THE ON-LINE URBAN ATLAS OF PORTLAND OREGON, USA
an investigation of urban morphology and building typology

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This website describes the development of an Urban Atlas for Portland, Oregon, USA. This web-based project, based at the Portland Urban Architecture Research Laboratory of the University of Oregon, is being developed to organize geographically-based information about urban history, current urban planning, architecture, buildings, open space and urban sustainability. The Atlas will be freely available to scholars, practitioners and city officials.

The atlas deals with a range of scales, from the entire city, to individual neighborhoods, blocks and buildings. It will be possible, for example, to see distributions of particular building types over the entire city, relationships between street patterns and housing density, relationships between building permit applications and property values, or relationships between commercial activity and housing density. These sorts of correlations are normally not readily available, as information is contained in different kinds of sources. The Atlas will bring different sources together within a common cartographic framework, allowing the user to readily visualize new relationships.

The data comes from a range of sources, including historic and contemporary zoning, tax lot maps, insurance maps, contemporary planning and infrastructure maps and documents, historic photographs, oral histories, building permit applications and visual architectural documentation such as building plans and elevations. Having this variety of information in one place, and linked to particular geographic areas, will allow the user of the atlas to see and understand a particular place from a number of different points of view, providing an understanding that is as holistic as possible.

The website will incorporate research that has already been conducted on block types and their relationship to building types, in several areas of the city, including the inner city square grid, the outer city rectangular grid, the irregular grid in the middle landscape and the marginal grid at the city edge. These studies, while dealing uniquely with the Portland context, are also typical of North American cities in general, and the Atlas will be a prototype for similar efforts elsewhere.

A major innovation of the Atlas is its open-source character. It is being developed with protocols that allow it to be continuously updated as information becomes available and as researchers are available to work on it.
Neighborhods: Portland Districts

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Overall Location

The Sunnyside neighborhood is located on the Southeast portion of Portland, and its boundaries are SE Stark St., SE Hawthorne Boulevard (north to south), SE 28th St. and SE 49th St. (west to east). Sunnyside is bordered by Laurelhurst to the north, Richmond to the south, Buckman to the west, and Mount Tabor to the east.
Blocks: Types & Morphologies

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- Square Blocks
- Rectangular Blocks
- Irregular Blocks
With the expansion of the city and subsequent annexation of surrounding communities during the early twentieth century, multiple residential neighborhoods located near trolley lines were built with irregular block patterns. Restrained by topographic parameters or predefined master planning concepts, these blocks departed from the standard square and rectangular morphology seen elsewhere in Portland. As many of the areas were reclaimed farm land surrounded by developments, the edge conditions of most blended into the existing traditional grid and street pattern. When combined with the phased construction of typical building typologies seen in other residential neighborhoods, this irregular pattern presents new spatial properties and urban fabric types in the city.

**Neighborhoods with Irregular Blocks:**

**East Moreland**  
**King’s Hill**  
**Ladd–S Addition**  
**Laurelhurst**  
**Sunnyside**  
**Mt. Tabor Area**  
**Rose City Park**  
**Woodstock**  
**St. Johns**  
**Lents**  
**Wilshire-Beaumont**  
**Buckman**
NEIGHBORHOODS: PORTLAND DISTRICTS

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SUNNYSIDE

IRREGULAR BLOCK STRUCTURE

The original block layouts in Sunnyside were 200 ft. x 300 ft, and some of the typical square Portland blocks (200 ft. x 200 ft.). Nine blocks were the exception on the northwest boundary of the neighborhood. The first portion of blocks (between Stark St, Morrison, 30th St and 33rd St) owe its irregularity to the fact that some parcels had been previously sold; therefore, the blocks couldn’t be divided like the rest.

The second group of blocks (between Belmont St. and Taylor St.) was irregular due to Railway Ave. This avenue broke the regular grid in order to allow future circulation of the streetcar. The Streetcar route was modified and this group of blocks became regular again. By 1887, most of the grid was dominated by rectangular blocks of 200 ft. x 300 ft. and the Portland square block, with the exception of one larger rectangular block (200 ft x 600 ft). However, during time the grid suffered some changes. The annexation of several blocks and the interruption of streets have lead to the creation of “superblocks”. This hasn’t really affected the rectilinear block layout of the neighborhood. It has lead to bigger rectangular blocks and L shaped blocks.