

Single Family House Size Data: Trends and Existing Conditions for Austin Neighborhoods

Introduction, Methodology and Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this effort is to produce information about the sizes (in terms of square feet) of single family houses in Austin, including data on trends over time and existing conditions by neighborhood areas. The resultant products include:

- typical house sizes of existing housing stock by neighborhood,
- average house sizes of new housing stock created in the past five years by neighborhood and subdivision,
- ranking and graph of recently built house sizes by neighborhood,
- a listing of the very largest houses built during the past year.

Discussion

Clearly, the physical size of single family houses built in Austin has increased significantly over the past five decades. For example, the standard house built in Brentwood in the late 1940's is about 1,200 square feet and housed Austin's first wave of returning GI's and their new families; whereas today, the typical house being built in Circle C is almost 4,000 square feet in size—more than three times the size of the Brentwood classic. Interestingly, the size of the average family living in these structures has actually steadily decreased over the same period of time (about 4.3 persons per family on average in 1950 compared to 3.1 persons per family today).

There are very few neighborhoods in Austin that have not seen at least some level of residential redevelopment in the form of substantial renovations, remodeling projects, and today, tear-down and re-builds. This activity has resulted in "house size multi-modalism" within Austin neighborhoods. In other words, neighborhoods tend to have two to three distinct clusters of house size groupings. For example, in Rosedale, there is the group of original homes that are seldom larger than 900 square feet; then there is the

group of houses that have had renovations yielding additional bedrooms, larger kitchens and bathrooms and sometimes family rooms. These structures can typical range in size from 1,450 to 2,400 square feet. And today, original houses in Tarrytown, for example, that may have initially been no more than 1,300 square feet in size are being demolished and replaced with structures that often range anywhere from 5,000 to 10,000 square feet in size.

Methodology

Information from the Travis Central Appraisal District is used to create a sample of house sizes within existing neighborhoods and to determine the decades when that stock was built. Building permit information is used to calculate the average sizes of new house built within Austin since 2000 by neighborhood.

This document is produced by Ryan Robinson, City Demographer, Department of Neighborhood Planning and Zoning, City of Austin, January 2006.
ryan.robinson@ci.austin.tx.us

cityofaustin.org/census