



Striving for National Excellence
Urban Parks Workgroup: Presentation to the Austin City Council
October 20, 2011

Striving for National Excellence

Austin City Council's Goal

- Every resident should live within walking distance of a park;
- Walking distance = $\frac{1}{4}$ mile for urban core; $\frac{1}{2}$ mile outside urban core.
- Adopted November 19th, 2009

87%

The percentage of people in Austin who say it is important to live near open space.

Source: Austin Community Survey, done in association with the Austin Comprehensive Planning Process

37%

The percentage of people in Austin's urban core who do live near a park.

Framing the Issue

Acreage & Accessibility

parks as recreational amenities

- *disk golf*
- *cycling*
- *trails*

parks as ecological necessities

- *watershed protection*
- *land conservation*
- *environmental protection*

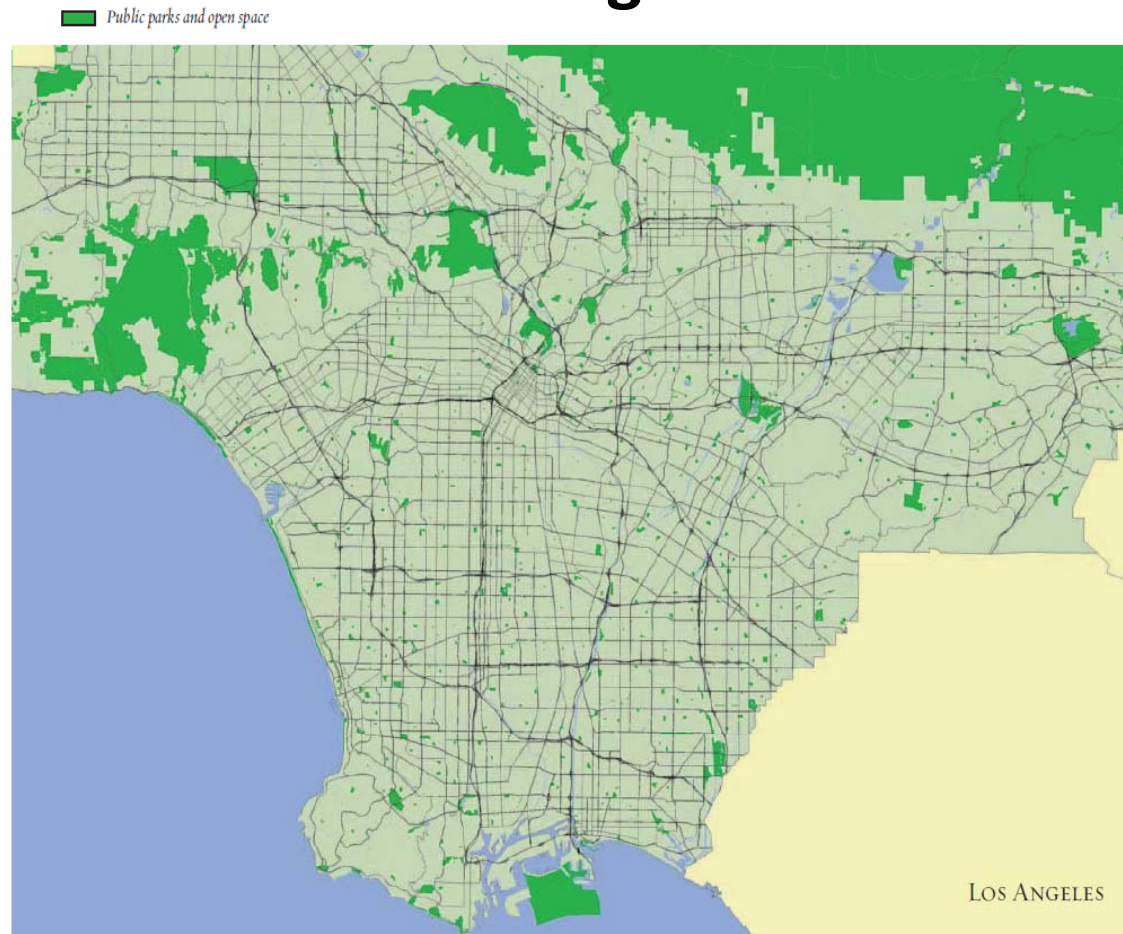
parks as urban infrastructure

- *health care infrastructure*
- *economic development*
- *environmental infrastructure*

Meeting Austin's Goals for:

