

Butler Trail Code Amendment

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Environmental Conservation Program Manager



Background

- Construction of Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail began in 1971
- Code compliant at time of construction
- 2017 WPO code amendment restrictions on 50 ft setback
- Current use today averages ~ 5 million visits annually



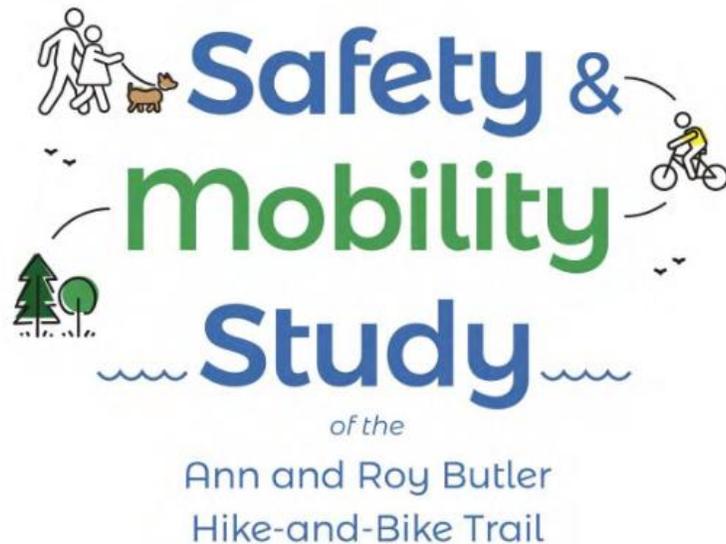
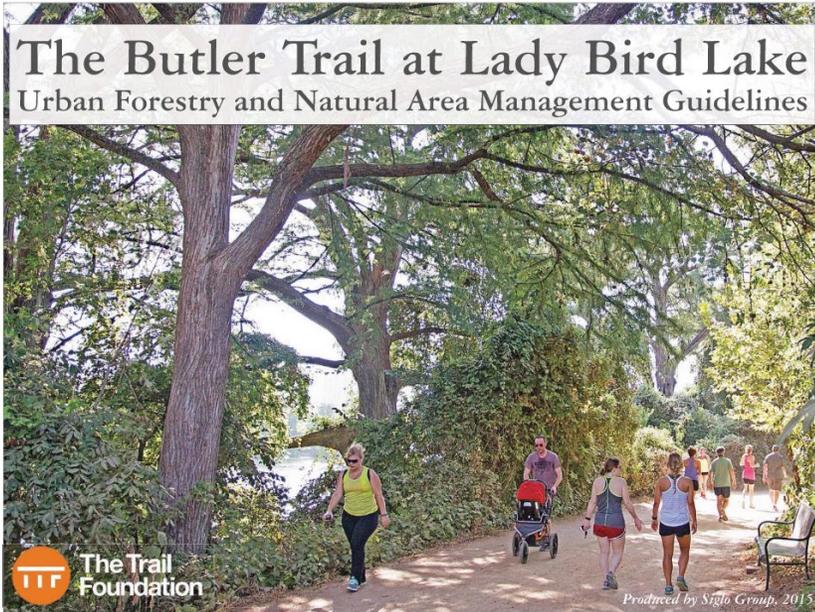
Background

**Amendment initiated by City Council
on May 18th, 2023**

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

The City Council initiates amendments to City Code Title 25 (Land Development) to allow the Butler Trail to remain within the setbacks applicable to Lady Bird Lake; and to allow capital improvements made to the Butler Trail to comply with the recommendations from the 2015 Butler Trail Urban Forestry and Natural Area Management Guidelines, maintenance standards of care listed in the Butler Trail POMA, and the recommendations provided in the Butler Trail Safety and Mobility Study.



