

Flood Mitigation Task Force

Thoughts on the Work Plan

“If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes.”

—ALBERT EINSTEIN

Questions that Might Inform our Work Plan

- How much time do we each have to contribute to our shared work?
- What is realistic to achieve between now and March 2016?
 - What would be some realistic goals for us to set?
 - What would we need to know in order to accomplish our goals
- What are the top 3 priorities?
 - How would we organize ourselves if we wanted to spend ~80% of our time on our top priorities?
 - Of the other issues identified in the Council Resolution, what can we do to make meaningful progress?
- How do we use committees to divide and conquer, while building a shared ownership over our work product?

Ideas: Stuff we need to Learn More About

- Context for how flooding fits into the big picture of COA priorities
- Basics of engineering/risk-based decision making (e.g. flood frequency, cost-benefit analysis)
- South Lamar Neighborhood mitigation plan
- What are the biggest concerns related to flooding and to flood mitigation? Where do we get the most 'bang for the buck'?
- How does flood mitigation relate to affordability?
- How can the drainage utility fee be used both to share the costs as a whole community as well as to appropriately assign the costs? (e.g. discounts for raingardens, local increase to support neighborhood stormdrain upgrades)

Now, therefore, be it resolved:

- A. The FMTF is created to gather information and develop recommendations related to citywide and area flooding and its impacts to property, public safety, and City finances, with an **emphasis on flood mitigation solutions and funding options.**

B. Review and Recommendations Regarding:

- a) Flood mitigation and preparedness strategies;
- b) Flood plain variances and flood buyout policy;
- c) Structure and use of the adopted drainage utility charge, and
- d) Storm water management system O&M, capital costs, city fees, flood insurance, and other identified factors that have impacts to affordability and equity...
- e) Methods and means to provide more public education to new residents and visitors to raise awareness of flash flooding potential, as well as strategies for the public to take to remain safe, and
- f) Standard and Green Infrastructure utilization; impacts, regulations, and management of impervious cover; master planning and studies underway.

Ideas About How We Might Approach B.1

- Look at decision rubric for floodplain variances
 - and strive for (vet that there is) a coherent and consistent way of granting/administering
 - Are there conditions for the grantee taking on some of the risk?
- Learn about the buy-out program
 - Vet the conceptual approach
 - Evaluate funding (current/future allocations relative to risk, all COA priorities)
- Have 2-20 minute brainstorming sessions (Nov and Feb?) on B.1.e

Ideas About How We Might Approach B.2:

Identifying available funds, including federal, state, and local sources as well as prioritizing future capital investment for flood mitigation management.

- Focus on learning from WPD on how they approach this
- Vet staff ideas
- Endorse/make recommendations

[maybe we do not allocate a significant amount of time to this task?]

Ideas About How We Might Approach B.3:

Evaluating best practices in peer cities with similar climate and flood issues.

- Perhaps staff could identify 2-3 cities that are most comparable to COA?
- Are they cutting-edge enough to be worth exploring further?
- Or just take DFW, Houston, San Antonio and pick out some key strategies to investigate?

Ideas About How We Might Approach B.4:

Receiving staff briefings concerning progress and recommended action for the Upper Onion Creek study and providing comment.

Ideas About How We Might Approach B.5:

Collaborating with the City's Environmental Commission as appropriate.

- Perhaps staff could provide a high-level list of the most obvious ways that we might collaborate?

Ideas About How We Might Approach B.6:

Collaborating as appropriate with other jurisdictions and agencies that have interest, expertise, and investment authority regarding flood mitigation potentially impacting areas inside and outside of the City of Austin as well as with work groups or other regional initiatives focused on flood issues and storm water management.

- Could staff provide a list of the most obvious entities that we would collaborate with, and some of the programs/mechanisms they offer?
- TF could think about how much effort/resources should be applied to further developing those partnerships.

Ideas About How We Might Approach B.7: Assisting in public outreach to share information and engage the community for feedback.

- Maybe have COA community engagement staff share some ideas?
- Make a plan to identify what feedback from the community would be most valuable.
- Committee could participate in outreach that could inform our work (what questions should we get community feedback on?)

DRAFT Working Group topics for Flood Mitigation Task Force consideration
Council Resolution 20150604-044

Resolution Topics	Capital Improv. Program	O&M / Oper. Programs	Buyouts	Funding	Regs
1. Flood mitigation strategies	x	x	x	x	x
2. Flood preparedness strategies	x	x	x		
3. Floodplain variances		x			x
4. Flood buyout policy	x		x	x	
5. Drainage Utility charge				x	
6. O&M costs		x		x	x
7. Capital costs	x	x		x	x
8. City fees				x	x
9. Flood insurance				x	
10. Affordability & equity	x	x	x	x	x
11. Public education & safety		x			
12. Green & grey infrastructure	x	x		x	
13. Impervious cover regulations					x
14. Master Plan	x	x	x	x	x
15. Other studies/plans*	x	x			x
16. Identify funds/prioritize CIP	x			x	
17. Peer city benchmarking	x	x	x	x	x
18. Upper Onion Creek study	Staff presentation & TF discussion				
19. Collaborate with EV Comm.	TBD				
20. Collaboration with Others	TBD				
21. Task Force public outreach	TBD				

* e.g., Upper Onion Creek; S. Lamar N'hood Mitigation; Imagine Austin/CodeNEXT

- x = consideration
- x = central discussion
- x = central discussion, more than one topic category (row)

Possible Subtopics for WORKING GROUPS

Capital priorities

- Multiple mission objectives
- Problem & solution prioritization
- Master Plan goals & objectives
- Green & grey infrastructure
- Upper Onion Creek Study

O&M / Operating Programs

- Assets maintenance
- Level of service
- Flood preparation & response
- Public education

Buyout Policy

- Clustered vs. individual buyouts
- Relocation benefits
- Creek flood vs. Local flood

Funding & DUF charge

- DUF discount for on-site green infra.
- Funding gap and historic funding summary
- Future funding sources

Regulations

- Floodplain variances
- CodeNEXT: Flood mitigation for redev/infill