



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Gregory I. Guernsey, AICP, Director  
Planning and Development Review Department

DATE: October 3, 2014

SUBJECT: Staff Report - City Council Resolution No. 20140501-042 – South Lamar Mitigation Study

On May 1, 2014, the City Council passed resolution No. 20140501-042 directing the City Manager to develop a plan to address the effects of infill development in the South Lamar Neighborhood and in other parts of Austin experiencing infill development. The resolution directed the City Manager to:

- A. Work with the South Lamar Neighborhood and to include cross-departmental perspectives to propose a Mitigation Plan for the South Lamar neighborhood that addresses the challenges created by many years of development on a site-by-site basis, lacking water detention and exacerbated by recent infill developments where inadequate infrastructure exists, including a potential implementation timeline and potential financial resources.
- B. Develop recommendations for enhanced tools that will better anticipate the cumulative effects of increasing density on a neighborhood's natural and manmade infrastructure, to preserve the quality of life for residents and to better inform zoning and budget deliberations.
- C. Identify opportunities within the context of the CodeNext rewrite to incorporate methods to define and protect a neighborhood's character, infrastructure and safety and provide commensurate mitigation requirements to better manage density and its associated costs.

The City Manager was also directed to provide a presentation to the Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Council Committee. Staff presented at the September 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

In fulfillment of the requirements of the resolution, staff has developed a set of recommendations. The first of these recommendations sets the framework for addressing the localized flooding and transportation issues within the South Lamar Neighborhood. The remaining recommendations address the regulatory issues highlighted in the resolution. These recommendations propose an approach to identify those code amendments and

process changes that could occur in advance of the results of CodeNEXT and those changes most suitable for the code revision process.

#### **A. Lack of Adequate Infrastructure within the South Lamar Neighborhood**

Since the beginning of 2009, the South Lamar Neighborhood has experienced a significant increase in development. Between Q1 2009 and Q2 2014, 133 housing units have been given certificates of occupancy within the neighborhood. While this is a significant increase in units, there are 549 units presently in the review stage or under development. An initial analysis by the Watershed Protection Department (WPD) has identified deficiencies in the stormwater infrastructure in parts of the West Bouldin Creek watershed that fall within or near the South Lamar Neighborhood (*see West Bouldin Creek Watershed within the South Lamar Neighborhood map on page 4*); however, WPD staff has also identified additional needs throughout the remainder of the watershed (*see West Bouldin Creek Watershed map on page 5*).

The transportation system throughout the South Lamar Neighborhood provides limited mobility options. The roadway network:

- Offers limited entry and exit points to and from the neighborhood
- Has few direct routes through the neighborhood
- Is “walled off” from neighborhoods to east by the Union Pacific Railroad tracks
- In the parts of the neighborhood experiencing the greatest volume of development, the roads (Del Curto Road, Lightsey Road, and Clawson Road) are narrow and largely without curbs or gutters.

There are few sidewalks in the neighborhood and the bicycle routes through the neighborhood are not striped or otherwise separated from traffic. Although segments of Del Curto Road, Lightsey Road, and Clawson Road are designated routes on the City of Austin’s Bicycle Map, the lack of bicycle improvements, limited sight lines, and narrow pavement discourage bicycle usage. Improvements to these roadways could improve stormwater management and provide increased mobility options

#### Recommendations

**Recommendation A1** — To address the broader needs of the West Bouldin Creek Watershed, WPD staff has identified a need for consultant services to complete the watershed study that was started by the Watershed Engineering Division in 2013. Staff resources have been diverted to address other flooding issues following the October 2013 floods. The study’s objective would be to cover the needs of the entire watershed. This expanded study of the watershed should:

- Identify and prioritize facility needs
- Identify projected capital expenditures
- Identify funding sources
- Provide a plan to facilitate public-private partnerships.

The scope should also be expanded to identify and prioritize roadway upgrades that will improve the drainage system and convey stormwater to the below grade pipes and existing natural channels.

*Estimated Cost:* \$.7M to \$1.5M

**Recommendation A2** — To address the lack of mobility options within the South Lamar Neighborhood, the scope of the South Lamar Corridor Study should be expanded. The revised scope would create a multi-modal thoroughfare plan (i.e., a collector plan) for the South Lamar Neighborhood to use as a template for other areas of the city. An adopted thoroughfare plan would allow the City to have land dedicated for roadway improvements at the zoning, subdivision, or site plan stage of the development process. This could serve as a template for creating thoroughfare plans for other areas facing development pressures which also have inadequate local transportation infrastructure. It can also serve as a model to develop and expand the thoroughfare plan to the rest of the City.

*Estimated Cost: \$.7M to \$1.5M*

## **B. Tools to Address the Effects of Redevelopment and Infill Development**

Although there have been attempts to amend the Land Development Code to address the needs of an increasingly urbanizing city, the essence of the code remains largely suburban. As such, the code does not always address the issues related to infill development. Similarly, while the Land Development Code provisions and associated development review processes may not discourage all infill and inner city development/redevelopment, they can be regulatory obstacles to the city aspired to in the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan*.

