

**1D. Stormwater 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**

The Task Force did not look directly at the question regarding how the cost of operations, maintenance, capital projects, city fees, or flood insurance impact affordability and equity; however, we recognize that the cost of making the necessary improvements will require a significant expenditure by the City for the foreseeable future. We also recognize the real and ongoing costs in terms of quality of life, flood damage (existing and potential), and life-safety will continue to effect the City if Austin does not have the fortitude to effectively address flood mitigation. Many of the known problems have been identified for decades (in some cases more than 30 years) and the cost to implement solutions is not going to decrease. Furthermore, previous and current planning policies (via Austin Tomorrow Plan 1979 and Imagine Austin 2012) encourage higher density in older areas of the City (built prior to the 1977 Drainage Criteria Manual DCM.) with undersized existing drainage infrastructure.

While there are widespread creek and local flood problems throughout our community most of them can be associated with pre-1977 development. The districts and neighborhoods impacted by these floods are demographically diverse and, while the brunt of major flooding is felt by the effected residents, the reality is that there is a fiscal cost to the entire city. Those costs include the labor of City personnel and emergency responders, repair and replacement of City infrastructure, and community-wide flood insurance rates. Although the total cost of the 2013 Halloween Flood is still being tallied by City Staff the numbers to date indicate the final number will surpass \$150 million dollars.

Because we should be focused on the life-safety aspect of flood mitigation, and because these problems are spread across the City, and because watersheds do not recognize political boundaries, we do not believe that solutions can be, or should be, divvied up by Districts to ensure equitable spending across the City. Instead, and as mentioned in other sections of this report, the Task Force believes that the problems and solutions should be prioritized by risk to human life, risk to critical infrastructure, and risk of potential damage to buildings such that the most dangerous problems are addressed first.

The City Council will need to address the issue of affordability in how the recommendations of this report are implemented, but at the same time Council must recognize that the costs of flood recovery are borne by the entire City and the costs to mitigate should be as well. To maintain affordability we recognize the full implementation of the Drainage Master Plan will take time but we firmly believe that we cannot wait decades longer to address the critical flood problems facing the City. It may be necessary for City management and Council to make some difficult budgetary decisions regarding the things we want to spend money on as a community versus things we must do to keep our residents safe.

**Task Force Recommendations:**

1. Before increasing fees or calling bond elections, Council should undertake a review of the entire City budget, specifically items related to priorities to keep the citizens of Austin safe, and make difficult decisions about how we prioritize spending and about funding the things we must do to keep our residents safe.
2. Council should consider directing staff to prepare detailed analyses or assessments of potential flood problems and the cost of mitigation in areas identified for annexation to better define anticipated costs in the service plans for these areas.
3. The City should adopt a uniform buyout program so that any buyouts, regardless of the reason, are treated uniformly and fairly.
4. The City should consider forming watershed coalitions, partnerships, or flood control districts in select watersheds (such as Onion Creek) to develop and fund regional flood mitigation strategies. This will encourage comprehensive solutions throughout entire watersheds and spread the financial burden and mitigation responsibilities over a larger geographic area.