- *Sustainability*
- *Family Retention*
- *Obesity Prevention*

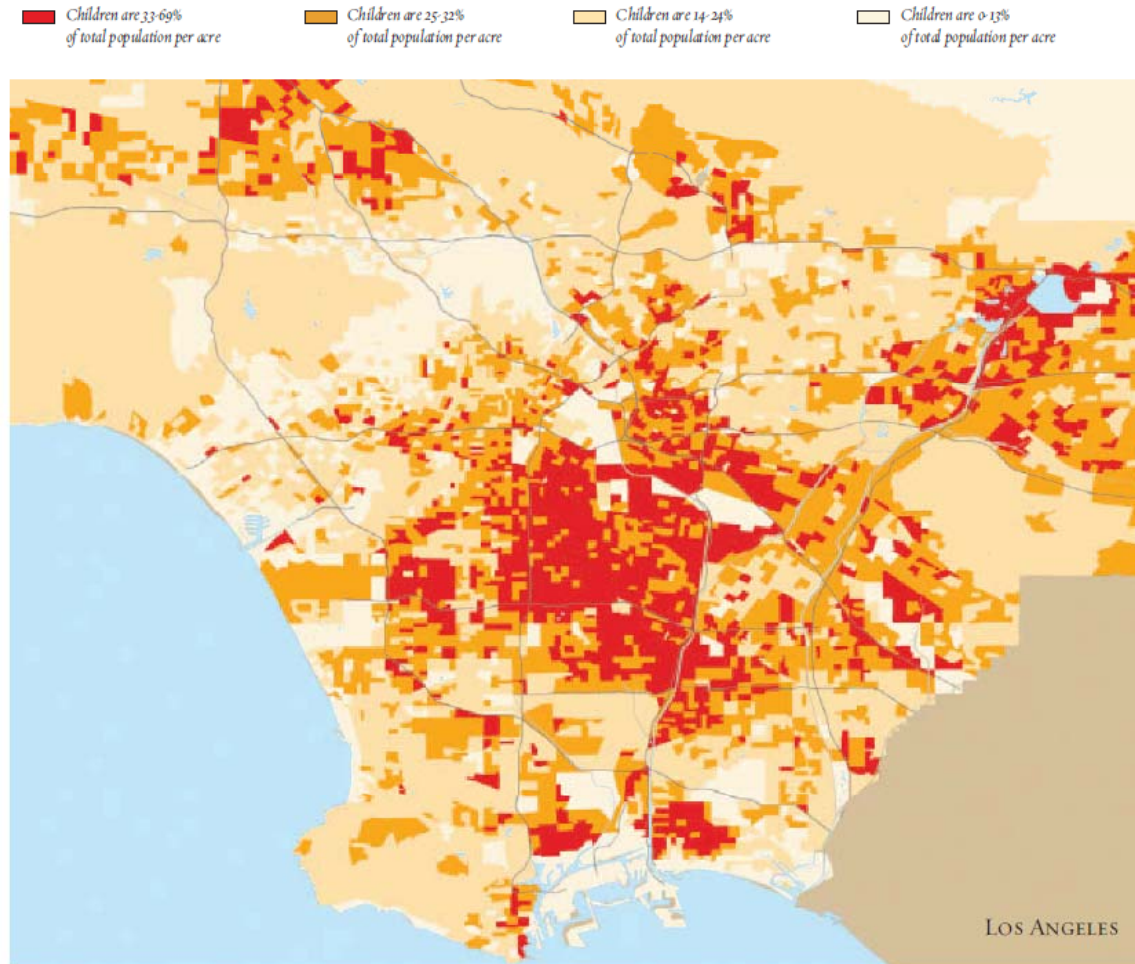
Understanding Why Access is Important: The Example of Park Land in the City of Los Angeles



Parks in Los Angeles are concentrated far from the city center.

"No Place to Play: A Comparative Analysis of Park Access in Seven Major Cities." Trust for Public Land, 2004.

High Children Population Density Areas in the City of Los Angeles



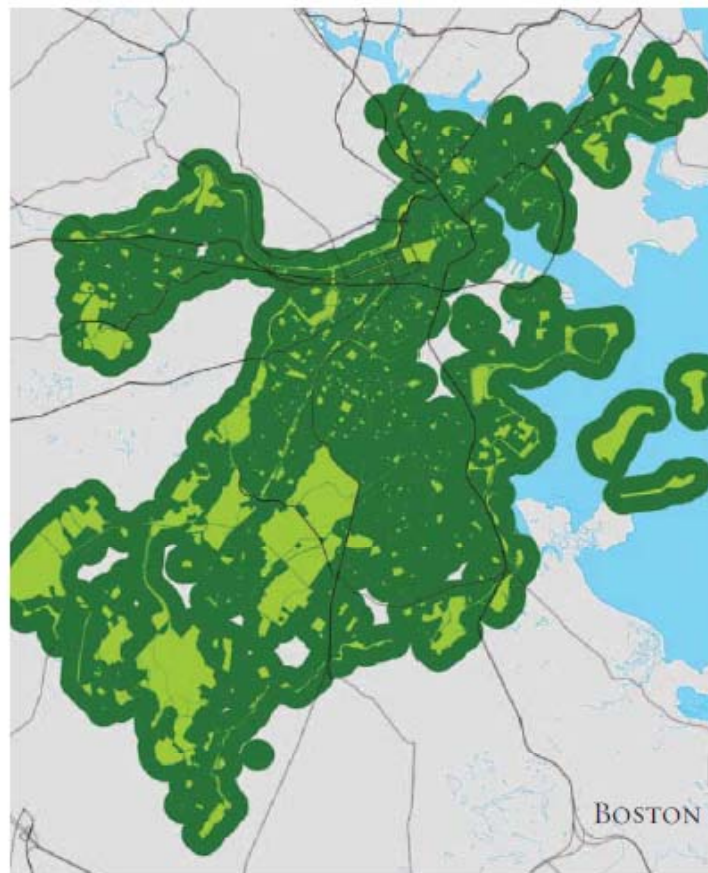
Areas shaded red indicate high children's population density zones.

