



Flood Mitigation Task Force: Kickoff Meeting

September 22, 2015

Presentation Overview

- Welcome & Introductions
- The Flood Mitigation Task Force Resolution
- A Short History of Austin Flooding
- Detailed Discussion of Resolution Scope Items
- Potential Policy Discussions
- Election of Officers
- Set Month-by-Month Schedule

The Flood Mitigation Task Force

- [Council Resolution 20150604-044](#) (June 4, 2015)
- Call to Action (“Whereas...”)
- Scope
- Organization
- Schedule
- Meetings
- Open Government & Ethics Issues

FMTF Objective

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

A. The Flood Mitigation Task Force (FMTF) is created to gather information and develop recommendations related to citywide and area flooding and its impacts to property, public safety, and City finances, with an emphasis on flood mitigation solutions and funding options.

FMTF Scope

B. The FMTF scope of work shall include:

1) Review and recommendations regarding:

- a. Flood mitigation and preparedness strategies;
- b. Flood plain variances and flood buyout policy;
- c. Structure and use of the adopted drainage utility charge; and
- d. Storm water management system operation and maintenance costs (O&M), capital costs, city fees, flood insurance, and other identified factors that have impacts to affordability and equity in anticipation of the 2016-2017 Council budget conversation.

FMTF Scope

- e. Methods and means to provide more public education and outreach to new residents and visitors to raise awareness of flash flooding potential, as well as actions and strategies for the public to take to remain safe; and
- f. Standard and Green Infrastructure utilization; impacts, regulations, and management of impervious cover; master planning and studies underway.

FMTF Scope

- 2) Identifying available funds, including federal, state, and local sources as well as prioritizing future capital investment for flood mitigation and management.
- 3) Evaluating best practices in peer cities with similar climate and flood issues.
- 4) Receiving staff briefings concerning progress and recommended action for the Upper Onion Creek study and providing comment.
- 5) Collaborating with the City's Environmental Commission as appropriate.

FMTF Scope

- 6) Collaborating as appropriate with other jurisdictions and agencies that have interest, expertise, and investment authority regarding flood mitigation potentially impacting areas inside and outside of the City of Austin as well as with work groups or other regional initiatives focused on flood issues and storm water management.
- 7) Assisting in public outreach to share information and engage the community for feedback.

FMTF Schedule & Final Report

D. The FMTF shall:

1) meet monthly;

2) coordinate with the City Manager and staff from appropriate City departments involved in flood mitigation efforts or flood recovery activities, such as: ...

3) present a **final report** including recommendations and potential items for budget consideration to the Public Utilities Committee not later than March 2016 and for final consideration by City Council not later than April 7, 2016; and

4) expire upon the completion of its assigned tasks or April 30, 2016, whichever is sooner.

➤ Possible month-by-month schedule presented later/below.

