



## MYTH: Austin Is a City of Single-Family-Only Zoning

*Two forms of housing dominate Austin: Single-family houses and large apartment buildings. This lack of housing variety does not reflect Austin's diversity and contributes to growing affordability issues.*

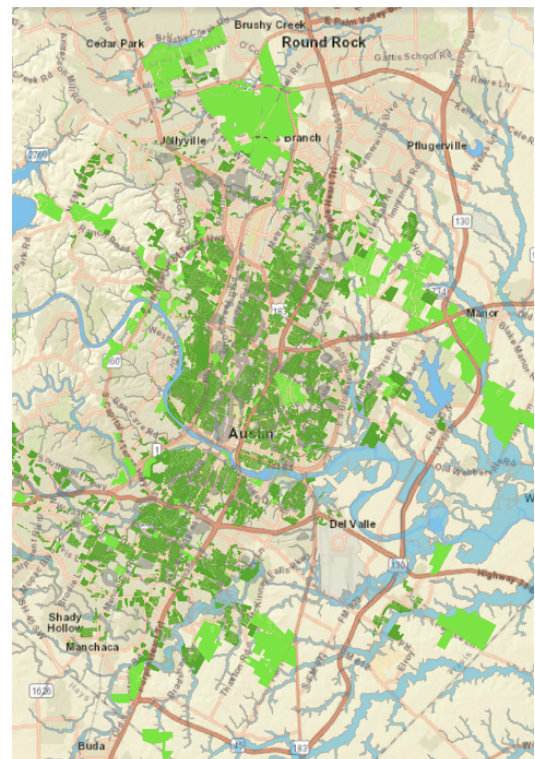
— [City of Austin Housing Website](#)

*Large architecturally unremarkable neighborhoods close to downtown and UT, for example, are designated as historic districts, and the zoning in most of Austin prohibits any housing besides single-family homes.*

— [Austin Business Journal, July 16, 2021](#)

[An article in The New York Times](#) looked at various cities across the U.S. and used [Urban Footprint](#) analysts to calculate the percentage of residential housing that is zoned for single-family housing only—that is a single-family house, not a duplex, and only a very restrictive accessory dwelling unit (ADU). These calculations were done a few months before Minneapolis changed its zoning ordinance. Austin was not included in the article, so using city data we mapped the single-family-only restrictive zoning in Austin (RR, LA, SF-1 and SF-2) and calculated the Austin percentage.

The green areas on this map represent residential land (other than large apartment buildings) whose zoning allows more than single-family homes. The darker green areas show the residential land



within the City of Austin zoned for greater than one home per lot (but not large apartment buildings). The lighter green areas show PUD developments, which contain denser housing types. Obviously, Austin is not dominated by single-family-only zoning and other housing densities are not prohibited.

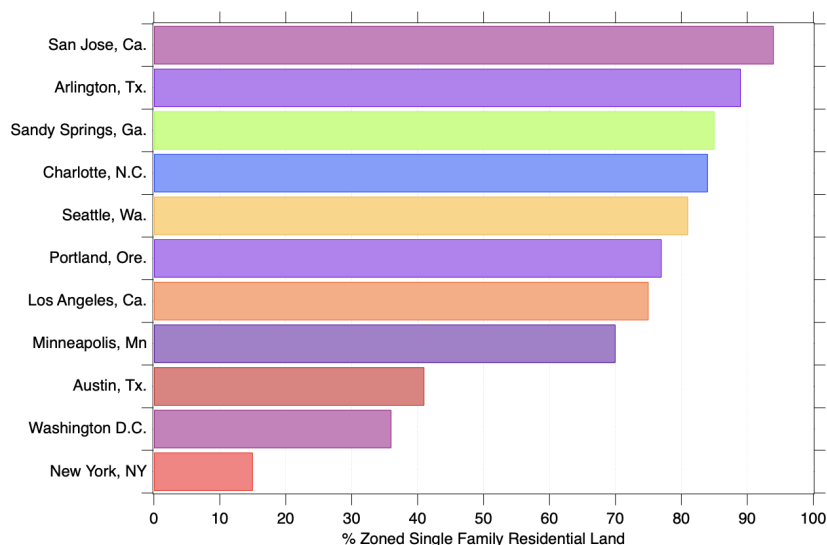
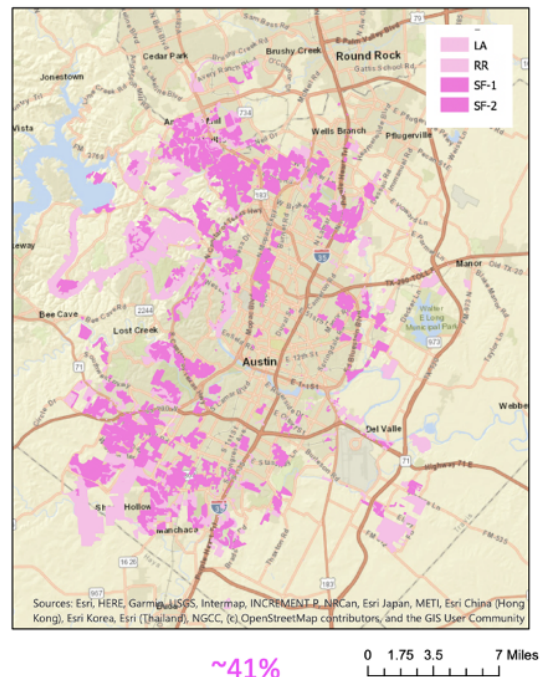
But how does it compare with other cities?

## So—How Does Austin Compare?

Since Austin was not included in *The New York Times* article we made a comparable map with single-family-only residential zoning shown in pink.

Austin has about 41% of residential land zoned for single-family only. The range of single-family-only-zoned residential land in the cities in the study were from 15% to 94%.

The bar chart shows the percentage of single family only zoning of all residential zoning in the cities in *The New York Times* study, with our calculation for Austin included. The bar chart shows that Austin has *much less* single family only residentially zoned land than most of the cities in the study.



## **Takeaway**

It is a myth that Austin is predominantly a single-family-zoned city. Austin has considerably less single-family-only zoning than all of the cities featured by *The New York Times* except for New York City (15%) and Washington, D.C. (36%). Most of the other communities analyzed would have to cut their single-family-only zoning almost in half to be comparable to Austin.

Far from dominating the market as claimed, less than half of the residential zoning in Austin is limited to single-family homes. The claim that “the zoning in most of Austin prohibits any housing besides single-family homes” is not based on facts.

To move forward as a community, we must shed the myths that have hobbled our conversations.