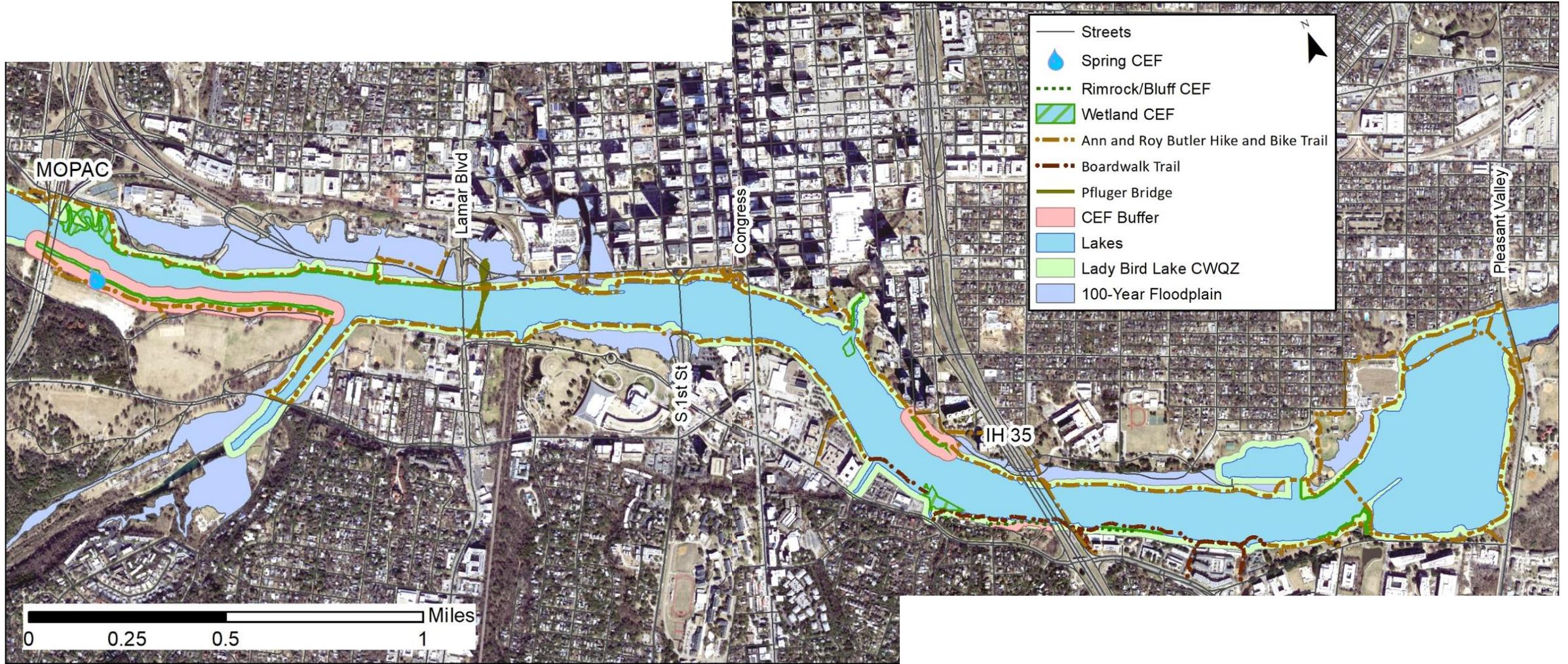


The Trail Conservancy

- Urban Forestry and Natural Areas Management Guidelines
- Safety and Mobility Study
- Parkland Operations And Maintenance Agreement



Site Conditions



CITY OF AUSTIN

WATERSHED PROTECTION DEPARTMENT



Proposed Amendment

- **25-8-261 (B)(3)(c)** to allow the Butler Trail to exceed 12 feet width (no administrative variance)
- **25-8-261 (B)(3)(f-g)** to allow the Butler Trail to be located within 50 feet of the shoreline of Lady Bird Lake with a baseline of 1:1 restoration, and up to 2:1 restoration where feasible, for impacts associated with reconstruction and capital improvements or alternative compliance as approved by the Director of Watershed. Current code only allows this with an administrative variance.
- **25-8-261 (C)(2)** to remove the requirement for additional restoration for shoreline disturbance for the Butler Trail, which would be redundant with the required 1:1 restoration.



Proposed Amendment (1/3)

