



National Trust *for*
Historic Preservation

Old Buildings in a Changing Austin: Historic Preservation, Density, and Affordability

MIKE POWE, PH.D. | DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH | RESEARCH & POLICY LAB

SEPTEMBER 25, 2019

Save the past. Enrich the future.



The **Research & Policy Lab** promotes the conservation, reuse, and retrofit of existing buildings and neighborhoods as a powerful strategy for supporting community health, equity, and resilience.



“The greenest building is one that already exists.”

- Carl Elefante



**The Greenest Building:
Quantifying the Environmental
Value of Building Reuse**

A REPORT BY

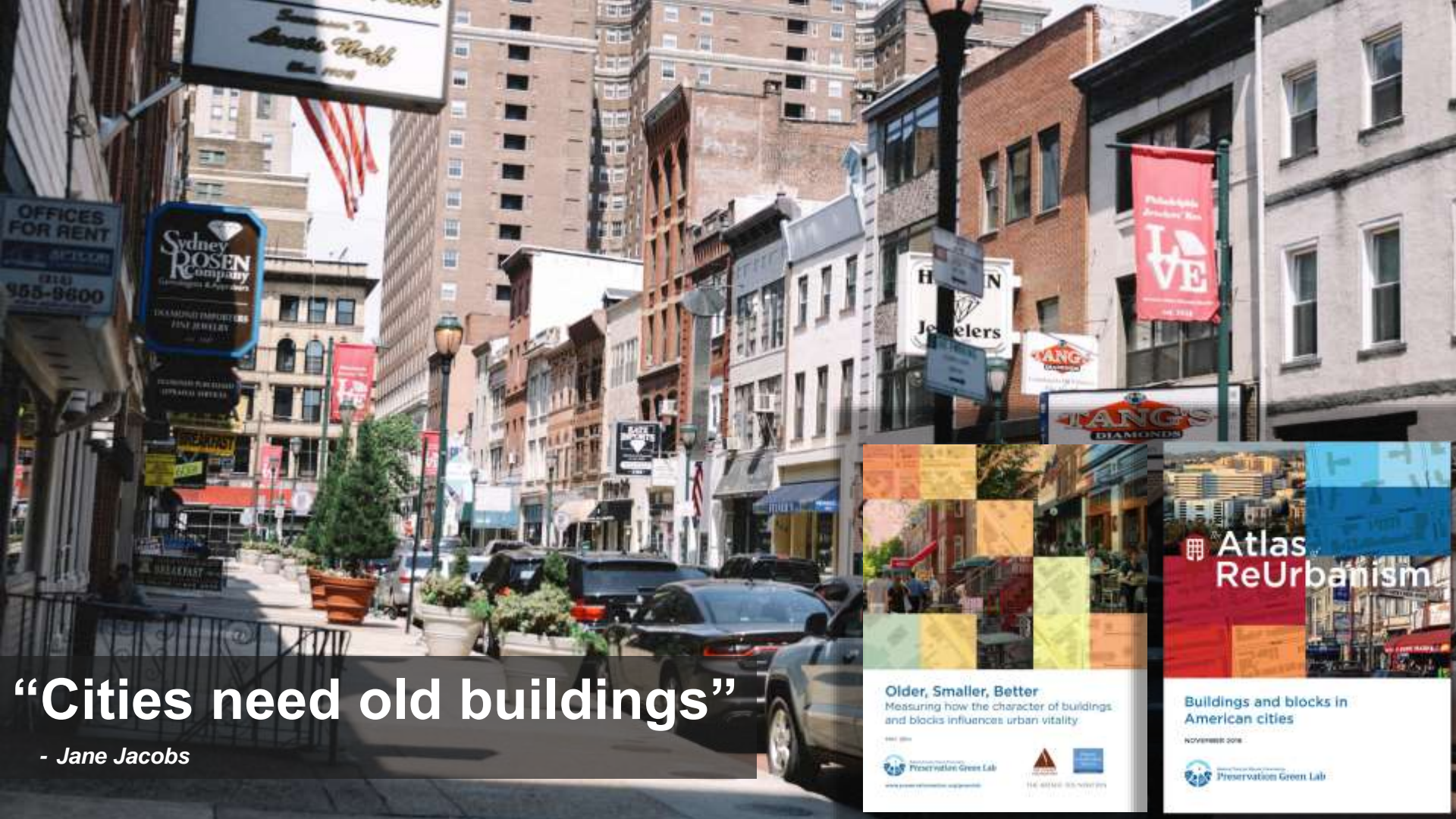


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“Cities need old buildings”

- Jane Jacobs



Older, Smaller, Better
Measuring how the character of buildings and blocks influences urban vitality

NOV 2018
Preservation Green Lab
THE GREEN CITY SOURCE



**Atlas
ReUrbanism**

**Buildings and blocks in
American cities**

NOVEMBER 2018
Preservation Green Lab



“What can be done to bring the benefits of building reuse to more places?”

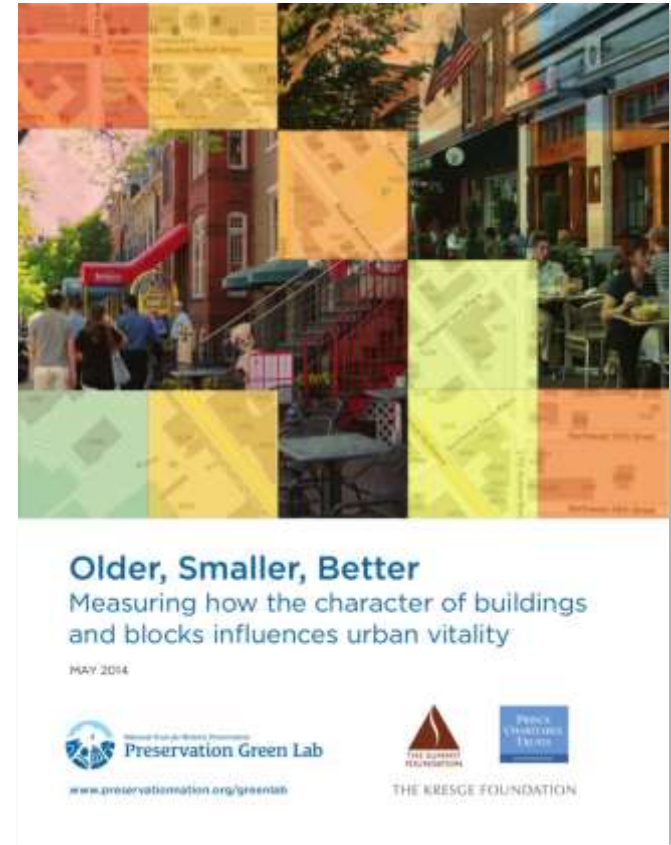
**Untapped Potential:
Strategies for Revitalization
and Reuse**

October 2017



Older, Smaller, Better Project Overview

- **OBJECTIVE:** Test Jane Jacobs' hypothesis that diverse city fabric supports greater vitality and opportunity
- Used newly available data to assess the social, cultural, and economic value of older, smaller buildings
- Focused on Seattle, San Francisco, and Washington D.C.



00:00 Fri

Eric Schamhorst
eric.schamhorst@kadk.dk

Older, Smaller, Better Data and Metrics

- Creatively linked diverse datasets to test statistical relationship between built character and performance
 - Spotrank cell usage intensity data
 - Yelp, Flickr, Craigslist, Walk Score
 - U.S. Census Bureau, ACS
 - LEHD LODES
 - City permits

OSB Mapping Methodology





OSB Mapping Methodology

- Overlaid 200-meter-by-200-meter grid



OSB Mapping Methodology

- Overlaid 200-meter-by-200-meter grid
- *Older, Smaller, Better* focused on commercial and mixed-use areas



OSB Mapping Methodology

- Overlaid 200-meter-by-200-meter grid
- *Older, Smaller, Better* focused on commercial and mixed-use areas
- Measured key features of the built fabric:
 - Median building age
 - Diversity of building age
 - Granularity

Seattle Parcel Data



Seattle Parcel Data



Year Built

- 1900 - 1910
- 1910 - 1919
- 1919 - 1926
- 1926 - 1939
- 1939 - 1946
- 1946 - 1951
- 1951 - 1959
- 1959 - 1982
- 1982 - 2005
- 2005 - 2016

Seattle Parcel Data



Year Built

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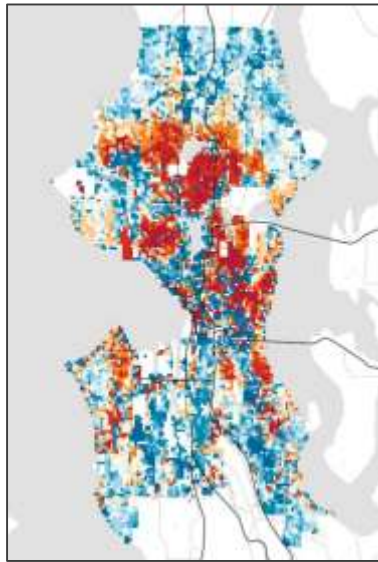
Seattle Parcel Data



Year Built

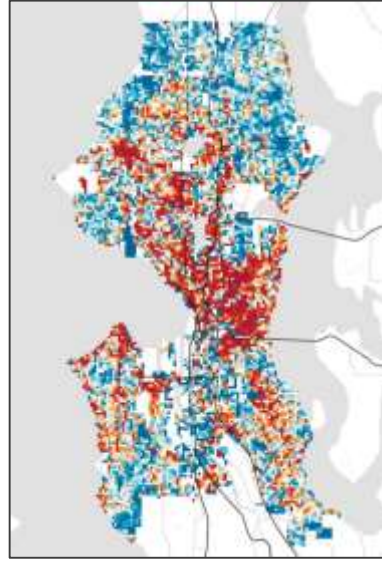
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Measures of City Fabric



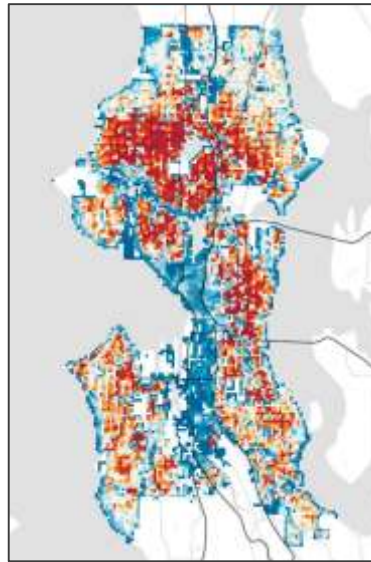
Building Age

+



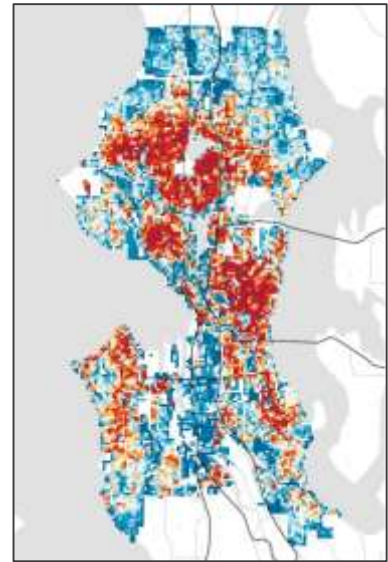
Age Diversity

+



Granularity

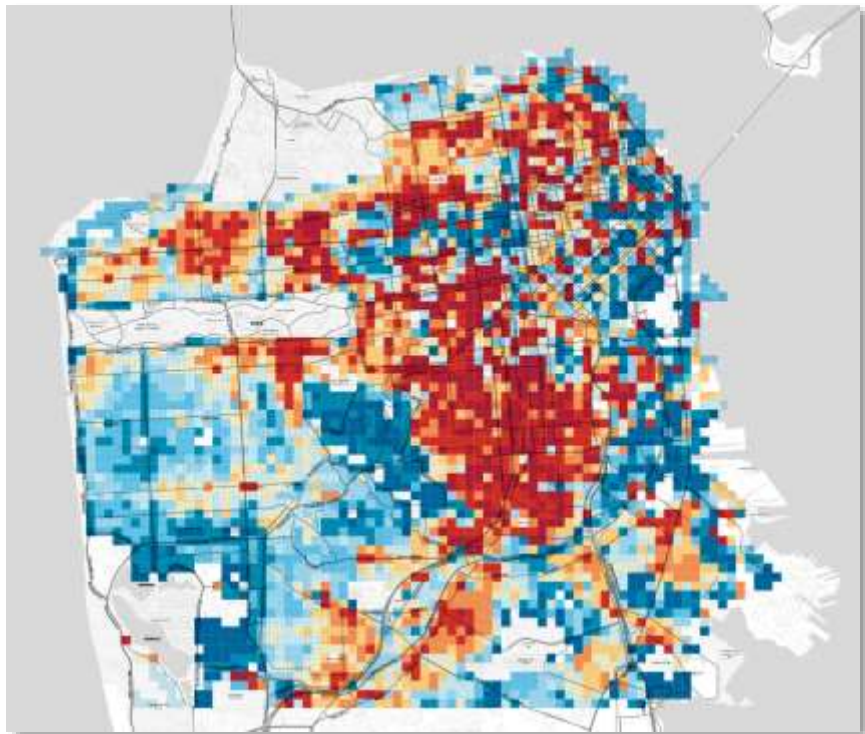
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Composite of all three

Our composite measure = “Character Score”

Statistical Analysis



- Developed spatial regression models to determine relative role of building fabric alongside other measures
 - **Private investment** (Construction permit dollars)
 - **Access to transit** (Transit Score)
 - **Income** (Median income)

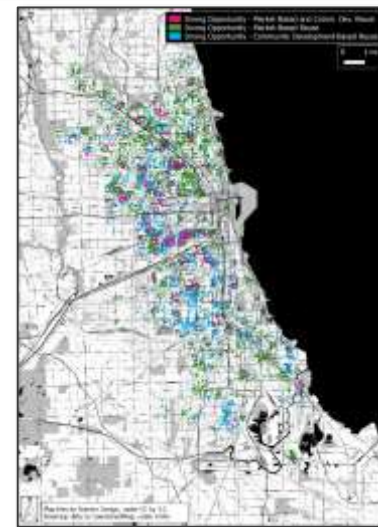
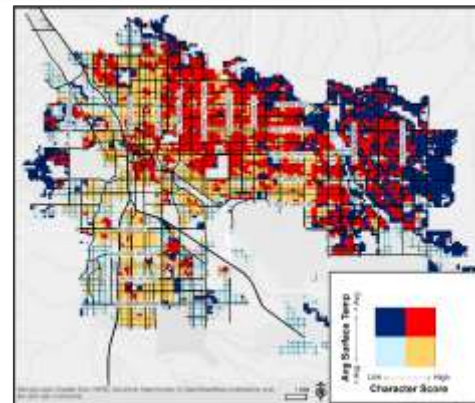
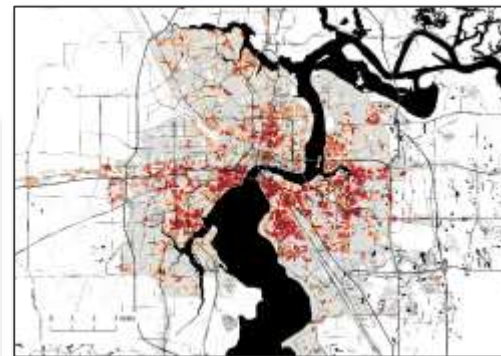
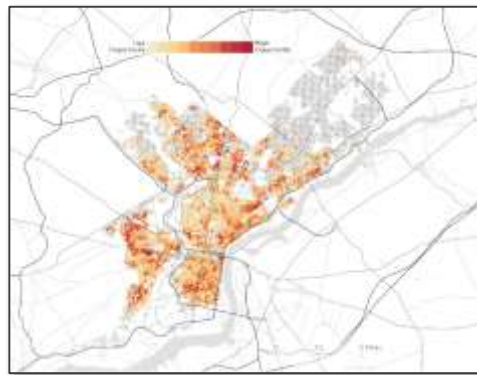
Older, Smaller, Better Findings

- Where you find older, smaller buildings and mixed-vintage blocks, you see significantly...
 - Greater walkability
 - Younger residents and a greater mix of people at different stages of life
 - Greater nightlife and cultural vitality
 - More jobs, creative jobs, and businesses per square foot
 - More women and minority-owned businesses, non-chain businesses, small businesses, and new businesses



Older, Smaller, Better Evolution

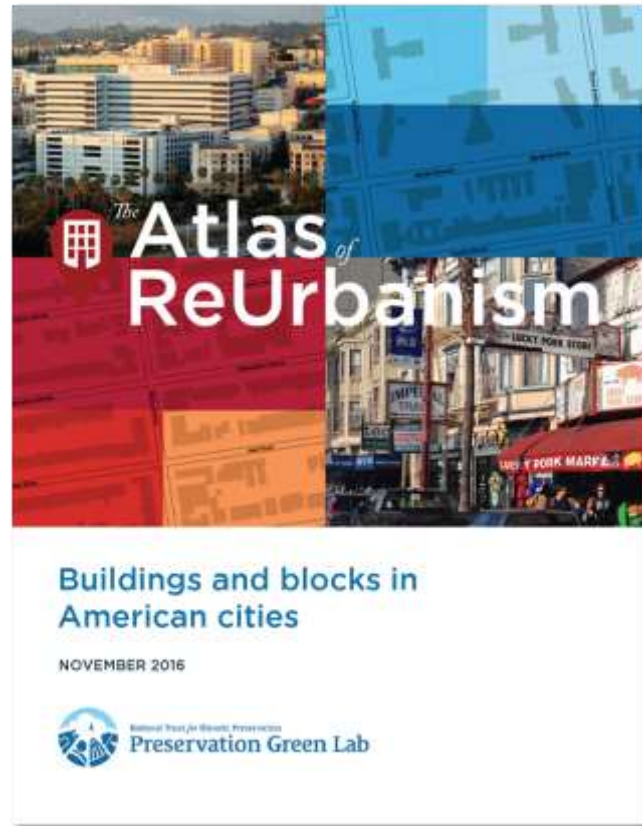
- Since publication of the original report in 2014...
 - Peer-reviewed publication in the *Journal of the American Planning Association*
 - Integration of mapping methodology into PGL's Partnership for Building Reuse with ULI



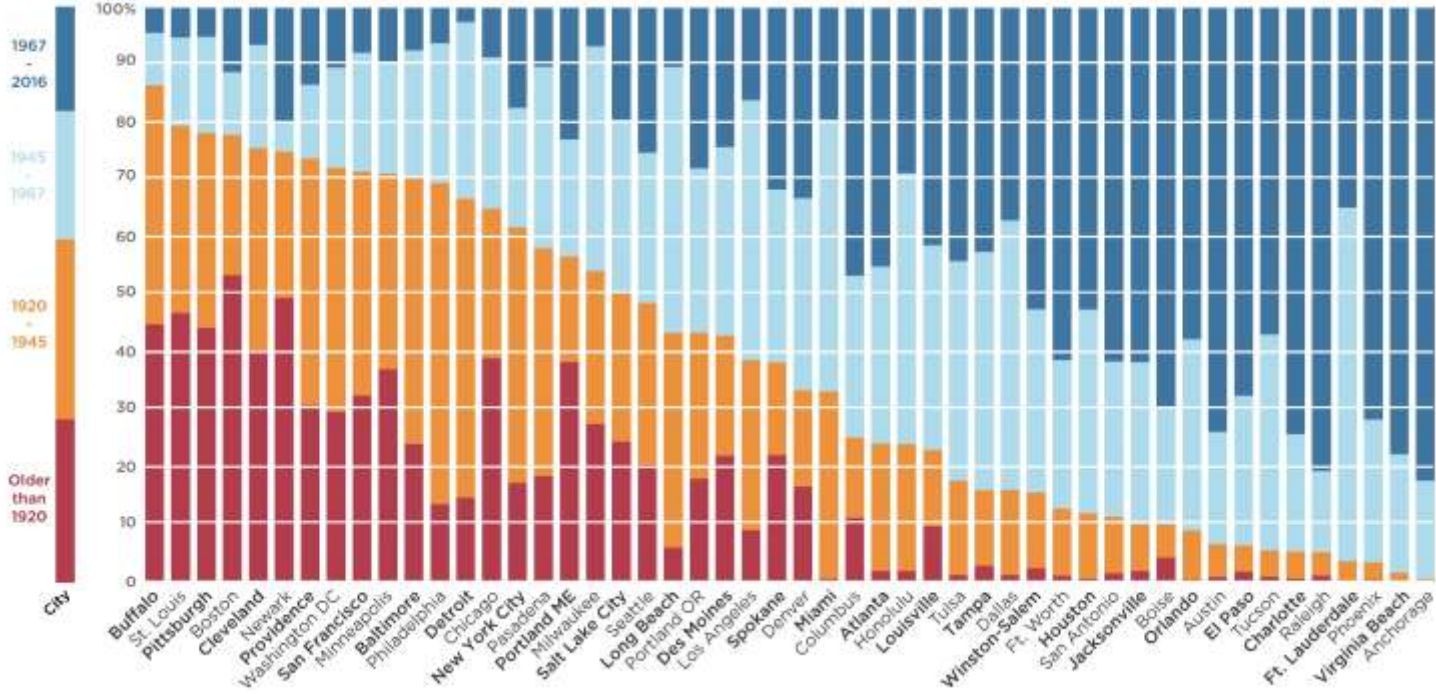
Atlas of ReUrbanism

Project Overview

- **OBJECTIVE:** Take *Older, Smaller, Better* data to national scale
- Constructed massive 50-city database that combines built environment and urban vitality data
- Includes comparative charts, interactive mapping platform, and city-specific factsheets

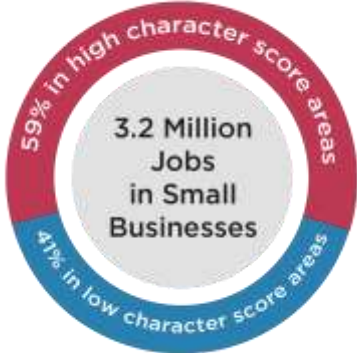
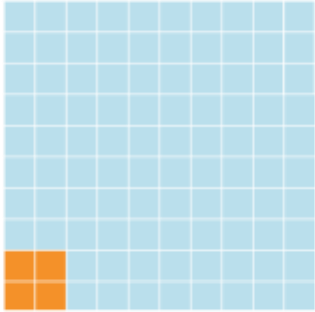


Atlas: Comparative Charts

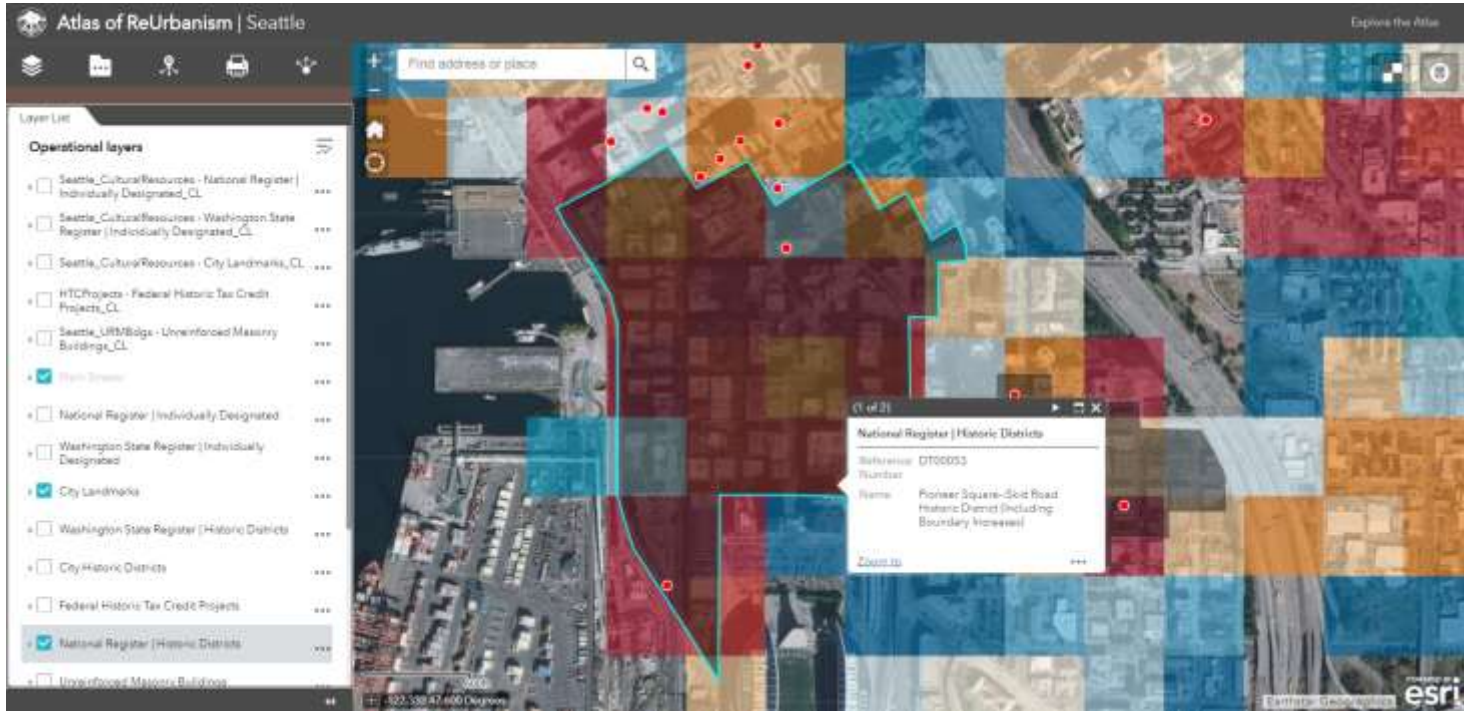


Atlas: Learning from 50 Cities

4.3%
of all
buildings
are locally
landmarked



Atlas: Interactive Maps



Atlas: City-Specific Factsheets

Seattle, WA

83.9 mi² | Pop: 684,451 | 18th Most Populous U.S. City | Est. 1869

Blocks of older, smaller, mixed-age buildings play a critical role in fostering robust local economies, inclusive neighborhoods, and sustainable cities. The Preservation Green Lab report, *Older, Smaller, Better*, leveraged the ideas of **Jane Jacobs** to show why preservation and building reuse matter for successful communities. The *Atlas of ReUrbanism* expands this research to 50 U.S. cities, demonstrating that **Character Counts**.

In **Seattle**, compared to areas with large, new structures, character-rich **blocks of older, smaller, mixed-age buildings** contain...

- 78% greater population density**
- 36% more jobs in small businesses and 24% more jobs in new businesses**
- 64% more women and minority-owned businesses**

The building blocks for an inclusive, diverse, economically vibrant city. Seattle's older, smaller buildings are irreplaceable assets. For more information about Seattle's high-character areas, [please see reverse](#).

■ **The Atlas of ReUrbanism | A Tool for Discovery**
 Developed by the Preservation Green Lab, the Atlas of ReUrbanism is part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's ReUrbanism initiative. Explore the buildings and blocks of Seattle and other American cities further by visiting www.atlasofreurbanism.com

Built Character in Seattle

83.9 mi² | Pop: 684,451 | 18th Most Populous U.S. City | Est. 1869

The Atlas of ReUrbanism uses the following score to identify character-rich blocks by age and size: higher scoring areas in red represent blocks of older, smaller, mixed age buildings; lower scoring areas in blue represent newer, larger, urban-style developments.

High Score (Red) **Low Score** (Blue)

Density of historic blocks
Density of newer blocks

High v. Low Character Score

Use the table below to compare high- and low-character score areas in terms of their density and diversity, inclusiveness, and economic vitality.

