

# DRAFT

**August 1, 2014**

Travis County

Guiding Growth

LAND, WATER, AND TRANSPORTATION PLAN



The seal of Travis County, Texas, is a circular emblem. It features a central five-pointed star with a smaller star on its upper point. Below the star is a depiction of a city skyline. The entire seal is surrounded by a wreath. The outer ring of the seal contains the text "COUNTY OF TRAVIS" at the top and "STATE OF TEXAS" at the bottom, with the year "1830" at the bottom center.

# Travis County Commissioners Court

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Commissioner Bruce Todd, Precinct 2

Commissioner Gerald Daugherty, Precinct 3

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# A: INTRODUCTION

## Travis County Plans for the Future

The population of Travis County is forecasted to grow to approximately 1.5 million people by 2035, and demand for county services will grow accordingly. The *Land, Water, and Transportation Plan (LWTP)* provides Travis County a framework for protecting land and water resources, building transportation and park systems, and efficiently delivering related services while maintaining a balanced budget. It is a set of long-term goals and policies that the Commissioners Court will use to guide orderly development and the appropriate conservation of land and water resources within the unincorporated areas of Travis County.

- Identify where the county will incent development
- Identify where the county will incent conservation
- Provide guidance to minimize incompatible land uses
- Guide consistent collaboration with other governments and agencies at the regional and local level
- Help coordinate private and public investment

As with all Texas counties, Travis County must accomplish these objectives within the context of the legislative authority granted to counties by the state legislature. While cities need to determine whether a proposed ordinance violates state law, counties need to determine whether a proposed ordinance is allowed by state law. Travis County and other urban counties are seeking additional authority so they can effectively manage growth within their jurisdiction.

## Vision, Guiding Values, and Mission

### *VISION FOR TRAVIS COUNTY*

Travis County's vision for the county is one of an open, diverse community where all people are safe and healthy and can fulfill their hopes and dreams; where people enjoy a good quality of life and natural and cultural resources are protected for us and future generations.

### VALUES THAT GUIDE TRAVIS COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Taking responsibility and being accountable, fostering public trust, providing good customer service and excellence in performance, practicing sound fiscal policy, respecting and caring for the individual, acting with transparency, honesty and openness, and working in collaboration and cooperation with others.

### TRAVIS COUNTY MISSION

Our mission is to preserve health, provide a safety net for the needy, ensure the public safety, facilitate the resolution of disputes, foster an efficient transportation system, promote recreational opportunities, and manage county resources in order to meet the changing needs of the community in an effective manner.

## Transportation and Natural Resources Department

Transportation and Natural Resources (TNR) is the department completing the *LWTP*. Its mission is to provide citizens living in unincorporated areas of the county with transportation, natural and cultural resource protection, park, and land development services to promote public safety, health, and welfare in compliance with Texas laws and mandates of the Travis County Commissioners Court. TNR is completing the *LWTP* to facilitate more comprehensive decision-making across its different programs and leverage program resources so departmental services are delivered in the most cost-effective way. The specific TNR functions addressed in the *LWTP* are as follows:

- Planning and implementing park, land conservation, drainage, and transportation capital improvement programs
- Managing parks, land conservation, endangered species habitat, water resource protection, and hazard mitigation programs
- Regulating the subdivision of property, construction of streets and drainage in subdivisions, and development in floodplains

## Public Engagement

The *LWTP* is built on existing transportation, resource protection, park, hazard mitigation, and land development plans, ordinances, and rules. The public input process for the *LWTP* began, then, with information received from the public when these plans and ordinances were originally developed and adopted. Additional information about public opinions was also obtained from surveys completed by other agencies in recent years (see the *LWTP Background Report*). THE COMPLETE REVIEW PROCESS WILL BE DESCRIBED WHEN COMPLETED.

## Planning Horizon and Geographic Study Area

The planning horizon is 25 years and uses the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) population and growth projections for planning purposes. This is aligned with the Travis County Central Campus Master Plan 2010 timeframe as well. The geographic study area is the Extra-Territorial Jurisdictions (ETJs) of the 22 municipalities in Travis County and the unincorporated area outside these limits. It is approximately 419,000 acres, or 654 square miles (see *Map 1*).