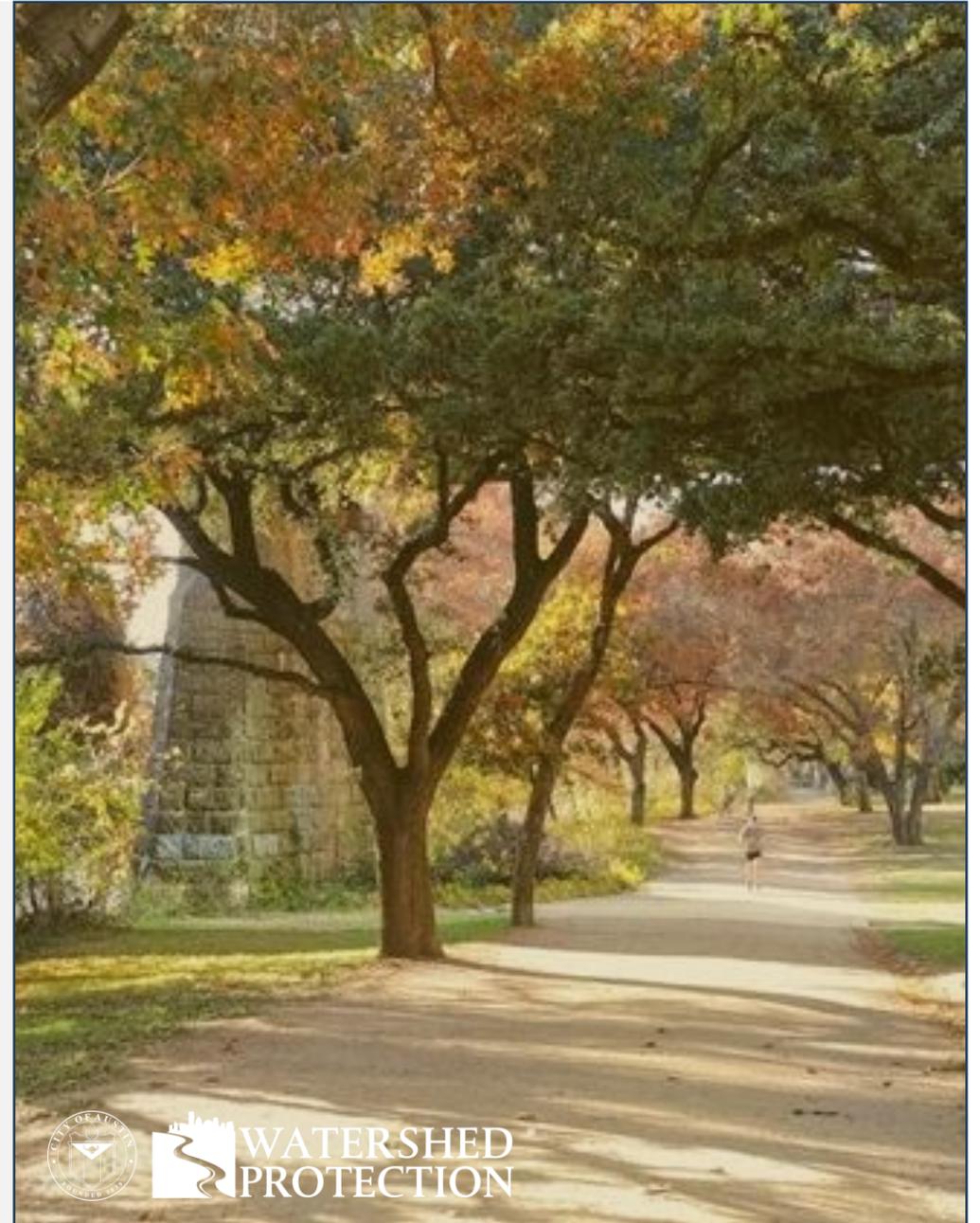
§ 25-8-261 - CRITICAL WATER QUALITY ZONE DEVELOPMENT.

In all watersheds, development is prohibited in a critical water quality zone except as provided in this Division. Development allowed in the critical water quality zone under this Division shall be revegetated and restored within the limits of construction as prescribed by the Environmental Criteria Manual.

(B) Open space is permitted in a critical water quality zone if a program of fertilizer, pesticide, and herbicide use is approved by the Watershed Protection Department, subject to the conditions in this Subsection.

(3) A hard surfaced trail may cross the critical water quality zone pursuant to [Section 25-8-262](#) (*Critical Water Quality Zone Mobility Crossings*). A hard surfaced trail that does not cross the critical water quality zone may be located within the critical water quality zone only if:

