



Watershed Protection Ordinance (WPO): Stakeholder Meeting Summary of Potential Ordinance Elements

April 13, 2012

800 238 8902 July 12, 2006

Meeting Objective

Review potential code changes identified by stakeholders & staff for the Watershed Protection Ordinance.

Meeting Agenda

- **Introductions [5 min.]**
- **Staff Presentation/Stakeholder Discussion [90 min.]**
 - **Council Resolution Review**
 1. **Creek Protection**
 2. **Floodplain Protection**
 3. **Development Patterns & Greenways**
 4. **Improved Stormwater Controls**
 5. **Mitigation Options**
 6. **Simplify Regulations & Maintain Development Opportunity**
 7. **Coordinate with Regional Partners**
- **Full Group Wrap-Up [25 min.]**
 - **Next Steps/Schedule**

Rationale for Ordinance

- **Austin an early US leader in watershed protection**
- **Comprehensive Watershed Ordinance 1986**
- **Better understanding of watershed management**
- **Unique challenges in eastern watersheds**
- **Some development patterns leading to property loss, unsustainable public & private expense**
- **Complex current code & criteria**
- **Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan alignment**

Council Resolution

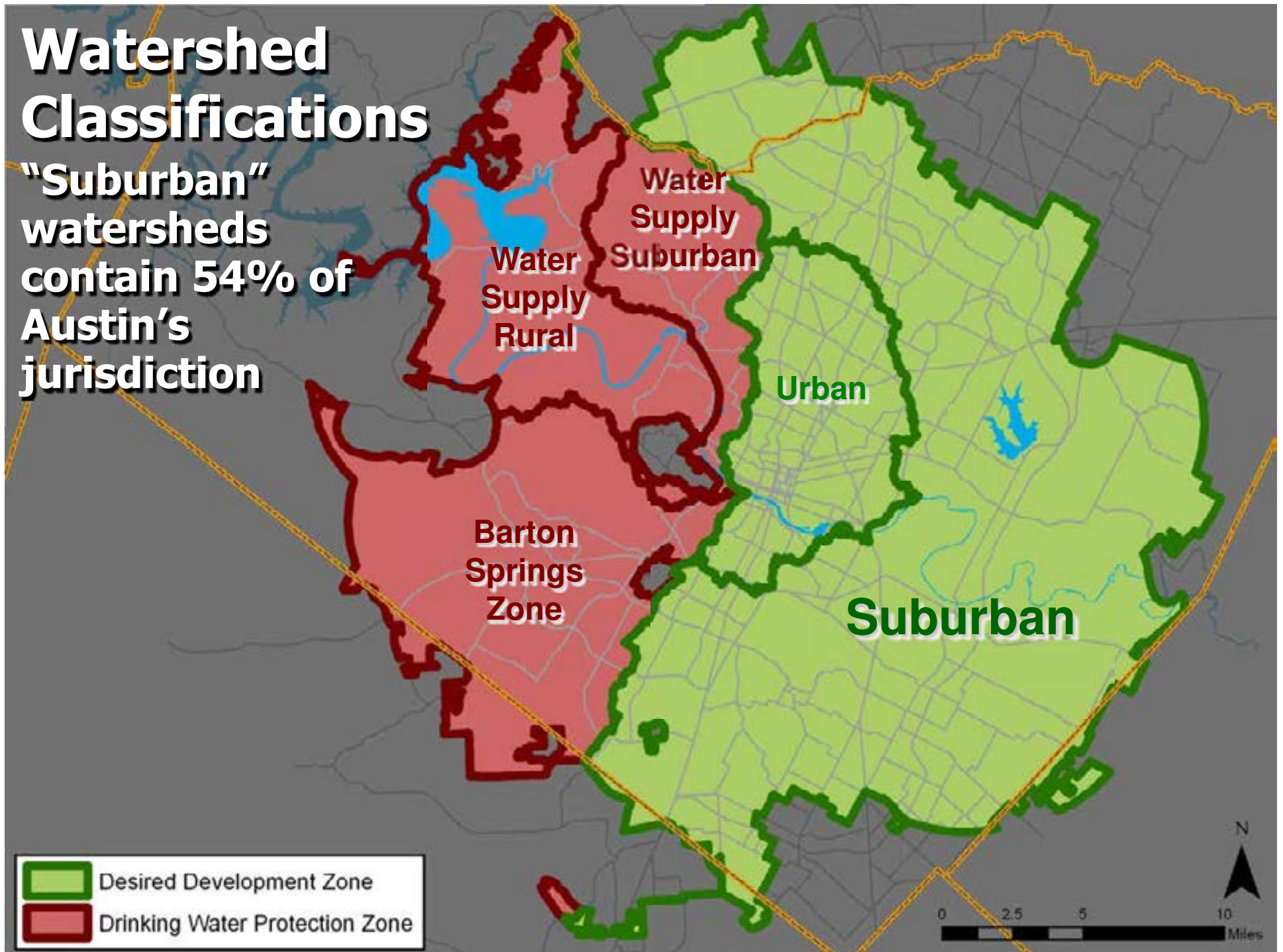
- 1. Creek Protection**
- 2. Floodplain Protection**
- 3. Development Patterns & Greenways**
- 4. Improved Stormwater Controls**
- 5. Mitigation Options**
- 6. Simplify Regulations & Maintain Opportunity**
- 7. Coordinate with Regional Partners**

