

Austin | Madrid: A Case Study for Compact Green Family Living in American Cities

Austin, Texas has been labeled one of the fastest growing cities in the nation. Committed to sustainable, dense growth, how can Austin incorporate successful housing strategies of the Compact City model to improve the quality of life for residents?

Madrid, like Austin, is a capital city. Both cities occupy approximately the same amount of land, but Madrid is almost 5 times denser making it a successful example of the Compact City model. It has vibrant street life, efficient and accessible public transportation, and great architecture. Madrid can serve as an ideal place to explore the mechanism behind a successful compact city.

After quantitative and qualitative analysis of Austin housing, as well as identification and study of an underutilized urban site in Austin, we spent 2 weeks in Madrid, learning about its history, its planning strategy, its people, its vibe. We interviewed architects, academics, and administrators. We visited recent major infrastructure projects, new housing developments, and high profile architectural projects. We visited peoples' apartments to see how they lived.

Applying the ensuing evidence, a master plan focusing on development of attached housing was proposed for the Austin site providing increased density, immediate access to green space, and affordability for middle-income families.