

The Cost of Community: Housing and Mental Well-Being

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Jewel's Soundbite



“Going to college was kind of like breaking that generational curse that it felt like was kind of placed on me. And I was like, I don't want to end up in that situation that I saw my family was in. So college was like, yeah, that that's what I'm going for.” - Jewel

Why Housing Matters for Wellbeing

- **Loneliness and isolation** are significant risk factors for mental health issues
 - **Belonging and connectedness** can serve as **protective factors**
- Students who live on campus **engage more with academics and the university**
- Living on campus is associated with **higher graduation rates and GPAs**



Source: The University of Texas

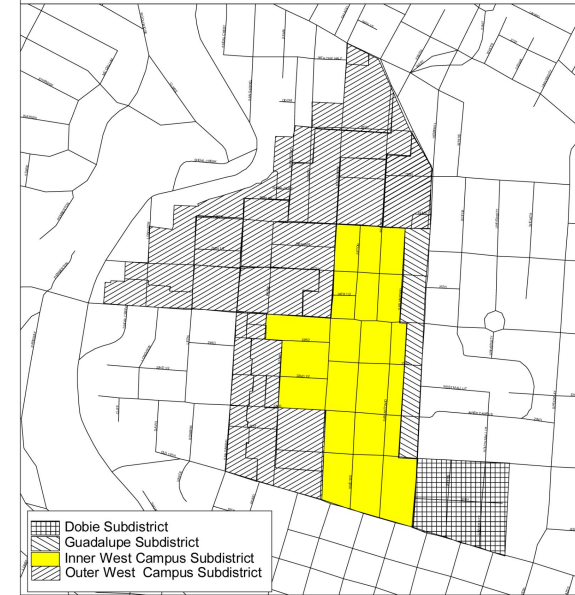
Year	Students living on-campus	Students living off-campus
2012	3.0511	2.9566
2013	3.0462	3.0008
2014	3.1304	3.0615
2015	3.2033	3.117
2016	3.1612	3.1308
2017	3.2017	3.1772
2018	3.2566	3.1751
2019	3.3175	3.2172
2020	3.3546	3.227
2021	3.5015	3.4556
2022	3.4071	3.3544

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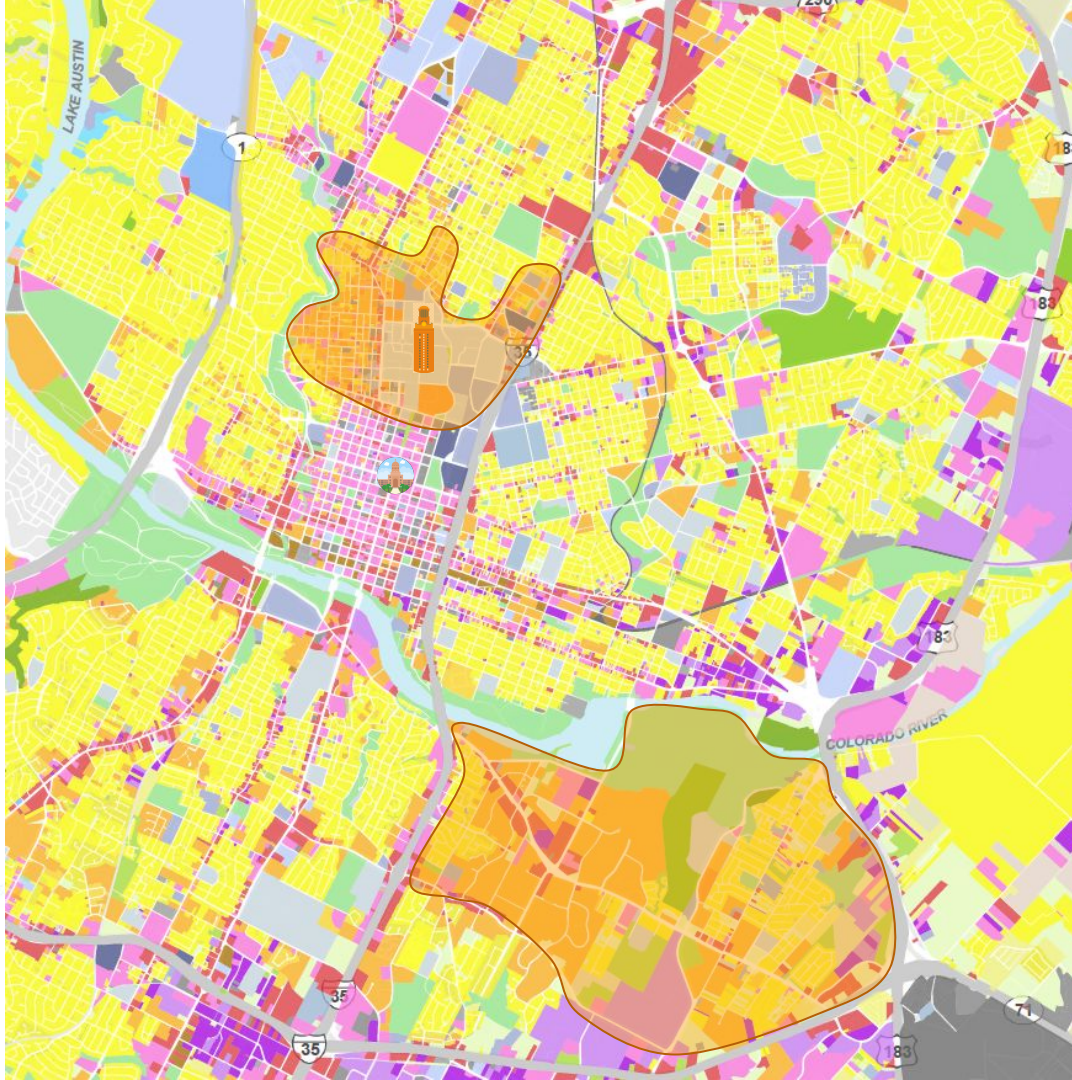
How Did We Get Here?