Density & Diversity

	High Character Score Area	Low Character Score Area
Avg. Population Density	714	493
Median Age (Year)	55.0	41.4
Avg. Between-Age 50-64	27.9%	22.8%
Avg. Foreign Born ¹	15.7%	16.9%
Avg. High School ²	82%	83%
Avg. People of Color ³	38.2%	34.8%
Avg. Housing Units/Block ⁴	38.4	20.8
Avg. Vacant Homes ⁵	0.3%	0.7%
Avg. Owned Homes ⁶	82.0%	81.9%

Inclusiveness

	High Character Score Area	Low Character Score Area
Total Unemployed Minority-Owned Businesses ⁷	1,229	1,681
Avg. Affordable Rental Housing Units ⁸	16.8%	11.3%

Economic Vitality

	High Character Score Area	Low Character Score Area
Total Jobs in Small Businesses ⁹	22,434	17,270
Total Jobs in New Businesses ¹⁰	8,208	4,841
Total Jobs in Creative Businesses ¹¹	30,367	16,260

Building and Preservation Facts

Item	Seattle	50-City Average
Historic Buildings	180,717	204,038
Per Square Mile	2,153	1,416
Historic Year Built	1948	1962
Most Recent Register of Historic Places	12%	6.9%
Locally Designated	0.9%	4.1%
Historic New Growth Potential	\$1	\$15

How Built by Period: Seattle | 50-City Average

Atlas: City-Specific Factsheets


Austin, TX
297.9 mi² | Pop: 931,830 | 11th Most Populous U.S. City | Est. 1839

Blocks of older, smaller, mixed-age buildings play a critical role in fostering robust local economies, inclusive neighborhoods, and sustainable cities. The Preservation Green Lab report, *Older, Smaller, Better*, leveraged the ideas of *Jane Jacobs* to show why preservation and building reuse matter for successful communities. The *Atlas of ReUrbanism* expands this research to 50 U.S. cities, demonstrating that **Character Counts**.

In **Austin**, compared to areas with large, new structures, character-rich **blocks of older, smaller, mixed-age buildings** contain...

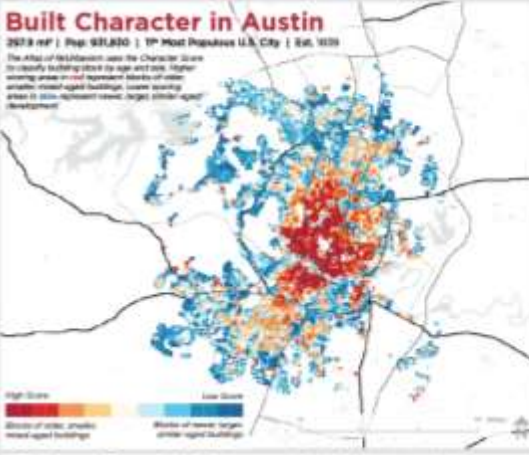
- 
83% greater population density
- 
72% more jobs in small businesses and 61% more jobs in new businesses
- 
Nearly 80% more women and minority-owned businesses

The building blocks for an inclusive, diverse, economically vibrant city. Austin's older, smaller buildings are irreplaceable assets. For more information about Austin's high-character areas, please see reverse.

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Built Character in Austin
2023 sq ft | Pop: 931,830 | 11th Most Populous U.S. City | Est. 1839


The Atlas of ReUrbanism uses the Character Score to identify building stock by age and size. Higher scoring areas are rich in older, smaller, mixed-age buildings, lower scoring areas are rich in newer, larger, single-unit developments.



Building and Preservation Facts

Category/Building	Austin	50-City Average
Density/Buildings	Total: 288,228	288,228
Per Square Mile	422	1,418
Median Year Built	1980	1980
City Hall's Register of Historic Places	17%	6.8%
Locally Designated Historic Tax Credit Projects	0	0%

Year Built by Percent: Austin | 50-City Average



200,838 Buildings
(73.1% of total)

27,946 Buildings
(9.7% of total)

High v. Low Character Score

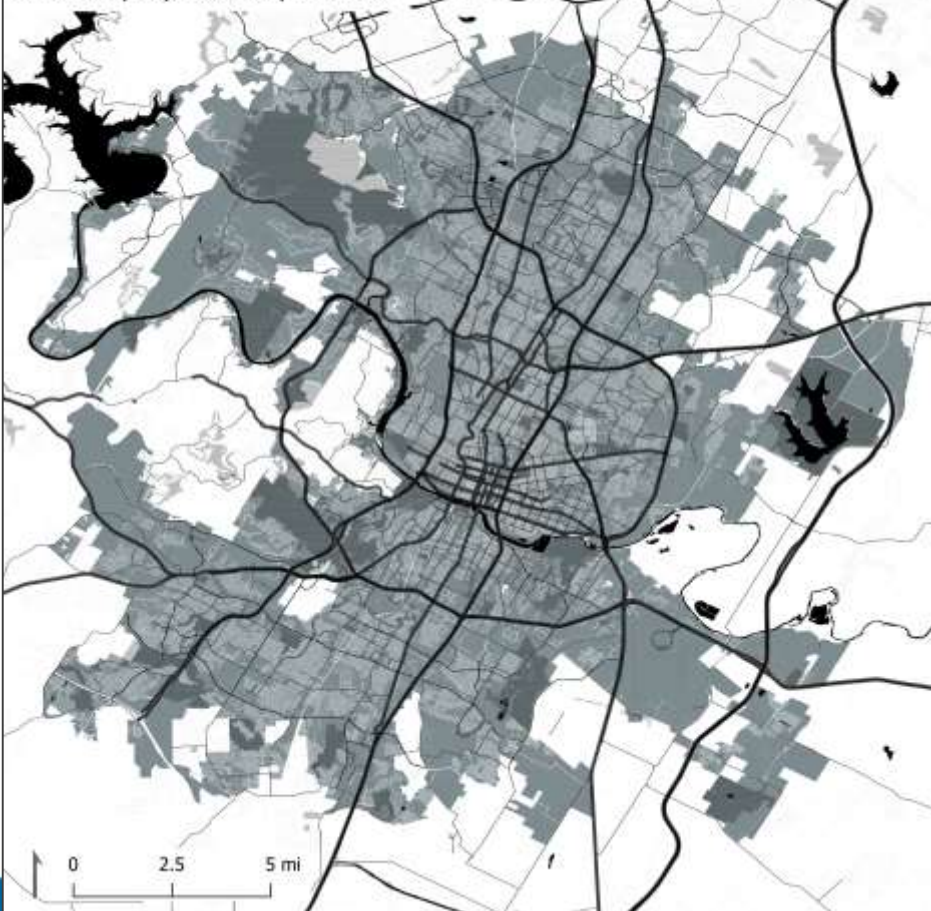
Use the facts below to compare high- and low-character score areas in terms of their density and diversity, inclusiveness, and economic vitality.

Category	High Character Score Areas	Low Character Score Areas
Density & Diversity		
Avg. Population Density*	64.2	30.1
Median Age (Year Bt)	35.3	33.8
Avg. Resident Age W. H&C	38.0%	48.3%
Avg. Foreign Born**	9.0%	10.8%
Avg. New to County**	50%	32%
Avg. People of Color*	45.1%	43.4%
Avg. Housing Units/Block (Block)	23.2	10.1
Avg. Vacant Homes*	10%	17%
Avg. Closed Homes*	22.0%	32.3%
Inclusiveness		
Total Women and Minority Owned Businesses**	2,100	1,340
Avg. Affordable Housing (Units)	90.2%	92.0%
Economic Vitality		
Total Jobs in Small Businesses**	42,239	34,290
Total Jobs in New Businesses**	9,017	5,987
Total Jobs in Creative Industries**	2,047%	42,082

*From the 2010 Census
**From the 2012-2013 Longitudinal Business Database (LBD) by the U.S. Census Bureau

Built Character in Austin

297.9 mi² | Pop: 931,830 | Est. 1839



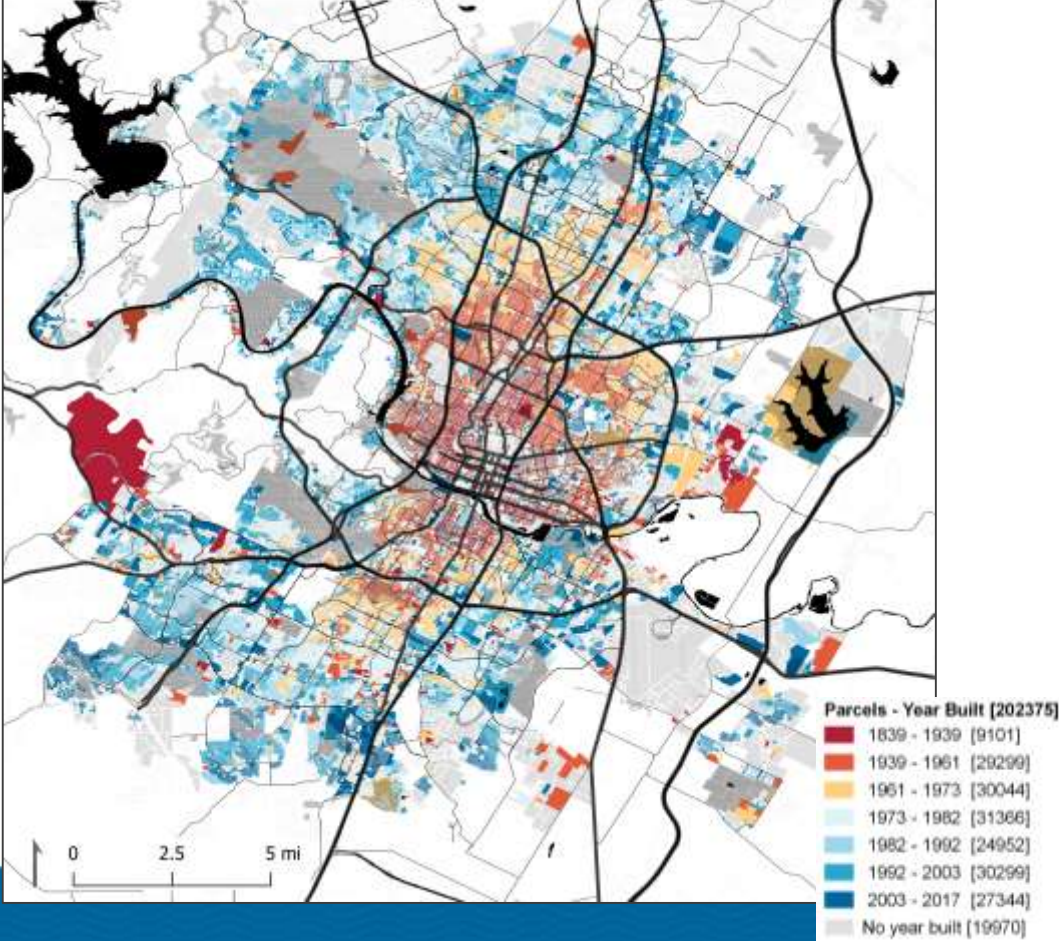
Austin

Buildings by the Numbers

- **200,835** buildings
- **0.8%** built pre-1920
- **6.5%** built pre-1945
- **30.0%** 50 years or older
- **1980** median year built
- **1.7%** on National Register
- **0.7%** locally designated

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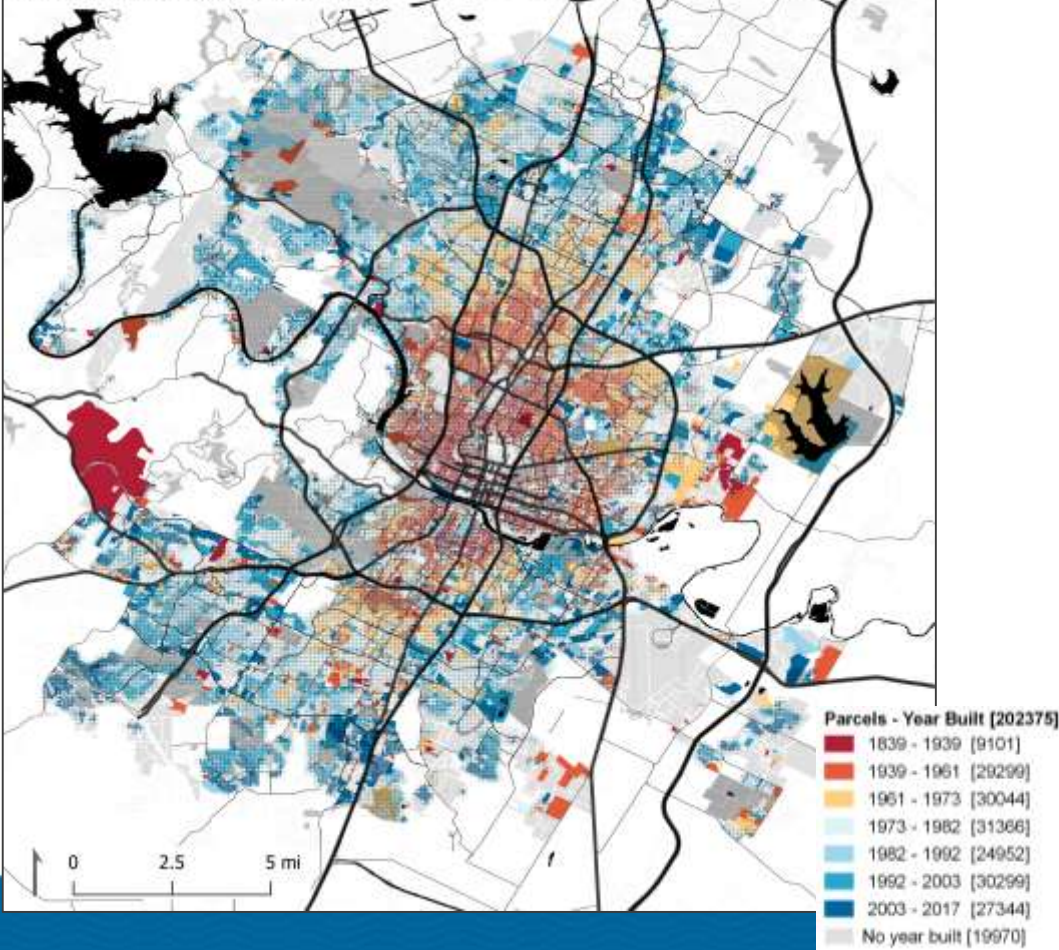
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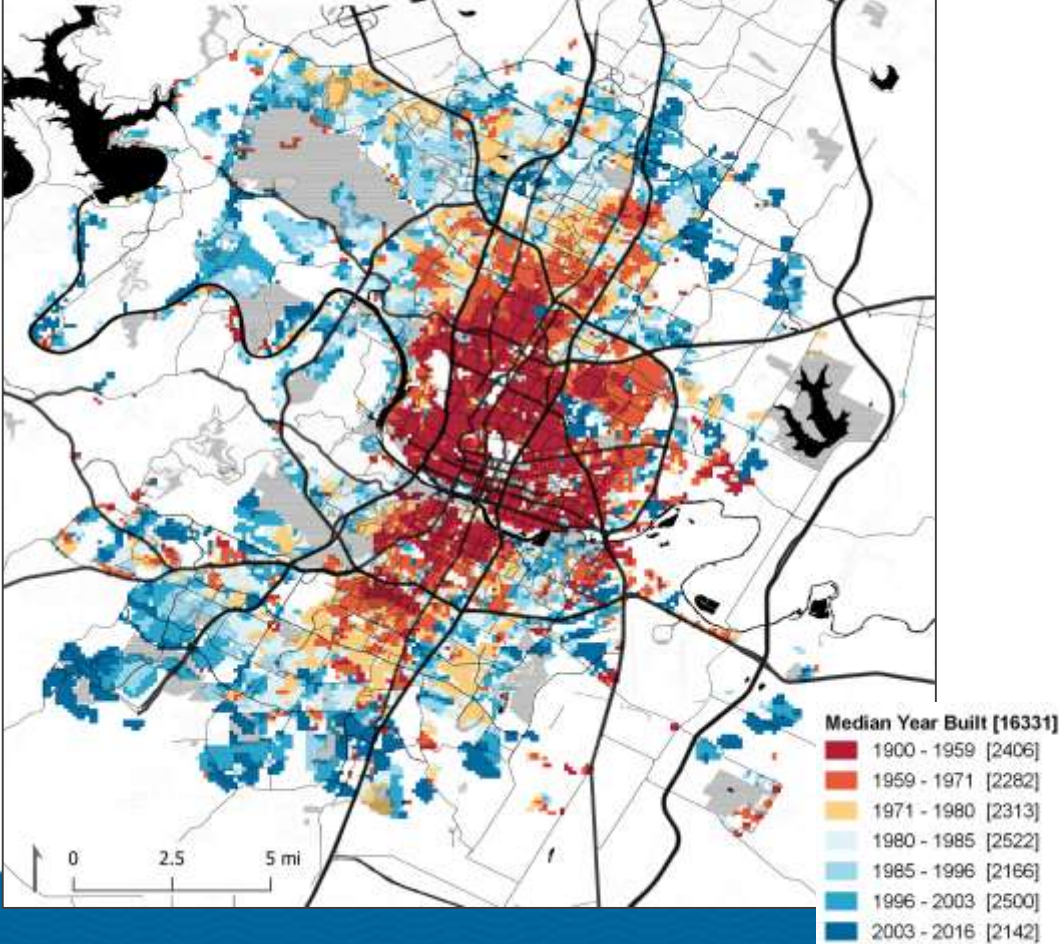
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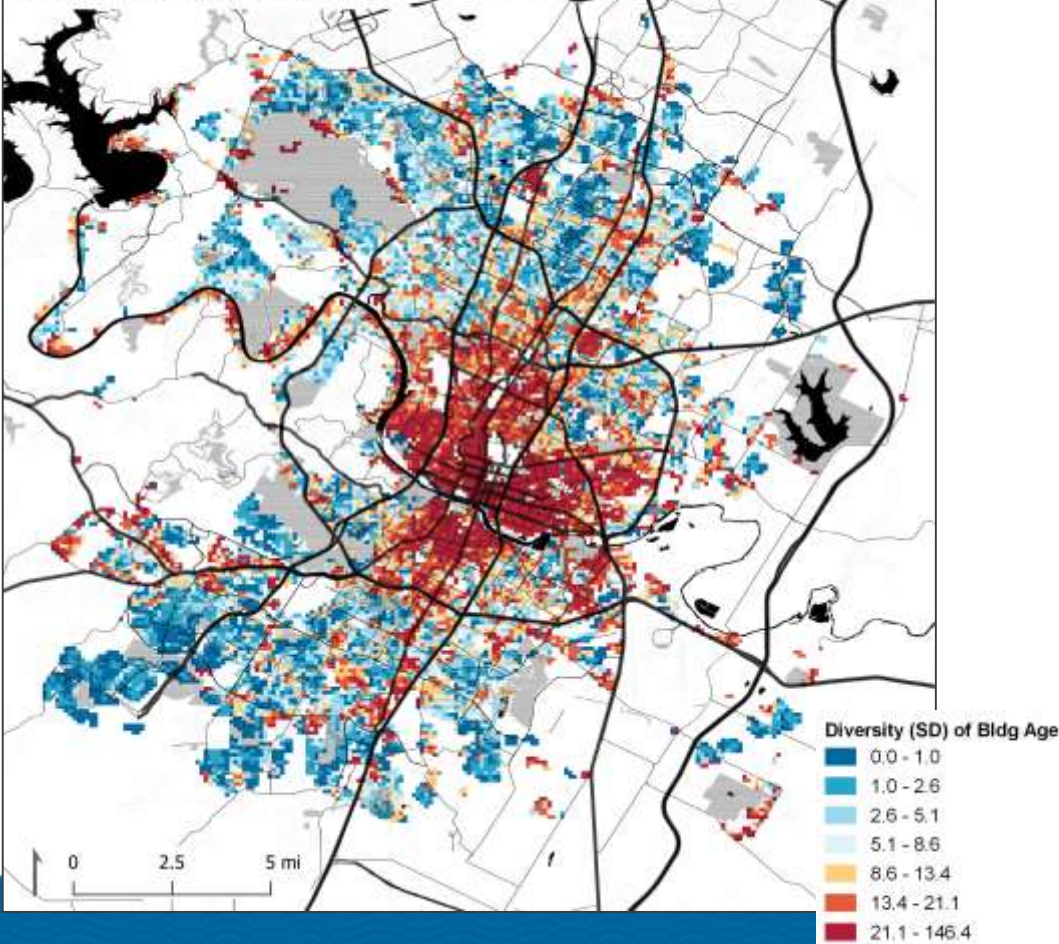
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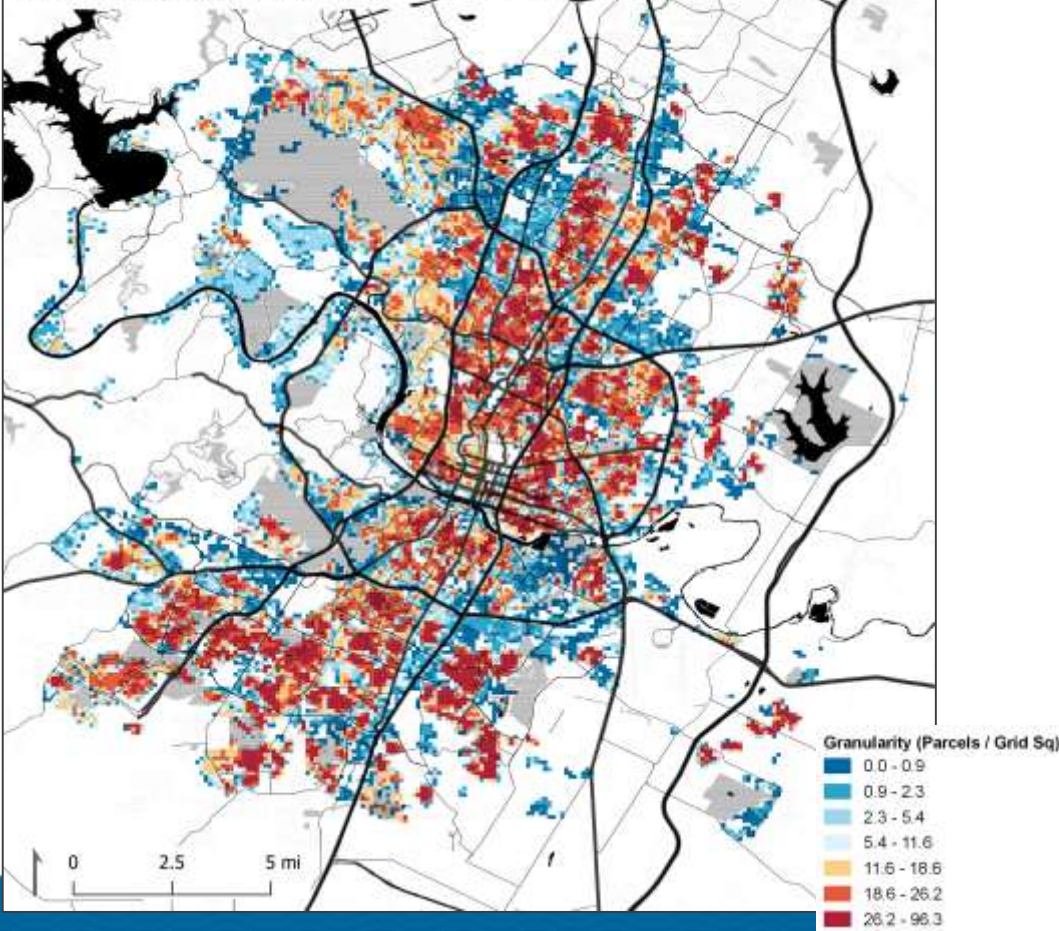
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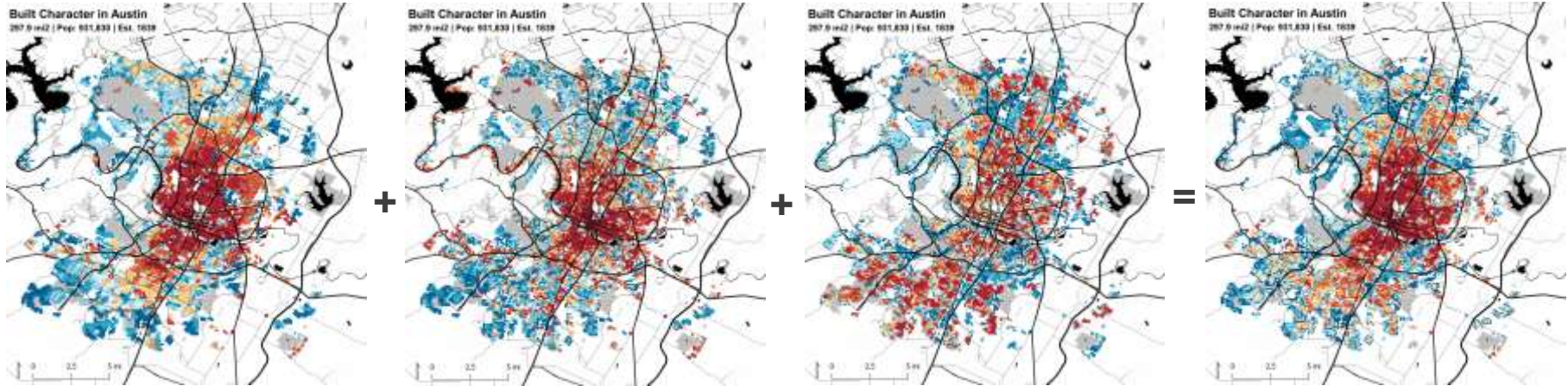


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Measures of City Fabric



Building Age

Age Diversity

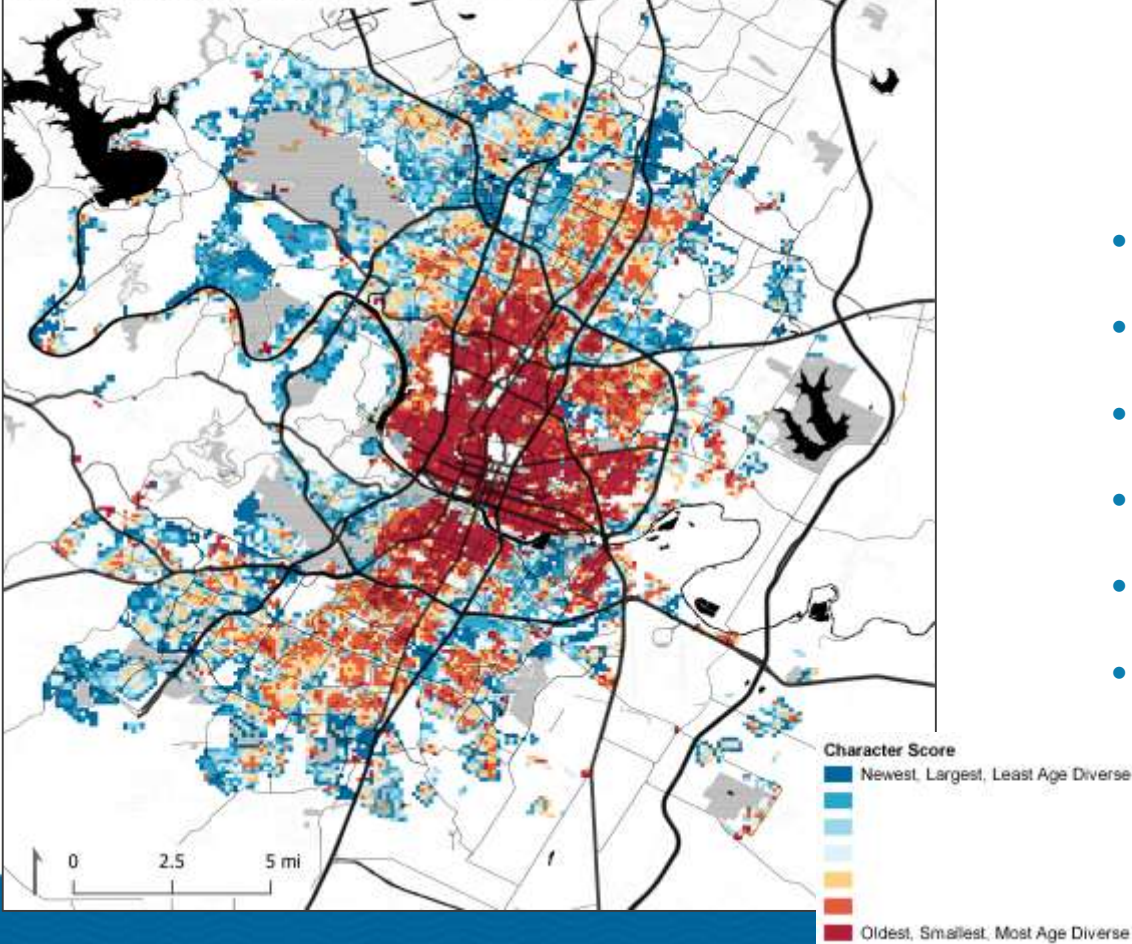
Granularity

Composite of all three

Our Austin composite measure = “Character Score”

