

City of Austin Watershed Protection Ordinance

On January 13, 2011, the Austin City Council approved a resolution directing staff to draft a new ordinance that would:

- Improve creek and floodplain protection, including critical headwater areas, to protect water quality while reducing erosion, flooding, and long-range infrastructure maintenance costs.
- Encourage land development patterns that provide improved protection of public and private property, preservation of floodplains, creeks, and open space, and provide greater access to and connectivity with greenways and trails
- Simplify development regulations, where possible, and minimize the impact of any changes on individual and collective abilities to develop land.

The Watershed Protection Department will kickoff a series of stakeholder meetings on August 26, 2011, to obtain public input. Meetings will include a professional facilitator and be open to all stakeholders.

1. Creek Protection - September to October 2011

Discuss how to improve stream buffer requirements to protect headwater areas and erosion hazard zones and to reduce long-range costs for infrastructure maintenance. Examine ways to simplify stream buffer regulations and offset the impacts of any new requirements on the ability to develop land.

2. Floodplain Protection - October to November 2011

Discuss how to preserve and restore the natural and traditional character of floodplains. Examine ways to strengthen the criteria for floodplain modification and to incentivize the restoration of vegetation in historically degraded floodplains. Review the proposed credits for the FEMA Community Rating System.

3. Development Patterns and Greenways - November to December 2011

Discuss how to allow more credit for the dedication of riparian and floodplain areas, coordinate with existing and future parks, and encourage the allowance of sustainable trails within riparian zones.

4. Improved Stormwater Controls - December to January 2012

Examine the threshold for when water quality controls are required. Discuss ways to encourage green infrastructure. Consider the long-term inspection and maintenance burdens of wet ponds and subsurface controls.

5. Simplify & Clarify Regulations and Maintain Opportunity - January to February 2012

Brainstorm ways to simplify and clarify current watershed regulations. Examine the balance between proposed protections and maintaining development opportunity.

6. Mitigation Options (Desired Development Zone) - February to March 2012

Discuss the potential to expand the use of transfers of development rights (TDR) and off-site mitigation in the Desired Development Zone. Review integration with the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and the Growth Concept Map.

7. Summary and Draft Ordinance - March to April 2012

Review the draft ordinance and provide final comments before public hearings.

Adoption Process

May - June 2012 Boards and Commissions

August 2012 City Council

Fall 2012 Travis County Commissioners Court