Anticipated Benefits

- **Bring best of watershed science into code**
- **Improved stream buffers, especially in east**
- **Restoration of natural floodplain function**
- **Sustainable maintenance of waterways**
- **Complements trail & greenway system**
- **Simpler buffer & site rules**
- **Majority of properties maintain existing development potential & increase flexibility**

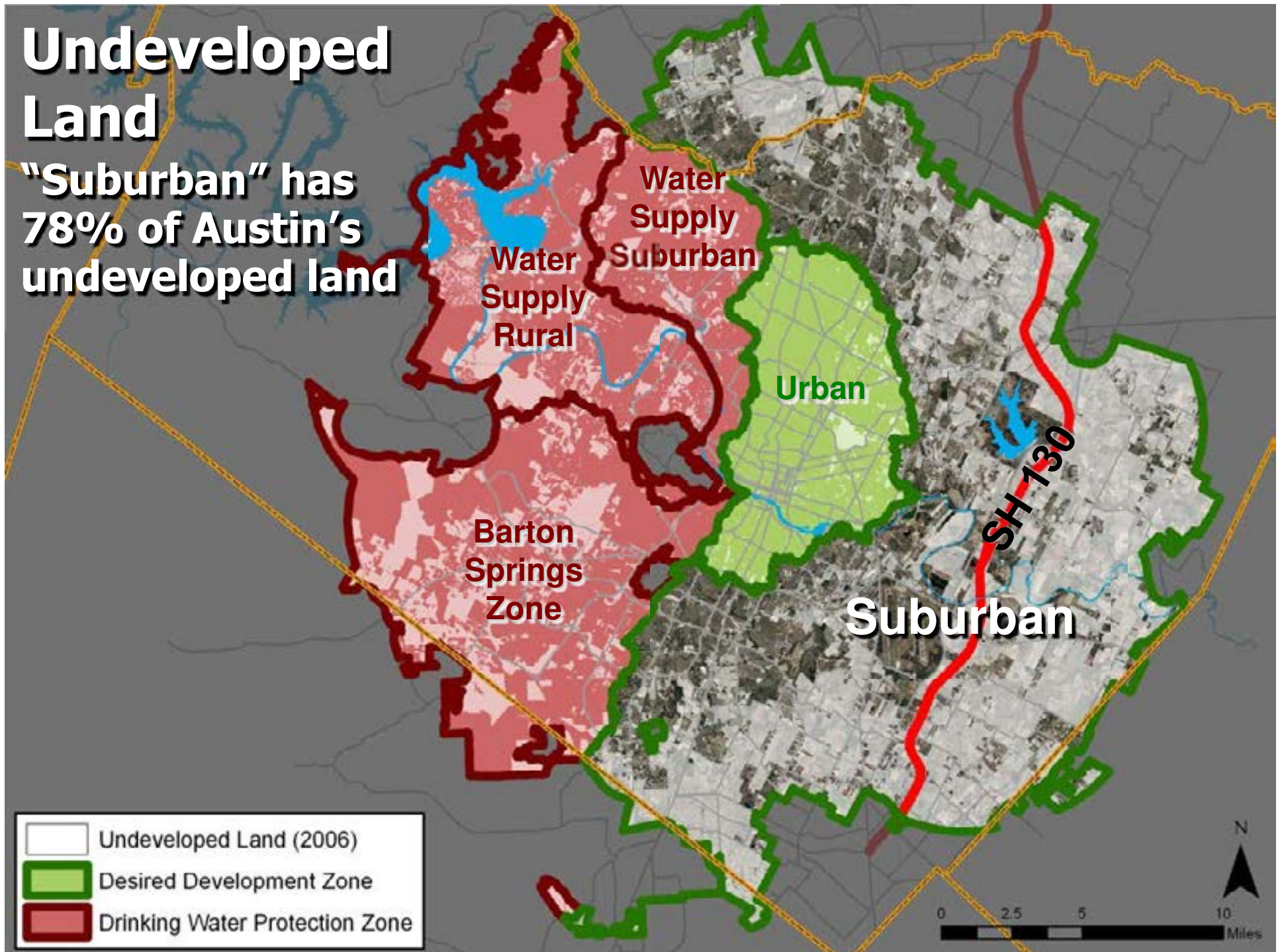
Watershed Classifications

"Suburban"
watersheds
contain 54% of
Austin's
jurisdiction



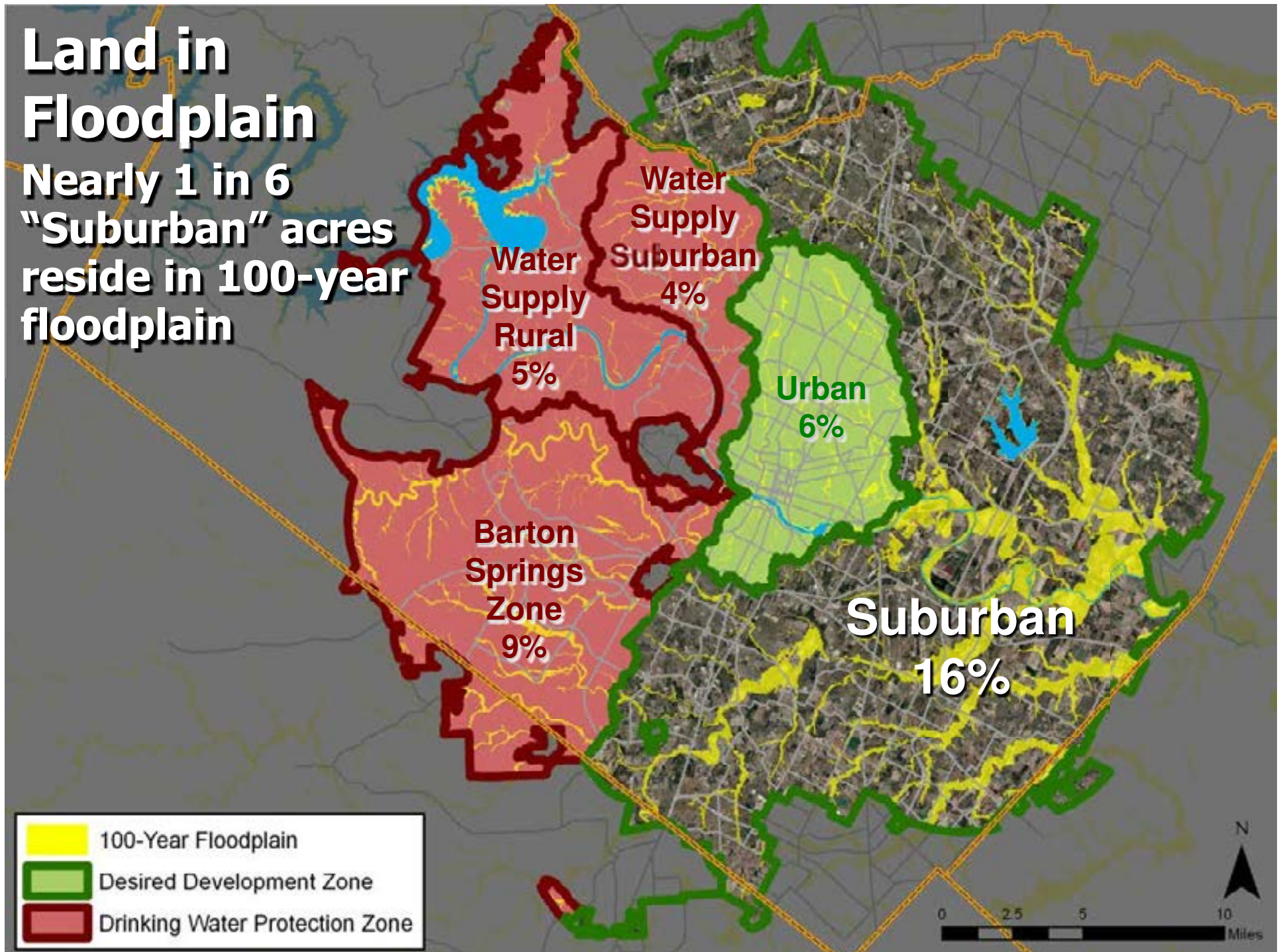
Undeveloped Land

**"Suburban" has
78% of Austin's
undeveloped land**



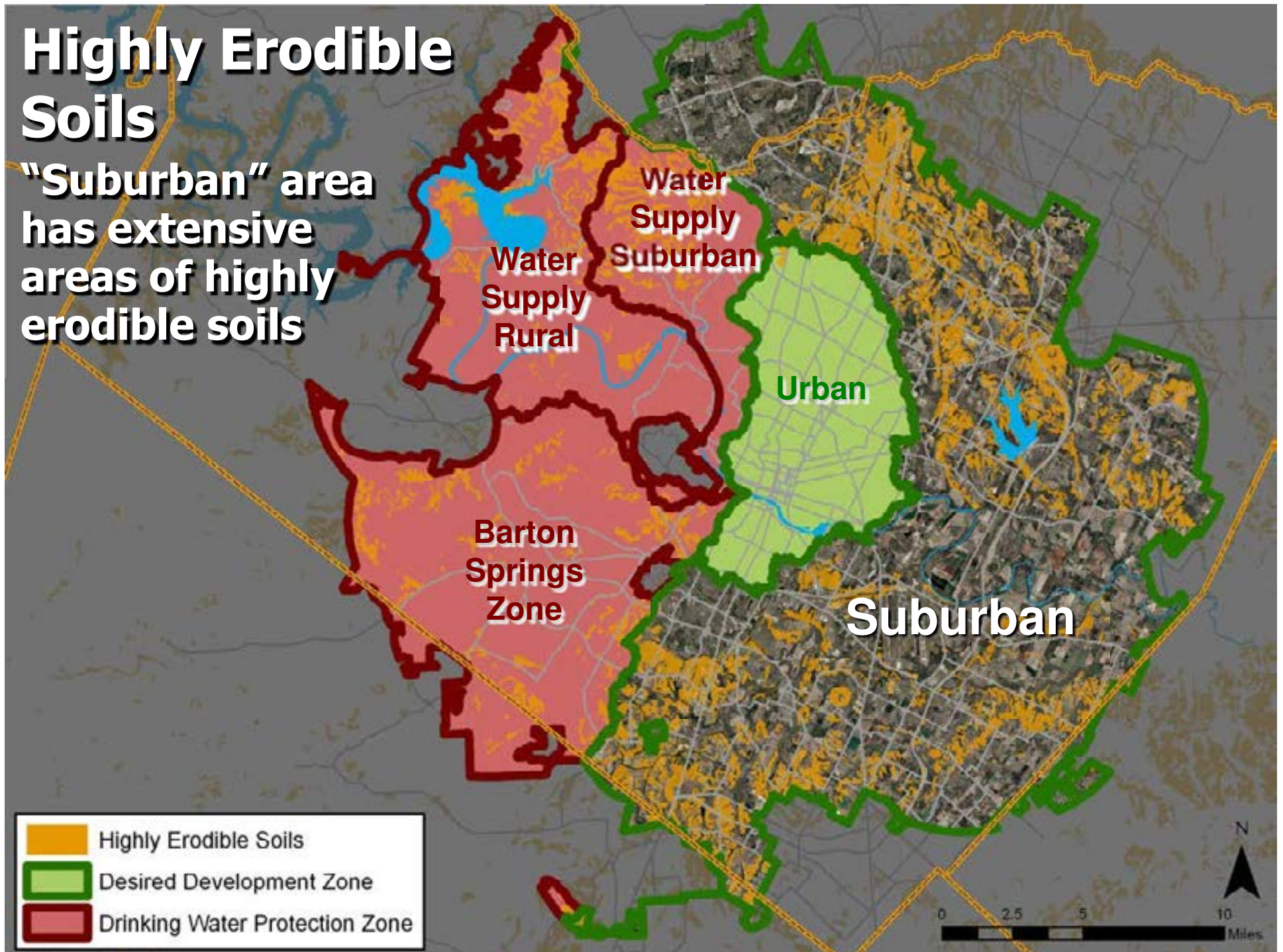
Land in Floodplain

Nearly 1 in 6
"Suburban" acres