Built Character in Austin

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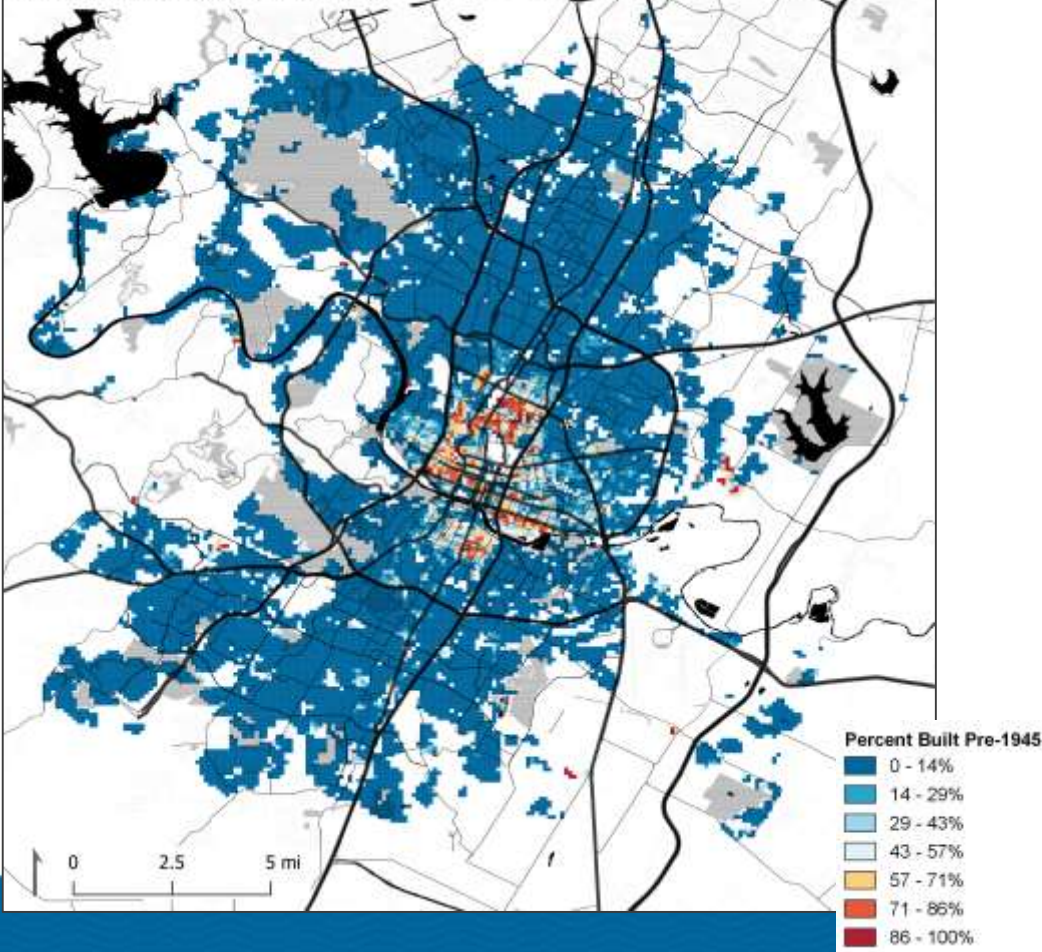
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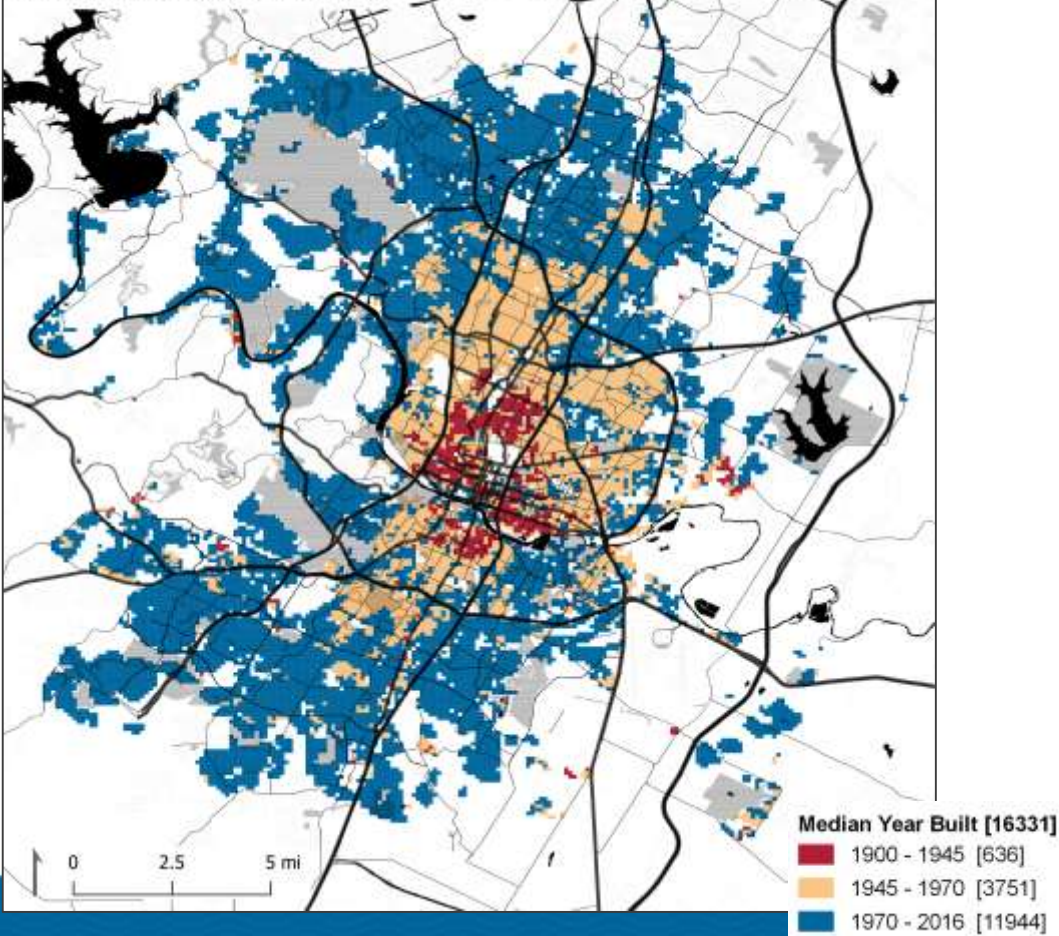
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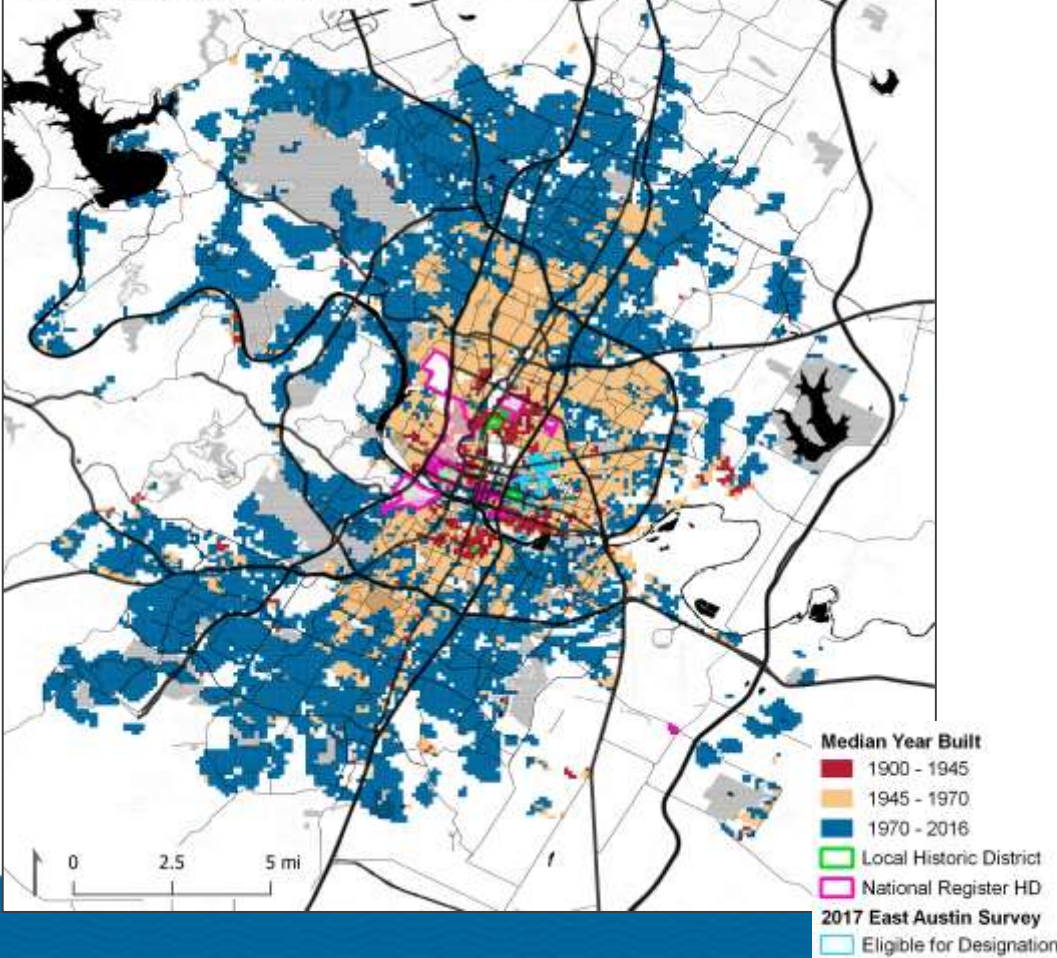
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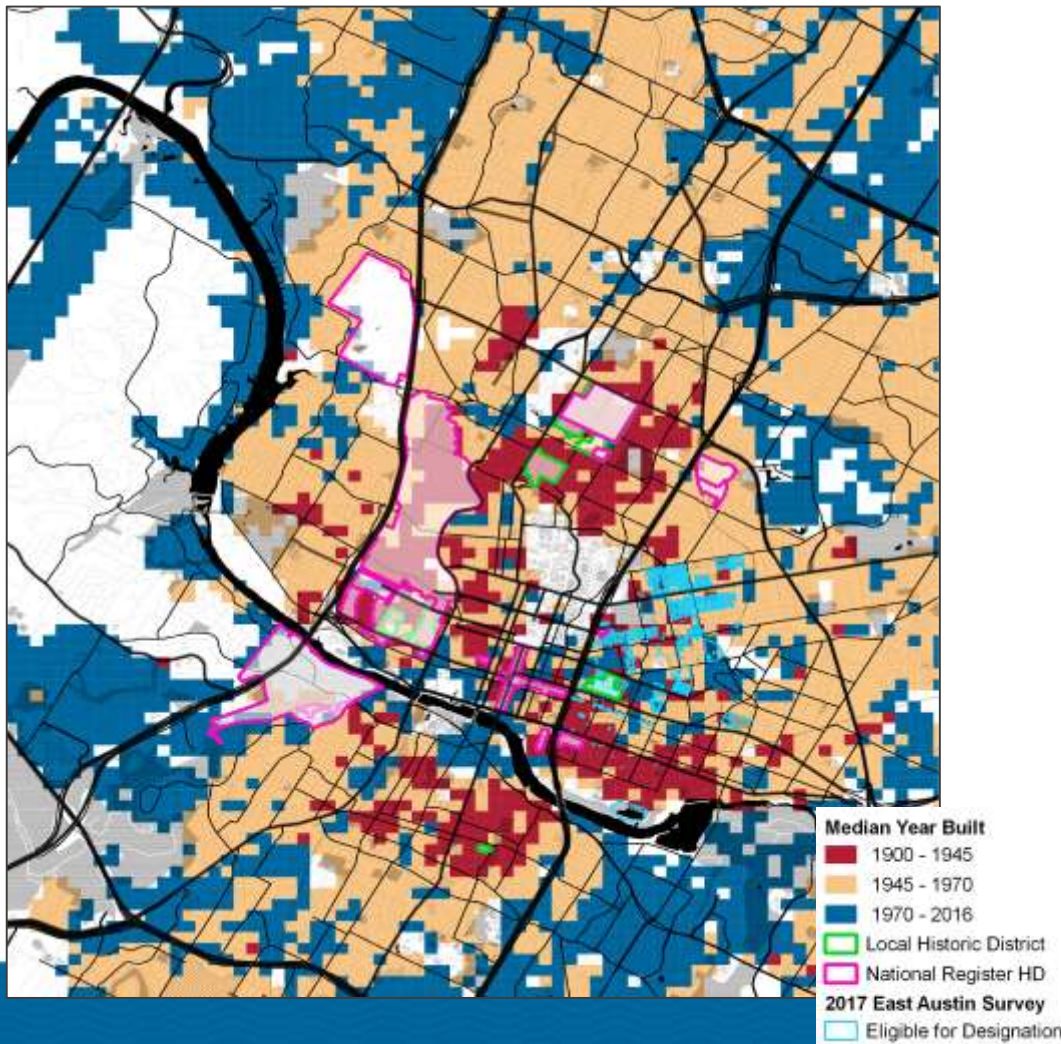
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Comparable City Comparisons

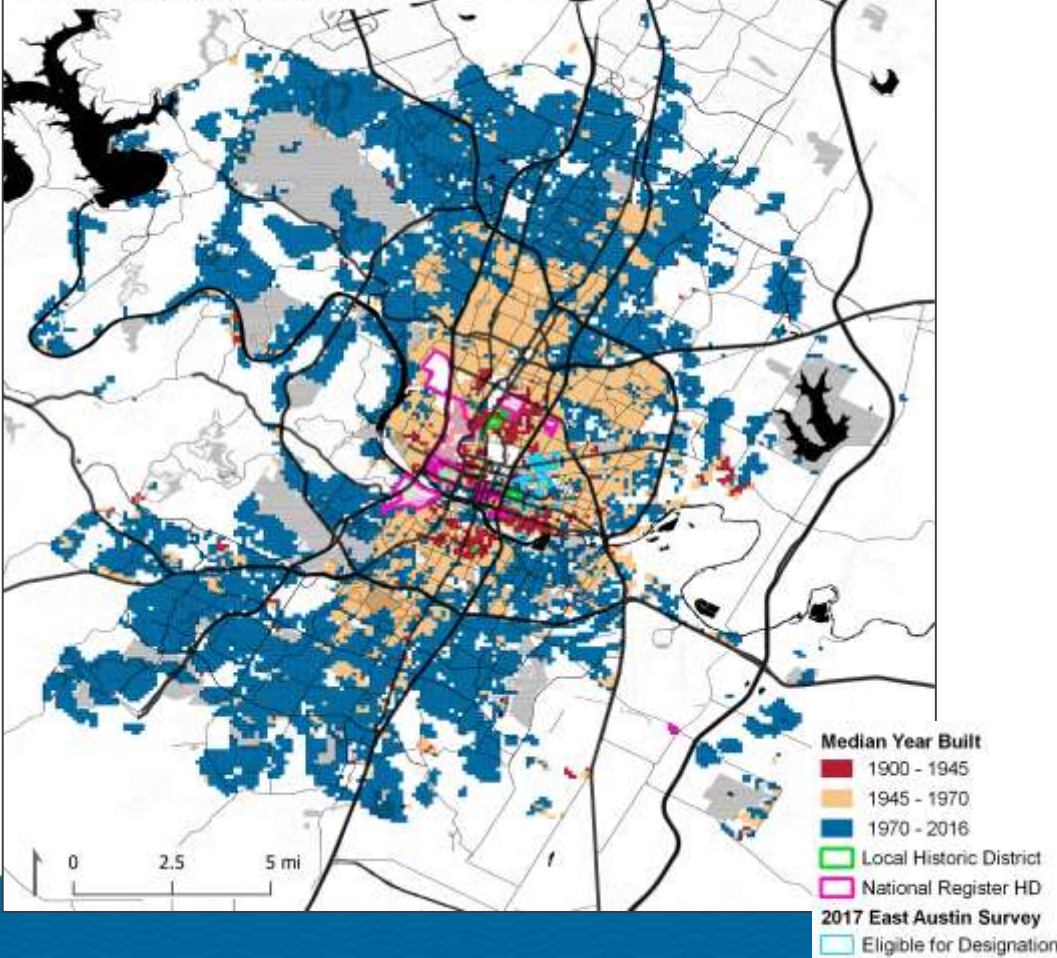
	Austin	Atlanta	Denver	Portland	Phoenix	Seattle
% Pre-1920	0.8%	1.9%	16.6%	17.9%	0.3%	20.4%
% Pre-1945	6.5%	24.1%	33.3%	43.3%	2.9%	48.4%
% Pre-1970	30.0%	58.5%	62.8%	74.2%	27.8%	76.0%
Median Year Built	1980	1962	1954	1950	1980	1946
% on National Register	1.7%	19.6%	4.2%	2.8%	1.9%	1.2%
% Locally Designated	0.7%	5.4%	5.4%	2.8%	2.1%	0.5%

Texas City Comparisons

	Austin	Dallas	El Paso	Fort Worth	Houston	San Antonio
% Pre-1920	0.8%	1.2%	1.7%	1.0%	0.4%	1.4%
% Pre-1945	6.5%	16.0%	6.3%	12.7%	11.8%	11.3%
% Pre-1970	30.0%	66.4%	34.8%	40.4%	48.0%	41.7%
Median Year Built	1980	1959	1979	1983	1968	1977
% on National Register	1.7%	1.9%	Data Unavailable	Data Unavailable	0.5%	Data Unavailable
% Locally Designated	0.7%	1.3%	Data Unavailable	Data Unavailable	1.2%	Data Unavailable

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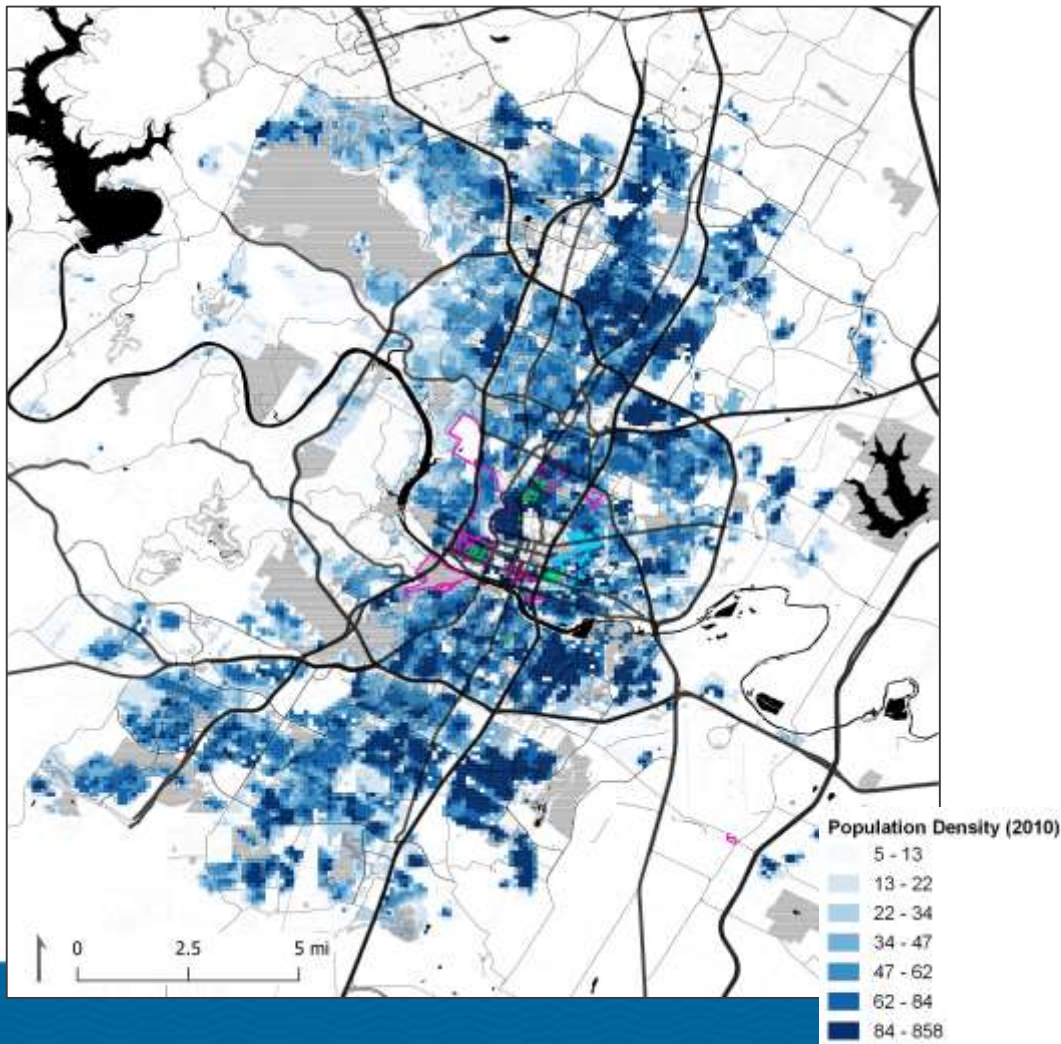
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Takeaway:

Older and historic areas of Austin have greater population and housing unit density.

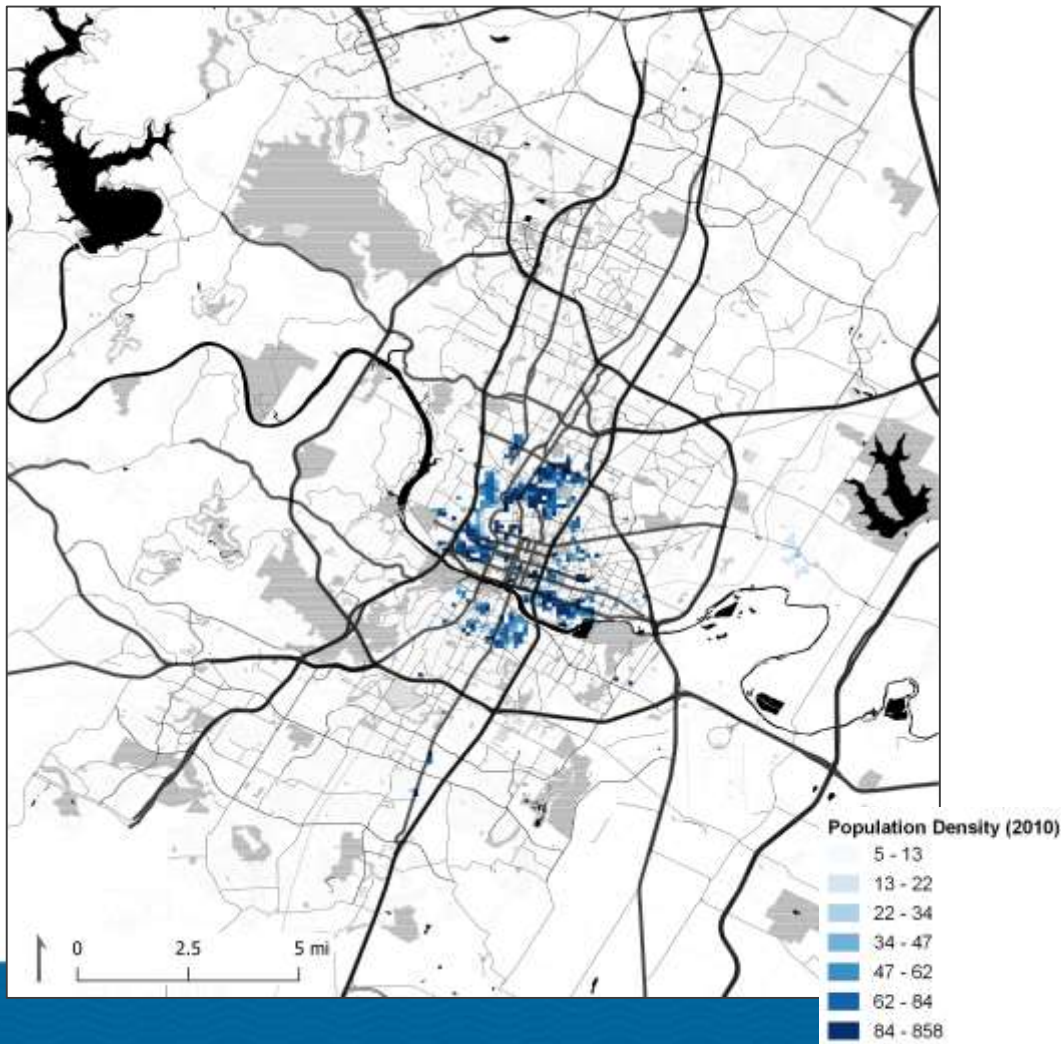
Population Density (2010)

- More old buildings = greater avg pop density
 - Median year < 1945
67.2 residents per grid square
 - Median year bw 1945-1970
55.9 residents
 - Median year >= 1970
47.8 residents