Open Government & Ethics Issues

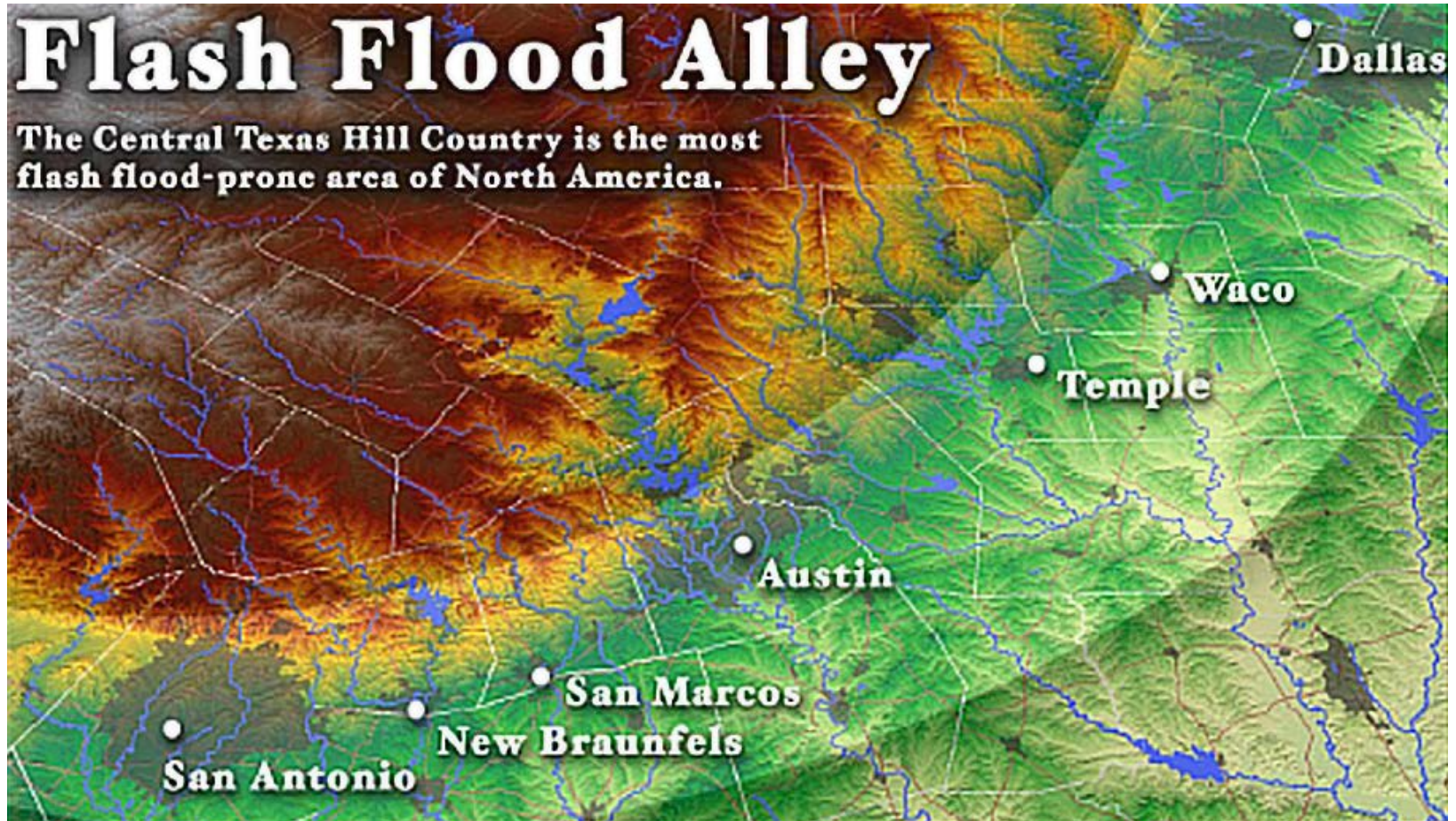
- Presentation by Sabine Romero, Law Department



A Short History of Austin Flooding

Flood Mitigation Task Force

Need for Flood Mitigation Services



Need for Flood Mitigation Services

- Flooding is Austin's most common weather-related emergency
- Floods can occur any time—even during a drought (e.g., Oct. 2013)



Major Austin Floods

Austin Flood & Flood Mitigation History

1832

1833

1836

1843

1852

1869

1870

1900

1913

1915

1921

1932

1935

1936

1938

Mid 1970's

1974-75 Creek Ordinances

1981 Drainage Fee

1977 DCM

1983 First floodplain regs in 100-yr FP



1915 - Sabine Street near Waller Creek

1975 & '81 NFIP



1980s onward:
Major capital projects;
Shoal buyouts

1991 Utility
established

1993 FEMA remaps
Onion floodplain

1997 Floodplain
Task Force

1998-99 first
Onion buyouts

2001 Master Plan



1961 1975 1991 2001

1960 1974 1981 1998

More floods 2004 2007 2010 2013 2015!

2013 Watershed Protection Ordinance

2001 Master Plan and Watershed Protection Department Mission

Flooding



Public Safety

Erosion



Property Protection

Water Quality Degradation



Environmental Protection

“Protect the lives, property, and environment of our community by reducing the impact of flooding, erosion, and water pollution.”