As Austin continues to become a more compact city through infill and more urban, denser development/redevelopment, there will be a need to update inadequate infrastructure. A review of different infrastructure financing mechanisms may identify untapped revenue sources or recommend adjustments to existing development fees to help pay for these improvements.

### Recommendations

**Recommendation B1** — To ensure that infill and urban development/redevelopment do not adversely affect the built and natural environments in the part of the city where it is occurring, a cross-departmental working group of City of Austin staff should be convened. This group would be responsible for reviewing the Land Development Code to identify code provisions and development review processes related to and affected by infill and urban development/redevelopment. This review should identify:

- Process changes
- Code amendments
- Resource implications

*Estimated Cost: None, can be accomplished with existing staffing levels*

**Recommendation B2** — Assemble a cross-departmental working group to identify additional revenue sources to finance infrastructure improvements. This group would generate a report that will:

- Identify different funding mechanisms
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these mechanisms
- Provide recommendations.

*Estimated Cost: None, can be accomplished with existing staffing levels*

### **C. Opportunities within the CodeNEXT Process to Address Issues Associated with Redevelopment and Infill Development**

*Recommendation B1* will result in a list of code amendments. In order to effectively implement these code amendments they will need to be prioritized in the context of the ongoing CodeNEXT process.

**Recommendation C1** — Review the lists of recommended code amendments and development review processes developed through *Recommendation B1* to identify changes:

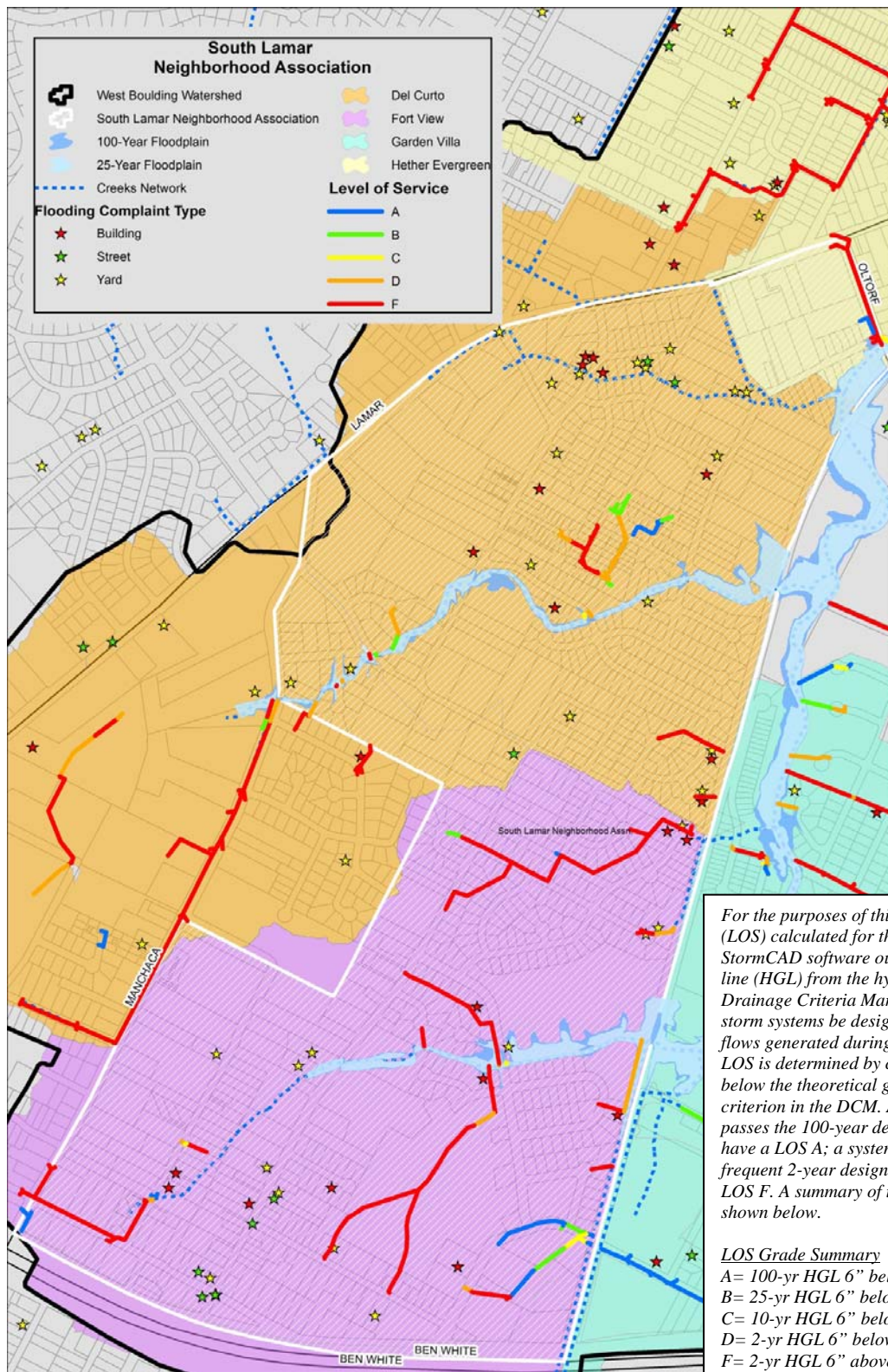
- That can be made in advance of the code revisions implemented during the CodeNEXT process and move forward with these proposed amendments and process changes
- That should be addressed by the CodeNEXT process.