"No Place to Play: A Comparative Analysis of Park Access in Seven Major Cities." Trust for Public Land, 2004.

New York and Boston: Areas Within Walking Distance of a Park



Most children in New York enjoy easy access to parks.

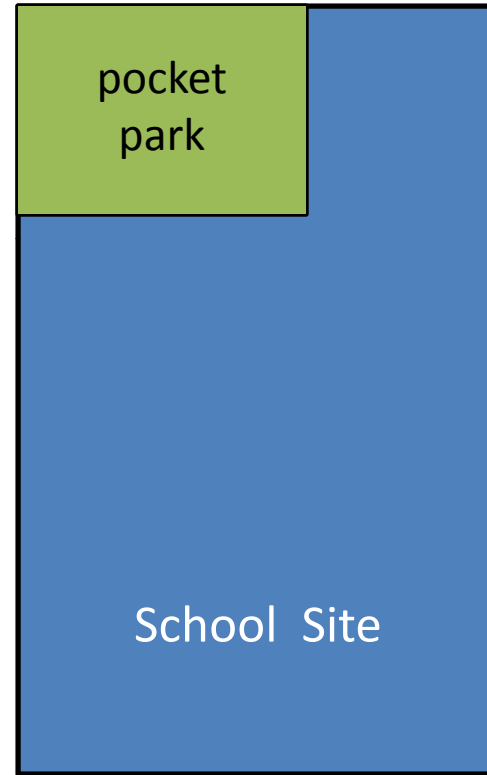


Boston's extensive park system reaches 97% of the city's children.






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Developing School Parks and Sites