Master Plan: Goals

Primary Mission Goals

1. **Flood Mitigation:** Protect lives and property by reducing the impact of flood events.
2. **Erosion Control:** Protect channel integrity and prevent property damage resulting from erosion.
3. **Water Quality Protection:** Protect and improve Austin's waterways and aquifers for citizen use and the support of aquatic life.



394 roadways at risk of
flooding during 100-year flood

5,095 structures in the
100-year floodplain

Creek Flood – Structures & Roadway Crossings



4,600+ local flood
complaints citywide

Much of system
old, undersized

Local Flood – Smaller Drainage Systems




Detailed Discussion of Resolution Scope Items

Flood Mitigation Task Force

1.a. Flood Mitigation & Preparedness Strategies

- Task Force: Review & make recommendations about flood mitigation & preparedness strategies
- Cornerstone of watershed protection
- Over 40 years of experience in Austin
- 3 solution types: capital, programs, regulations
 - Ounce of prevention worth a pound of cure
 - Over 100 flood capital projects completed and/or with funding allocated since 2001
 - Over 1,300 structures with flood threat reduced
- Reductions in flood insurance costs

Flood Mitigation Coordination

A background image showing several people in a river, likely engaged in flood mitigation work. They are wearing safety gear like life jackets and waders. The water is murky and the scene is outdoors.

Animal Services Office
Austin Code Dept.
Austin Energy
Austin Fire Dept.
Austin Police Dept.
Austin Transportation Dept.
Austin/Travis County Health &
Human Services
Austin Water Utility
Capital Planning Office

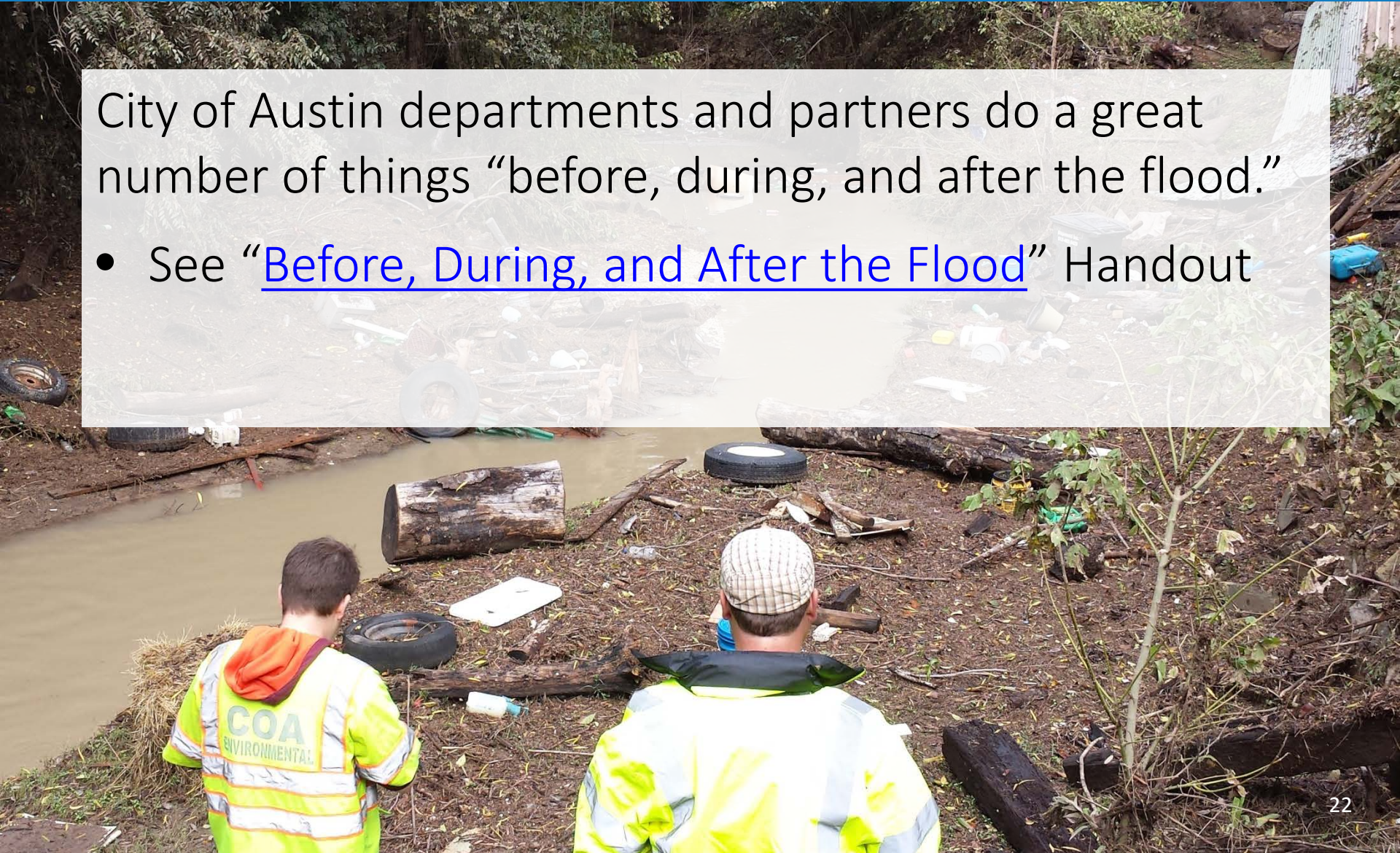
Development Services Dept.
Emergency Medical Services
Financial Services Dept.
Homeland Security &
Emergency Management
Office of Real Estate Services
Parks & Recreation Dept.
Planning & Zoning Dept.
Public Works Dept.
Watershed Protection Dept.