reside in 100-year
floodplain



Highly Erodible Soils

"Suburban" area has extensive areas of highly erodible soils



Creek Protection

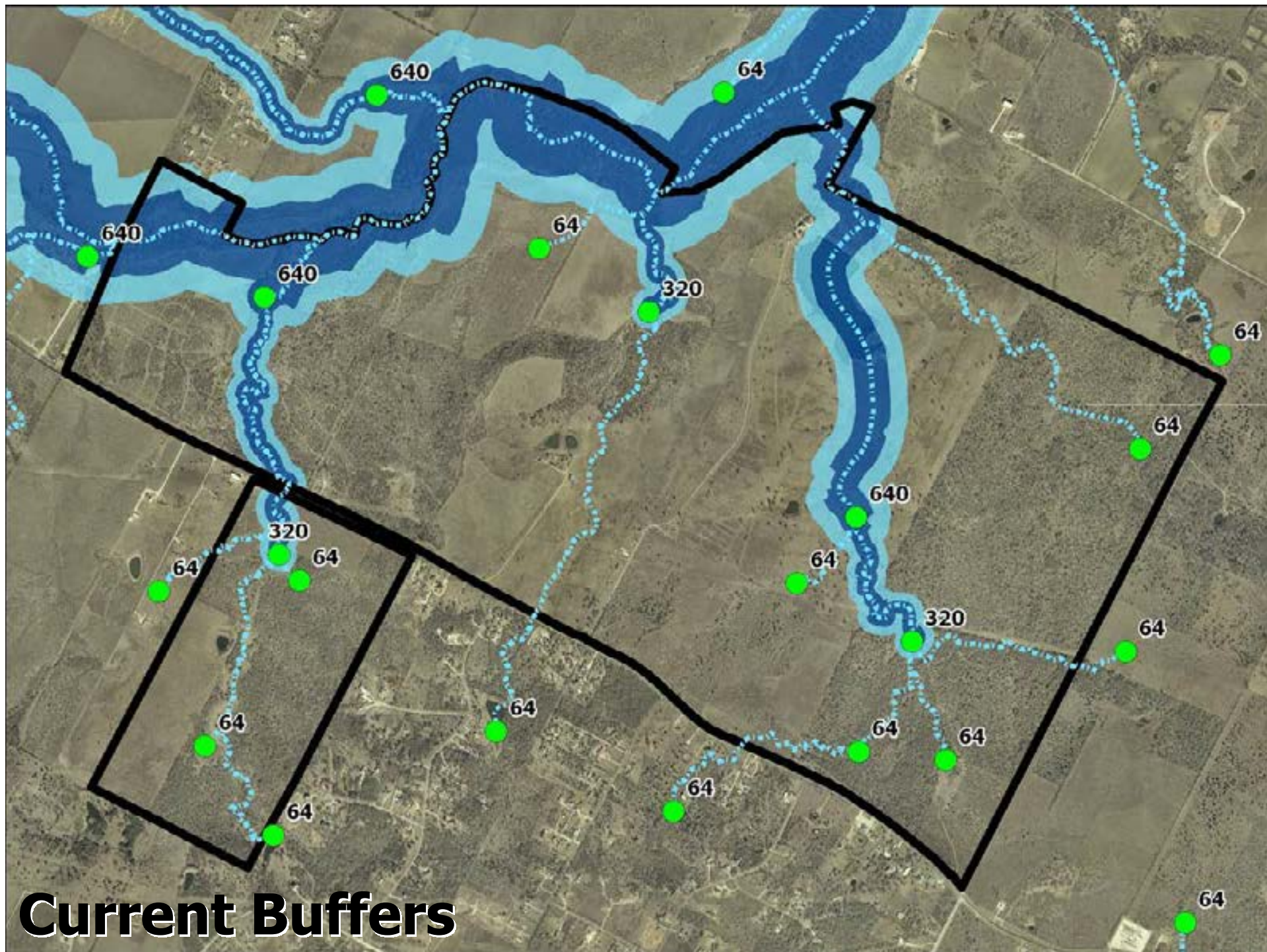
"Improve stream buffer requirements, including critical headwater areas, to protect water quality and reduce erosion, flooding, and long-range costs for infrastructure maintenance."