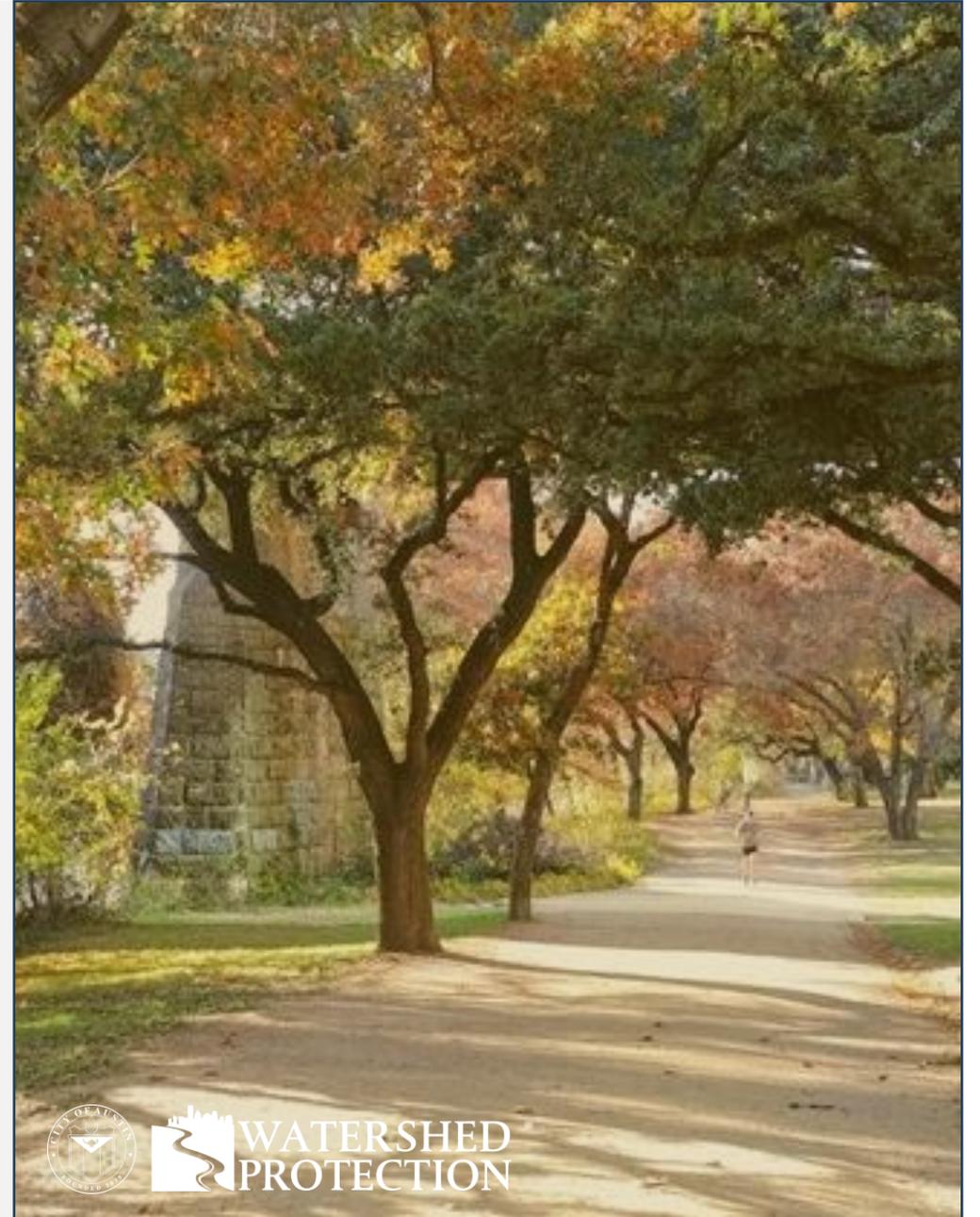
(c) limited to 12 feet in width plus one-foot compacted sub-grade shoulders, unless a wider trail is designated in a Council-adopted plan **or the trail is a part of the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail system;**



Proposed Amendment (1/3)

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- (f) located not less than 50 feet from the shoreline of Lake Travis, Lake Austin, Lady Bird Lake unless necessary for the construction of the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail system as allowed in (g) below, and Lake Walter E. Long, as defined in Section 25-8-92; and
- (g) located not less than 50 feet from the shoreline of Lady Bird Lake as defined in Section 25-8-92, unless restoration is provided at a minimum ratio of 1:1 with the option that the applicant and the Director collaborate to reach up to 2:1, as determined by a functional assessment of floodplain health; or alternative compliance as approved by the Director is provided.
- (g) (h) located not less than 100 feet from the ordinary high water mark of the Colorado River downstream from Longhorn Dam.