Plus Travis County, National Weather Service FEMA, USGS, and others!

Flood Mitigation Coordination

City of Austin departments and partners do a great number of things “before, during, and after the flood.”

- See “[Before, During, and After the Flood](#)” Handout



2015 Watershed Protection Master Plan

Inventory of Potential Flood Solutions

10

Capital
solution types



Waller Creek Tunnel

14

Programmatic
solution types



Flood Early Warning System road
crossing warning signage

14

Regulatory
solution types



25- & 100-year floodplain
delineation & development
restrictions

1.b. Floodplain Variances

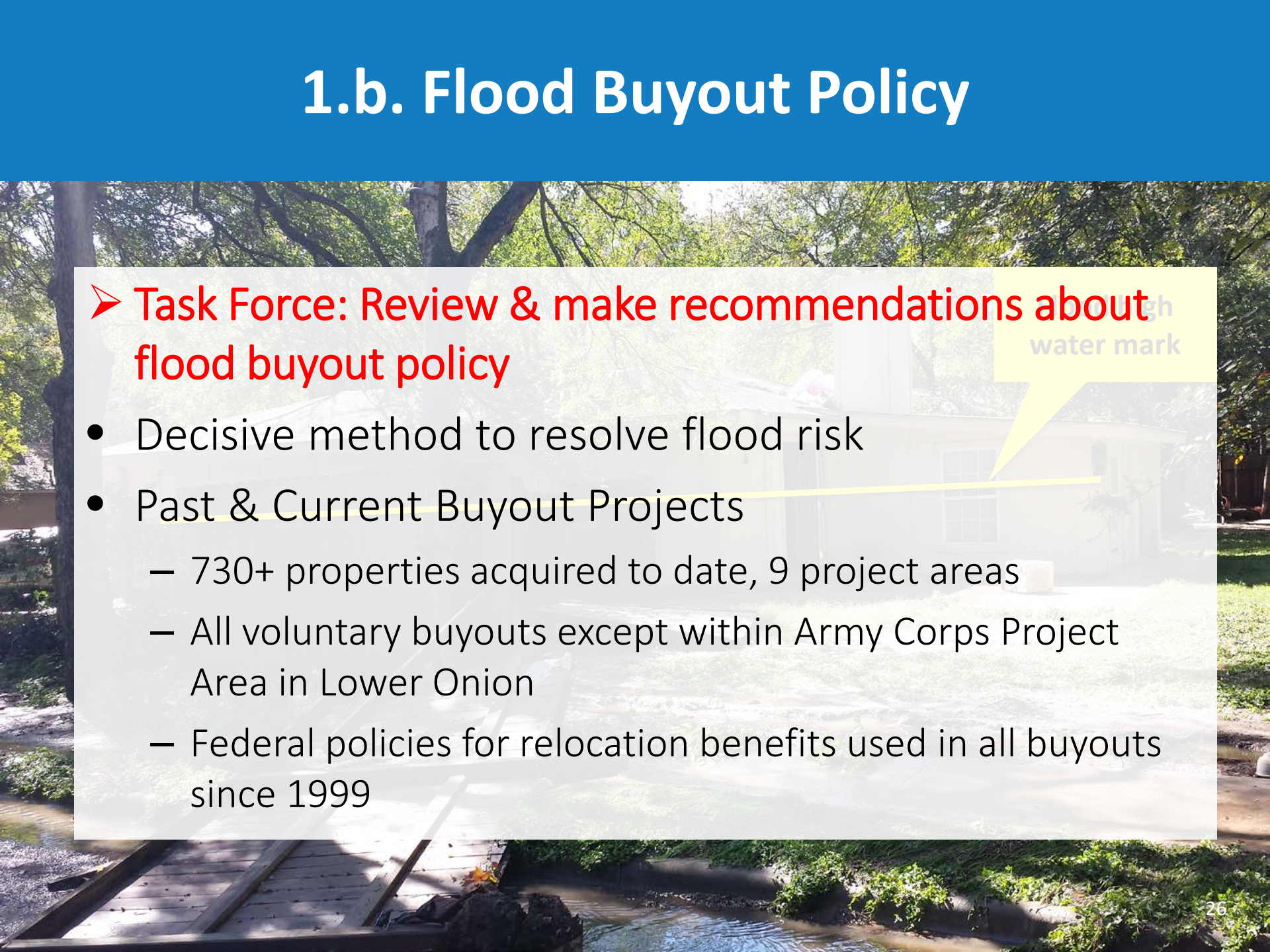
- Task Force: Review & make recommendations about variance requests and staff recommendations
- City Code limits development in 25- and 100-year floodplains to reduce threats to lives and property
- Developments may request a variance from City Council to deviate from these requirements