- The 1980s: Sowing the Seeds
 - 1983: Microelectronics and Computer Consortium (MCC)
 - **1984**: The last Land Development Code (LDC) update
- 2004: University Neighborhood Overlay (UNO)
 - Taller Buildings & Density Bonuses
 - SMART Housing
- Today: Students are Feeling the Crunch
 - November 2022: \$350 million affordable housing bond approved by voters
 - March 2023: City Council Resolution on increasing affordable **student** housing
 - Last week: Planning Commission moves to create Town Zoning category to allow more for the construction of more housing



Land Use

- Single Family
- Mobile Homes
- Duplexes
- Large-lot Single Family
- Three/Fourplex
- Apartment/Condo
- Group Quarters
- Retirement Housing
- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Office
- Manufacturing
- Warehousing
- Miscellaneous Industrial
- Resource Extraction (Mining)
- Landfills
- Semi-institutional Housing
- Hospitals
- Government Services
- Educational
- Meeting and Assembly
- Cemeteries
- Cultural Services
- Parks/Greenbelts
- Golf Courses
- Camp Grounds
- Common Areas
- Preserves
- Railroad Facilities
- Transportation Facilities
- Airports and Aviation Facilities
- Marinas
- Parking
- Streets and Roads
- Utilities
- Undeveloped
- Agricultural



Single Family (Low Density)

Apartments (High Density)

Office Space

Commercial

Students in West Campus are flanked on all sides by single family and office space zoning, restricting the development of new multi-unit housing. This limits housing stock, and subsequently increases rents.

Students who cannot afford West Campus housing typically end up living in Riverside.

The UT Housing Picture

- 40% of first time college freshmen **live off-campus**
- The lowest on-campus housing cost is around **\$13,000 for the school year**
- On-campus living costs about **\$1,000 more than in-state tuition** – for the cheapest dorms
- Pilot program announced this week: **\$1,800/year for residence halls**



Nationwide University Housing Shortage

The General Landscape of University Housing

- 43% of students at four year universities said they experienced housing insecurity in 2020 and 14% experienced homelessness
- Rents is rising, the inability of communities and institutions to build enough housing for students, and other costs of college going up.
- For many this can mean the difference between going to college or not.
- Some take on massive debt or miss out on extracurriculars, etc.

Housing Solutions Other Universities Are Implementing

- UNC Charlotte
 - Signing contracts with nearby hotels to house students
- University of Utah
 - Paying local alumni \$5,000 per semester to house students
- Florida A&M University
 - Giving students cash incentives (\$2,000/semester) and free meal plans
- University of Wisconsin
 - Admitting fewer students
- Long Beach City College
 - Turning parking garages into “dorms”

Key Takeaways

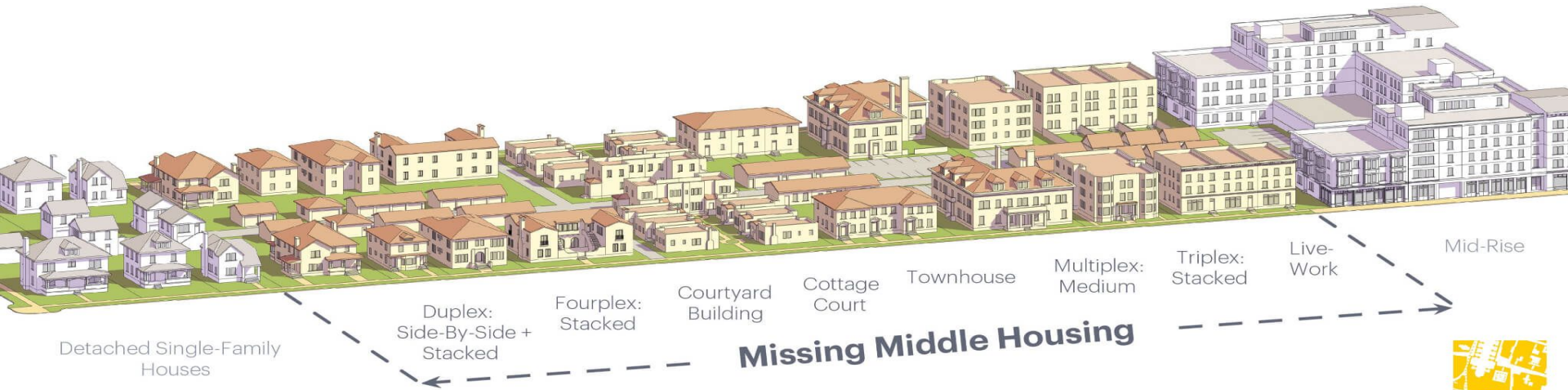
And Policy Recommendations

Key Takeaway #1

The university can take a more intentional approach to solve the housing shortage for UT students by researching the solutions other universities experiencing the same problem have implemented.

Key Takeaway #2

In addition to high-density zoning, UT can explore transitional zoning near campus to address “the missing middle” in Austin. This will allow more students to live closer to campus, granting them better access to the tangible and intangible benefits that living near campus can provide.



Key Takeaway #3

UT can set a north star goal and plainly state that providing affordable, on- or near-campus housing is a priority for all incoming freshmen. The quality of a student's first-year experience and their level of connection to campus community should not be based on their ability to afford rent.

Key Takeaway #4

The university needs more on-campus housing. But until then, the university should consider how they can create more involvement and belonging opportunities to improve mental health and well-being, both for students already on-campus and especially for those off-campus.

Thank You!

Any Questions?