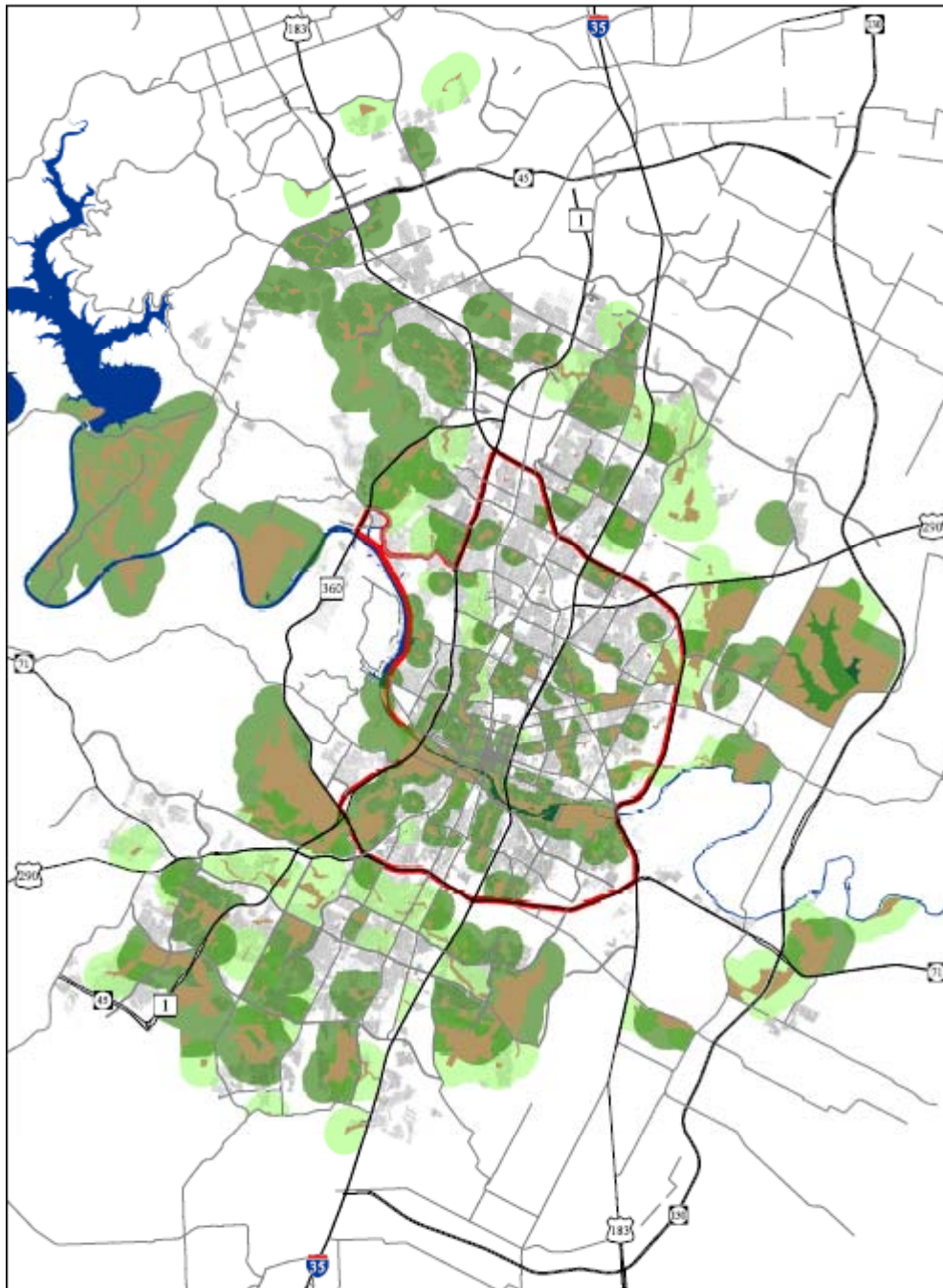


Austin Parkland Opportunities



-  Developed Parkland
-  Undeveloped Parkland
-  Existing School Parks (PARD owns a % of the school property)
-  New School Sites (no PARD ownership)
-  High Opportunity Sites