Floodplain Variances: Safe Access Concerns

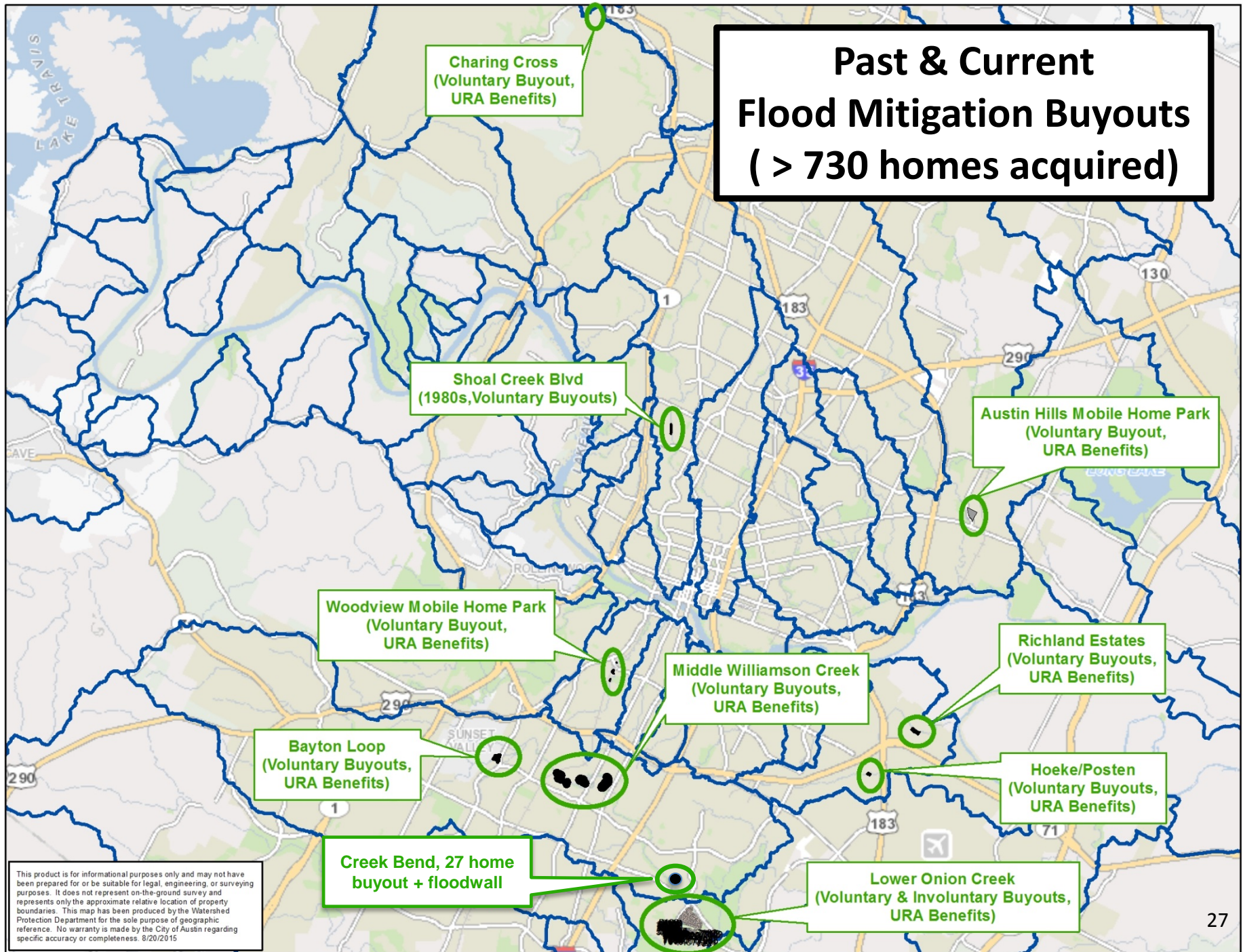
Video shot from a home that obtained a variance to construct in the 100-year floodplain ordinance