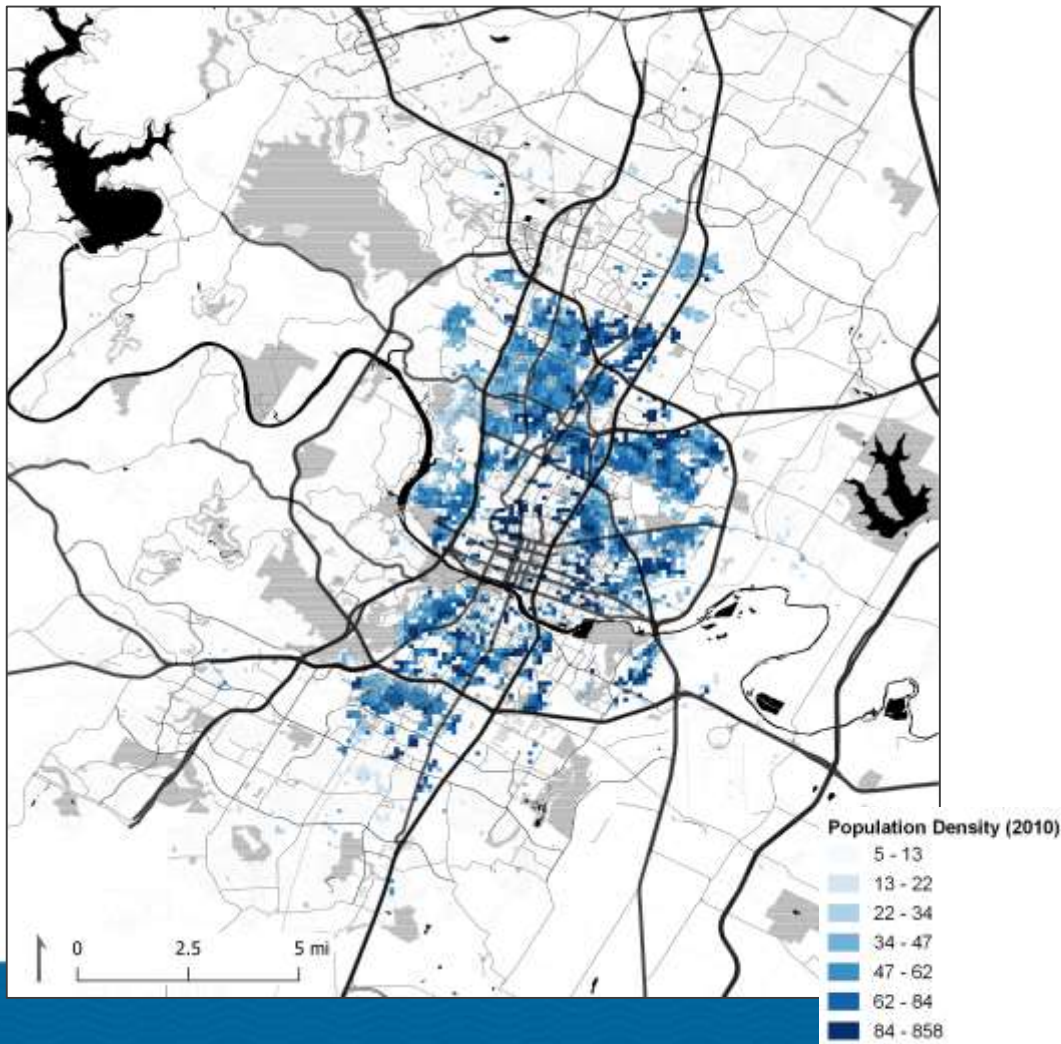
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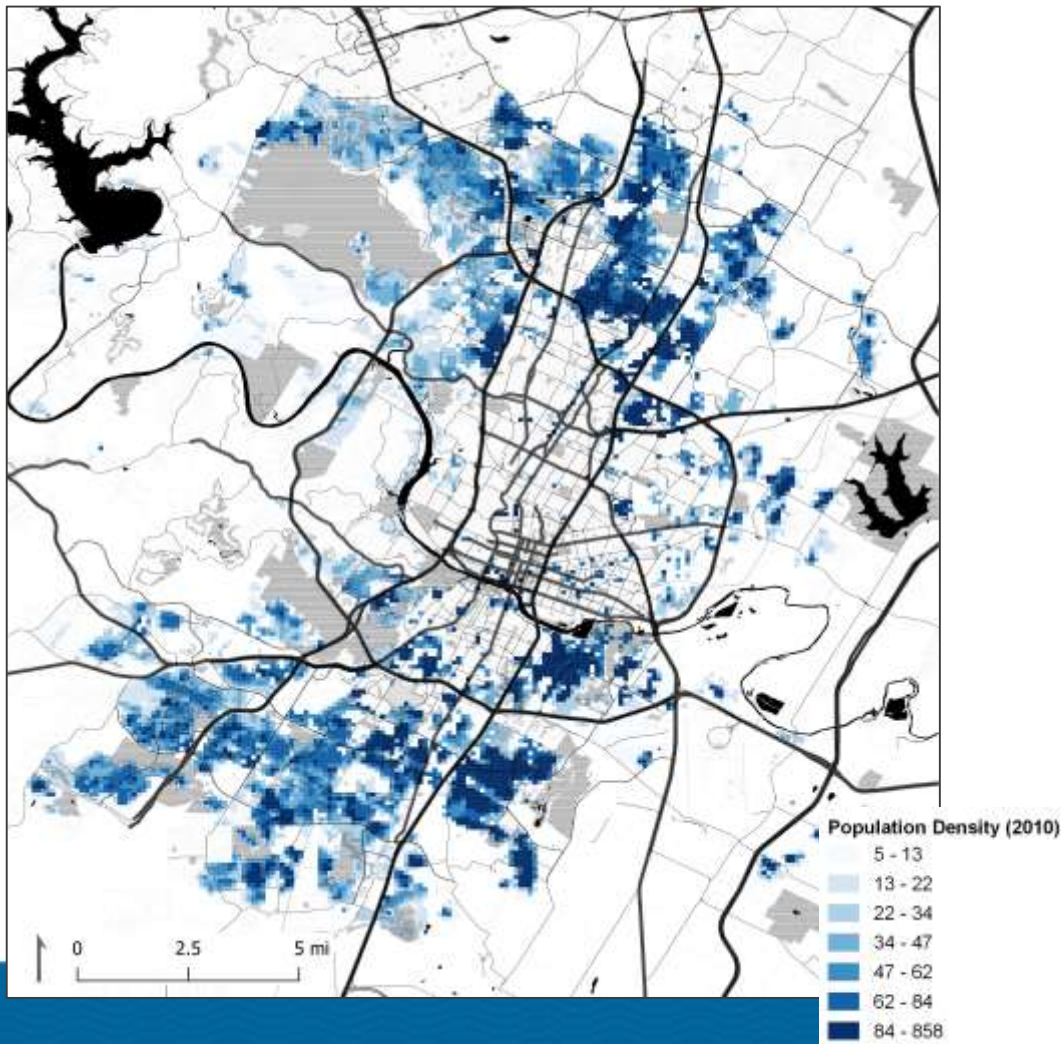
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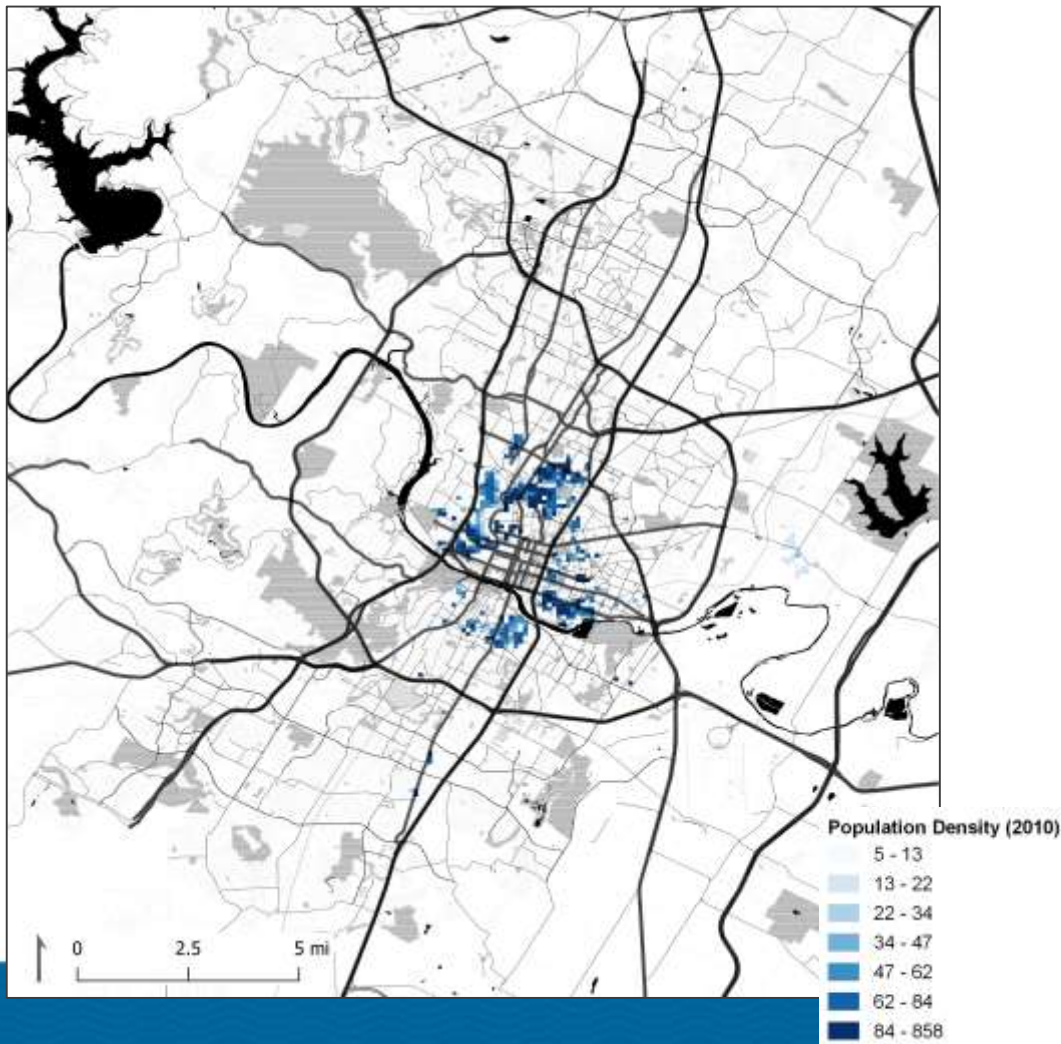
Population Density (2010)

- **More old buildings = greater avg pop density**
 - Median year < 1945
67.2 residents per grid square
 - Median year bw 1945-1970
55.9 residents
 - Median year >= 1970
47.8 residents



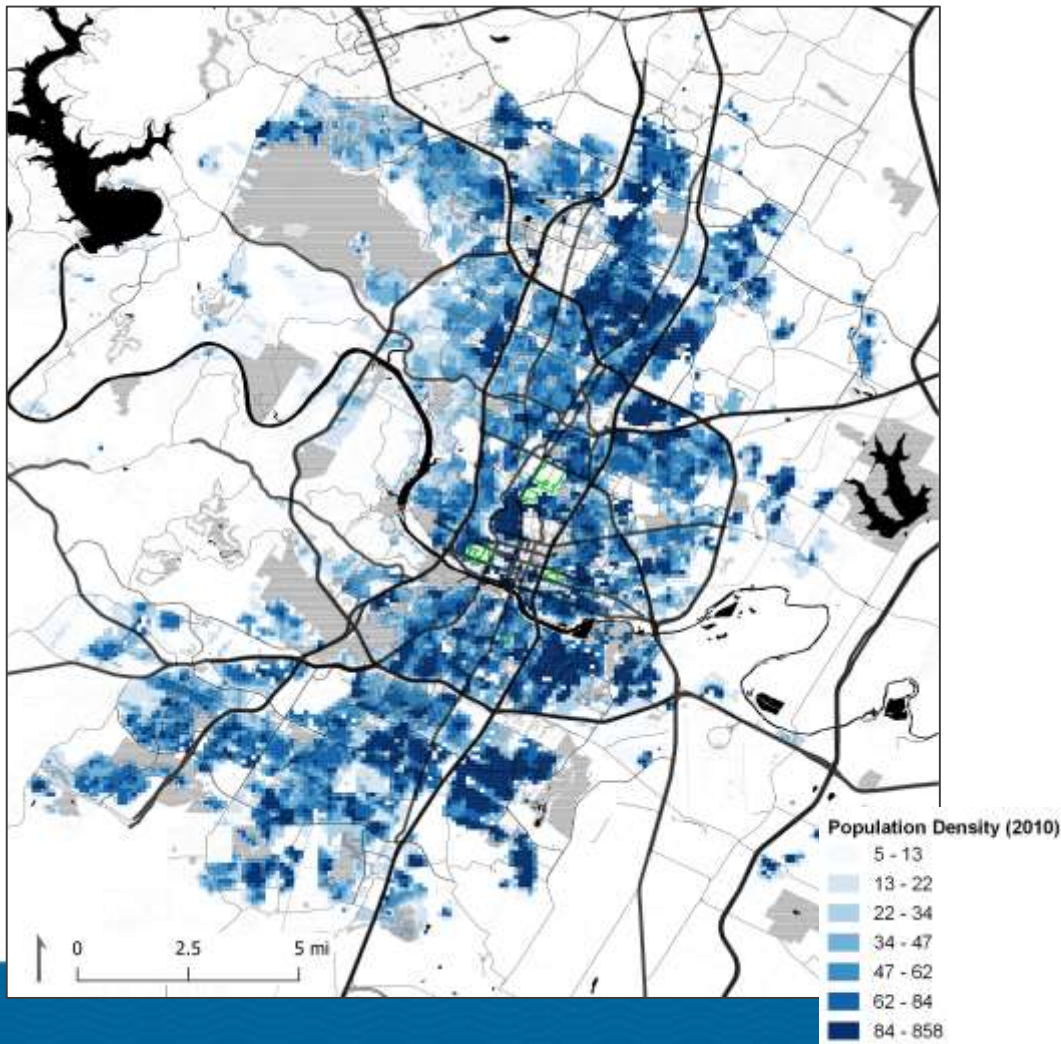
Population Density (2010)

- **More old buildings = greater avg pop density**
 - Median year < 1945
67.2 residents per grid square
 - More than one mile from city hall = 67.0



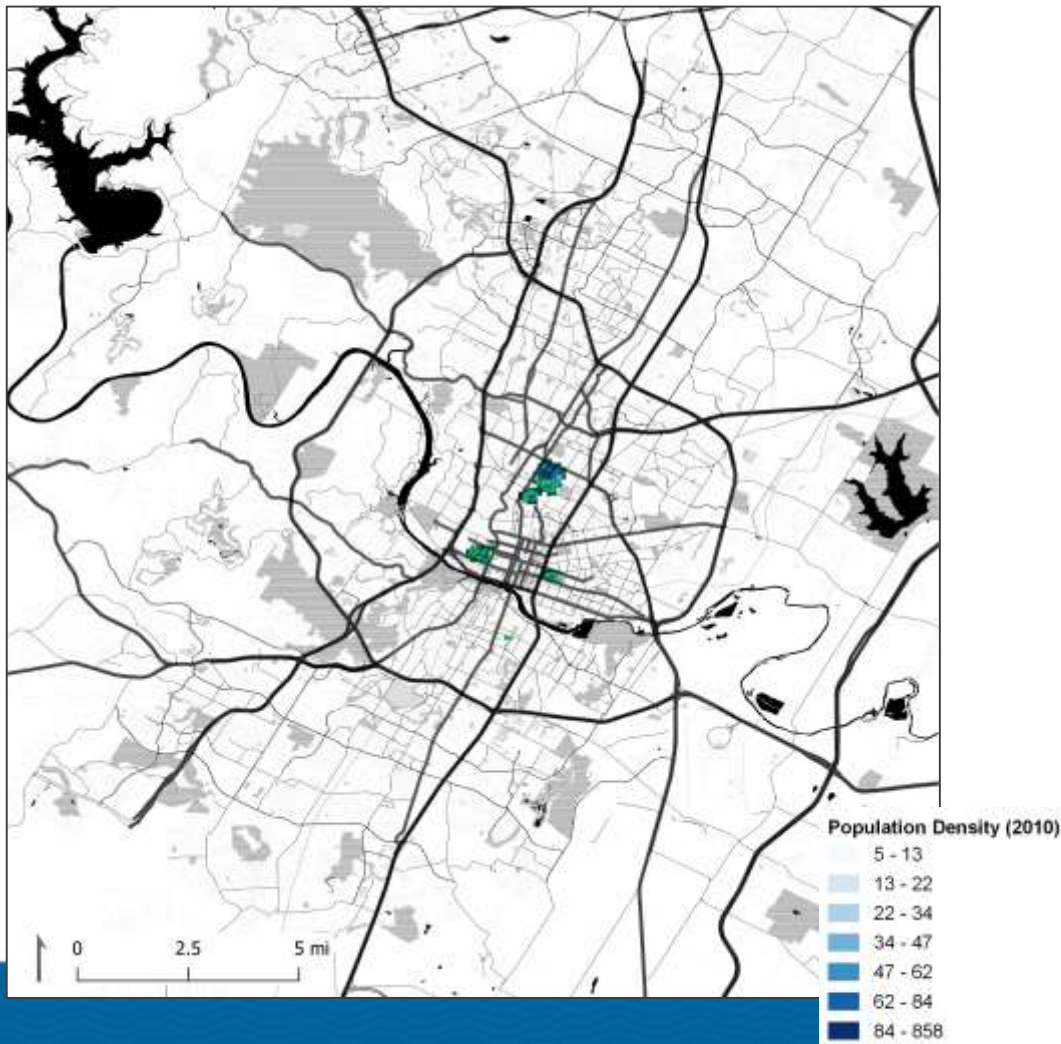
Population Density (2010)

- **More historic buildings = greater avg pop density**
 - Outside local historic districts = 50.2 residents per grid square
 - Areas including local historic districts = 90.9 residents per grid square



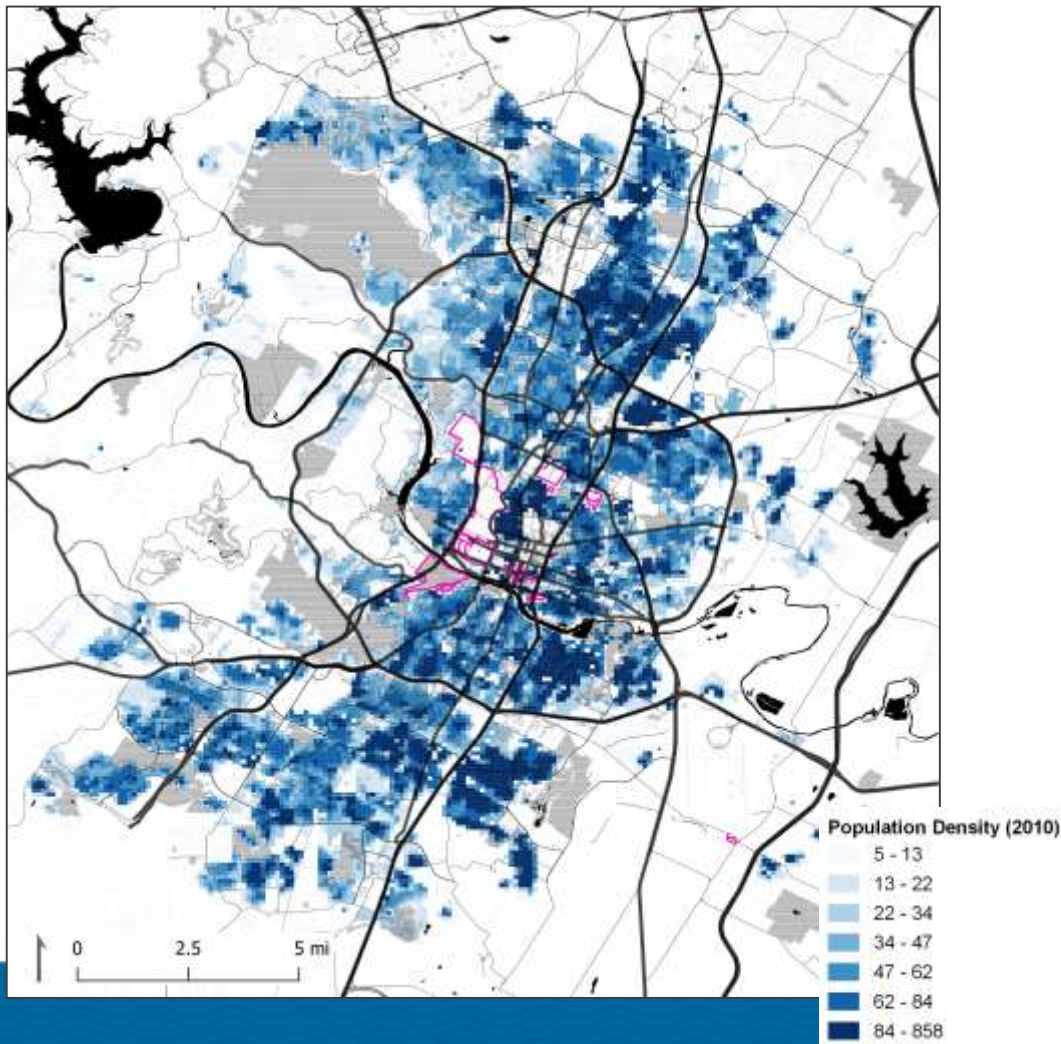
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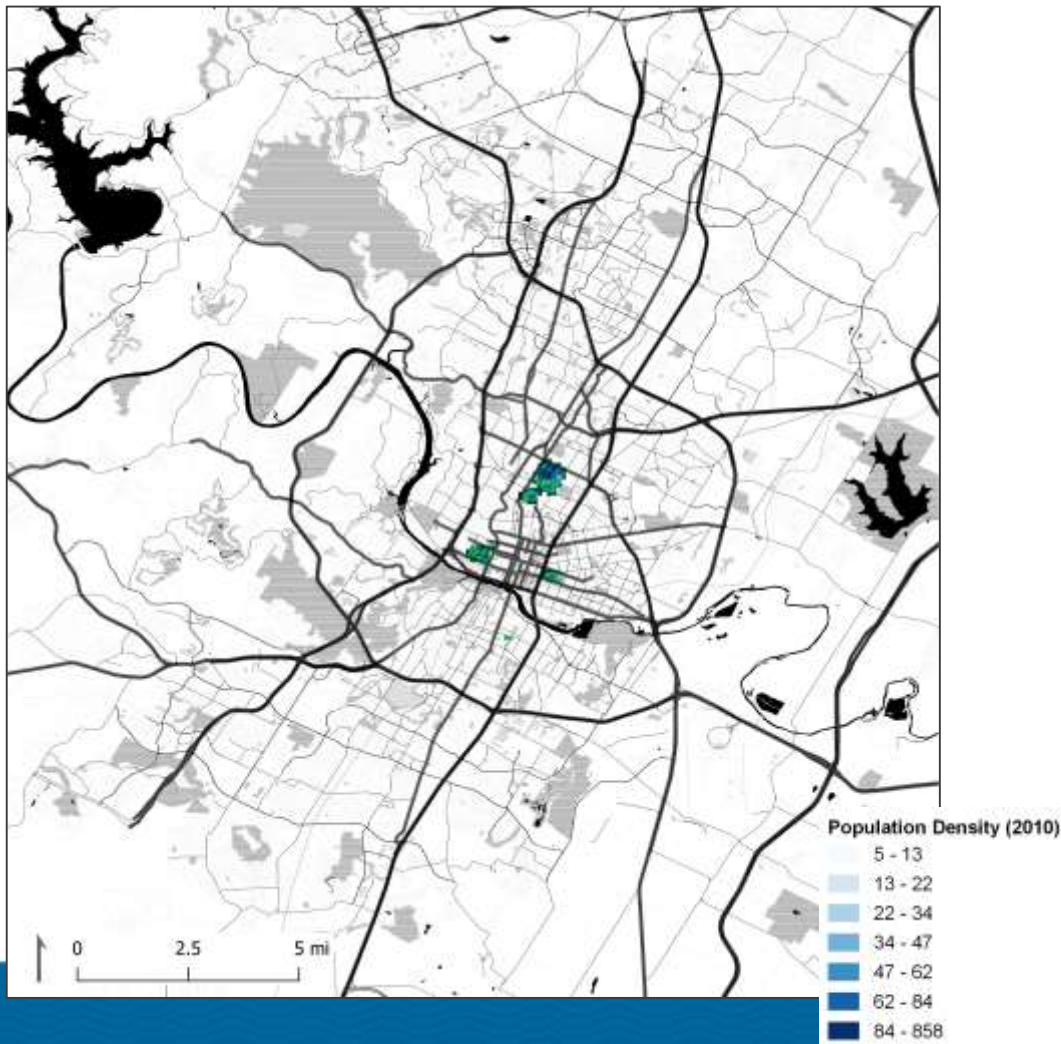
Population Density (2010)

- **More historic buildings = greater avg pop density**
 - Outside National Register historic districts = 50.3 residents per grid square
 - Areas including local historic districts = 90.9 residents per grid square



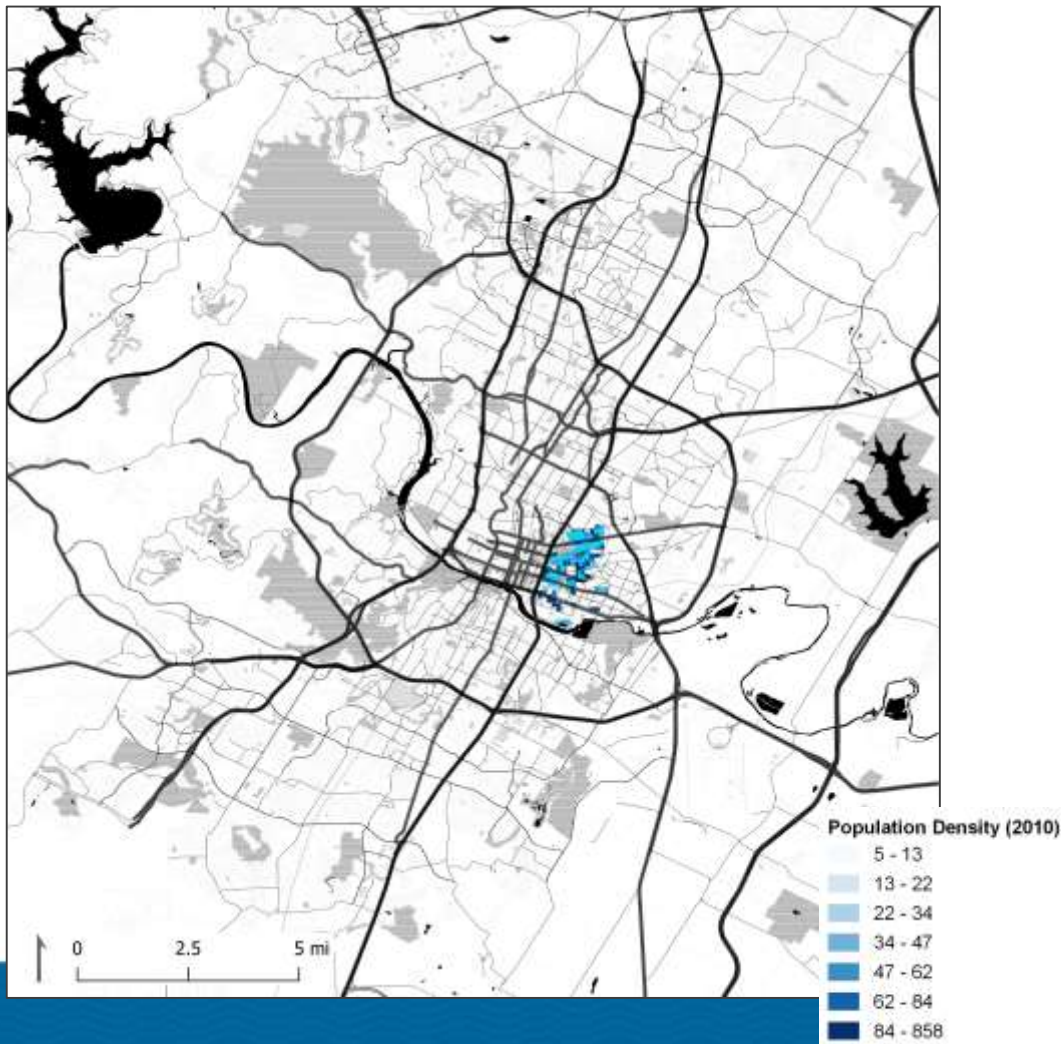
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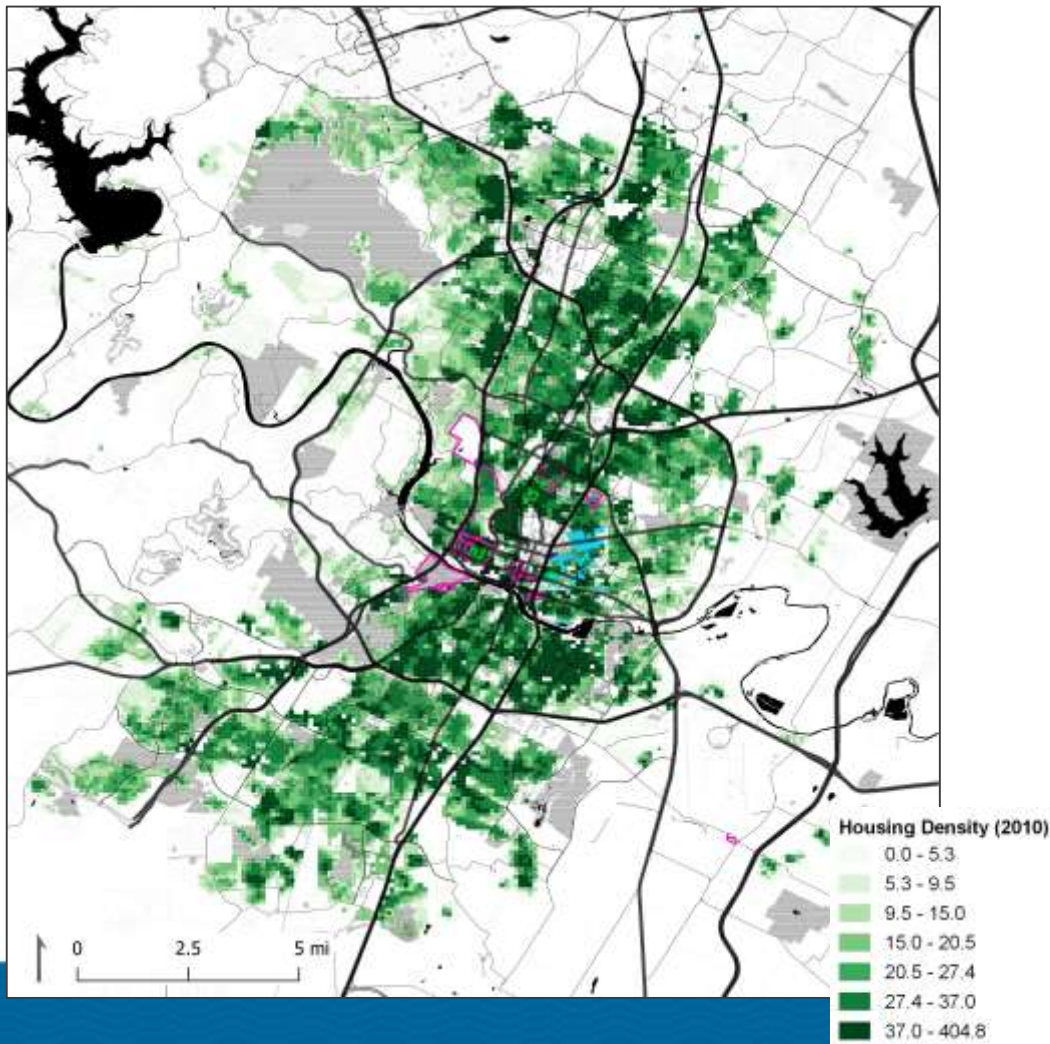
Population Density (2010)

