

# Lower Onion Creek Floodplain Buyout Area & Agricultural Opportunities



**Meredith (Gray) Gauthier**

**Conservation Program Coordinator  
Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens Program  
City of Austin Parks & Recreation Dept.**





# Background: Onion Creek

- Office of Sustainability's Food Environment Analysis of Travis County initial findings show the Onion Creek neighborhood lacks access to a food retail location with an acceptable Healthy Food Availability Index

## ***Imagine Austin Priority Program Policies***

- **Use green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city**

5. Protect farmland and conduct and stimulate research to facilitate growing techniques that minimize water usage and build healthy soils accounting for regional climate change.

## ***Imagine Austin Complete Communities Policies:***

### **Land Use & Transportation**

LUT P5. Create healthy and family-friendly communities through development that includes a mix of land uses and housing types, affords realistic opportunities for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel, and provides community gathering spaces, neighborhood

### **Conservation and Environment**

CE P13 Incent, develop, and expand the market for local and sustainable food, which includes such activities as farming, ranching, and food processing.

### **Society**

S P6. Promote the availability of and educate the community about healthy food choices, including "slow food" (local food traditions, small-scale food processing, and organic agriculture) and nutritional education programs.

S P7. Provide broad access to fresh foods, local farmers markets, co-ops, grocery stores, community gardens, and healthy restaurants in neighborhoods





# PARD land: Onion Creek Metro Park

- The Onion Creek Metropolitan Park is a 555-acre regional park located in southeast Austin, just south of Onion Creek
- The land – flat, woody and pond-filled – is undeveloped and used by area residents
- The Onion Creek Greenbelt is north of the creek
- Onion Creek travels approximately 79 miles
- Dedicated parkland
- **Urban Agriculture Opportunity:** over 20 interested neighbors who want to start a community garden, space has been identified, plans for community garden in works

# Watershed land: Lower Onion Creek Buyout Area

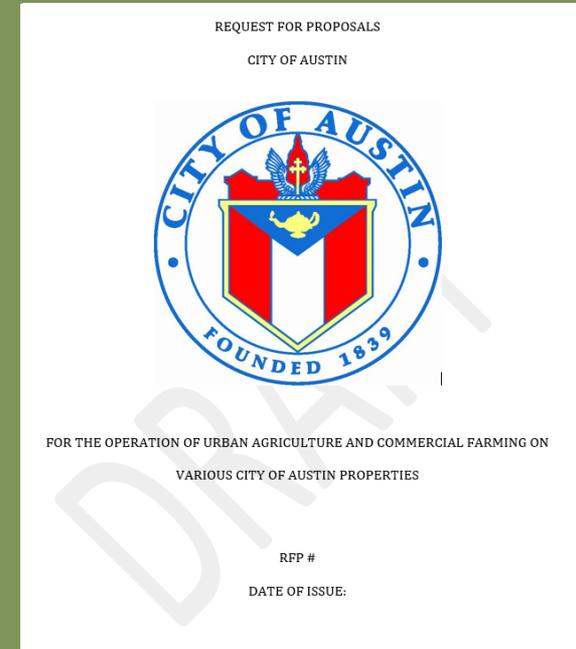
- As a public safety measure, the Watershed Protection Department and the US Army Corps of Engineers are buying out flood-prone homes near William Cannon Drive and South Pleasant Valley Road.
- Area had serious flooding in 1998, 2001, 2013 and 2015.
- 190 acres will be restored to a natural state.
- 100 acres will be designated for recreation. The Corps is working on plans for the recreational components.
- **Status:** As of April 3, 2017, Watershed Protection Dept. has purchased 781 properties in the lower Onion Creek area with 64 properties remaining in the project areas.
- **Urban Agriculture Opportunity:**— urban farm, community farm, or orchard could be appropriate in 100-year floodplain or even 25-year floodplain (if approved by floodplain engineers)





# Potential Timeline and Next Steps

- Final buyout hearings – April 2017
- WPD staff and other City staff meet with neighborhood stakeholders – June 2017
- Request for Proposals (RFP) released to public – Sept. 2017
- RFP closes – Dec. 2017
- RFP selection committee meets – Jan. 2018
- License agreement signed for operation on WPD property – Feb. 2018
- Urban agriculture begins – March 2018



# Potential Uses

- Urban Orchard
- Apiary (must comply with City of Austin Code on Beekeeping, Chapter 3-6)
- Livestock (without permanent fencing)
- Row Cropping Agriculture
- Agricultural Education
- Agri-Tourism
- Farmstand
- Hoop House (TBD)

# Thank You! Any Questions?



Meredith Gauthier

Conservation Program Coordinator

City of Austin Parks & Recreation Dept.

[meredith.gray@austintexas.gov](mailto:meredith.gray@austintexas.gov)

For More Information: <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/onion-creek-corps-project>