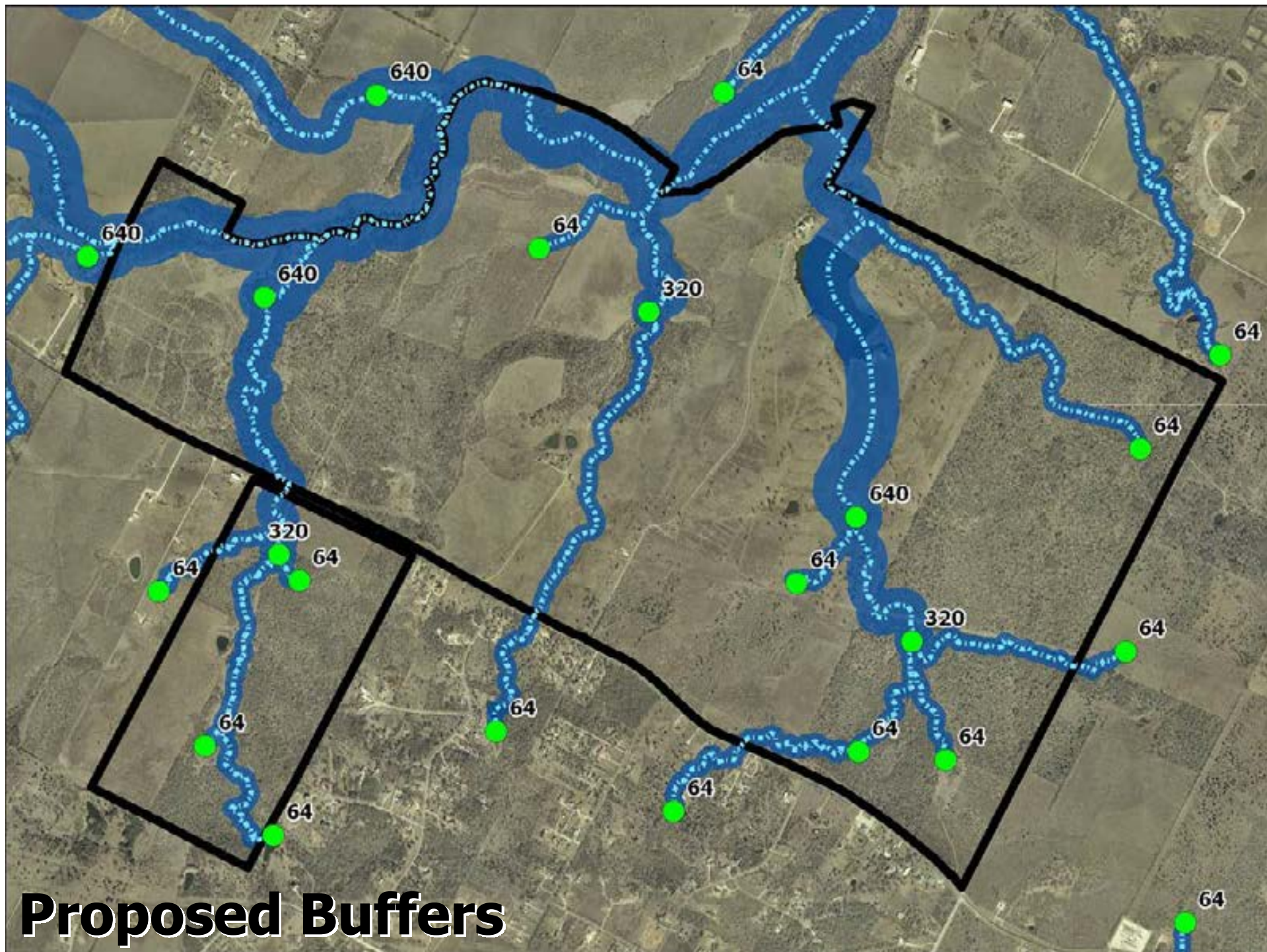


Creek Protection

- Extend minor “headwater” stream buffers to 64 acres of drainage citywide
- Standardize Critical Water Quality Zone (CWQZ) buffer drainage area thresholds & widths citywide:*
- 640 ac. drainage area; 300 ft (major)
- 320 ac. drainage area; 200 ft (intermediate)
- 64 ac. drainage area; 100 ft (minor)
- Eliminate Water Quality Transition Zone buffers in Suburban watersheds (like Urban)
- Use Gross Site Area basis for impervious cover in Suburban watersheds (discontinue Net Site Area basis)

* Will evaluate use in western creeks but may retain existing widths.