- **More historic buildings = greater avg pop density**
 - Outside NR districts = 50.3 residents per grid square
 - Areas including NR districts = 57.3 residents / grid square
 - Areas identified as eligible for designation in 2017 East Austin Survey = 60.5 residents / grid square



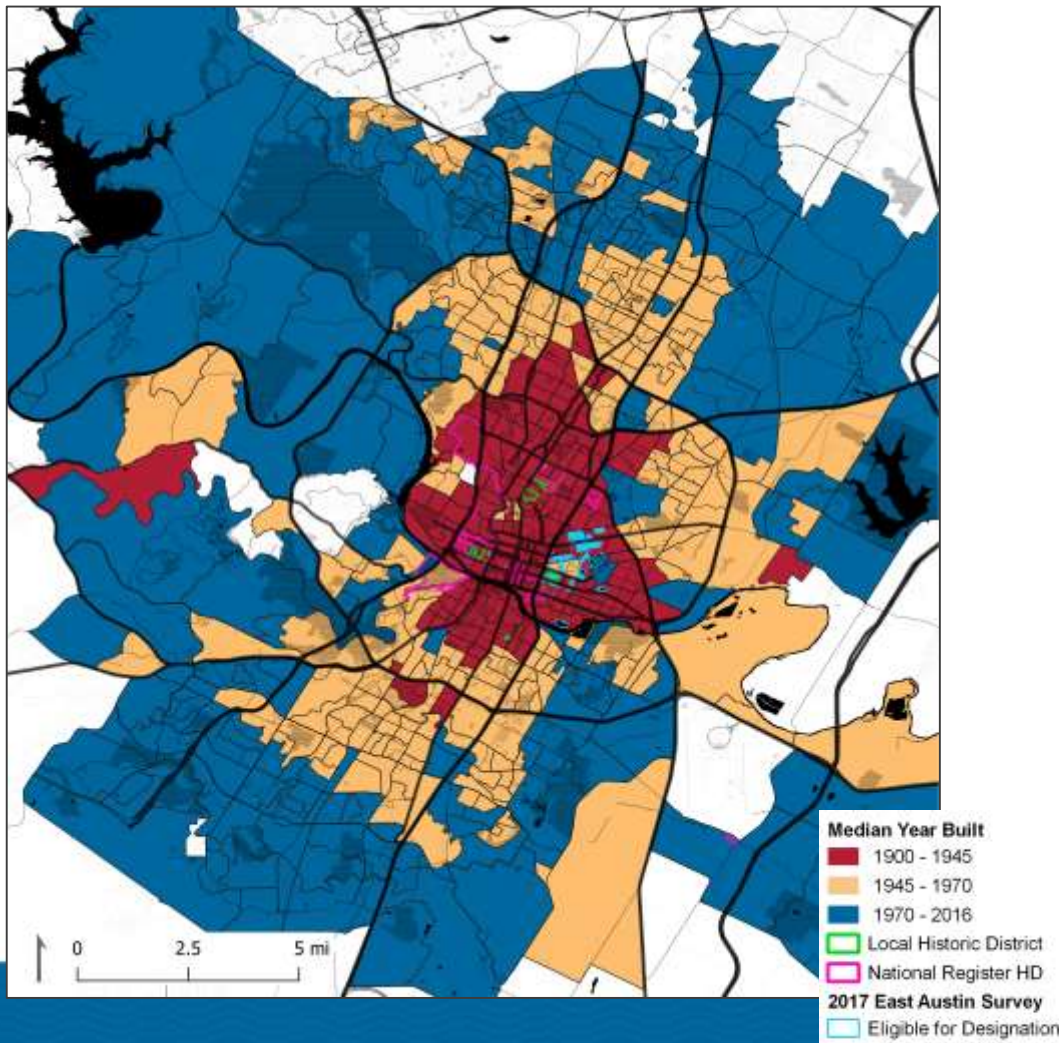
Housing Density (2010)

- **More older and historic buildings = greater avg density of housing units**
 - Areas with local historic districts have 2.5X housing units
 - Older median age – Greater density of housing units.



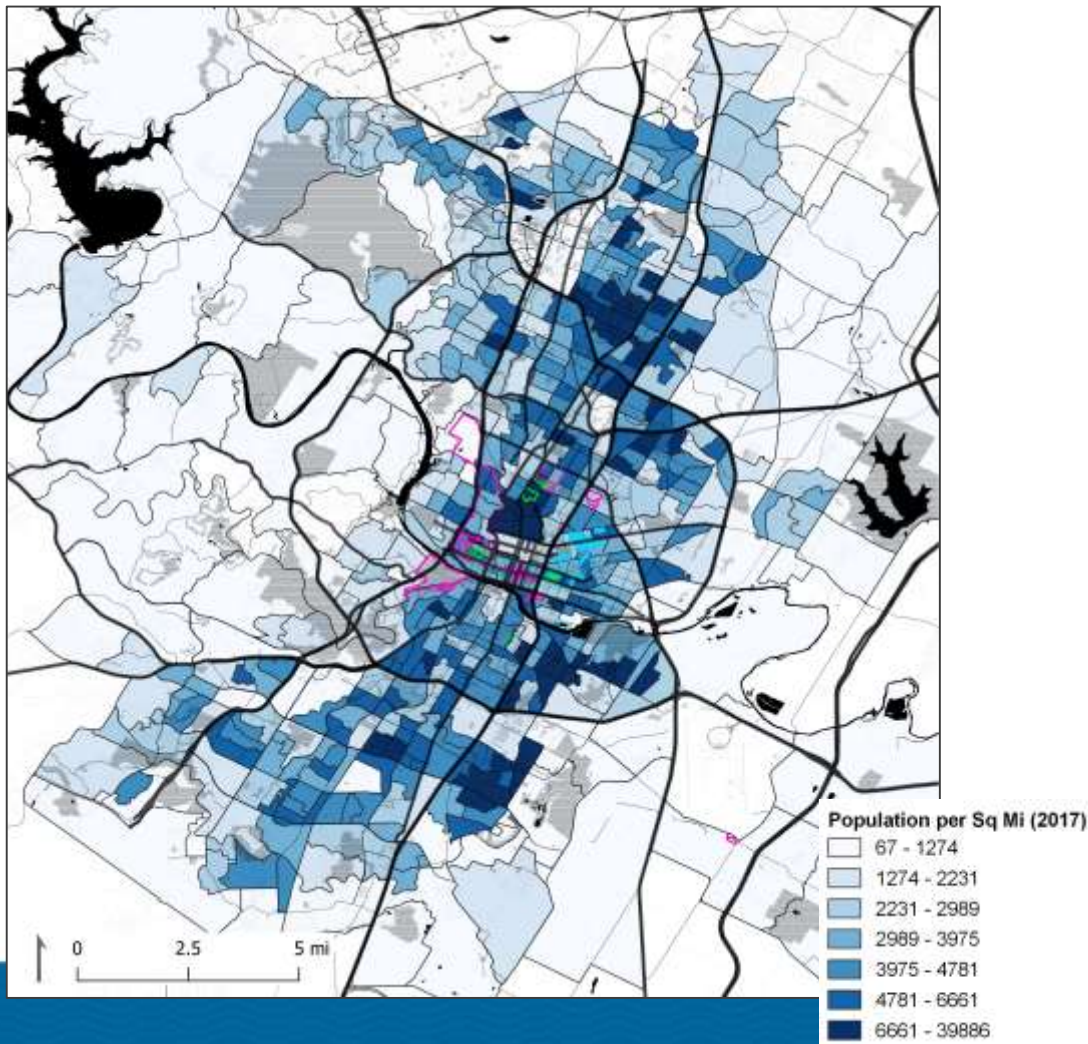
Population and Housing Density (2013-2017)

- More older and historic buildings = greater avg density of housing units



Population and Housing Density (2013-2017)

- More older and historic buildings = greater avg density of housing units
 - Local historic districts = 43% greater pop density and 95% greater housing density
 - Older median age = greater population and housing unit density

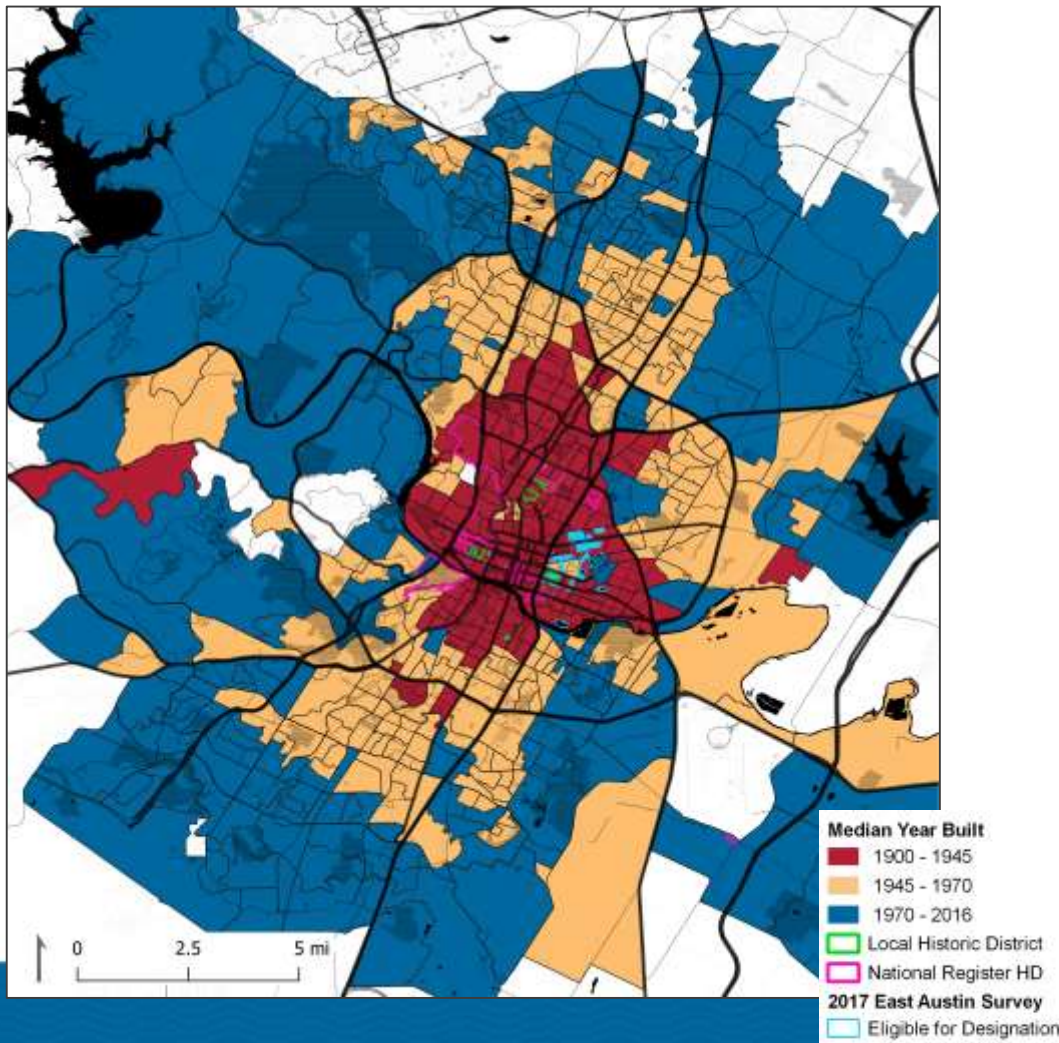


Takeaway:

Older and historic areas of Austin have more units of rental housing that is affordable.

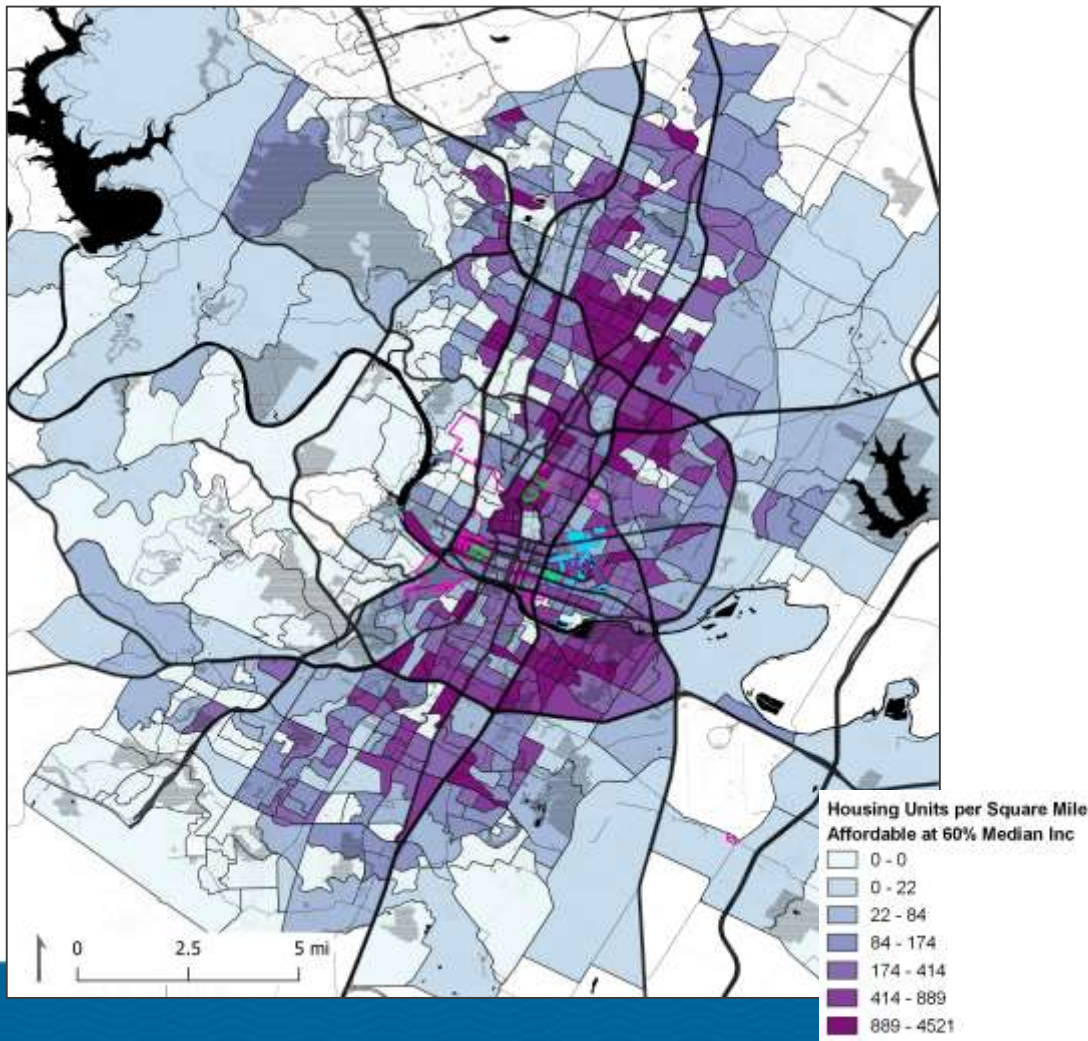
Affordable Rental Housing (2013-2017)

- Local historic districts → More than 2x rental housing units affordable at 60 and 80% median inc.
- Older building age → More affordable rental housing
- BUT difference is shrinking



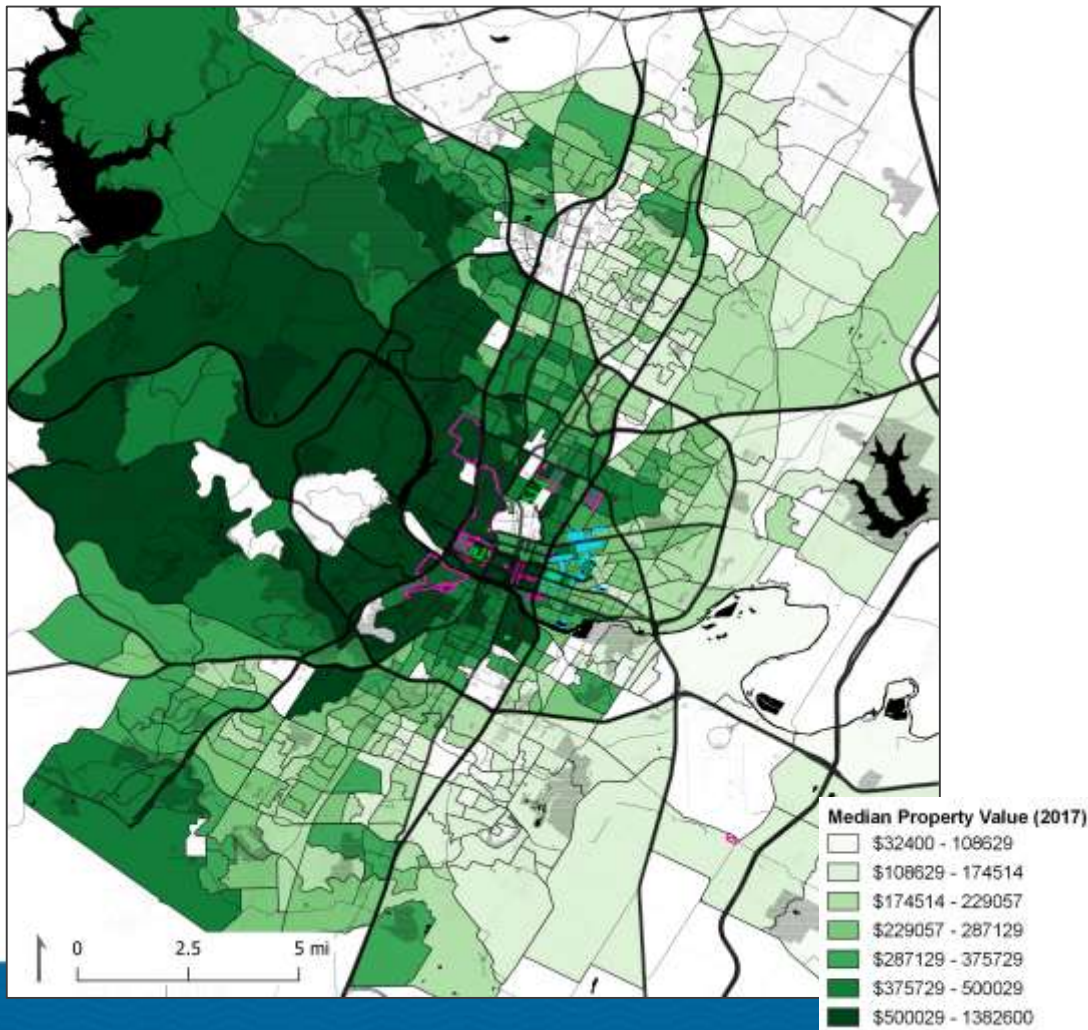
Affordable Rental Housing (2013-2017)

- Local historic districts → More than 2x rental housing units affordable at 60 and 80% median inc.
- Older building age → More affordable rental housing
- BUT difference is shrinking



Property Values and Median Rents (2013-2017)

- Older and historic areas have higher property values. Gap widening.
- Median rents are generally comparable or lower.
 - (Exception: NR districts)
- Q: Higher property values not linked to higher rents? Why not?

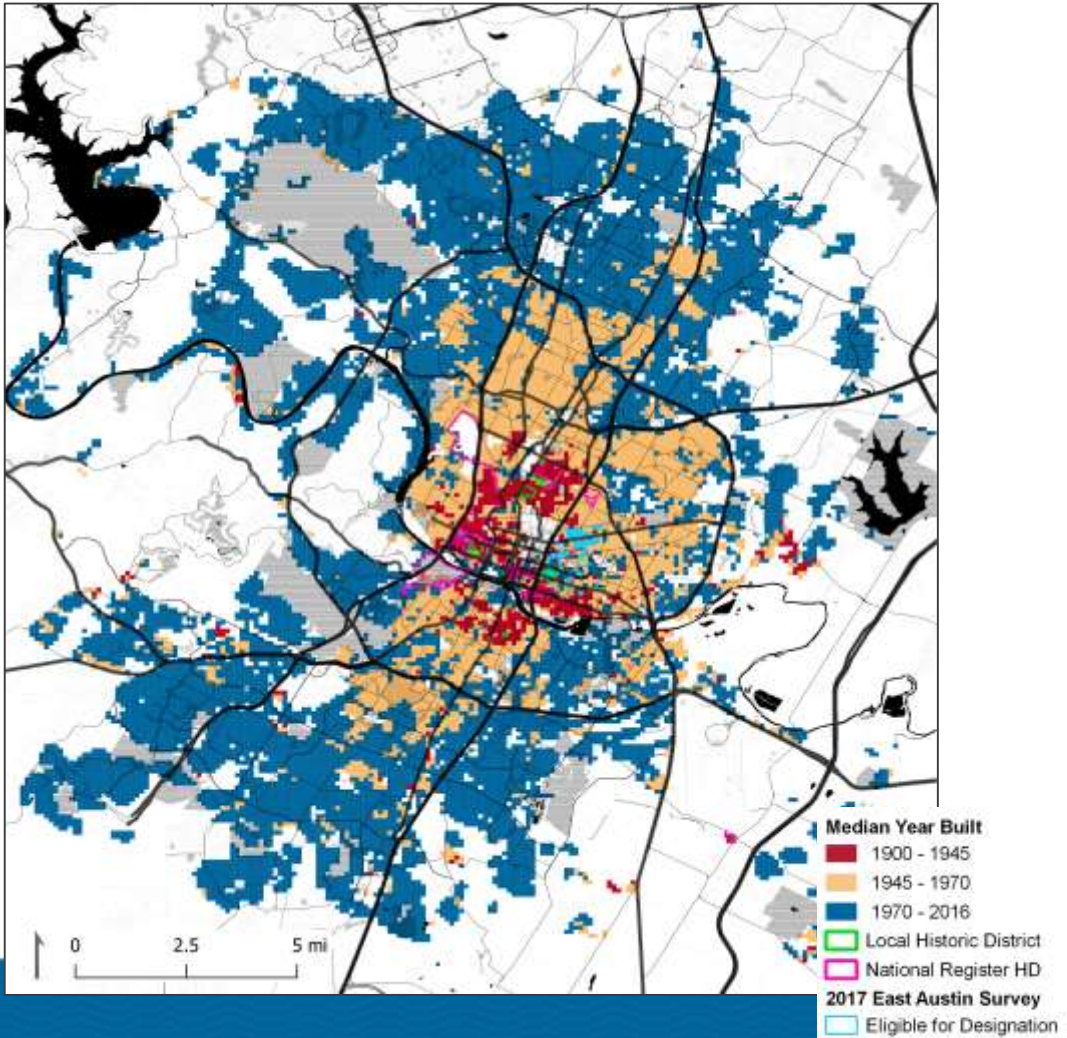


Takeaway:

Older and historic areas of Austin have more arts and cultural spaces.

