Vanport City was established in 1942 and lasted only six years. It was a hastily constructed public housing project, built by wartime industrialist Henry J. Kaiser to meet the housing needs of World War II workers at the shipyards in Portland and Vancouver, Washington. This temporary city was referred to as Kaiserville and the Miracle City, but was officially named Vanport because of its central location between Portland and Vancouver.

The city was built on 650 acres of Columbia River floodplain, near the current site of Delta Park, Portland International Raceway, and Heron Lakes Golf Course. At its peak in 1944, Vanport was the largest public housing project in the nation, the second largest city in Oregon, and had a total population of 40,000. It included about 10,000 apartments, with several shopping centers, schools, and recreation centers. The city also included a hospital, a police station, a library and, after the war, Vanport College.