100 50 0 ft

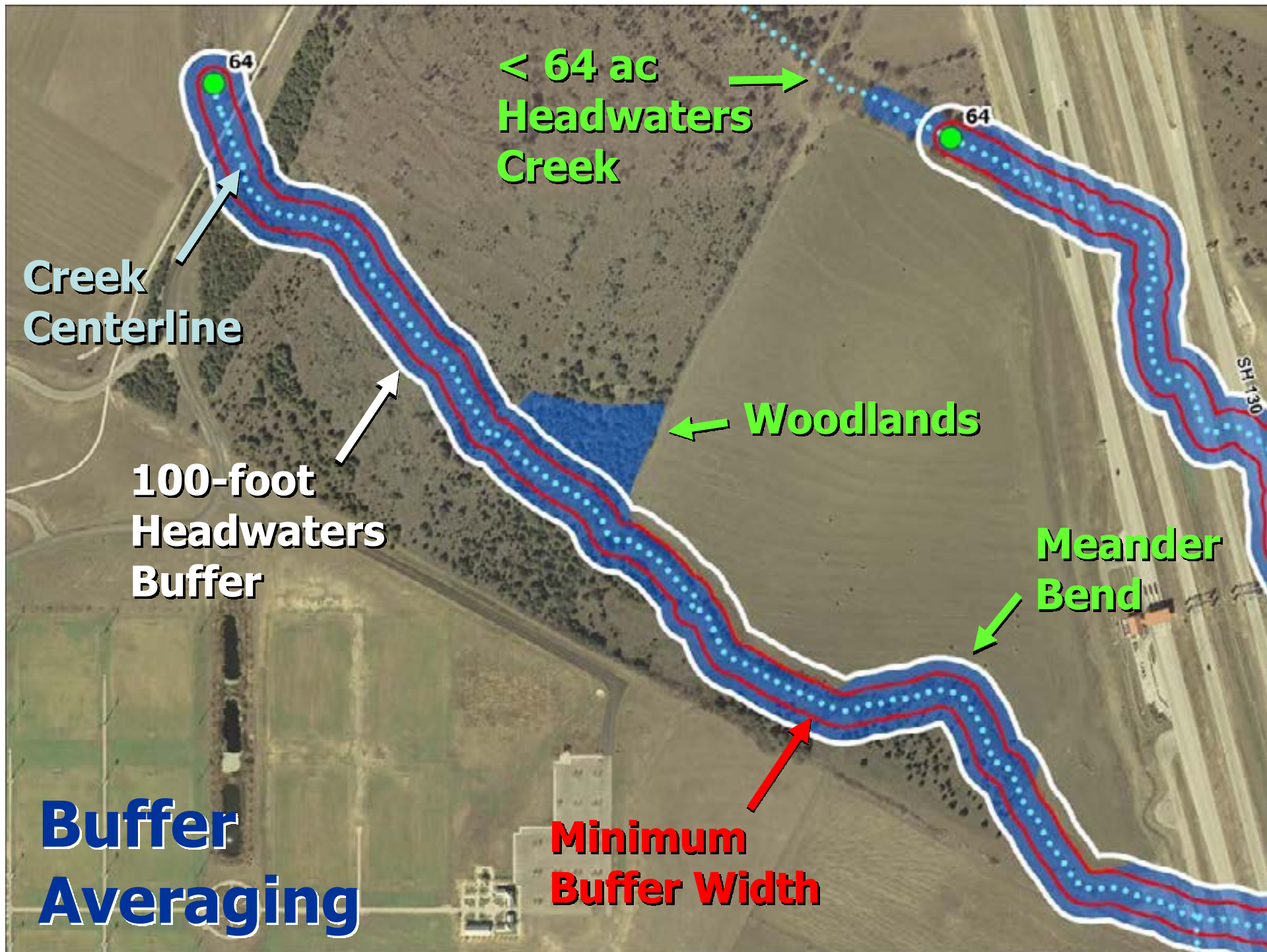


Proposed Buffers

Centerline

Creek Protection

- Allow “buffer averaging” to reduce buffers by up to one-half if the overall area protected remains the same
- Allow “innovative” water quality controls in the upper half of CWQZ buffers (but out of 100-yr floodplain) in Urban & Suburban watersheds
- Reevaluate uses allowed/disallowed in CWQZ (e.g., golf courses, parks facilities, etc.)
- Add erosion hazard safeguards (e.g., add depth component for utility crossings)



Creek Protection

- Modify redevelopment exception to consider minimum stream setback & disallow additional non-compliance
- Make improvements to the Open Channels section of the Drainage Criteria Manual
- Buffer Elements that do not change:
 - Retain WQ Transition Zone buffers in Drinking Water Protection Zone
 - Barton Creek main channel buffer remains at 400 ft
 - No buffers within Downtown area
 - No change to buffers on Lady Bird Lake or Lake Austin

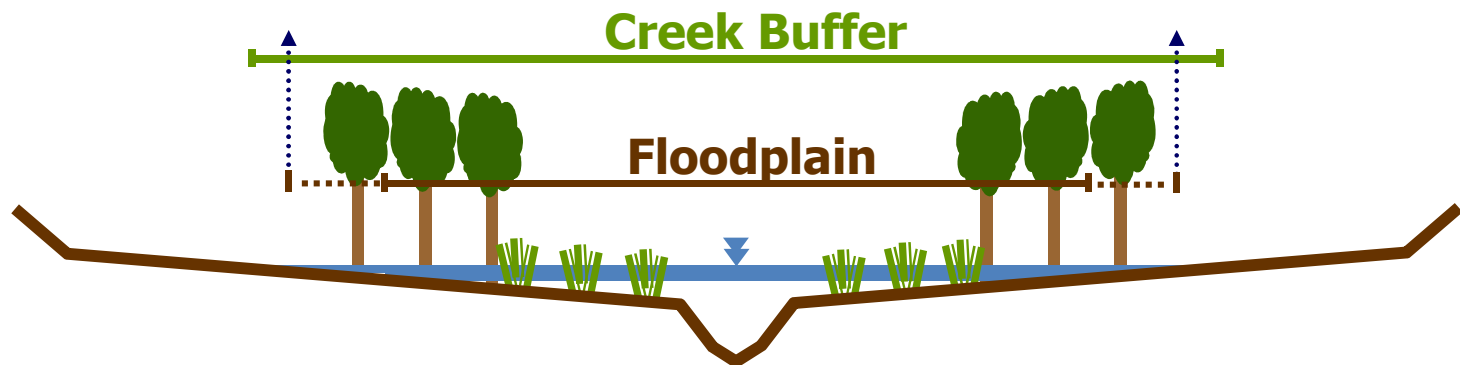
Floodplain Protection

"Promote, encourage and/or require the preservation and restoration of floodplains and stream buffers as well as the beneficial re-purposing of mining quarries."



Floodplain Protection

- Adjust definition of "natural & traditional character" to protect & enable the recovery of degraded waterways