## Horizon Issues

### *WILDLAND FIRE MITIGATION*

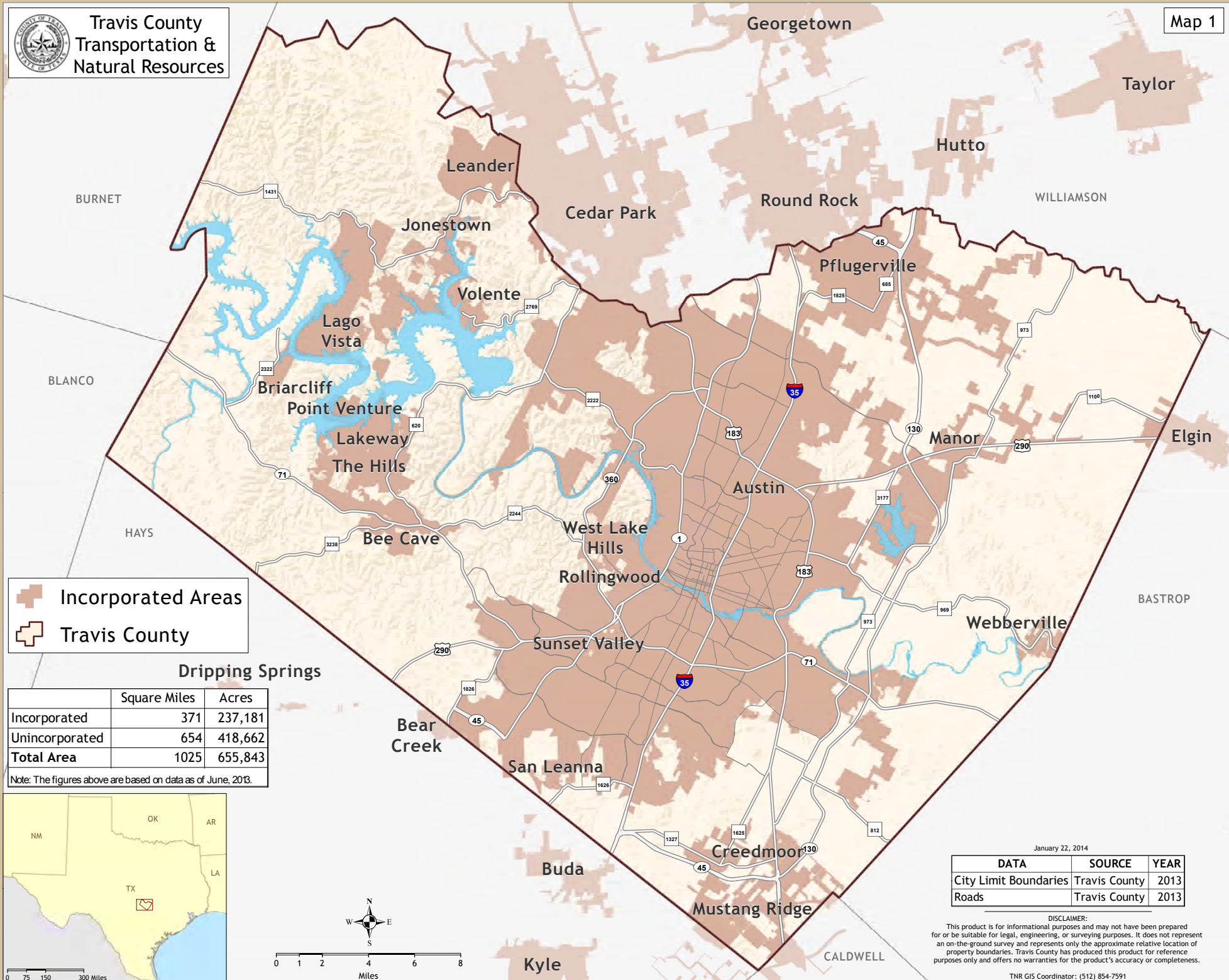
The recent occurrences of severe wildfires in central Texas at the urban interface with undeveloped land has increased public concern about loss of life and property damage from these events. This problem is currently being addressed by the *Joint City-County Wildland Fire Task Force* and *Community Wildfire Protection Plan* template but will need to be addressed in greater detail in the County's *Hazard Mitigation Plan*.