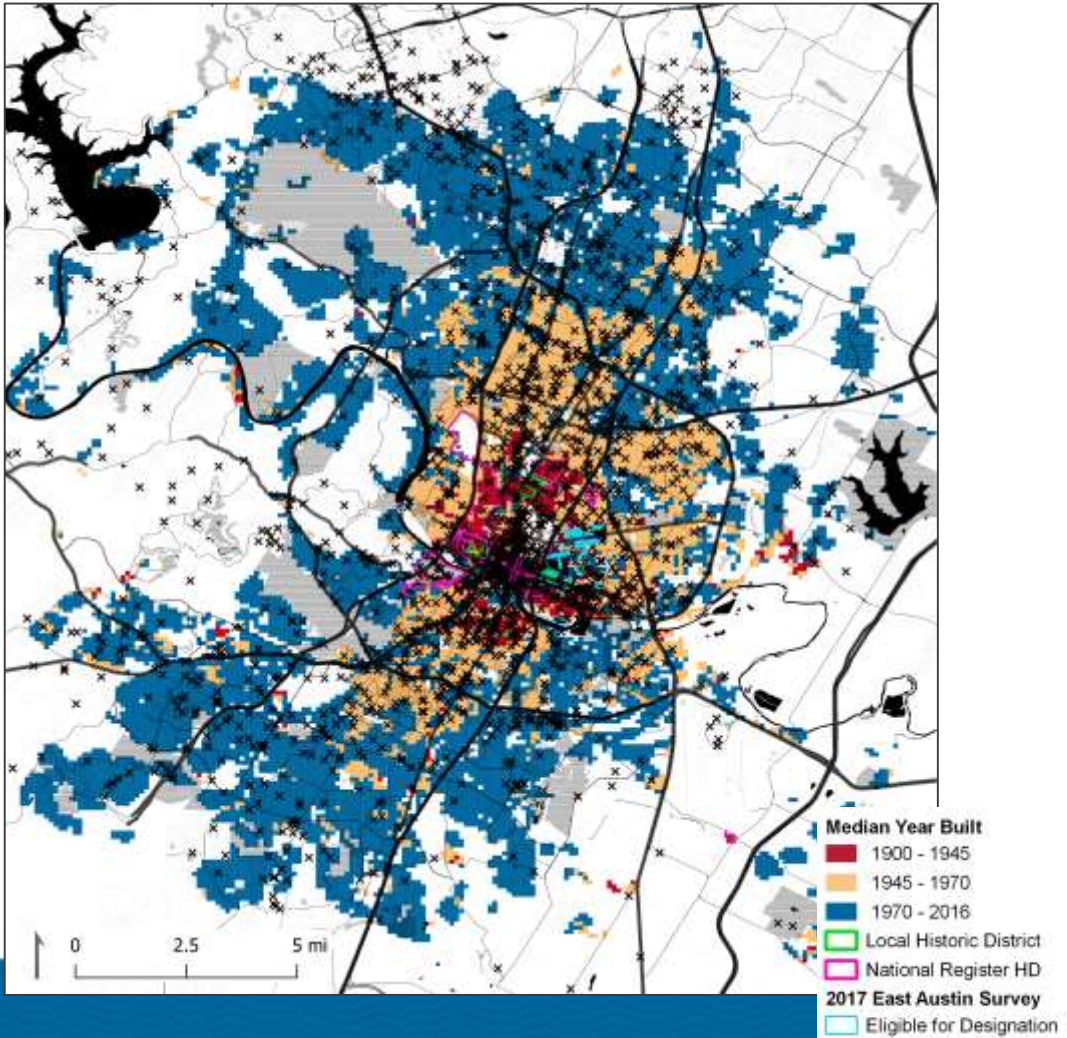
Arts and Cultural Spaces (2018)

- Majority prewar areas = 3.7% of land area; 19.5% of arts and cultural spaces
- 2.0% of land intersects National Register district; 11.1% of CAMP spaces
- East Austin Survey areas are <1% of land area; >7% of CAMP spaces



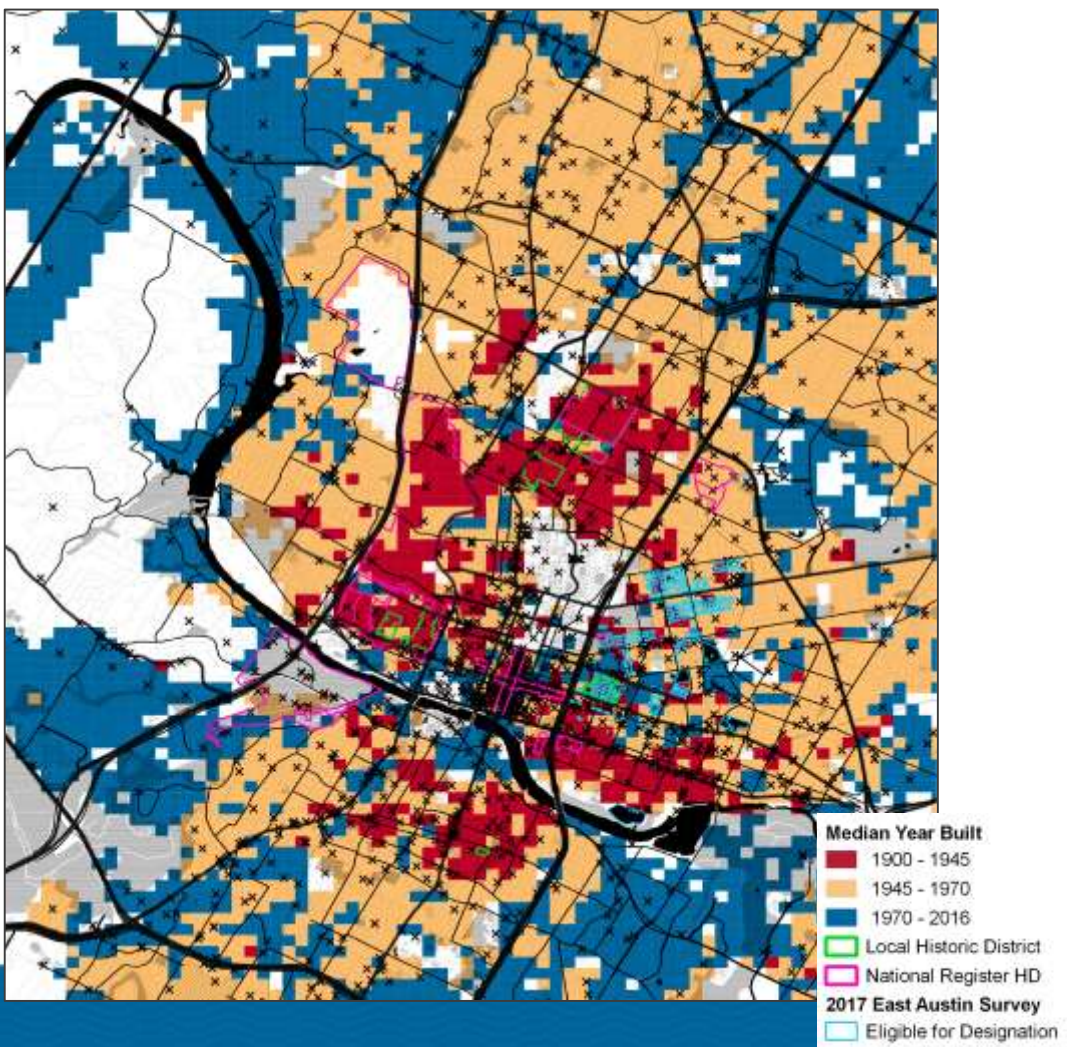
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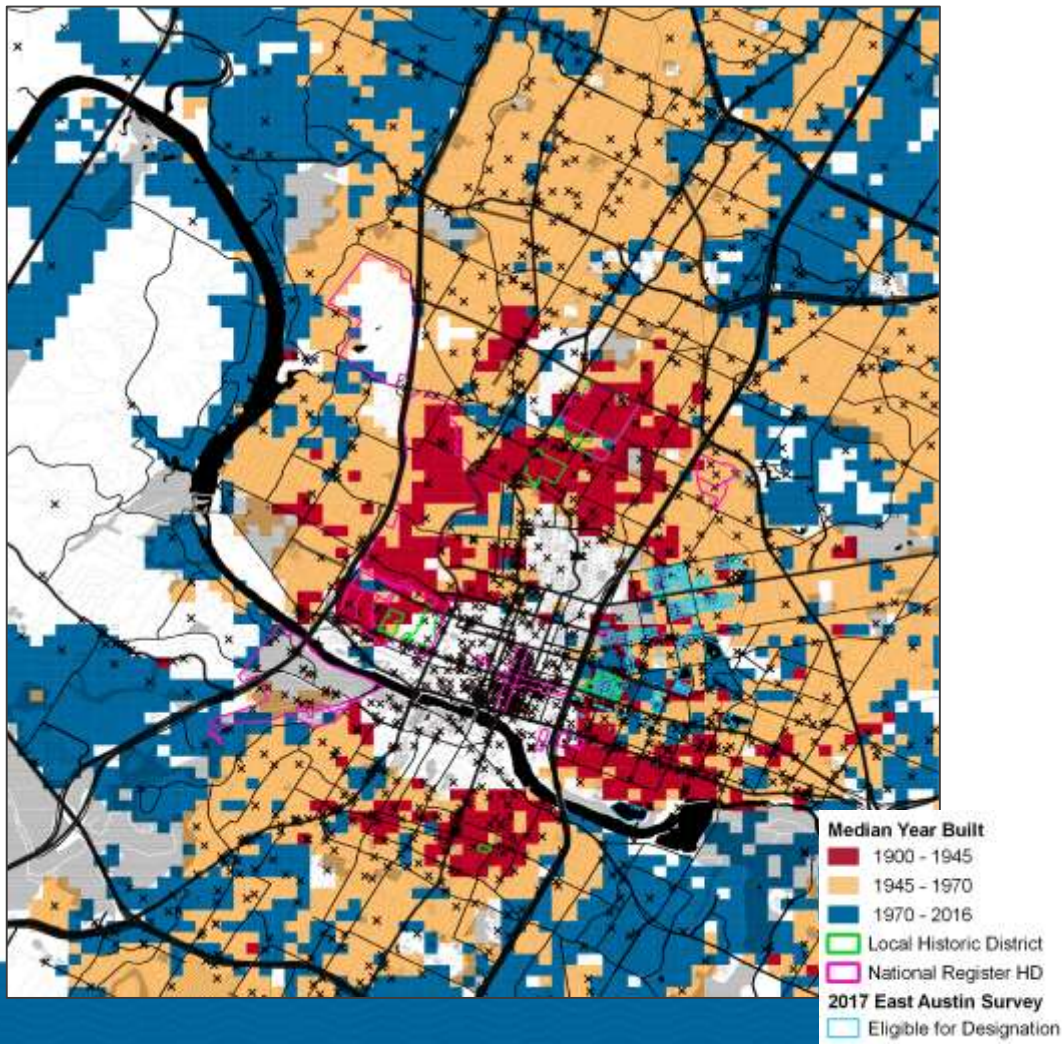
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Arts and Cultural Spaces (2018)

- Link between older/historic and cultural spaces is clear, even if excluding downtown
 - NR districts 2x CAMP spaces
 - Post-1970 - 75% land area and 48% CAMP spaces
 - Pre-1945 - 3.4% land and 14% CAMP spaces

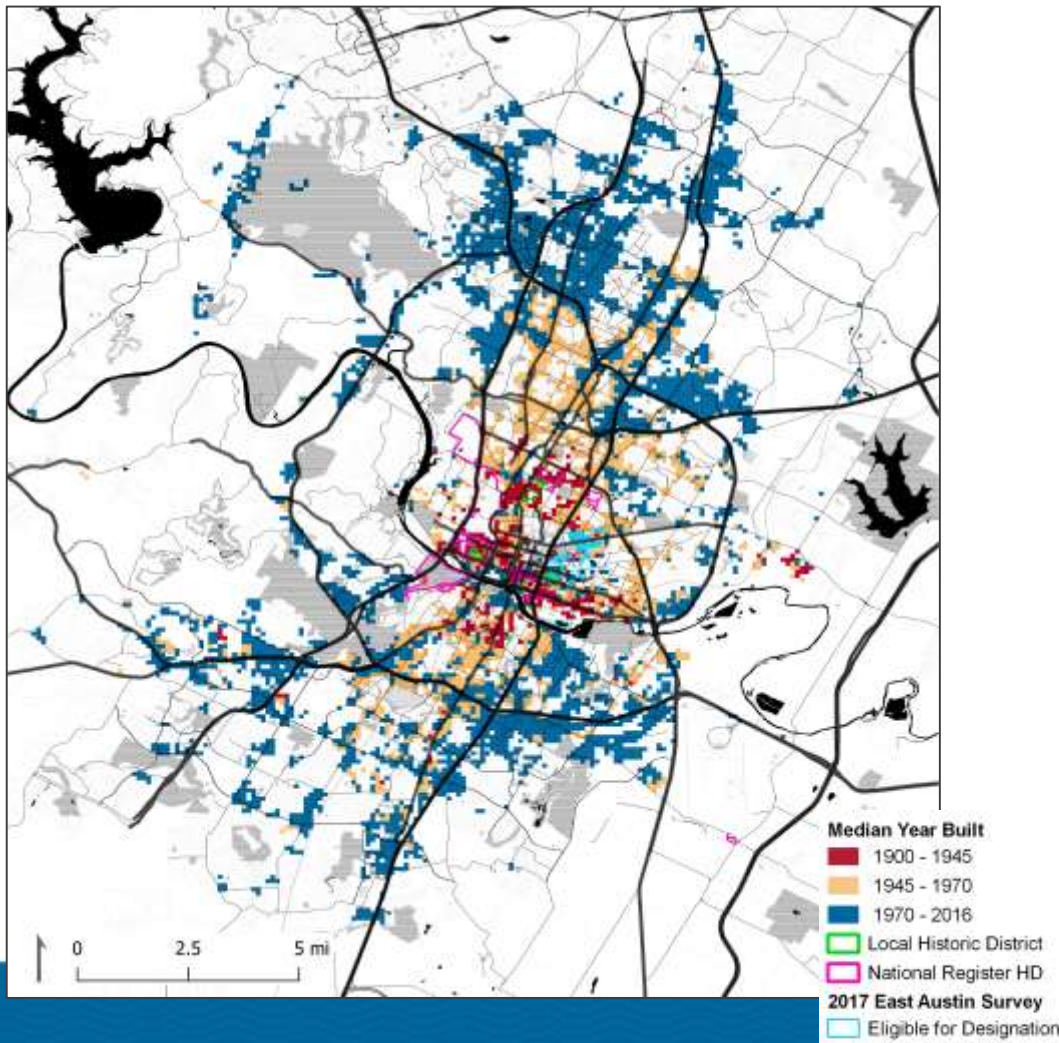


Takeaway:

Older and historic areas of Austin provide a launch pad for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

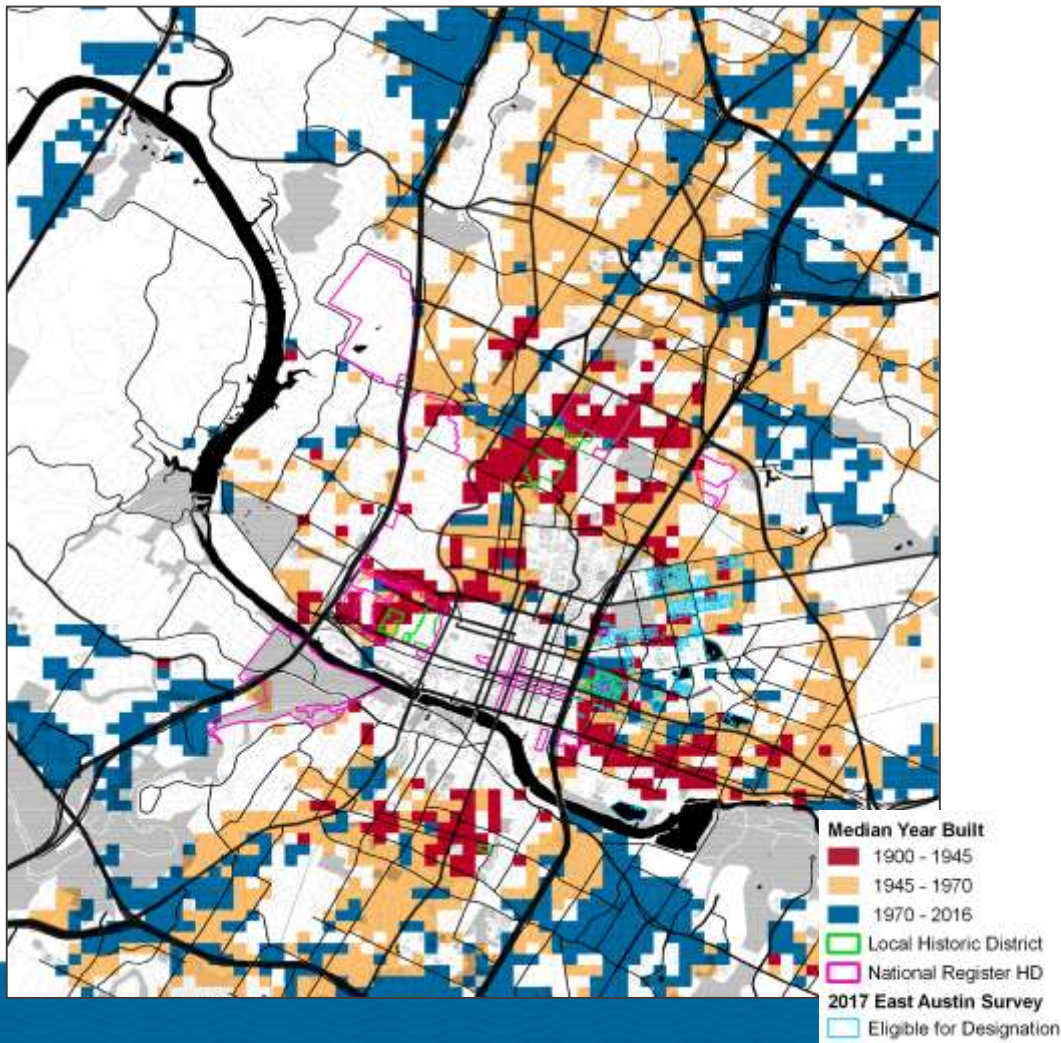
Jobs in Small / New Businesses (2017)

- Even excluding downtown...
- Majority prewar
 - 15.3 jobs in small biz
 - 3.6 jobs in new biz
 - 7.4 businesses
- Median year built '45-69
 - 10.4 jobs in small biz
 - 2.6 jobs in new biz
 - 5.1 businesses
- Median year built 1970+
 - 7.0 jobs in small biz
 - 2.2 jobs in new biz
 - 4.2 businesses



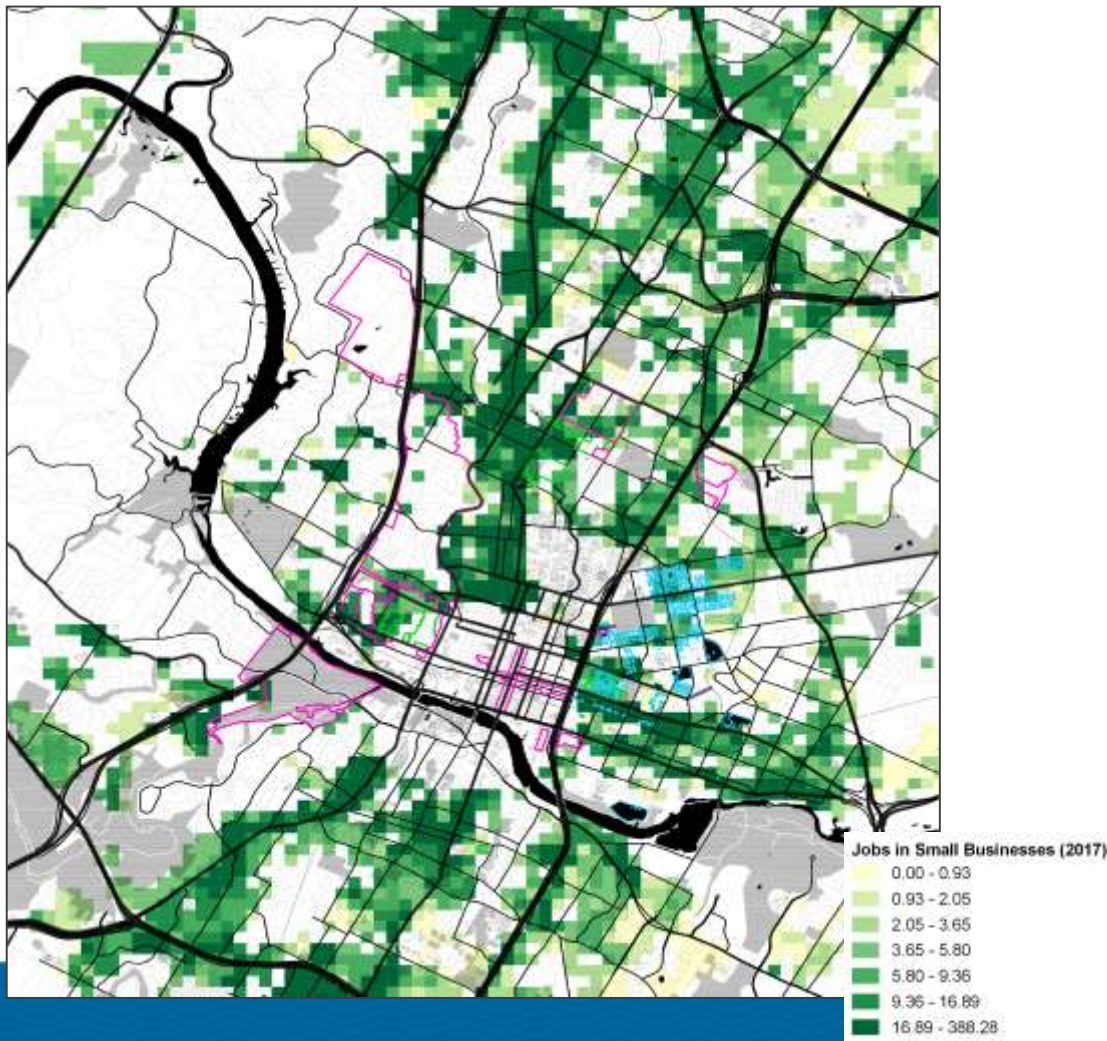
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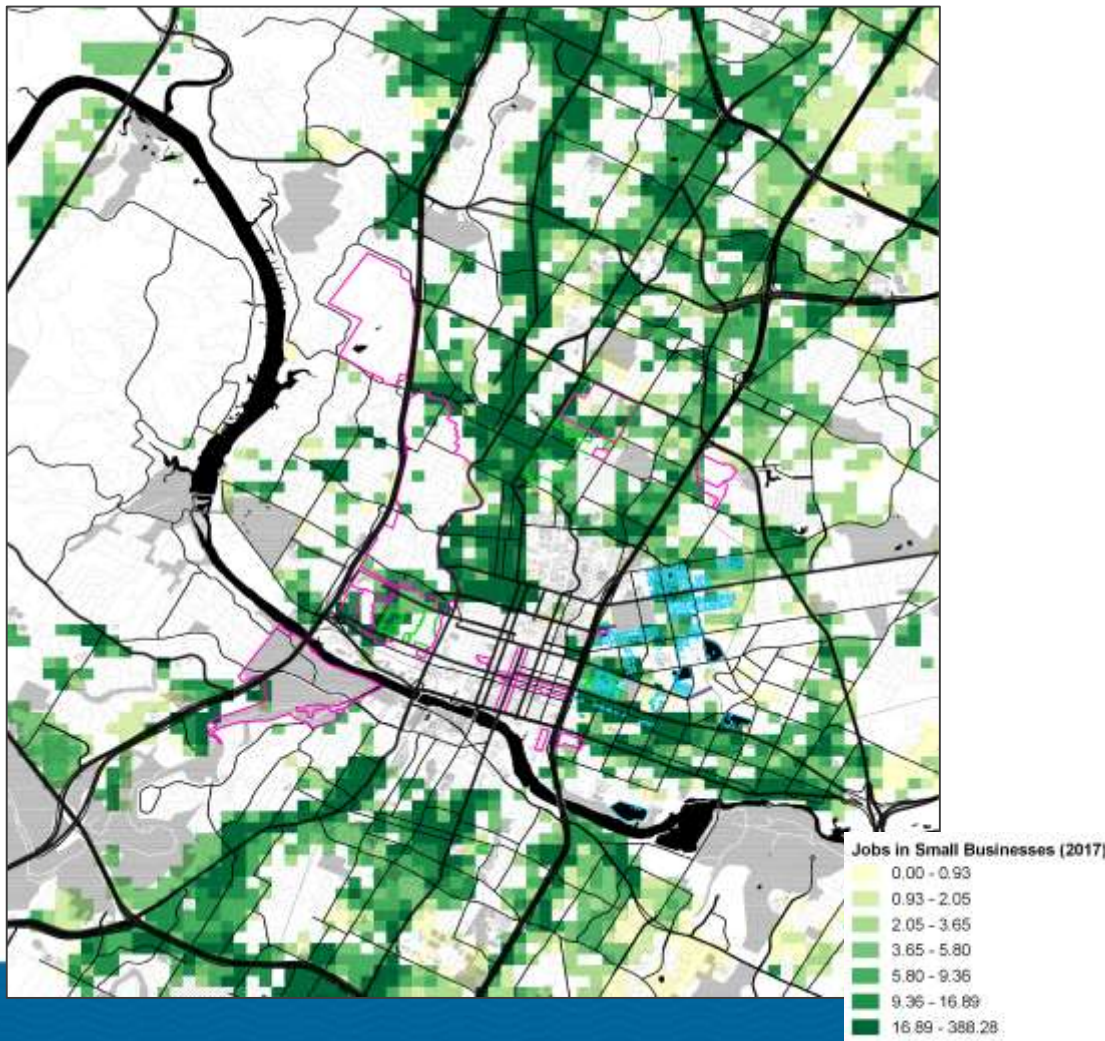
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- Median year built '45-69
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 - 2.6 jobs in new biz
 - 5.1 businesses
- Median year built 1970+
 - 7.0 jobs in small biz
 - 2.2 jobs in new biz
 - 4.2 businesses



Jobs in Small / New Businesses (2017)

- Even excluding downtown...
- Intersects local historic district
 - 17.5 jobs in small biz
 - 2.4 jobs in new biz
 - 8.5 businesses
- Intersects NR district
 - 16.8 jobs in small biz
 - 1.9 jobs in new biz
 - 9.0 businesses
- Intersects no historic districts
 - 8.2 jobs in small biz
 - 2.3 jobs in new biz
 - 4.5 businesses

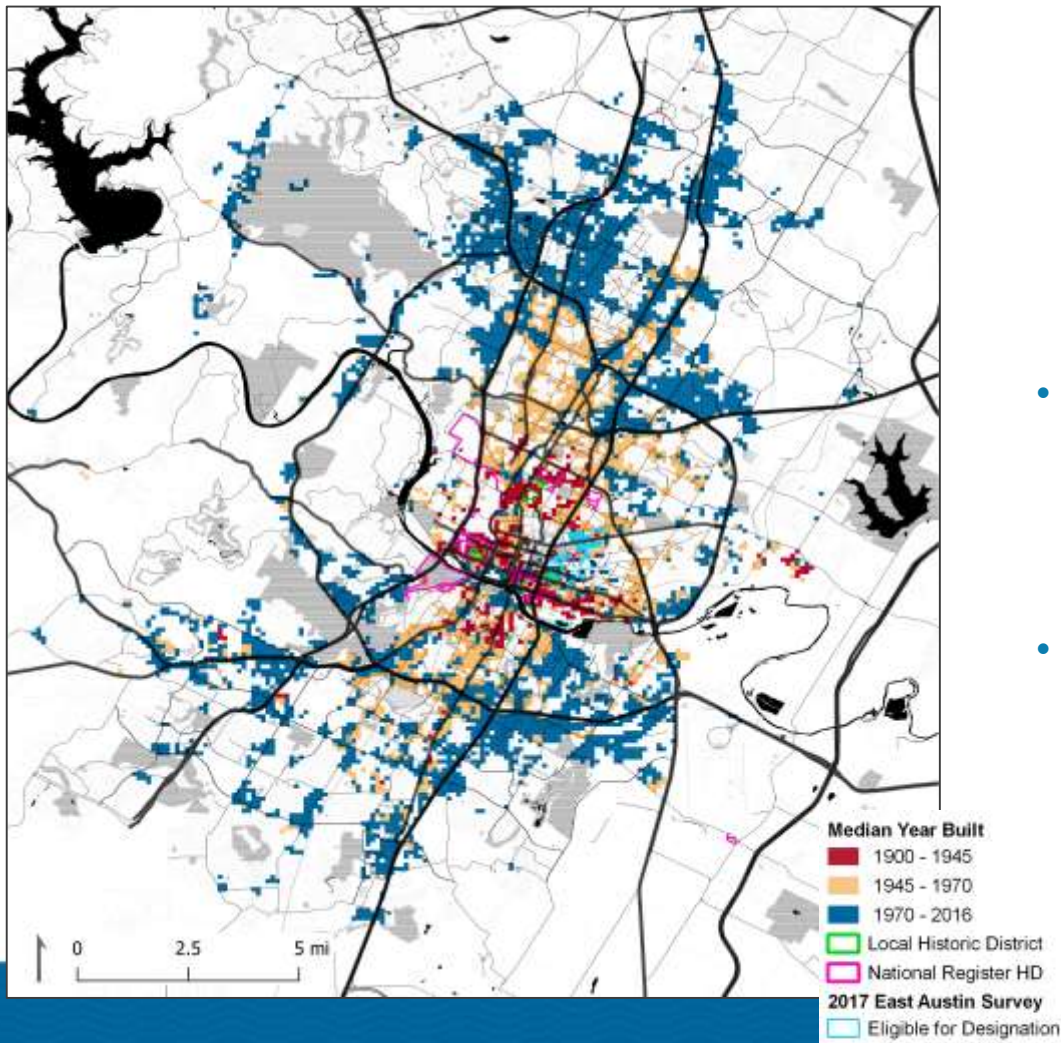


Takeaway:

Older and historic areas are less diverse in terms of residential demographics but more diverse in business ownership.