- Restrict floodplain modifications in CWQZ
- Explore planning for wooded/naturally vegetated floodplains when designing for future conditions
- Make improvements to the Floodplain Modification guidelines in the Environmental Criteria Manual



Development Patterns & Greenways

"Explore opportunities to encourage a development pattern that better protects public and private property, preserves floodplains, creeks and open spaces, and provides access and connectivity with greenways and trails."



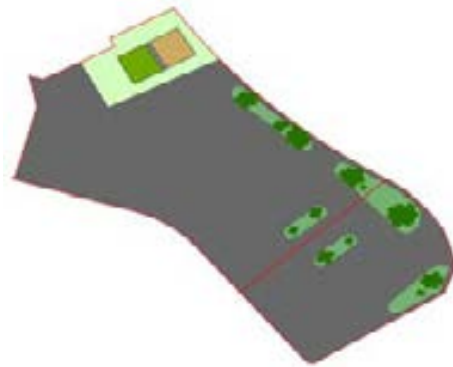
Development Patterns & Greenways

- Facilitate the creation and use of riparian greenways & trails
- Explore parkland dedication options to protect floodplain & riparian areas
- Consider options to incentivize improved stream buffers for redevelopment sites
- Improve PUD zoning elements for “superior” watershed protection



Development Patterns & Greenways

- Consider expanding BSZ Redevelopment Exception to Water Supply watersheds for water quality & community improvements
- Make improvements to transfers of development rights to allow for increased flexibility and protection of additional environmental resources



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Improved Stormwater Controls

"Improve permanent stormwater controls to better moderate runoff and help reduce streambank erosion."