### *PUBLIC TRANSIT*

The County has historically opted to leave transit services to other providers including Capital Metro (CMTA) and Capital Area Rural Transportation System [CARTS]. However, it is apparent that the County will be sought as a partner in the development and funding of the system as the region moves forward in its effort to provide for a regional high capacity transit system. For example, in June 2012, the County was approached by Lone Star Rail (Austin-San Antonio passenger rail) to enter into an inter-local agreement with other jurisdictions to develop a tax increment finance zone to help finance the system (County Commissioners directed representatives from Lone Star Rail to return to report on how their discussions with other partners have proceeded).

### *TRANSPORTATION FUNDING*

The current federal transportation funding system has not been able to keep pace with transportation infrastructure needs especially in rapidly growing areas such as the Central Texas region. Construction costs are rising, federal and state gas taxes remain unchanged, leading to reduced spending power. In the hopes of finding more sustainable revenue sources, Travis County has sought new ways to increase local revenues to help offset property tax based funding, shifting the financing burden of larger, regional, more costly projects from public taxpayers to the users and private development that generate additional traffic.

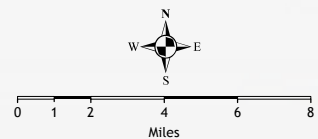


Incorporated Areas  
 Travis County

**Dripping Springs**

	Square Miles	Acres
Incorporated	371	237,181
Unincorporated	654	418,662
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>1025</b>	<b>655,843</b>

Note: The figures above are based on data as of June, 2013.



January 22, 2014

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
City Limit Boundaries	Travis County	2013
Roads	Travis County	2013

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## B: FORECASTED DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

### Historical and Forecasted Population Growth

#### TRAVIS COUNTY VS METROPOLITAN PLANNING AREA GROWTH

From 1980 to 2010, the population of Travis County grew at an average rate of 3.02% per year, from 419,573 residents in 1980 to 1,024,266 in 2010. In comparison, population of the five counties (Travis, Williamson, Hays, Bastrop and Caldwell) that make-up the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) grew at a combined average rate of 3.65% per year. This trend is expected to continue: in 2010, nearly two-thirds (60%) of the 5-county population resided in Travis County; by 2035, Travis County’s share of the 5-county population is forecasted to decline to approximately one-half (48%) of the total 5-county population (see *Figure 1*). See *Map 2* for projected population within the unincorporated area of the County.

