



## What is Austin's True Housing Need?

### More Flawed Numbers

So, let's get this straight:

- Mayor Adler and the Council have provided [policy guidelines](#) to the city manager to upzone the whole city to provide, over 10 years, 135,000 more residential units.
- In order to accomplish this, they are proposing to upzone the city to allow the construction of 405,000 more units.
- Based on 2.4 people per household, 405,000 units is enough capacity to house over 972,000 people, but the city's demographer [predicts a population growth](#) of only 2 percent per year, or about 220,000 more people over 10 years.
- The demographer has indicated that [the city needs only](#) 75,000 to 85,000 more new residential units over 10 years, based on current growth rates.
- In adopting the Strategic Housing Blueprint, the City Council [ignored the demographer's advice](#) and calculated a housing goal of 135,000 units based on the **regional** annual growth rate of 3.4% rather than the city's actual annual growth rate of 2%.
- [The city asserts](#) that we have current zoning to accommodate 145,000 more units, but to date, it has offered no data or methodology to substantiate this claim, and it continues to put off requests for an explanation.
- A consultant on the CodeNEXT team advised the City to double its housing goal to achieve the capacity of the units it actually needs built. Using the actual 2% growth rate, his calculation would call for capacity of 150,000 to 170,000 units.
- Without giving a reason, the City Council has further ballooned the 2-times factor by arbitrarily instructing the staff to [triple](#) the Blueprint goal of 135,000 units to reach the 405,000 unit capacity target being used to upzone the city.
- Even without the proposed upzoning directed by the Council, data from the demographer indicates that currently the market is producing units greatly exceeding even the 135,000-unit goal. If [the current building rate](#) for **multifamily units alone** were to continue for ten years, this would result in over 228,000 more units accommodating 547,000 people.

## **We don't get it. Do you? Ask yourself, "What's really going on here?"**

The City staff, Council, and their real estate allies and their supporters have chosen to ignore factual data about the City's housing needs in order to create a narrative to justify their deregulation of our Land Development Code to remake Austin according to their own visions and economic goals. Despite actual demographic trends compiled by the city demographer, they want to "bend the trend" to make room for more people by pushing out those of us who already live here. It appears that the drive to redevelop our neighborhoods is driving the housing capacity numbers, not the other way around. Remaking our city just because newcomers want to live here is a grossly unjust reason for displacing current residents.

We question the merits of the capacity methodology used by the City as the foundation for the rewrite of the Land Development Code. In the City of Austin, zoning capacity is not a static number; every month, it is increased by variances and up-zonings requested by developers. Capacity is organic, and it grows with the City by individual zoning changes.

Excessive zoning capacity will not decrease housing costs. Developers and their lenders look carefully at market demand, and they will not overbuild and oversupply the market. If the City is upzoned for a 405,000-unit capacity, they will simply pick the low-hanging fruit and build luxury units wherever they choose. And they won't need community input because they will already have the zoning. Upzoning residential neighborhoods at this scale is nothing more than [turning our land use "planning" over to the real estate industry](#).

Austin has plenty of places for population growth, both inside and outside the urban core. It's time to have a real community conversation to write a land code based on consensus, not one dictated by special interests.

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