1.b. Flood Buyout Policy

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- Task Force: Review & make recommendations about flood buyout policy
- Decisive method to resolve flood risk
 - Past & Current Buyout Projects
 - 730+ properties acquired to date, 9 project areas
 - All voluntary buyouts except within Army Corps Project Area in Lower Onion
 - Federal policies for relocation benefits used in all buyouts since 1999
- High water mark

Past & Current Flood Mitigation Buyouts (> 730 homes acquired)



1.c. Structure and Use of the Adopted Drainage Utility Charge

- **Task Force: Review & make recommendations about the drainage utility charge**
- Provides largest funding source for WPD
- Paid as part of monthly utility bill
- Recent DUF Changes
 - Charge now applies to property, not units on the property
 - Charge calculated using amount and percent of impervious cover; no distinction between land uses
 - Charge proportional to impact of each property on the City's drainage system
 - Changes are revenue-neutral, some will pay more, some will pay less

1.c. Structure and Use of the Adopted Drainage Utility Charge

Schedule

- Council approved changes 6/25/15
- WPD/AE staff working on billing implementation for Oct 1, 2015 charges, thus Nov 1, 2015 bills
- Online calculator and more info available at www.austintexas.gov/drainagecharge
- Web Tool showing each property planned for October 2015 release

1.d. Flood Mitigation Program Costs & Community Impacts

- Task Force: Review & make recommendations concerning management system operation and maintenance costs (O&M), capital costs, city fees, flood insurance, and other identified factors that have impacts to affordability and equity in anticipation of the 2016-2017 Council budget conversation
- Fixing flood problems is costly
- So is loss of life, repairing flood damage, and hardship
- Detailed cost data for flood mitigation in future meetings

Flood Insurance

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

- NFIP gives Austin's citizens the ability to purchase federally backed flood insurance for their properties
- FEMA's Community Rating System program rewards communities that go above and beyond minimum NFIP requirements
- Because several city regulations surpass these minimum requirements, citizens receive up to a 20% discount on flood insurance premiums

