features a front porch with white columns and red steps. Red shutters are visible on the windows. The house is surrounded by greenery and a lawn. The text "Starter House" is overlaid in white, serif font, with "(Not a Tiny House)" in a smaller white, sans-serif font below it.

# Starter House

(Not a Tiny House)



# How to Escape the Housing Trap

1. Code Reform
2. Incremental Developers
3. Localize Finance

Toolkit

# Six Policies Every City Needs To Be “Housing Ready”

Download at [strongtowns.org/housingready](https://strongtowns.org/housingready)

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**The Housing-Ready City:**  
A Toolkit for Local Code  
Reform



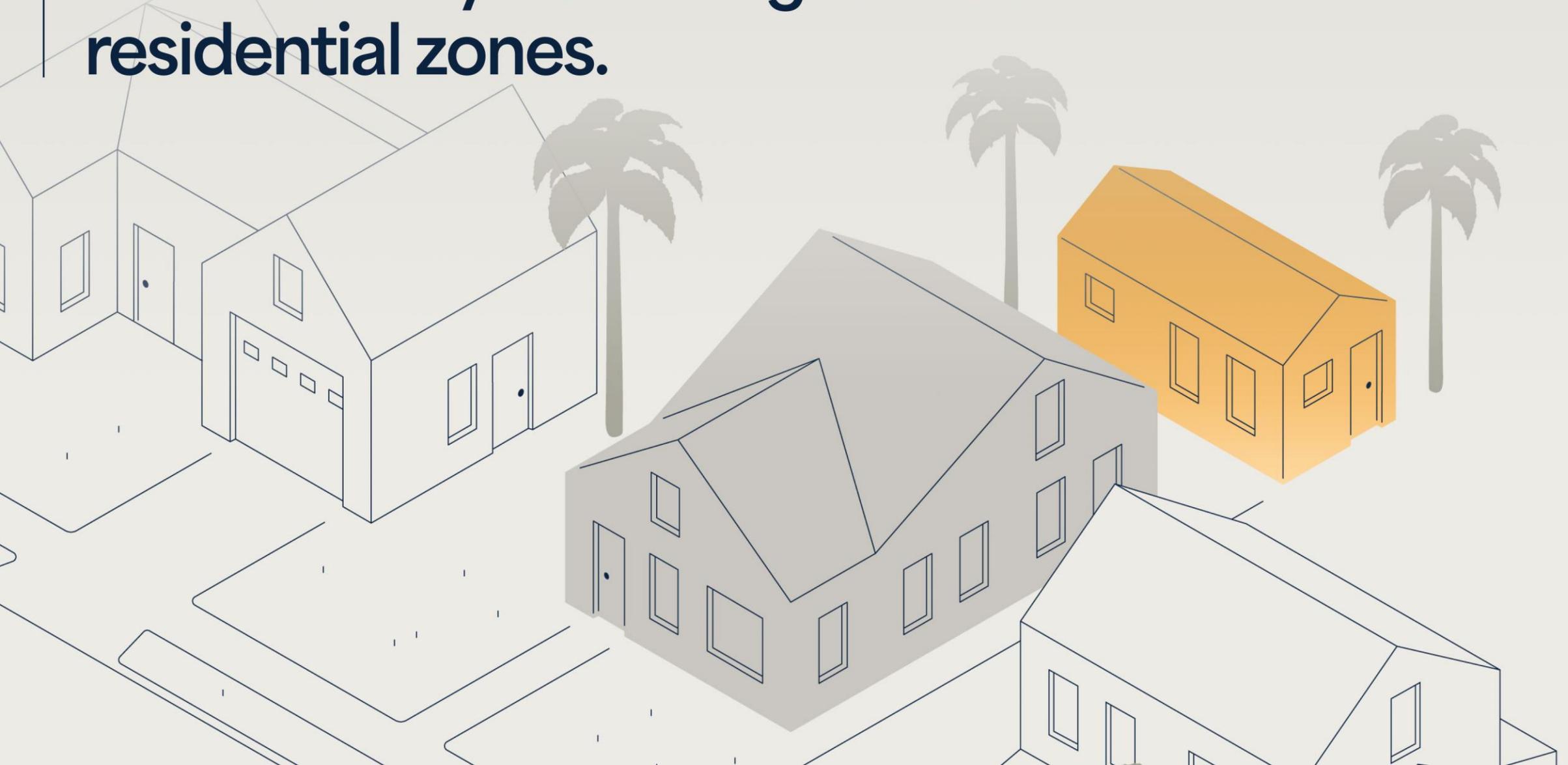
Policy #1

**Allow single-family home conversion to duplex or triplex, by right.**



Policy #2

# Permit backyard cottages in all residential zones.



Policy #3

**Legalize starter homes in all residential zones.**



Policy #4

**Eliminate minimum lot size requirements  
in existing neighborhoods.**



Policy #5

# Repeal parking mandates for housing.



Policy #6

# Streamline the approval process.





# Housing Reform

The most boring revolution.



Toolkit

# Who Will Build the Housing-Ready City?

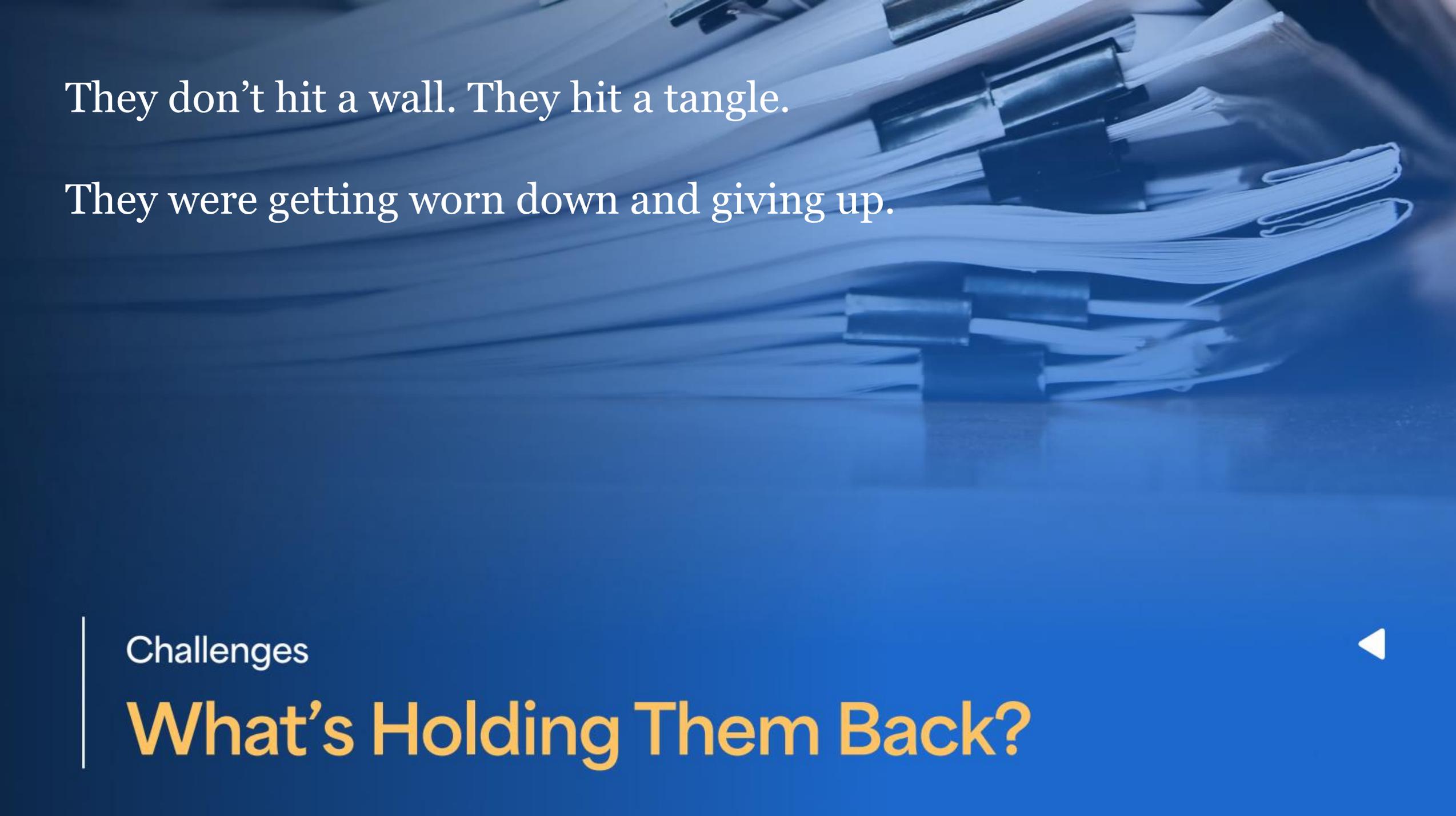
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How Cities Can Grow an Ecosystem of Incremental Developers