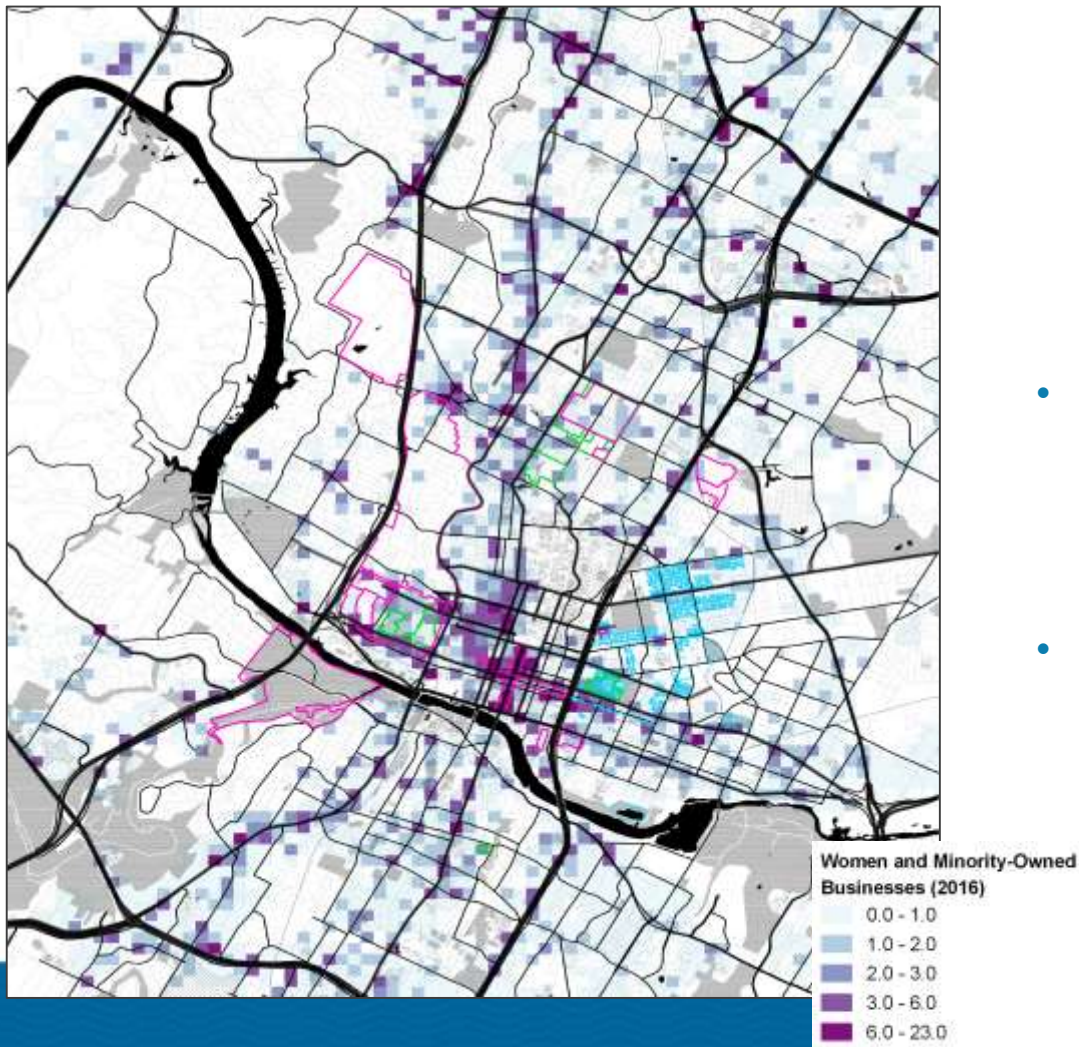
Women and Minority-Owned Businesses (2016)

- Majority prewar areas = 2x women and minority-owned businesses, compared to majority post-1970 areas
- Areas that include local or NR district also have 2x women and minority-owned businesses



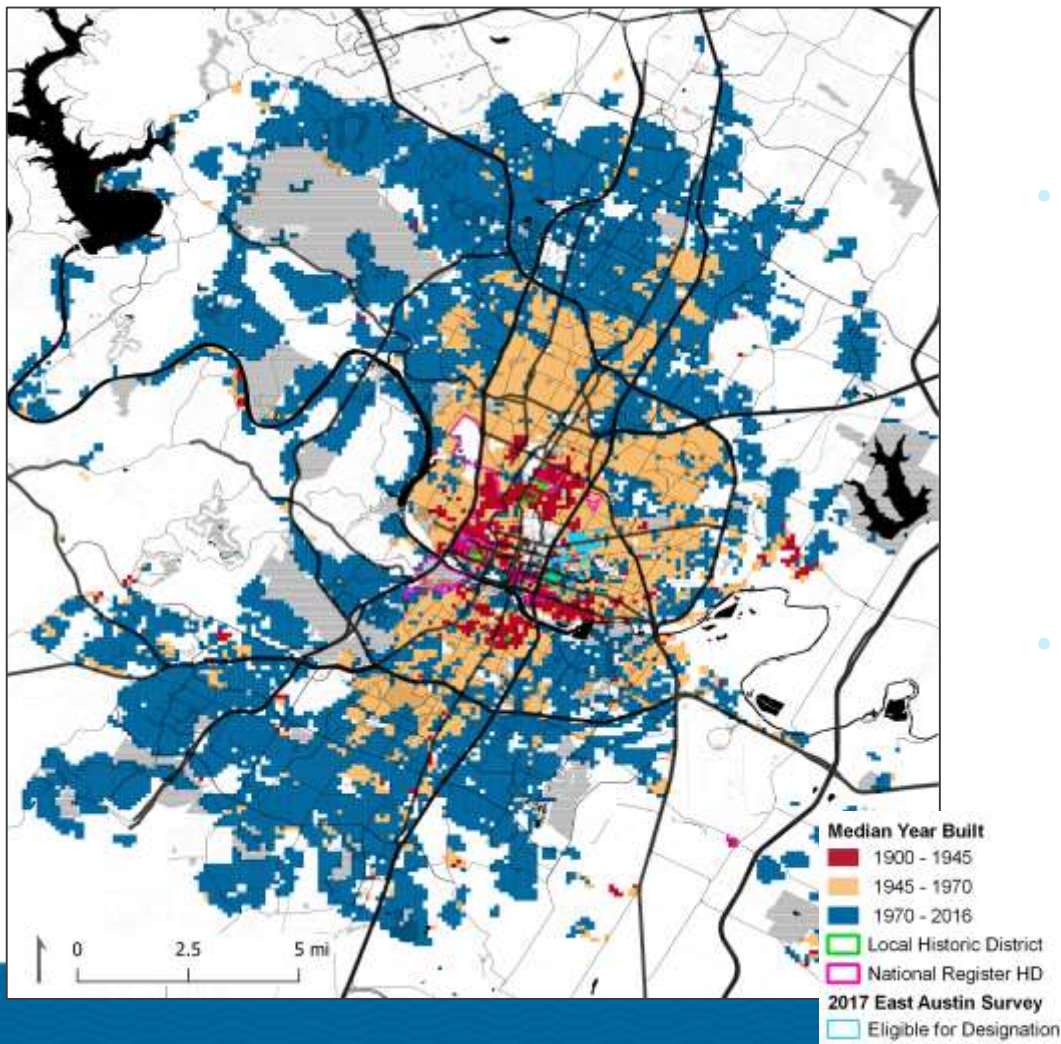
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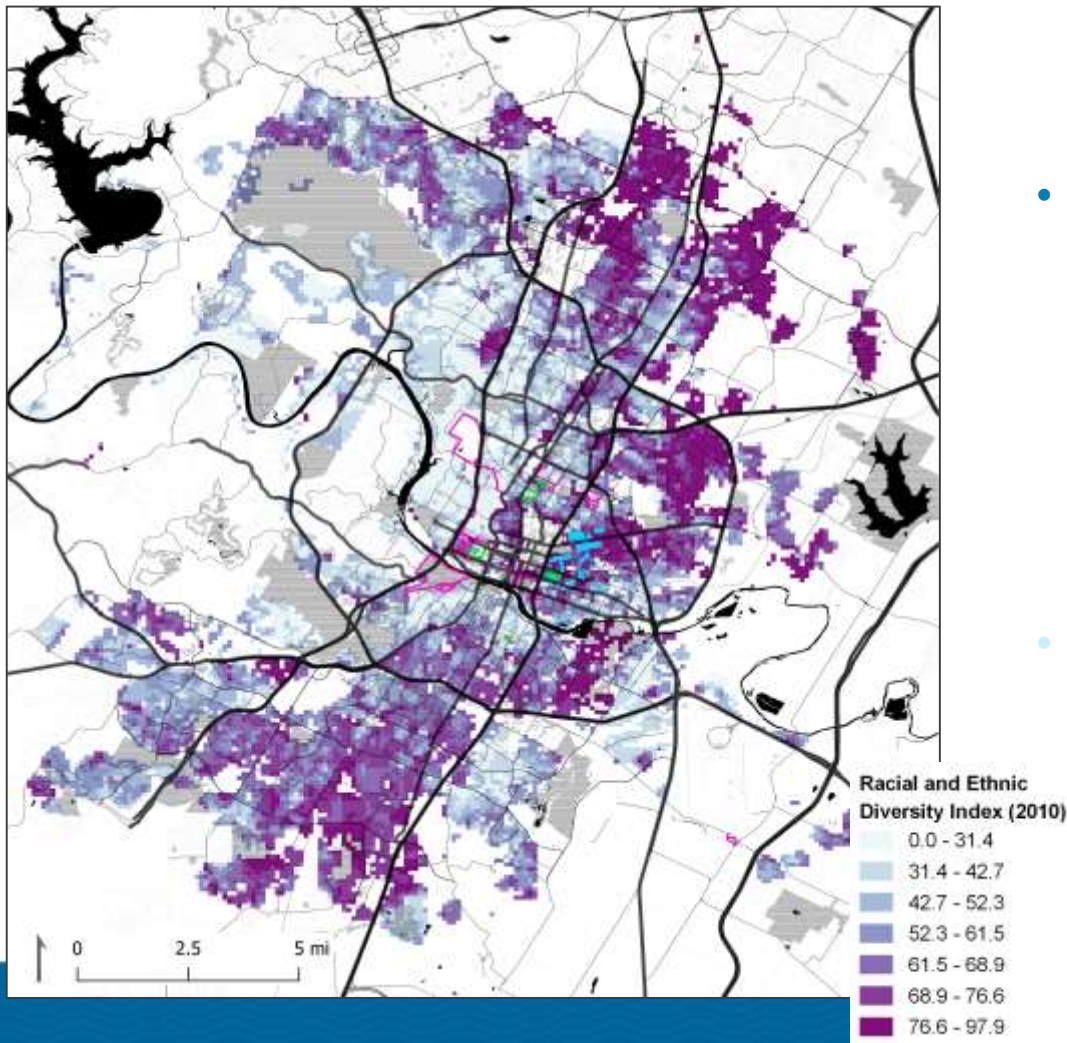
Population Diversity

- Areas with prewar and historic buildings are less diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, resident age, and income
 - Exception: Local historic districts - slightly more diverse in terms of income groups
- Areas determined to be eligible for designation in 2017 East Austin Survey are especially diverse in all three ways



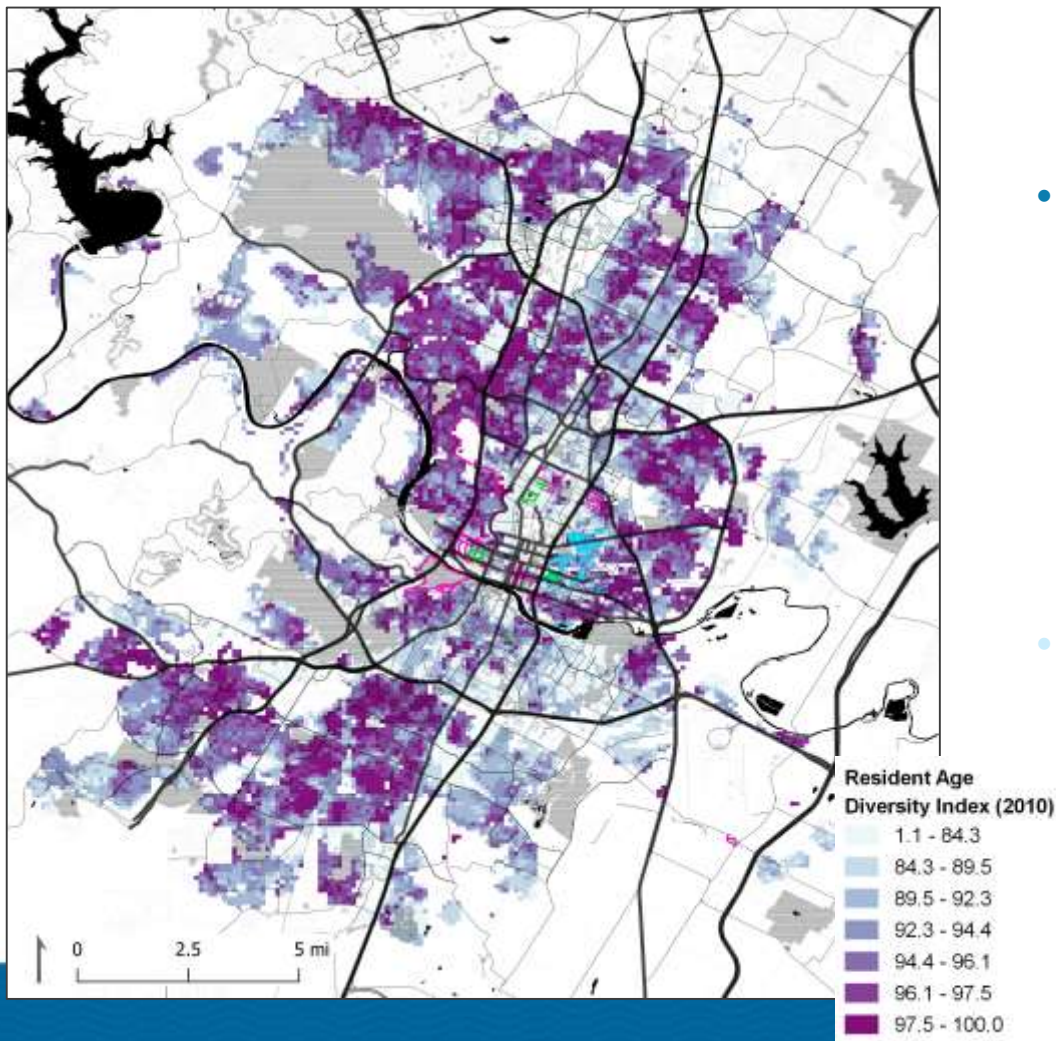
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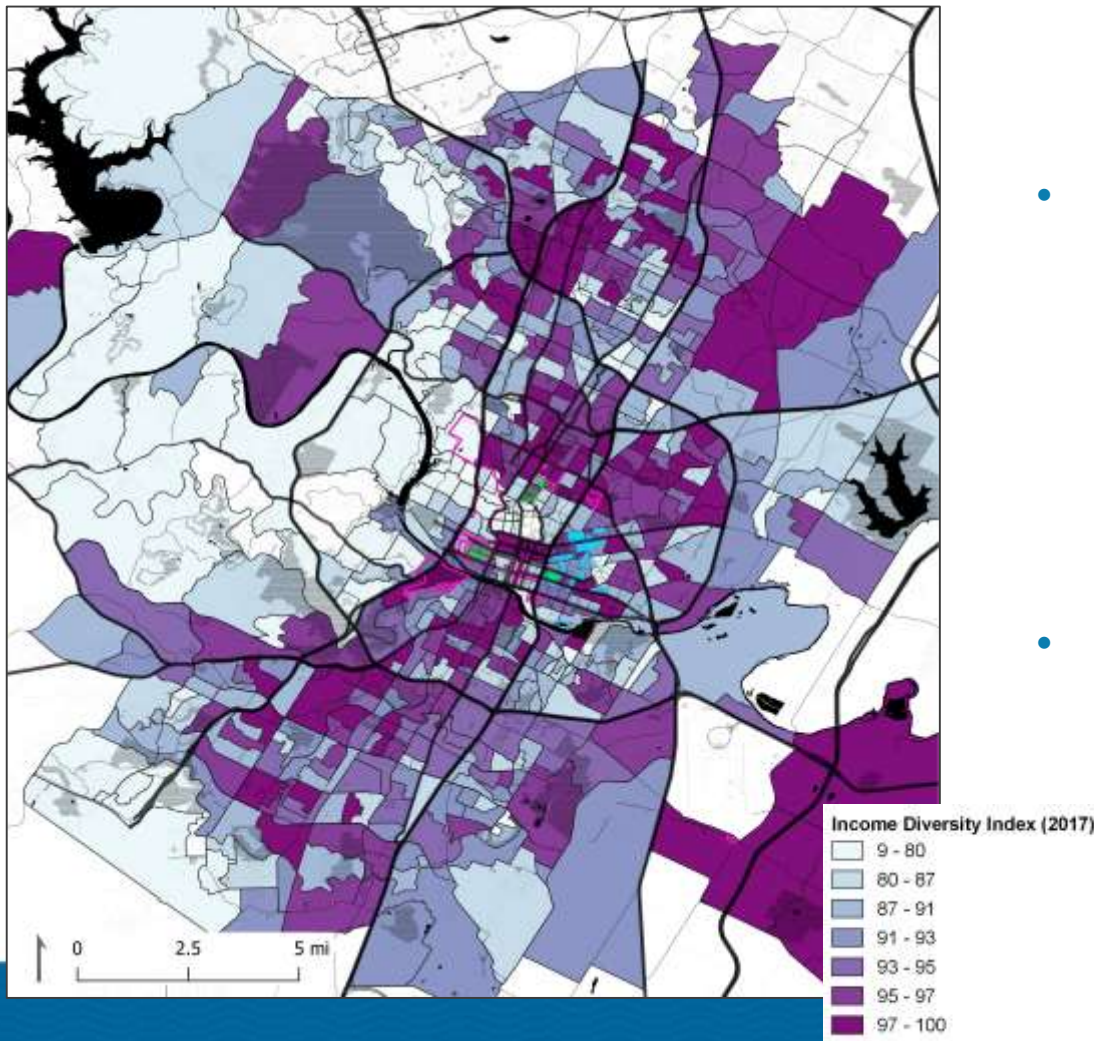
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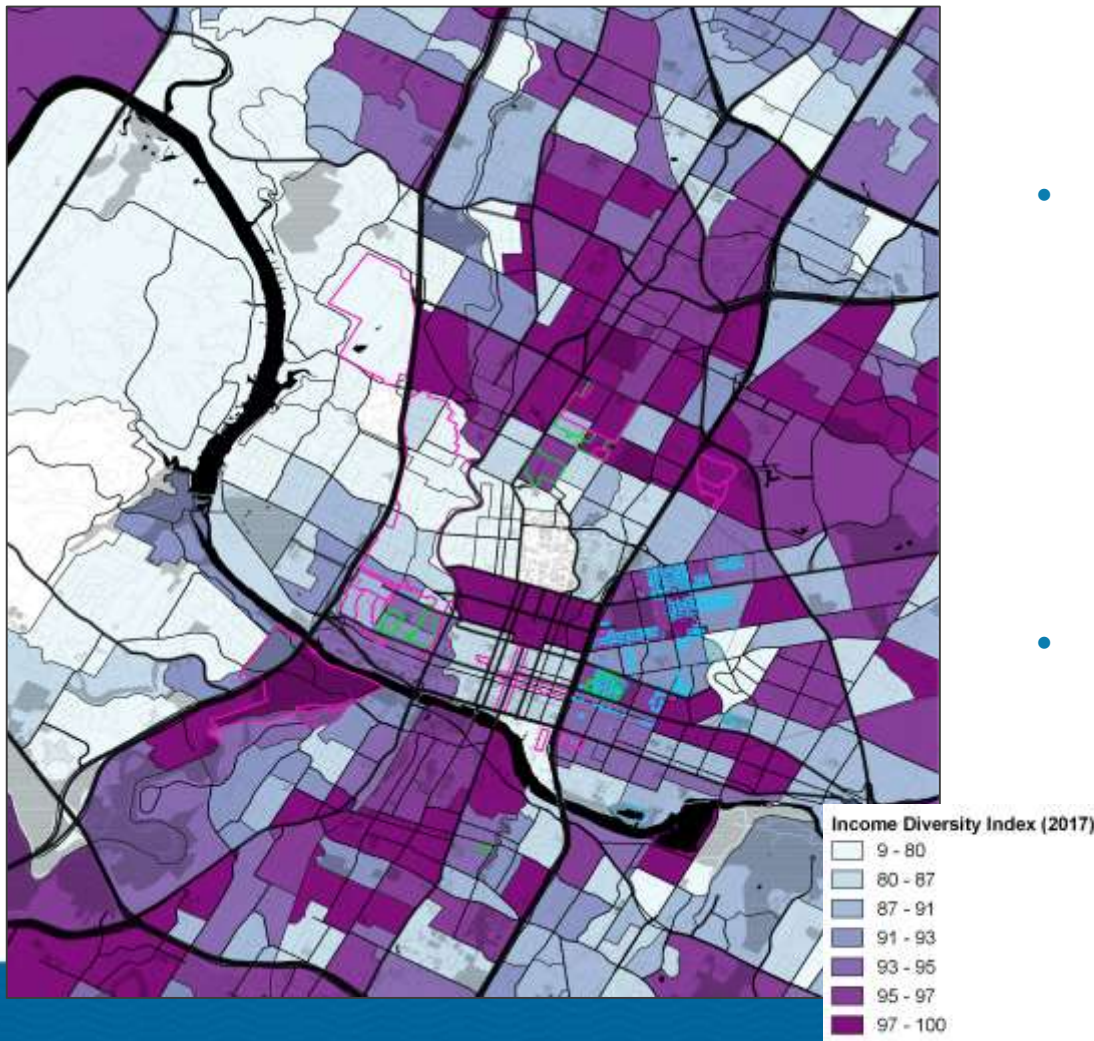
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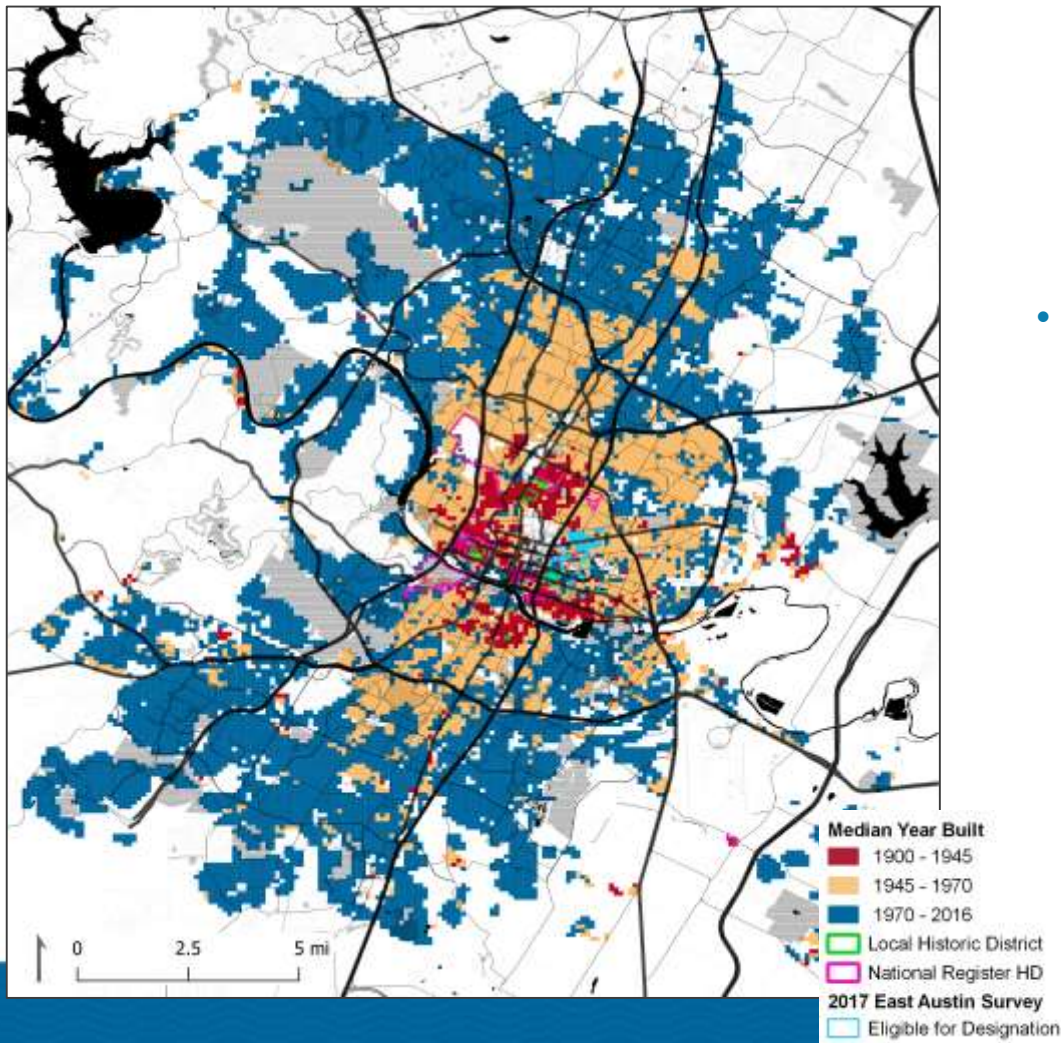


Takeaway:

There's more development and demolition activity in historic districts than you'd might expect.