1.e. Public Education and Outreach: Keeping the Public Safe

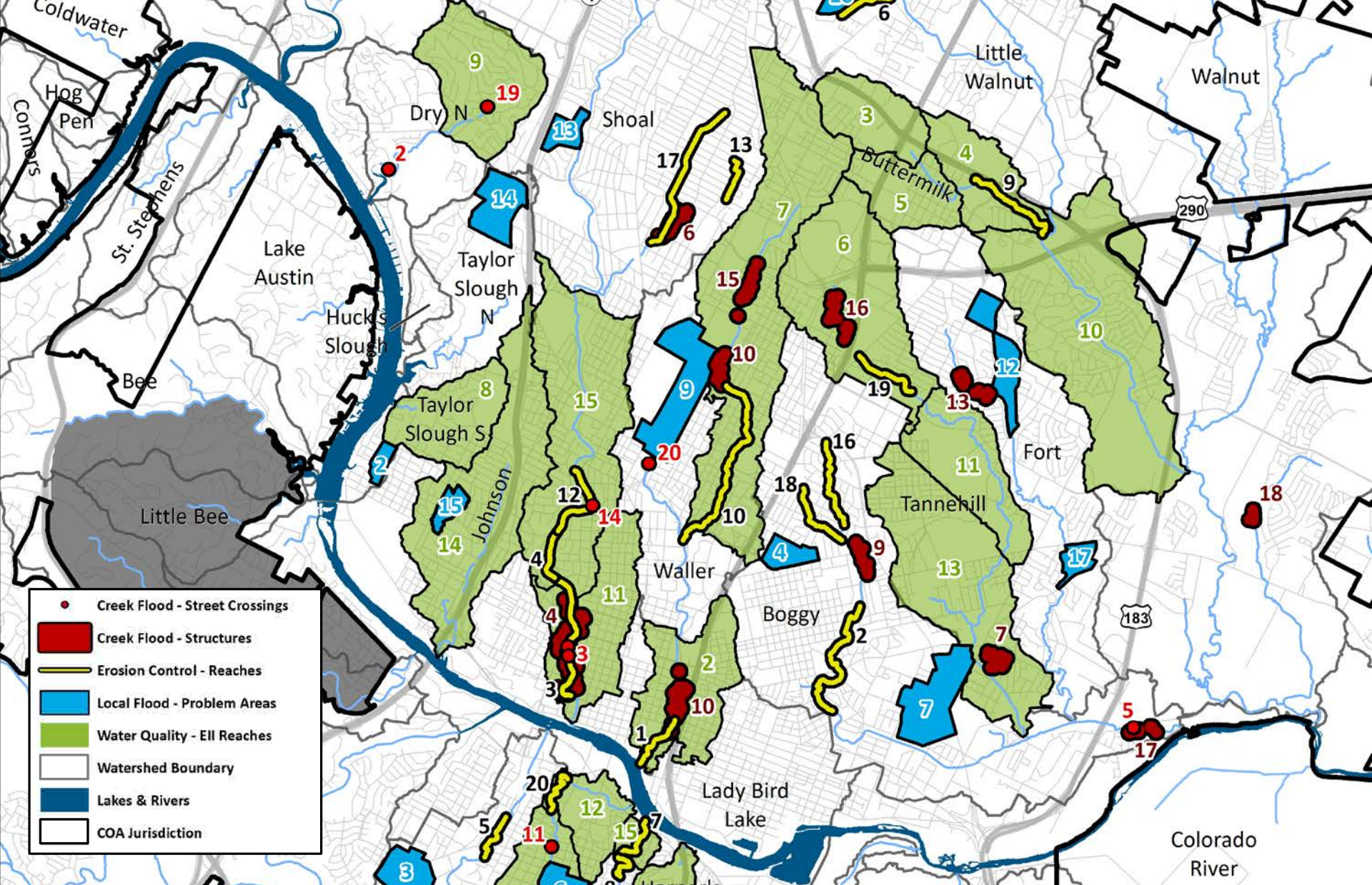
- Task Force: Review & make recommendations concerning methods and means to provide more public education and outreach to new residents and visitors to raise awareness of flash flooding potential, as well as actions and strategies for the public to take to remain safe
- External communications
 - Flood safety awareness campaigns
 - Driver safety
 - Media relations
 - Neighborhood/stakeholder meetings
- Internal communications
 - Intranet
 - Surveys



1.f. Green & Grey Infrastructure, Impervious Cover, Master Planning, etc.