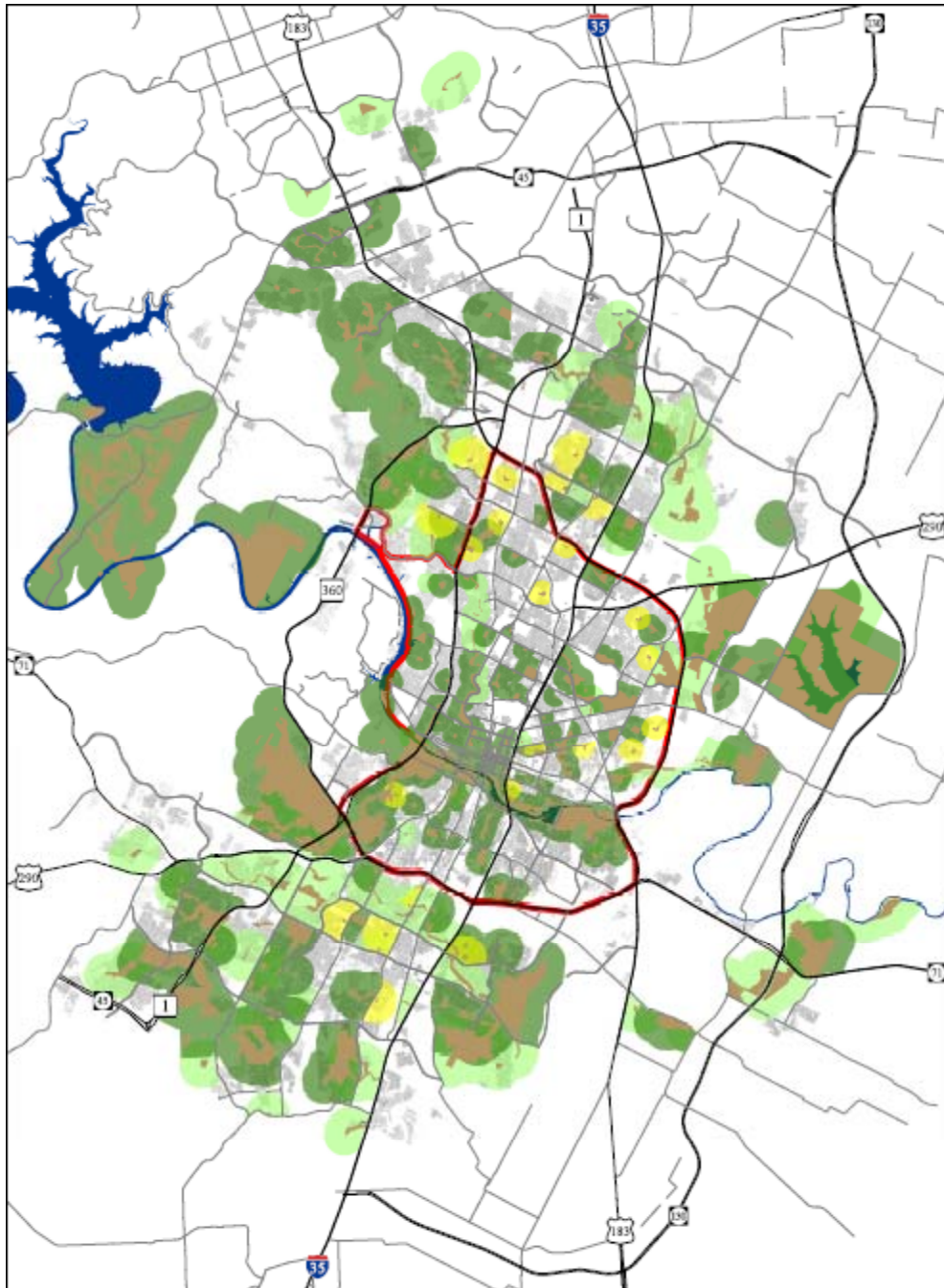
Meeting Austin's New Park Access Goal

	Inner Core Total % Pop Served	Outer Area Total % Pop	Total Development and Acquisition Costs	Total Additional Maintenance Costs
Developed Parkland (Map A)	37%	42%	\$0 (existing)	<i>\$0 (existing)</i>
Undeveloped Parkland (Map B)	43% (6%)	61% (19%)	\$6,000,000	\$350,000
Existing School Parks (Map C)	47% (4%)	65% (4%)	\$4,400,000 (22 parks @ \$250,000 each)	\$143,000
New School Sites (Map D)	68% (21%) <i>(28 parks estimated)</i>	76% (11%) <i>(33 parks estimated)</i>	Inner Core: \$5,600,000 Outer Area: \$6,600,000 (\$200,000 each)	\$413,000
Alternate Sites (Map E)	69% (1%)	76% (0%)	\$ 400,000 (2 sites at \$200,000 each)	\$80,000
Remaining Parks Needed	90% <i>(30 parks estimated)</i>	90% <i>(21 parks estimated)</i>	Inner Core: \$30,000,000 Outer Area: \$18,900,000 (~\$1,000.000 each)	\$1,380,000