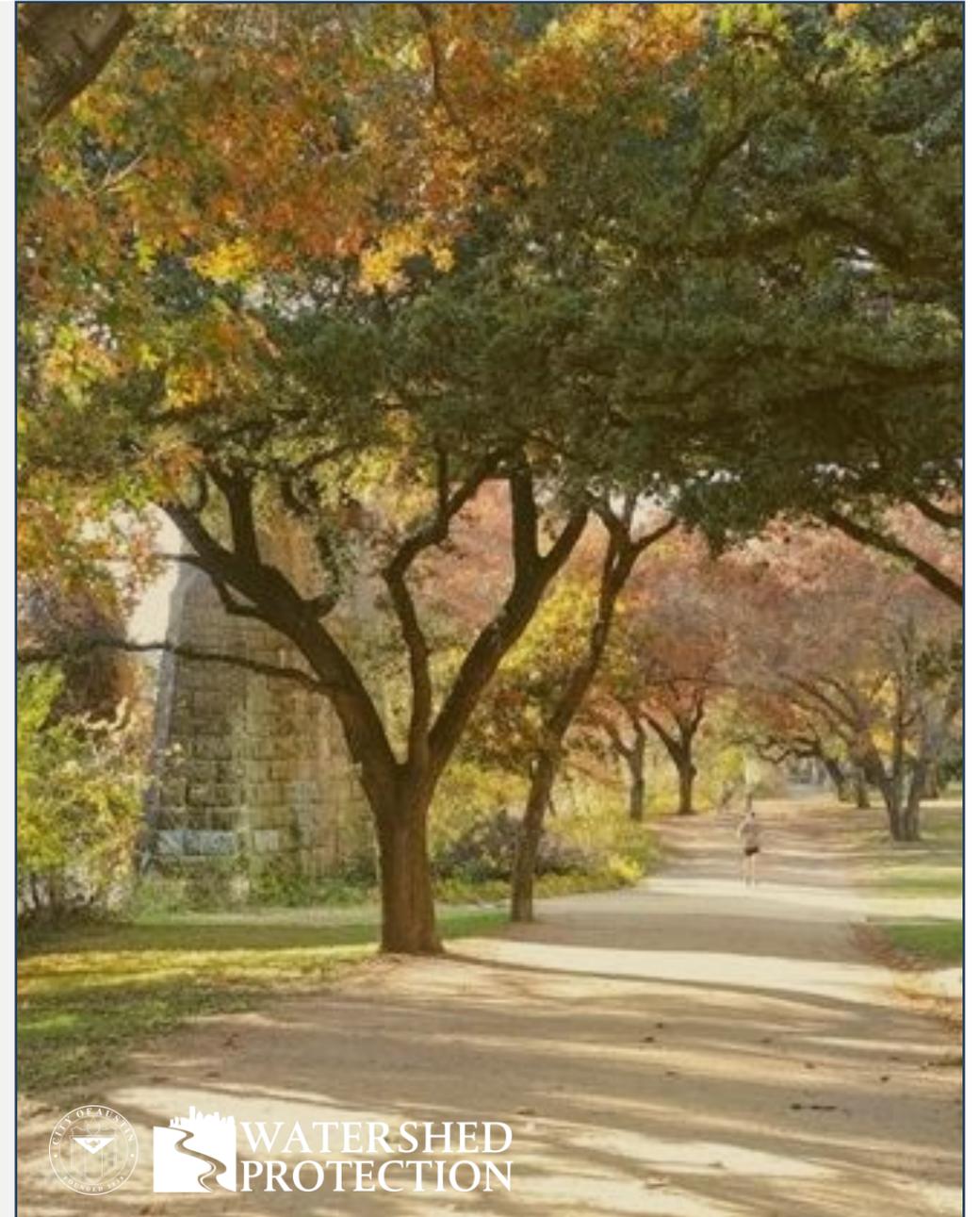


**WATERSHED
PROTECTION**



Proposed Amendment

- (C) The requirements of this subsection apply along Lake Travis, Lake Austin, Lake Walter E. Long, and Lady Bird Lake.
 - (1) A dock, public boat ramp, bulkhead or marina, and necessary access and appurtenances, are permitted in a critical water quality zone subject to compliance with [Chapter 25-2](#), Subchapter C, Article 12 (*Docks, Bulkheads, and Shoreline Access*). For a single-family residential use, necessary access may not exceed the minimum area of land disturbance required to construct a single means of access from the shoreline to a dock.
 - (2) Disturbed areas **not associated with the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail System** must be restored in accordance with the Environmental Criteria Manual and the following requirements:
 - (a) Within a lakefront critical water quality zone, or an equivalent area within 25 feet of a shoreline, restoration must include:
 - (i) at least one native shade tree and one native understory tree, per 500 square feet of disturbed area; and
 - (ii) one native shrub per 150 square feet of disturbed area; and
 - (b) Remaining disturbed areas must be restored per standard specifications for native restoration.



Staff Recommendation

City staff recognize the need to accommodate necessary improvements and updates to the Butler Trail for the benefit of the community especially those related to safety and mobility. Staff recommends approval for the code amendment as proposed for the following reasons.

- The current trail is non-compliant with environmental regulations regarding location and width within the CWQZ
- Restoration for impact to the inner CWQZ of Lady Bird Lake on site and around the trail will help maintain and restore the significant ecological benefits provided by this sensitive environmental area.
- The proposed code amendment provides a pathway forward to allow approval of future Butler Trail capital improvement project while balancing the needs of water quality protection and environmental function.



QUESTIONS?

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