➤ Task Force: Review & make recommendations concerning standard and green infrastructure utilization; impacts, regulations, and management of impervious cover; master planning and studies underway

- Land cover, drainage infrastructure, engineered controls, and site design have critical influence on flood mitigation (or lack thereof)
- Watershed protection master planning is essential to a systematic & objective approach with limited funds
- Green Infrastructure Working Group of CodeNEXT process providing key input on flood mitigation and other topics



2015 Master Plan Top 20 Priority Problem Areas

2. Identifying Available Funds

- Task Force: Identify available funds, including federal, state, and local sources as well as prioritizing future capital investment for flood mitigation and management

Current WPD Funding Sources

- Drainage Utility Fund (DUF)
- Regional Stormwater Management Program (RSMP)
- Urban Watershed Structural Control Fund (“UWO”)
- General Obligation Bonds / Certificates of Obligation
- Grants (e.g., FEMA, Corps of Engineers, et al.)

Resolution Items 3 – 7

3. Evaluate best practices in peer cities
4. Upper Onion Creek study briefing and comment
5. Collaborate with Environmental Commission
6. Collaborate with other jurisdictions and agencies focused on flooding & stormwater management
7. Assist in public outreach to share information and engage the community for feedback



Potential Policy Discussions, Task Force Officers, and Schedule

Flood Mitigation Task Force

Potential Policy Discussions

- Drainage Utility charge
- Property buyout approach
- Affordability/equity considerations
- CodeNEXT and improved regulations
- Funding challenges/sources of future funding

Task Force Organization

- Elect officers
- Understand Open Government & Ethics Issues
- Meet monthly
- Consider subcommittees as needed

Possible Schedule

- Sep** Kickoff / Introduction
- Oct** Flood Mitigation Strategies & Master Plan
- Nov** Costs & Funding; Flood Insurance; Affordability & Equity
- Dec** Flood Buyout Policy; Upper Onion Creek study briefing
- Jan** Drainage Utility Charge; Public Education & Outreach; Floodplain Variances; Code Requirements & Options
- Feb** Wrap Up; Future Funding; CIP Appropriations Input
- Mar** Final Report due for Public Utilities Committee
- Apr** City Council consideration

Resolution Scope List & Possible Schedule		Meeting							
B. The FMTF scope of work shall include:		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1) Review and recommendations regarding:		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
a.	Flood mitigation and preparedness strategies	p	D				Wrap-up / final TF identified topics / CIP Approprr. Review	Final Report due for Public Utilities Committee	City Council consideration
b.	Floodplain variances and	p	p			D			
	Flood buyout policy	p	p		D				
c.	Structure and use of the adopted drainage utility charge	p				D			
d.	Storm water management system O&M costs, capital costs, city fees, flood insurance, and other identified factors that impact affordability and equity	p	p	D		D			
e.	More public education and outreach to new residents and visitors / the public to remain safe	p	p			D			
f.	Standard & Green Infrastructure utilization; impacts, regulations, and management of impervious cover; master planning and studies	p	D						
2) Identify available funds, including federal, state, and local sources as well as prioritizing future capital investment for flood mitigation		p		D					
3) Evaluate best practices in peer cities with similar climate and flood issues.		p	D						
4) Receive staff briefings concerning progress and recommended action for the Upper Onion Creek study and providing comment.		p			D				
5) Collaborate with the City's Environmental Commission as appropriate.		Discuss with Environmental Commission							
6) Collaborate with other jurisdictions, agencies, work groups or other regional re: flood and storm water management initiatives.		Discuss inclusion of other jurisdictions and agencies during the Task Force deliberations							
7) Assisting in public outreach to share information and engage the community for feedback.		p				D			

KEY: p = presented; D = Detailed Discussion

Contact Information

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Flood Mitigation Task Force:

<https://www.austintexas.gov/fmtf> Main Webpage

<https://floodmitigationtaskforce.bloomfire.com/> Additional Resources Webpage