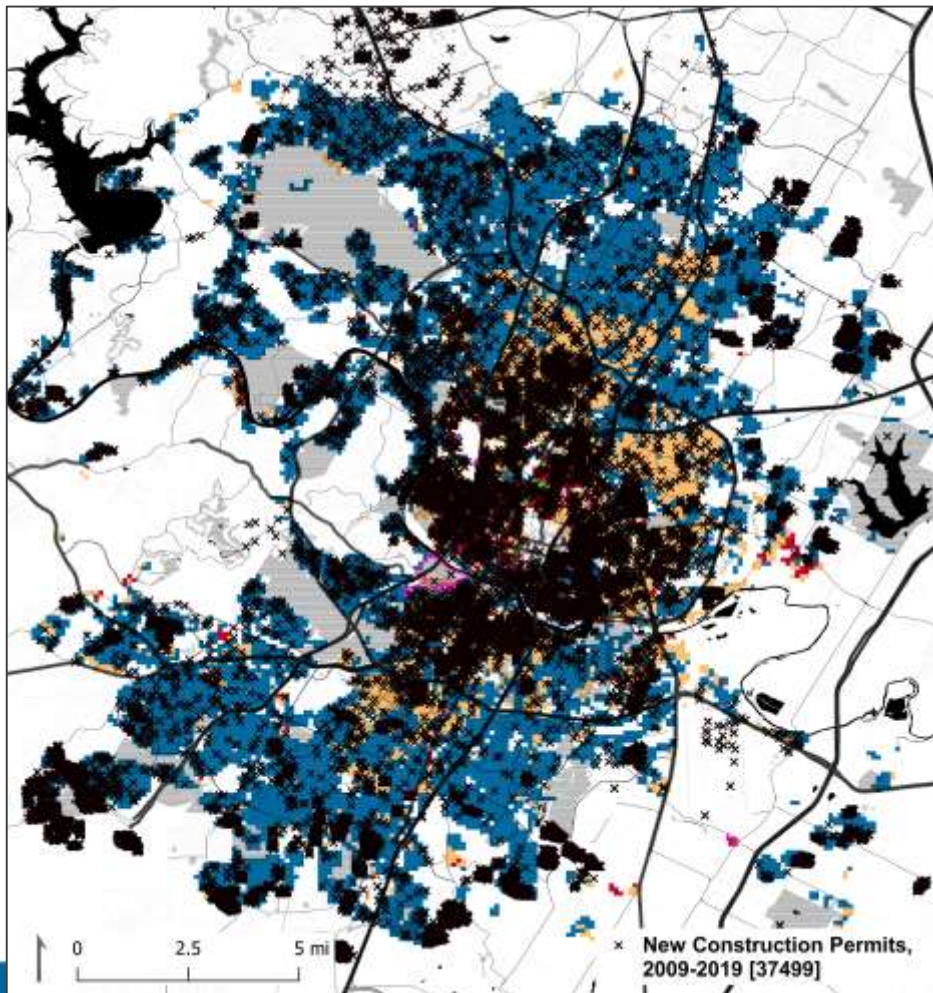
Development Activity (2009-2019)

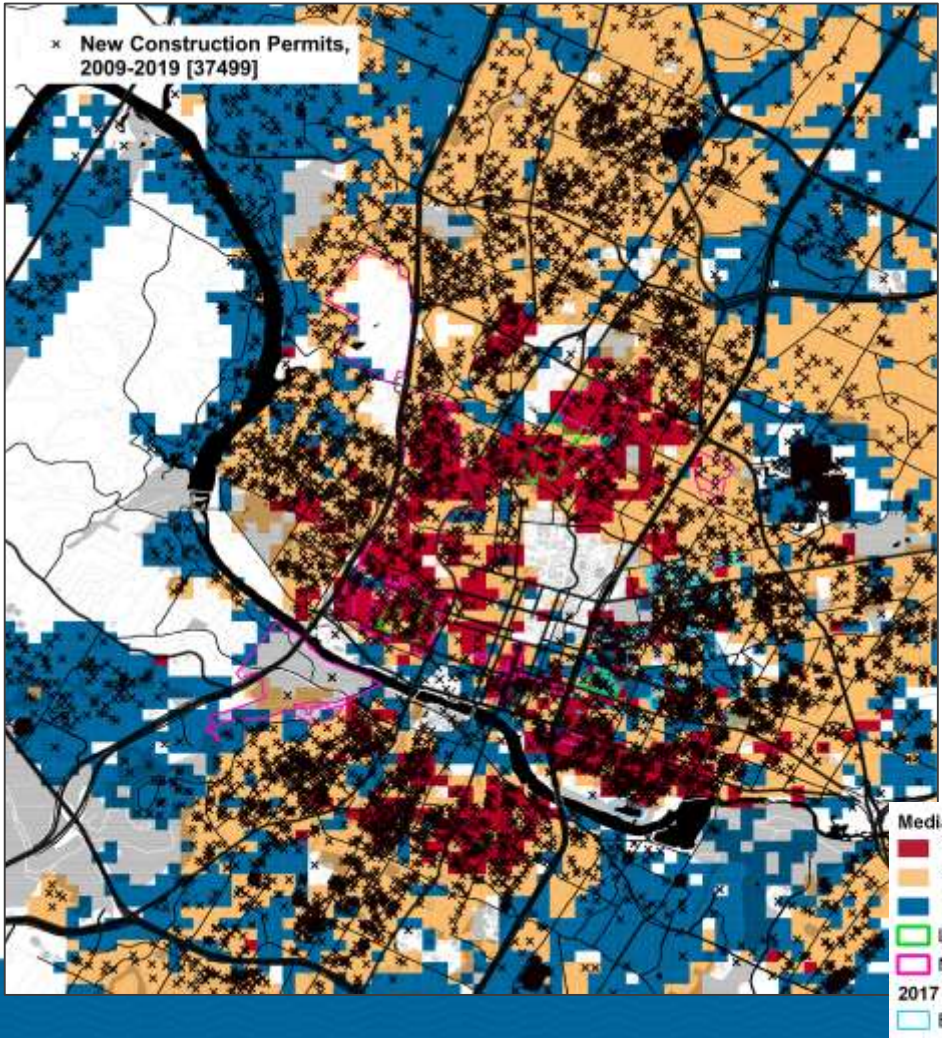
- Older and historic areas have outsized impact on permitted development activity.



Development Activity (2009-2019)

- Older and historic areas have outsized impact on permitted development activity.
 - New construction





× New Construction Permits,
2009-2019 [37499]

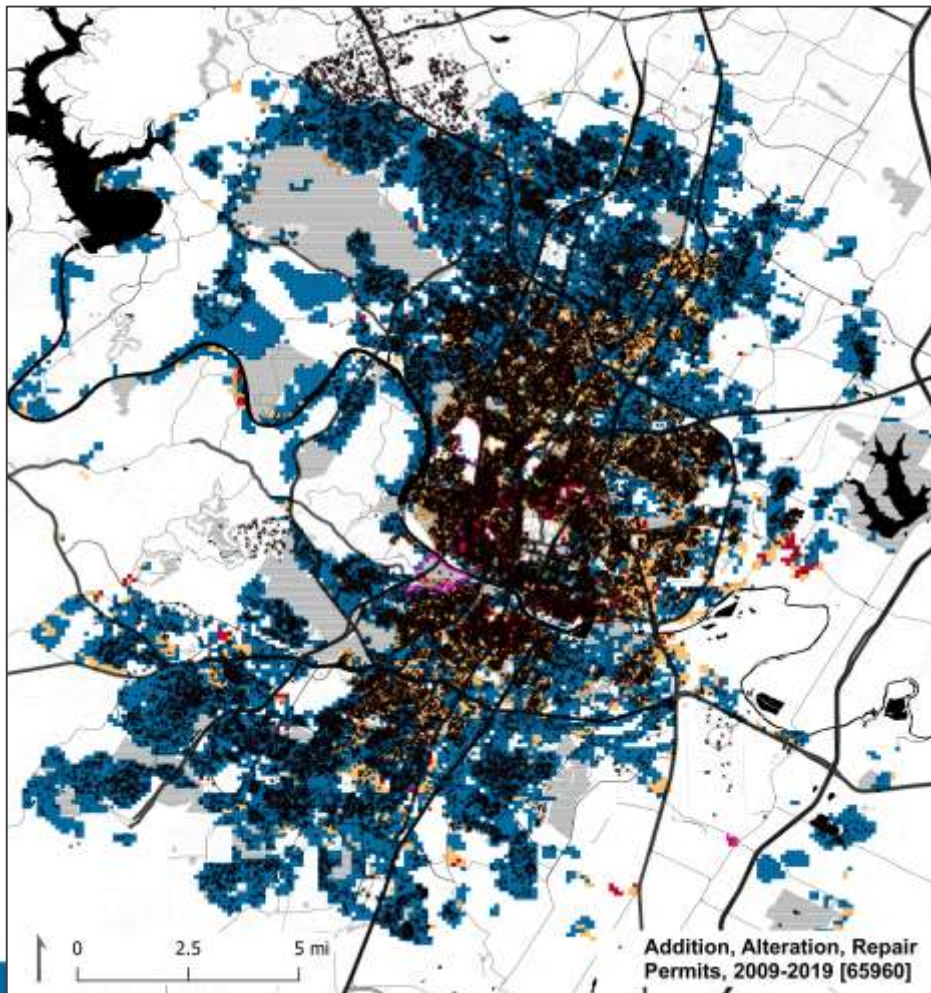
Median Year Built
 ■ 1900 - 1945
 ■ 1945 - 1970
 ■ 1970 - 2016
 □ Local Historic District
 □ National Register HD
 □ 2017 East Austin Survey
 □ Eligible for Designation

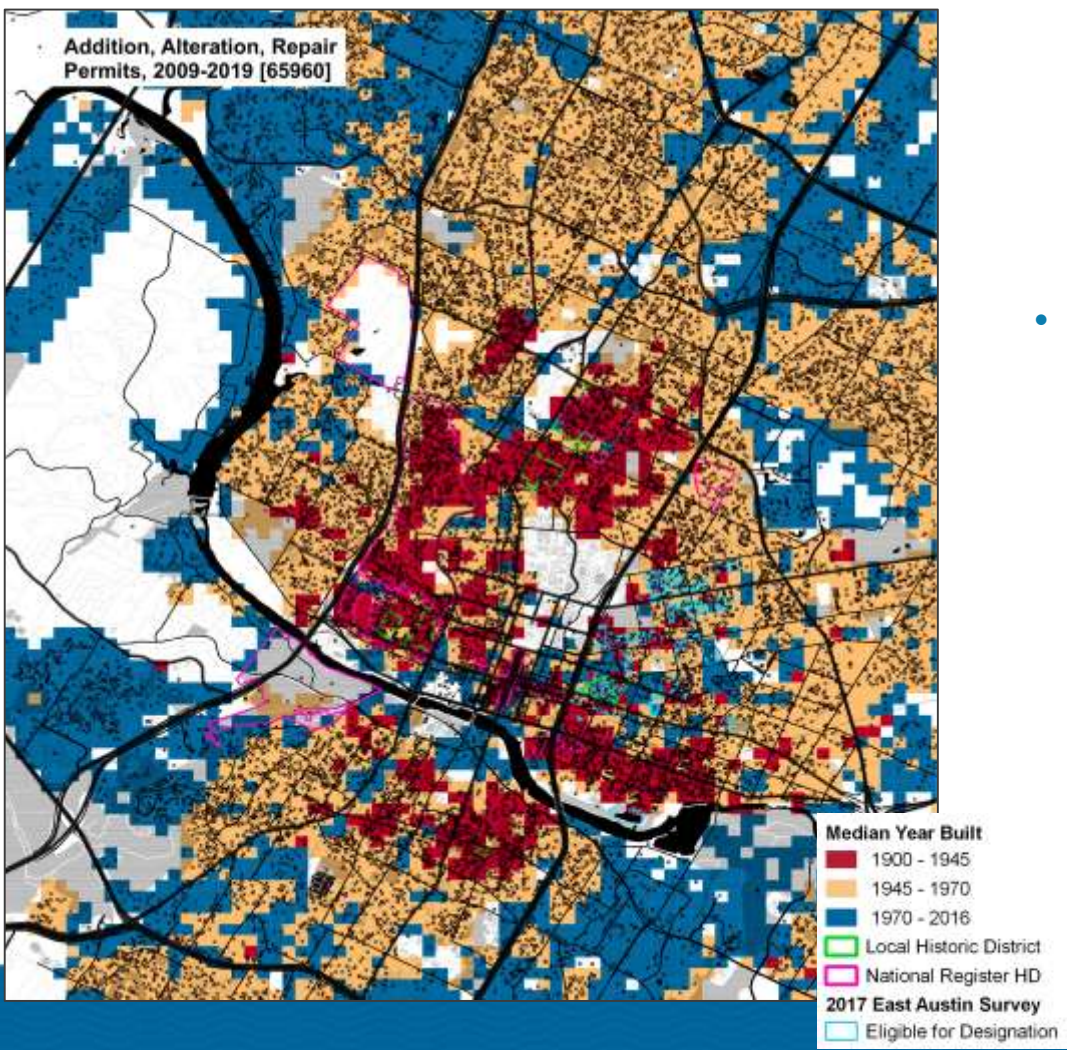
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- Older and historic areas have outsized impact on permitted development activity.
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Development Activity (2009-2019)

- Older and historic areas have outsized impact on permitted development activity.
 - New construction
 - Additions, alterations, and repairs



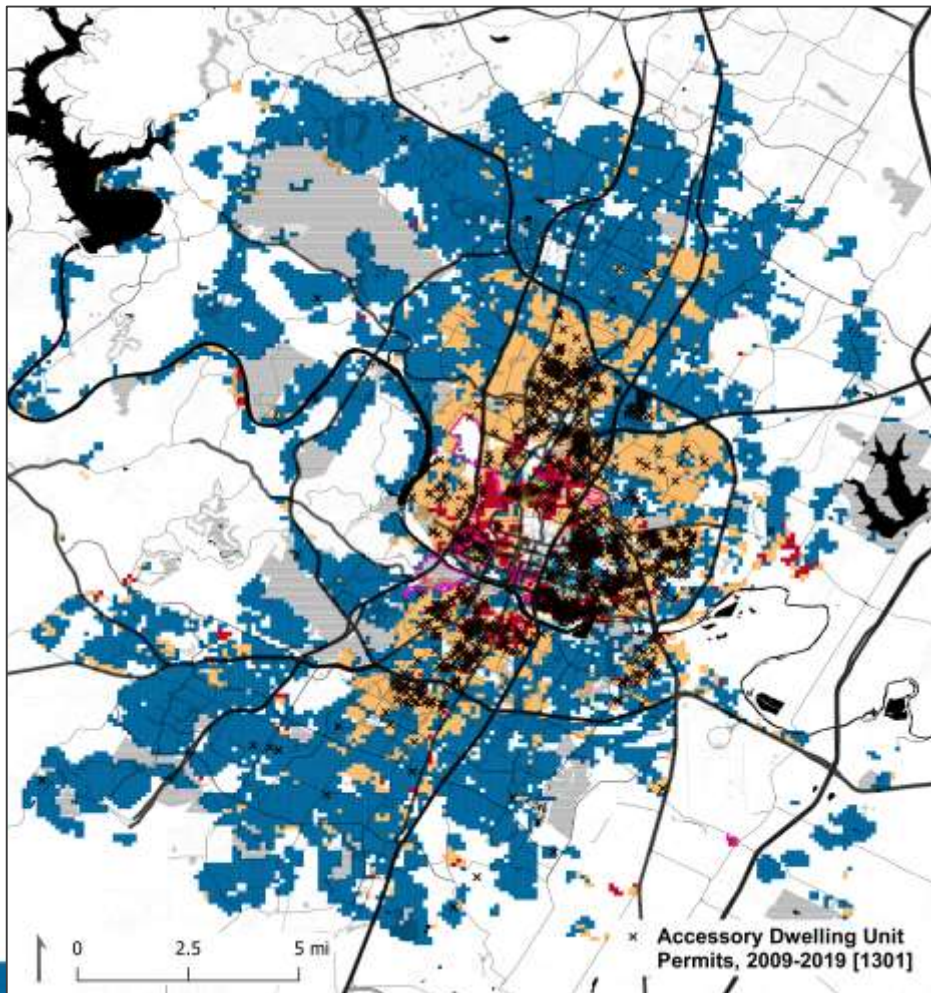


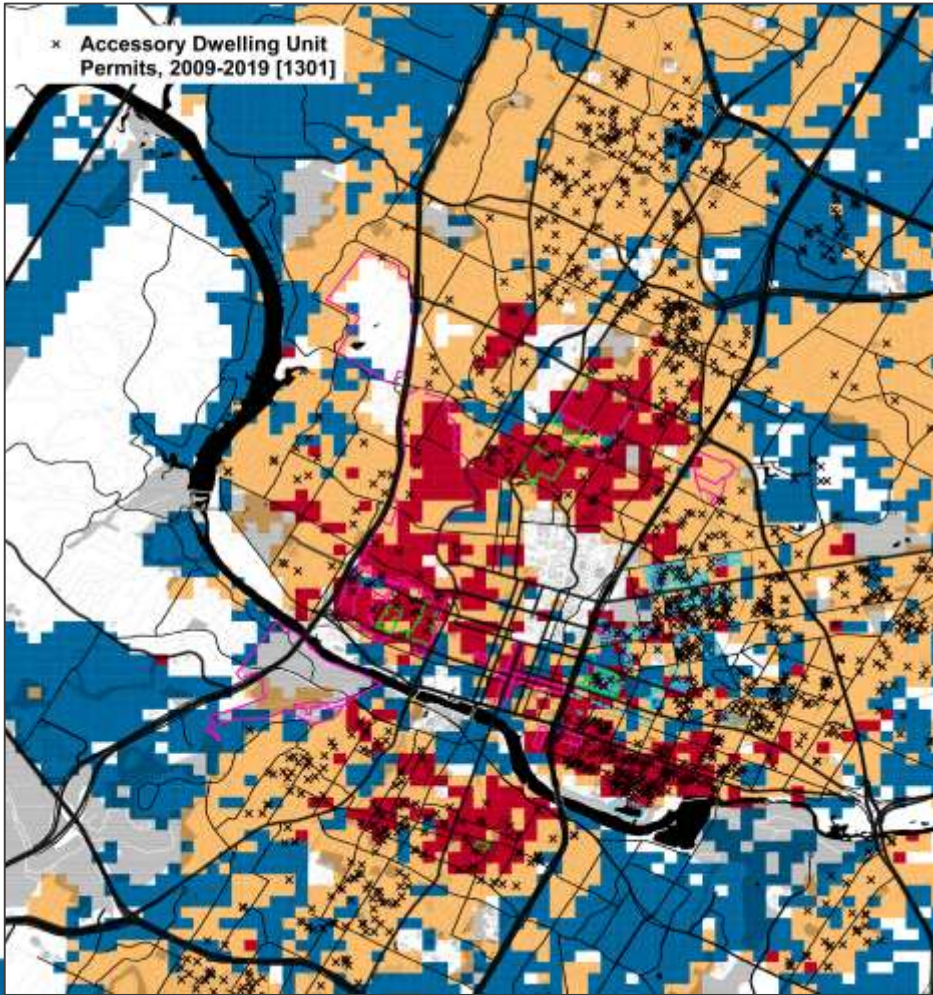
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Development Activity (2009-2019)

- Older and historic areas have outsized impact on permitted development activity.
 - New construction
 - Additions, alterations, and repairs
 - Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)



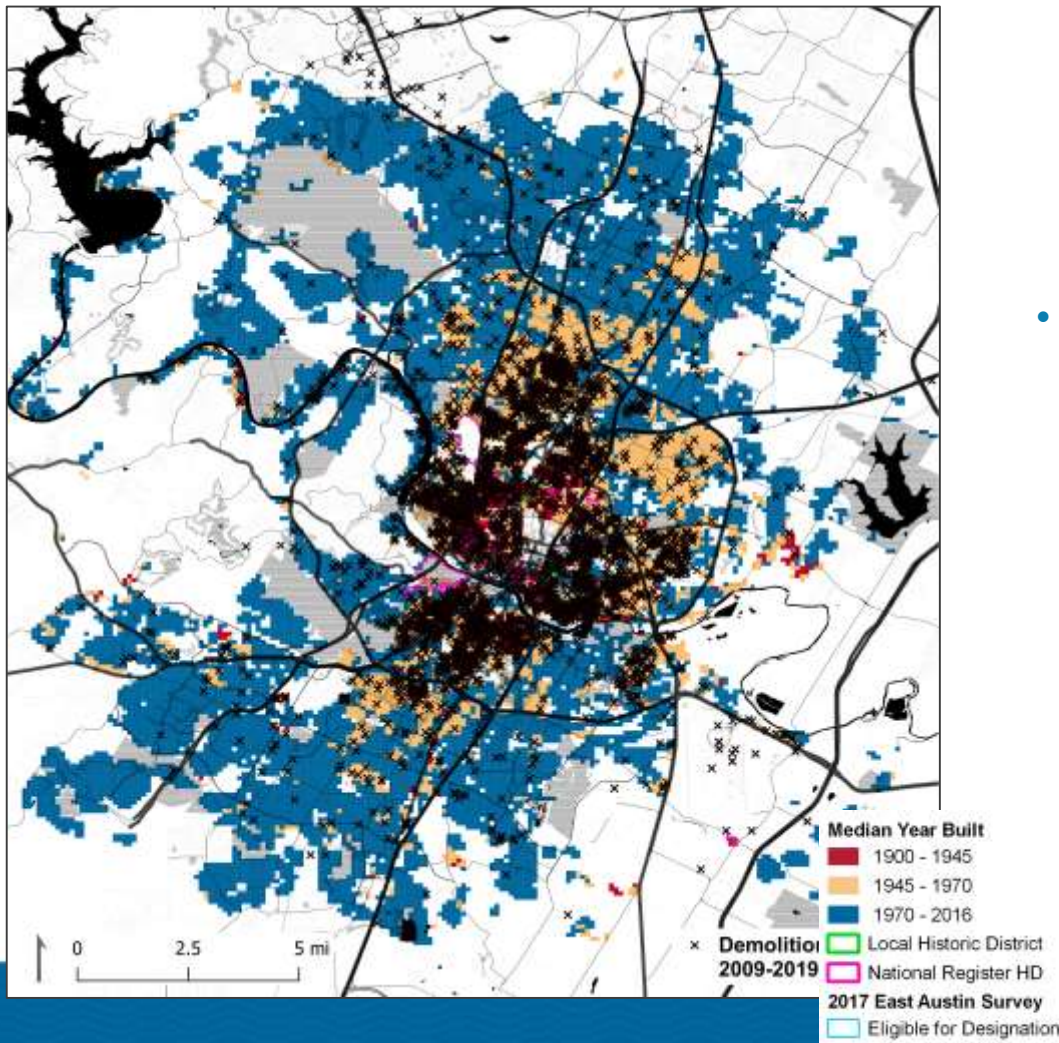


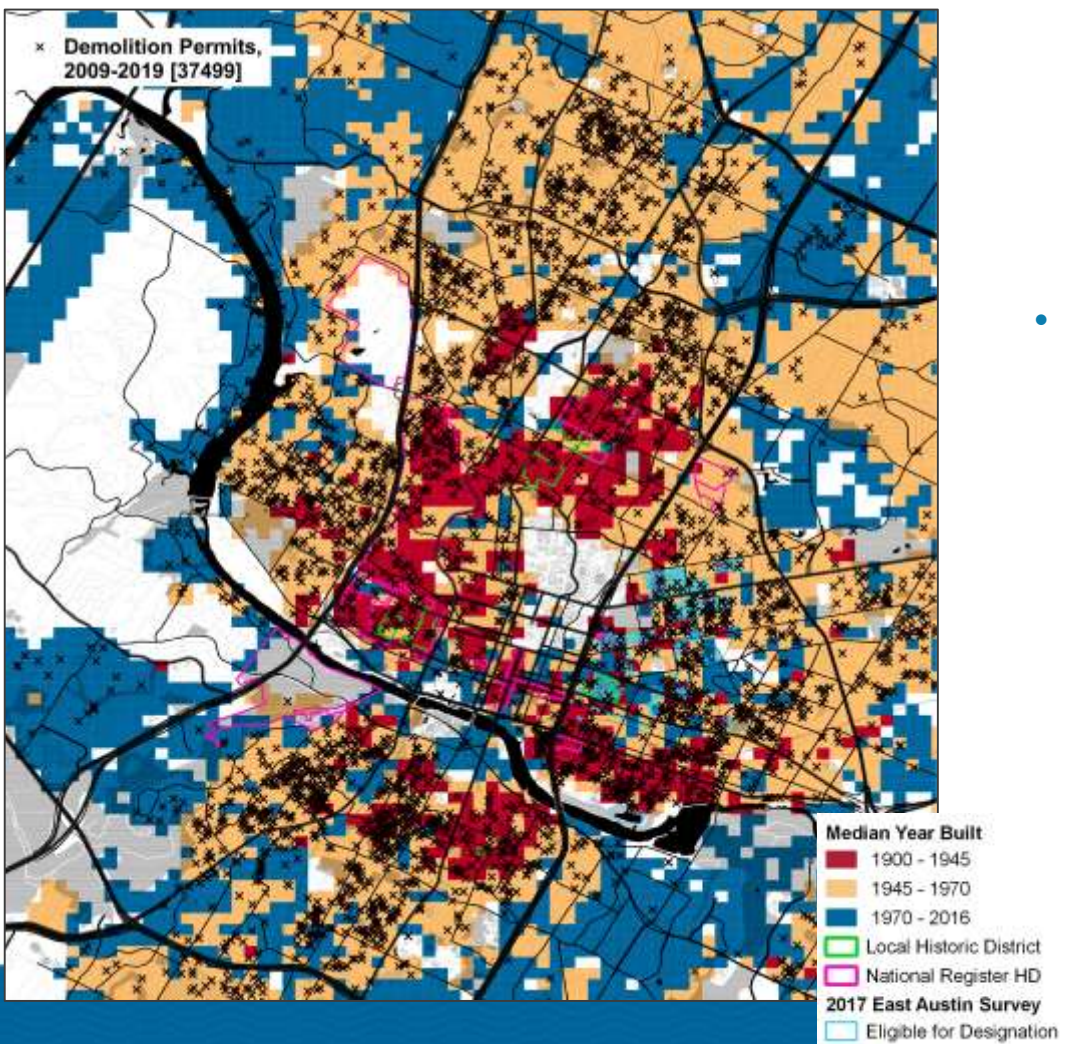
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- Older and historic areas have outsized impact on permitted development activity.
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 - Additions, alterations, and repairs
 - Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

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- Older and historic areas have outsized impact on permitted development activity.
 - New construction
 - Additions, alterations, and repairs
 - Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
 - Demolition





Development Activity (2009-2019)

- Older and historic areas have outsized impact on permitted development activity.
 - New construction
 - Additions, alterations, and repairs
 - Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
 - Demolition

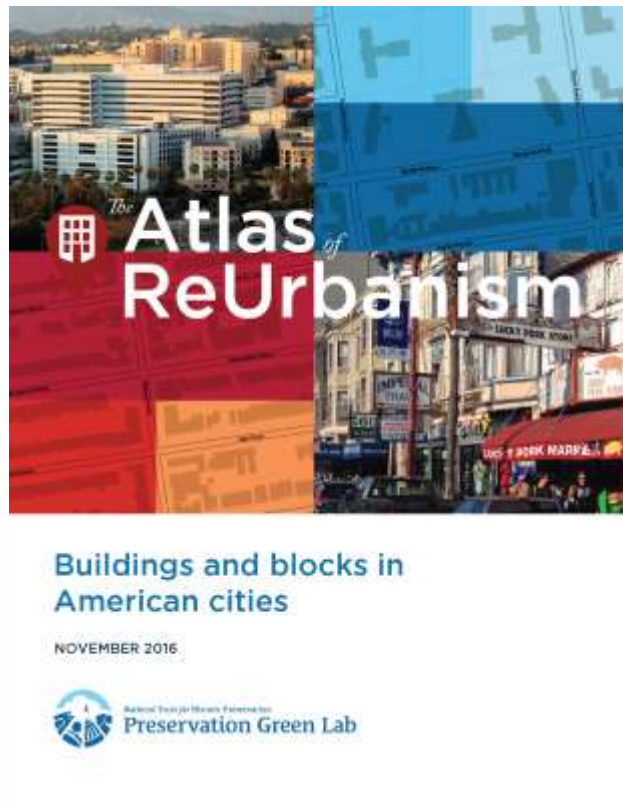
Key Takeaways: Review

Older and historic areas of Austin...

1. Have greater population and housing unit density.
2. Have more units of rental housing that is affordable.
3. Have more arts and cultural spaces.
4. Provide a launch pad for small businesses and entrepreneurs.
5. Are less diverse in terms of residential demographics but more diverse in business ownership.
6. Have more development and demolition activity than you'd might expect.

Discussion

- Which findings surprised you? Are you skeptical about any of the takeaways?
- How could policy and planning support preservation and reuse and help Austin grow gracefully?
- How could preservation be more effective in shaping a better Austin?



Thank you!

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www.savingplaces.org

www.savingplaces.org/research-lab



National Trust *for* Historic Preservation
Research & Policy Lab