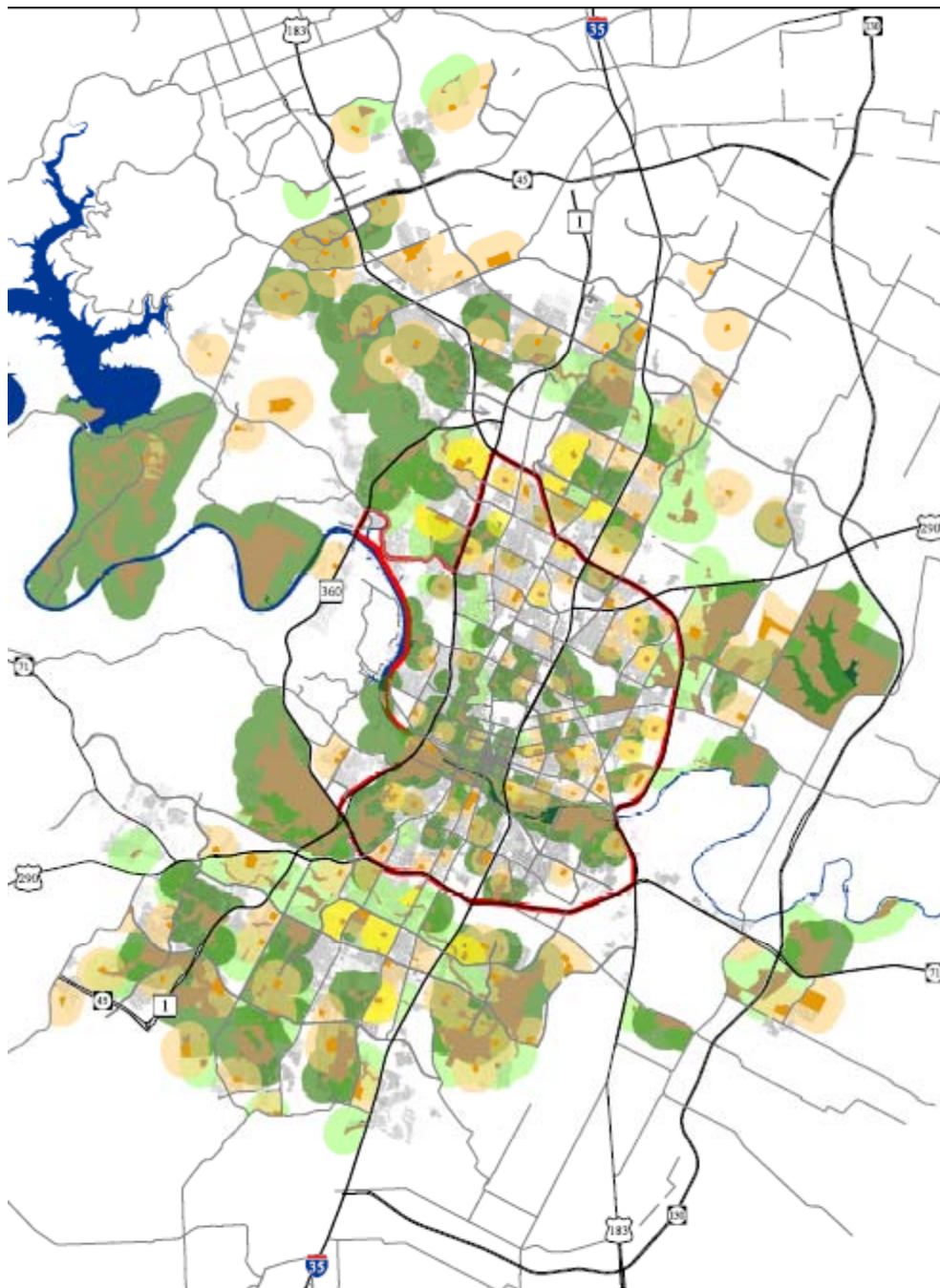
**Map B:
Undeveloped
Parks in Austin**

-  Developed Parkland
-  Undeveloped Parkland







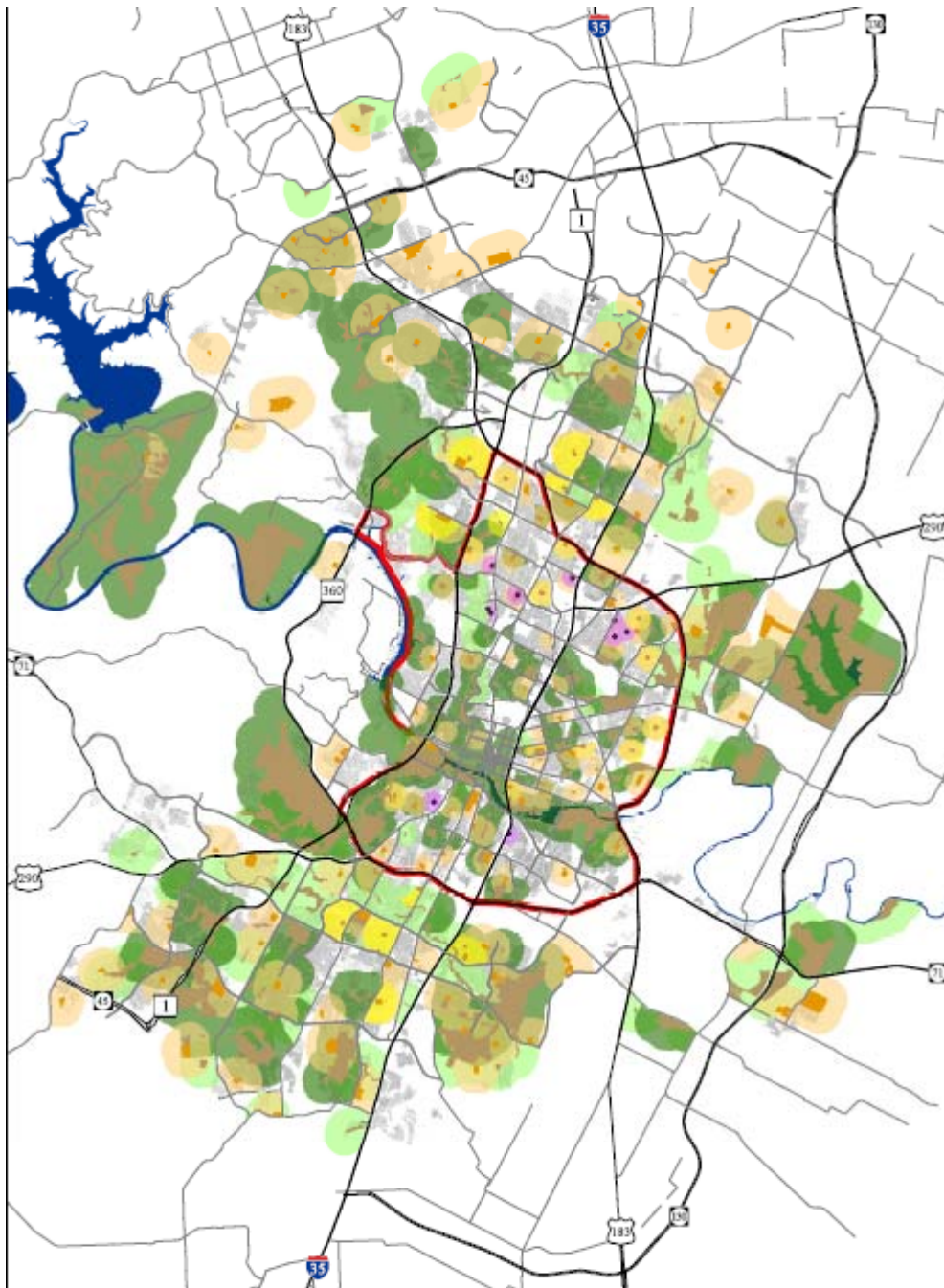
**Map C:
Existing School
Parks**

-  Developed Parkland
-  Undeveloped Parkland
-  Existing School Parks
(PARD owns a % of the
school property)