Profiles From the Field

**The Builders You Need  
Already Live in Your City.**



They don't hit a wall. They hit a tangle.

They were getting worn down and giving up.

Challenges

**What's Holding Them Back?**





The Role of the City

**Build the Support Structure.**



# 1. Clarity: Show People How to Start

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What helps:

- Create plain-language “start here” guides
- Provide step-by-step flowcharts for common project types
- Develop pre-approved plan sets for cottages, duplexes, and rehabs



## 2. Proportionality: Match the Process to the Project

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What helps:

- Create a “light-touch” approval path for projects under a defined size or complexity
- Provide utility mapping and upfront estimates of what the developer will need to invest in infrastructure access costs
- Document projects, and the decisions made about them, in a way that survives city staff turnover



### 3. Connection: Link People to Knowledge and One Another

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What helps:

- Run developer academies or intro workshops
- Invest in peer mentorship programs
- Provide forums or office hours with city staff



## 4. Culture: A Shift From Gatekeeping to Guidance

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What helps:

- Train and empower staff to help builders navigate the process
- Use your communication channels - or create new ones - to recognize small wins and first-time developers
- Provide strong leadership and communicate a city-wide priority on small-scale, context-sensitive development





This isn't a  
project you  
complete.

It's a culture  
you build.



# The Housing-Ready City: A Toolkit for Local Code Reform



Coming Winter 2026: Part 3

# Oswego, New York

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## Micro Grants





Muskegon, Michigan  
Tax Increment Financing

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**2019**

**2024**

# Minnesota

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## Special Assessments



# Florida

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## Co-sign Loans

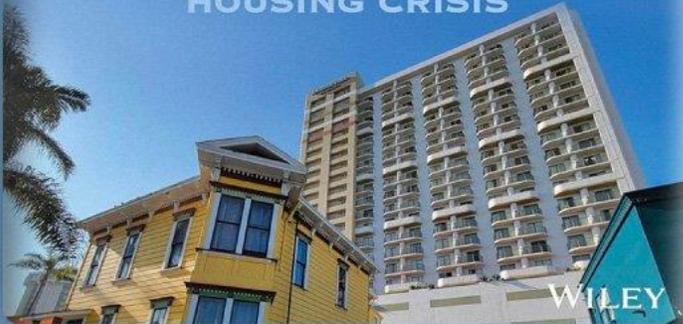


CHARLES L.  
MAROHN, JR.

DANIEL  
HERRIGES

# ESCAPING THE HOUSING TRAP

THE  
STRONG TOWNS  
RESPONSE TO THE  
HOUSING CRISIS



**Learn what power  
you have to heal  
your town's housing  
market.**

Toolkit

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