*Estimated Cost: None anticipated, can be accomplished with existing staffing levels and through the existing budget for the CodeNEXT process*

If you have any additional questions, please contact me at 512-974-2387, or Mark Walters, Principal Planner, at 512-974-7695.

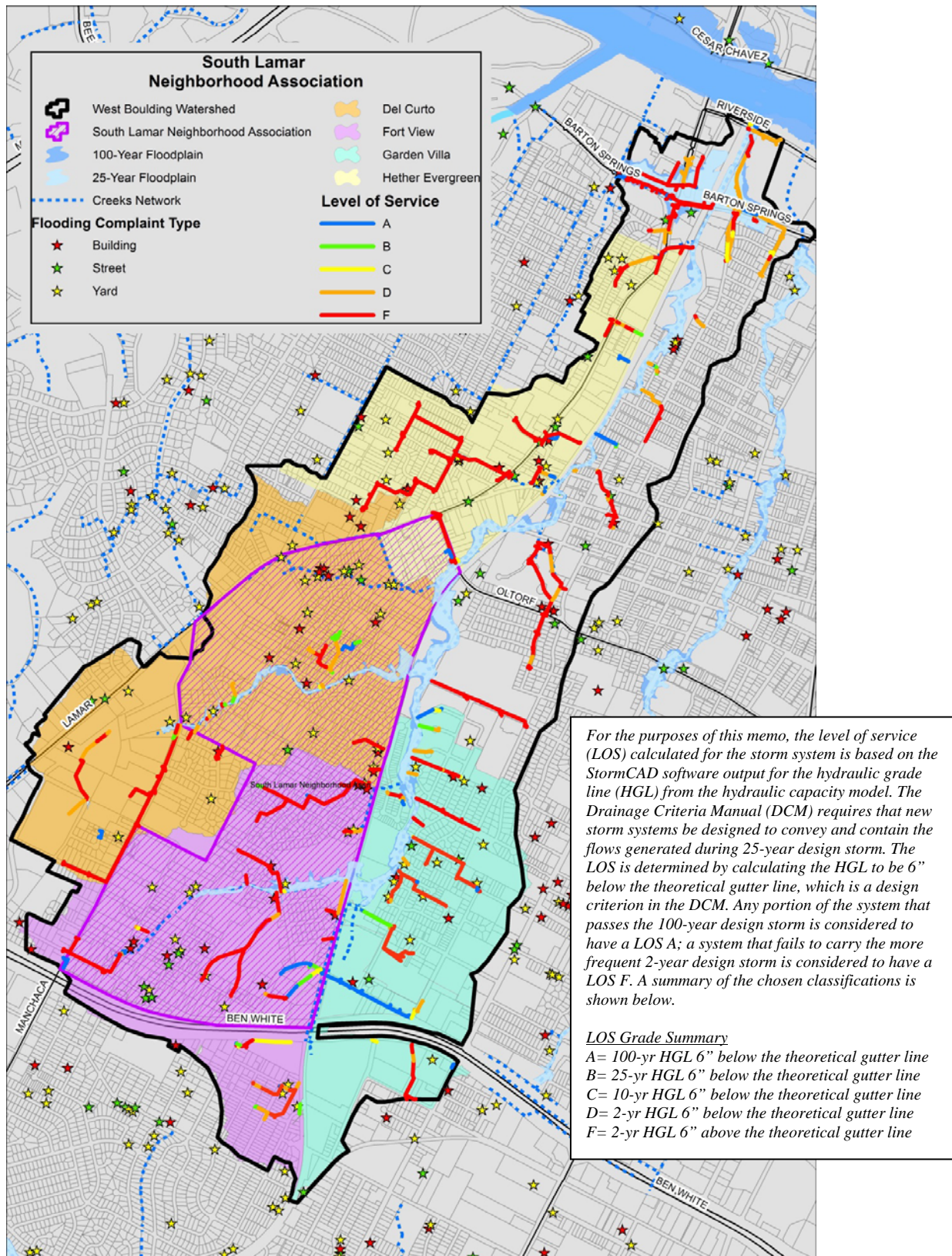
### Attachments

cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager  
Sue Edwards, Assistant City Manager  
Victoria Li, Director, Watershed Protection Department  
Rob Spillar, Director, Austin Transportation Department  
Mark Walters, Principal Planner



West Bouldin Creek Watershed within the South Lamar Neighborhood





West Bouldin Creek Watershed