



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Joseph G. Pantalione, P.E., Director
Watershed Protection Department

DATE: June 10, 2016

SUBJECT: Status Update for the Lower Onion Creek Flood Mitigation Buyout Project and
Onion Creek Floodplain and Flood Mitigation Study

Lower Onion Creek Flood Mitigation Buyout Project

In an effort to mitigate flooding in the Onion Creek watershed, the Watershed Protection Department (WPD) has been implementing the Lower Onion Creek Flood Mitigation Buyout Project since 1999. A total of 855 properties are included in three sub-project areas, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Project Area, the 25-Year Project Area, and the 100-Year Project Area.

The USACE Project Area includes the acquisition of 483 properties, installation of recreational facilities, and implementation of ecosystem restoration along Onion Creek. This project area has an estimated total cost of \$73.2 million, which includes a federal cost share of \$40.3 million. To date, the USACE has reimbursed the City \$23.6 million. Of the 483 properties in the USACE Project Area, 474 have been acquired. The City acquired 323 properties before the October 2013 flood and has acquired 154 properties since October 2013. There are six properties yet to be acquired in the USACE Project Area. Each of the six properties is in the eminent domain process.

The 25-Year Project Area includes the acquisition of 140 properties within the 25-year floodplain of Onion Creek and was authorized by City Council in June 2014. City Council approved funding for this project area in June 2014 in the amount of \$35.5 million in the form of Certificates of Obligation Bonds. To date, the City has acquired 128 of the 140 properties in this project area. The City has been in contact with the owners of the remaining 12 properties.

The 100-Year Project Area includes the acquisition of 232 properties within the 100-year floodplain of Onion Creek and was authorized by City Council in March 2015. Funding for this project includes \$60 million in Certificates of Obligation Bonds approved by City Council in September 2014 and a Federal Emergency Management Agency grant for approximately \$1 million awarded in March 2015. The City has acquired 112 of the 232 properties in the 100-Year Project Area. Of the 120 properties yet to be acquired, 96 property owners have been contacted to begin the buyout process. We anticipate that the remaining 24 property owners will be contacted by the end of July 2016.

Onion Creek Floodplain and Flood Mitigation Study

In response to the 2013 Halloween Flood, WPD is working to update the flood risk information for Onion Creek and selected tributaries in addition to evaluating flood mitigation alternatives between IH-35 and East Slaughter Lane. WPD provided City Council a memorandum on March 2, 2016 summarizing a feasibility-level analysis of the flood mitigation alternatives along with construction and life cycle costs.

We are currently working with our study consultant to finalize the floodplain models and mapping for Onion Creek. This work, which has been slowed by complications in the engineering analysis, will be completed in October 2016. While the results of this modeling are uncertain at this time, it could result in modifications to delineated floodplain boundaries in the watershed, including in the buyout areas, and changes to anticipated flood risk for those properties. We have also worked with our study consultant to incorporate the additional regional detention analyses recommended by the Flood Mitigation Task Force. We will work with our consultant and stakeholders to further refine and evaluate the most promising combinations of flood mitigation alternatives and to complete the preliminary engineering process by February 2017.

If you have any questions about the Lower Onion Creek Flood Mitigation Buyout Project or the Onion Creek Floodplain and Flood Mitigation Study, please contact Kevin Shunk, P.E., at 512-974-9176 or Kevin.Shunk@austintexas.gov.

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