Improved Stormwater Controls

- Require Water Quality (WQ) controls based on extent of impervious cover instead of percentage
- Evaluate new options to “stack” WQ & flood detention volumes
- Strengthen measures to regulate & inspect subsurface controls
- Tighten standards for use of wet ponds
- Remove code barriers to incentivize green infrastructure
- Use WQ controls to satisfy 2-year detention

Improved Stormwater Controls

- Review Water Quality (WQ) volume sizing requirements
- Review WQ control performance requirements
- Add option for volumetric detention to Drainage Criteria Manual
- Consider requirements or incentives for flood detention/conveyance for redevelopment in flood-prone areas
- Consider space-efficient WQ control options for Downtown
- Explore new non-degradation control options (e.g., infiltration rain gardens)
- Reevaluate credits for porous pavement

Mitigation Options

"Explore better ways to regulate the modification of floodplains, including options for off-site mitigation for developments in areas that are planned for higher density developments."



Mitigation Options

- Consider use of payment-in-lieu option for water quality ponds on small sites in some/all Suburban watersheds
- Consider strengthened cut & fill and steep slope protections for areas outside of Comprehensive Plan centers & corridors



Simplify Regulations and Maintain Opportunity

"Simplify development regulations where possible and minimize the impact of any changes on individual and collective abilities to develop land."

ELEMENT	DESIRED DEVELOPMENT ZONE			DRINKING WATER PROTECTION ZONE		
	Urban	Suburban City Limits	Suburban N. Edwards/ ETJ	Water Supply Suburban	Water Supply Rural	Barton Springs Zone
Watershed Classification						
Minor	64 ac.	320 - 640 ac.	320 - 640 ac.	128 - 320 ac.	64 - 320 ac.	64/128 - 320 ac.
Intermediate	64 ac.	640 - 1280 ac.	640 - 1280 ac.	320 - 640 ac.	320 - 640 ac.	320 - 640 ac.
Major	64 ac.	over 1,280 ac.	over 1,280 ac.	over 640 ac.	over 640 ac.	over 640 ac.
Critical Water Quality Zone						
Minor	50 - 400 ft.	50 - 100 ft.	50 - 100 ft.	50 - 100 ft.	50 - 100 ft.	50 - 100 ft.
Intermediate	50 - 400 ft.	100 - 200 ft.	100 - 200 ft.	100 - 200 ft.	100 - 200 ft.	100 - 200 ft.
Major	50 - 400 ft.	200 - 400 ft.	200 - 400 ft.	200 - 400 ft.	200 - 400 ft.	200 - 400 ft.
Water Quality Transition Zone						
Minor	None	100 ft.	100 ft.	100 ft.	100 ft.	100 ft.
Intermediate	None	200 ft.	200 ft.	200 ft.	200 ft.	200 ft.
Major	None	300 ft.	300 ft.	300 ft.	300 ft.	300 ft.

Simplify Regulations and Maintain Opportunity

- Evaluate simplification of Suburban watershed IC limits in City Limits (outside Edwards Aquifer recharge zone)
- Consider higher IC limits for Comp Plan “centers” in ETJ of Suburban watersheds
- Eliminate the Boundary Street Deduction in Suburban watersheds
- Consider allowing public boat ramps along the Colorado River (currently requires variance)



Simplify Regulations and Maintain Opportunity

- Allow street crossings of minor CWQZ buffers every 900 feet in Suburban watersheds (to match maximum block length criteria)
- Clarify that created or irrevocably altered roadside ditches do not create a CWQZ
- Numerous clarifications & corrections of existing code



Coordinate with Regional Partners

"Work in coordination with Travis County and neighboring communities to develop the above changes."



- Coordinate regulations with new Travis County Water Quality Rules (currently under development)

Adoption Schedule

Stakeholder Meetings

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|---|-----------------------|
| 1. Creek Protection | Sep 9, 23, Oct 7 |
| 2. Floodplain Protection | Oct 21, Nov 18, Dec 2 |
| 3. Development Patterns & Greenways | Dec 16, Jan 6, 20 |
| 4. Improved Stormwater Controls | Feb 3, 17, Mar 2 |
| 5. Mitigation, Simplification & Flexibility | Mar 23 |
| 6. Summary of Stakeholder Meeting Progress | Apr 13 |
| 7. Staff develops Draft Ordinance | Apr – Jul |
| 8. Stakeholder Feedback on Draft Ordinance* | Aug – Sep |

Boards & Commissions*	Oct – Nov 2012
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City Council	Dec 2012
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Travis County Commissioner's Court	Winter 2012/13
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* City staff also happy to meet with interested groups upon request.

Contact Information

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**[www.austintexas.gov/page/
watershed-protection-ordinance-0](http://www.austintexas.gov/page/watershed-protection-ordinance-0)**