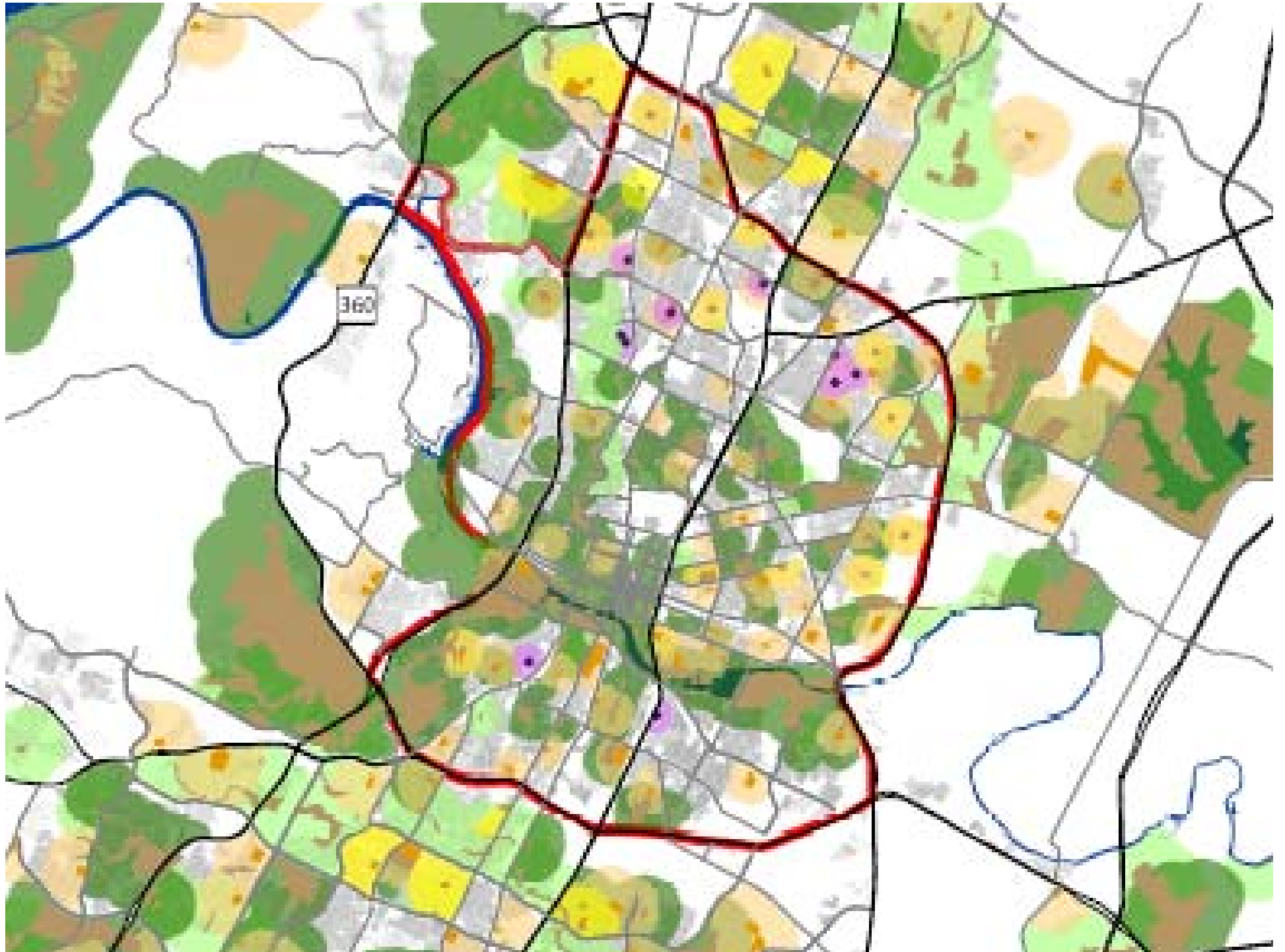
**Map D:
Possible New
School Sites**

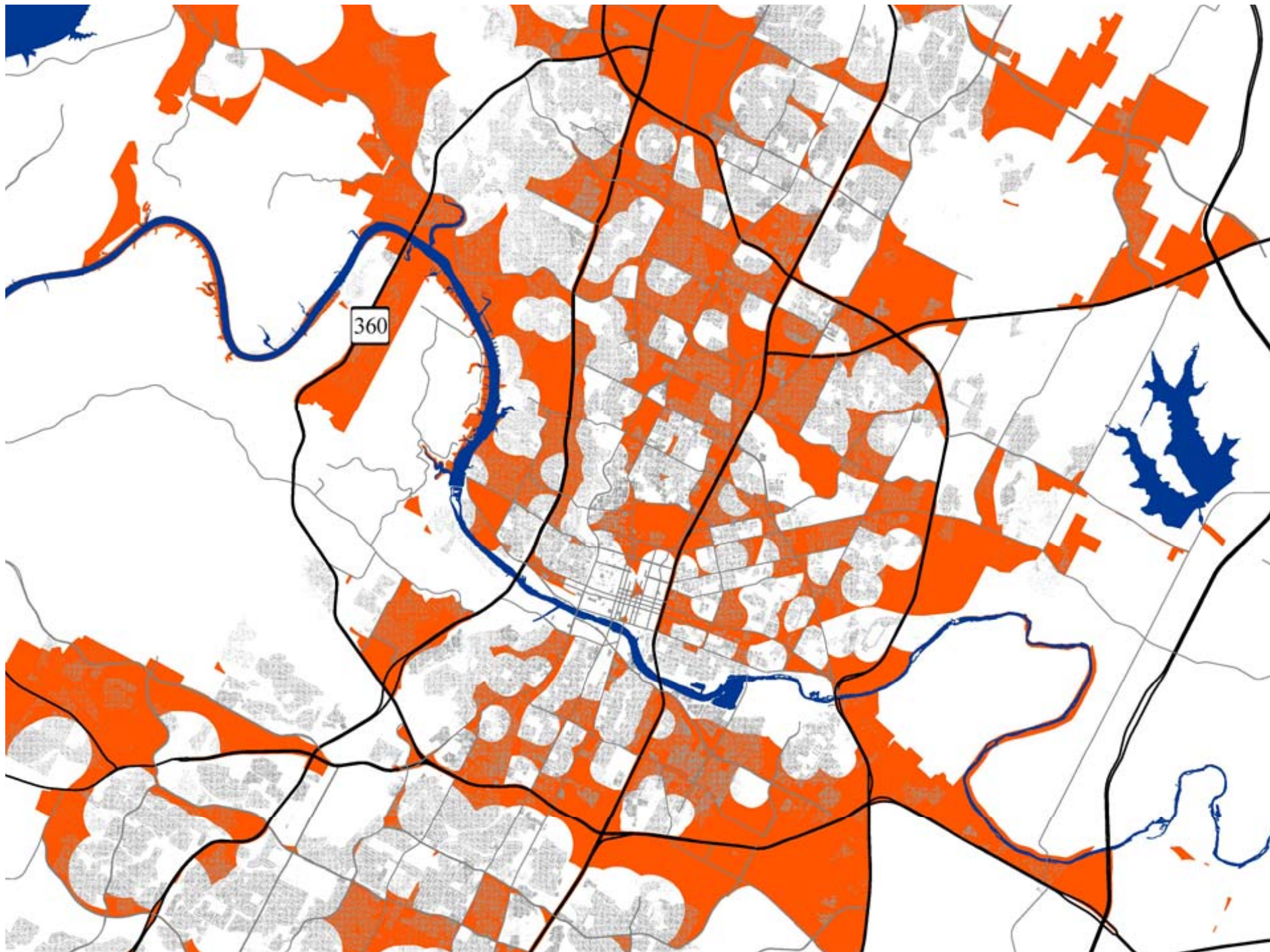
-  Developed Parkland
-  Undeveloped Parkland
-  Existing School Parks
(PARD owns a % of the
school property)
-  New School Sites (no
PARD ownership)



**Map E:
High Opportunity
Sites**

-  Developed Parkland
-  Undeveloped Parkland
-  Existing School Parks
(PARD owns a % of the
school property)
-  New School Sites (no
PARD ownership)
-  High Opportunity Sites





Striving for National Excellence

ACCESS & ACQUISITION

MAINTENANCE

DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

IMPLEMENTATION

Key Findings: *Acquisition*

The GAP:

- Large number of central city residents cannot walk to a park;
- City still trying to meet 1-mile goal set in 1983;
- Per capita number of parks: Austin ranks 52/75.

The SOLUTION:

- Acquire and transform more land for smaller urban parks; particularly in rapidly densifying areas such as transit corridors;
- Leverage existing city land.

Key Findings: *Maintenance*

GAP:

- City is impoverished in our upkeep and maintenance of parks. = Major barrier to expanding park access.
- Austin only 65th on funding for parks operations: only \$41 a resident vs national average of \$75.
- Only \$9 per capita spent on parks maintenance.
- Only 123 maintenance personnel for 14,911 acres of parks.

SOLUTION:

- More city funding for parks maintenance and operations is **CRITICAL!!**

Key Findings: *Design and Development*

The GAP:

- Lack of funding for comprehensive site design solutions;
- Lack of maintenance crews for “nature-based” play areas;
- Lack of precedents.

SOLUTION:

- Address code and liability issues;
- Enlist the help of local childhood development and public health research and design expertise.

Top Three Policy Recommendations

1. **ANNUAL FUNDING:** Provide annual funding for PARD to hire 1 full-time maintenance staff person per 75 acres of city parkland (right now PARD is at 1 maintenance staff person per 175 acres of park).
2. **BOND REFERENDUM:** include on the next bond referendum \$25 million in bonds for the acquisition and development of urban parks and incorporation of family-friendly features onto exiting public land.
3. **PARK DISTRICT:** Partner with other large Texas cities to ask the Texas Legislature to grant home rule municipalities the authority to create, via ballot referendum, a special city-wide parks district with authority to adopt a property tax levy dedicated to parks.

Key Policies: *Implementation*

- Develop **ten-year action plan**;
- Fund 1 new full time employee to **oversee implementation** of family-friendly urban parks policies **and facilitate AISD/PARD partnerships**;
- Fund 1 additional employee to **leverage public-private partnerships**;
- **Pursue strategic partnerships** with health-related entities.