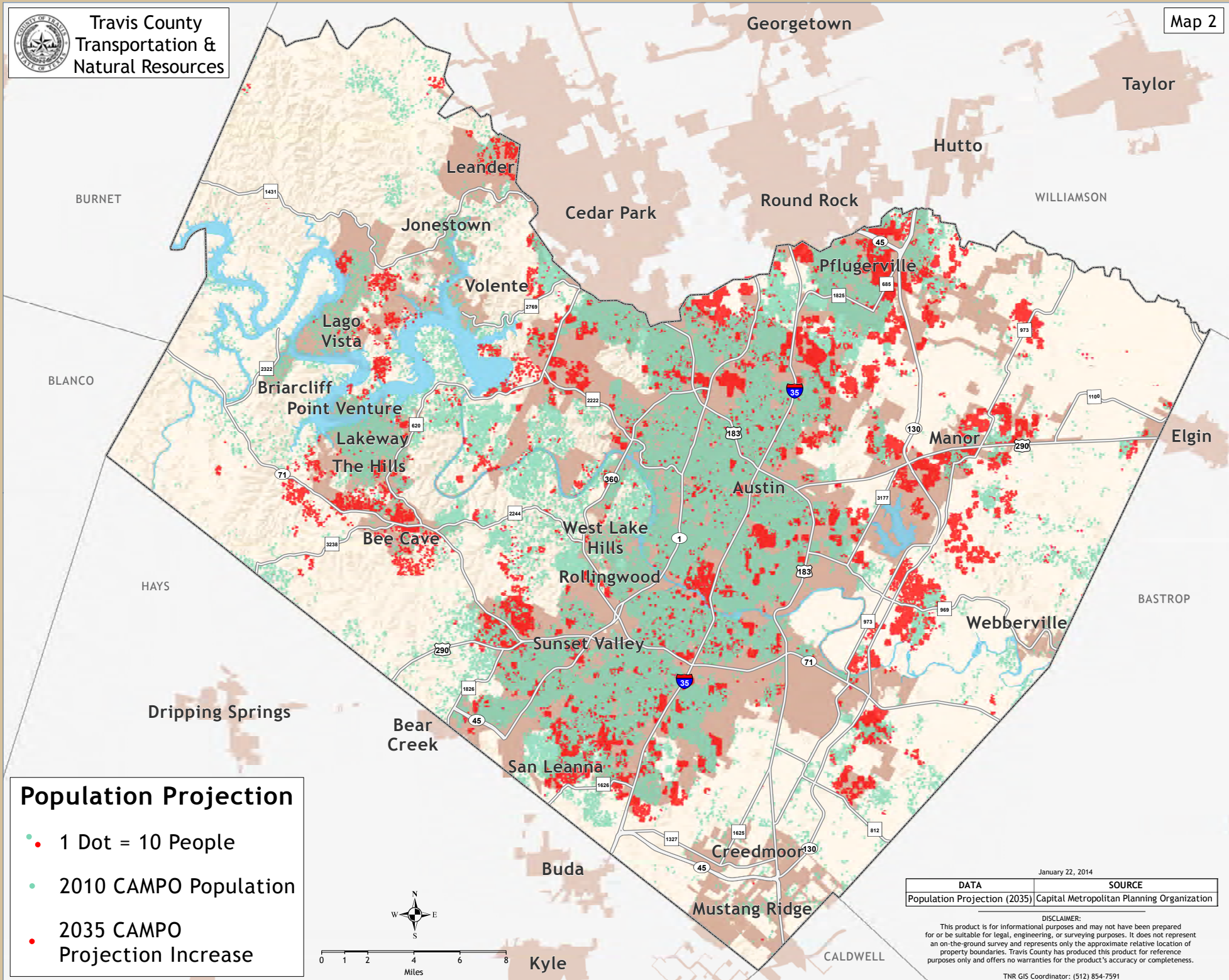
**Figure 1: Historical Population and Forecast by County**

County	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Census	2025 Forecast	2035 Forecast
Travis	419,573	576,407	812,280	1,024,266	1,318,000	1,555,300
Williamson	76,521	139,551	249,967	422,679	702,700	1,026,500
Hays	40,594	65,614	97,589	157,107	271,600	371,200
Bastrop	24,726	38,263	57,733	74,171	149,200	215,500
Caldwell	23,637	26,392	32,194	38,066	65,300	82,100
<b>5-County Total</b>	<b>585,501</b>	<b>846,227</b>	<b>1,249,763</b>	<b>1,716,289</b>	<b>2,506,800</b>	<b>3,250,600</b>

Source: CAMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, June 2010.

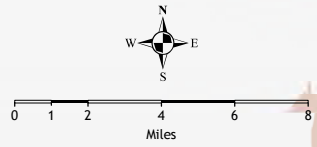
#### INCORPORATED VS UNINCORPORATED GROWTH

Between 1980 and 2010, much of the new population in the region located in low density single family housing on the fringe of existing urban areas, and much of it occurred outside municipal boundaries. An additional 53,677 persons are living in unincorporated Travis County (see *Figure 2*) since 2000. The percentage of the total county population living in unincorporated Travis County has increased as well, growing from 15.4% in 2000 to 17.5% in 2010.



### Population Projection

- 1 Dot = 10 People
- 2010 CAMPO Population
- 2035 CAMPO Projection Increase



DATA	SOURCE
Population Projection (2035)	Capital Metropolitan Planning Organization

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**Figure 2: Travis County Incorporated vs. Unincorporated Population (2000 and 2010)**

Travis County	2000 Census	% of County Total	2010 Census	% of County Total
<b>Incorporated</b>	687,062	84.6%	845,371	82.5%
<b>Unincorporated</b>	125,218	15.4%	178,895	17.5%
<b>Total</b>	812,280		1,024,266	

Source: 2000 and 2010 US Census.

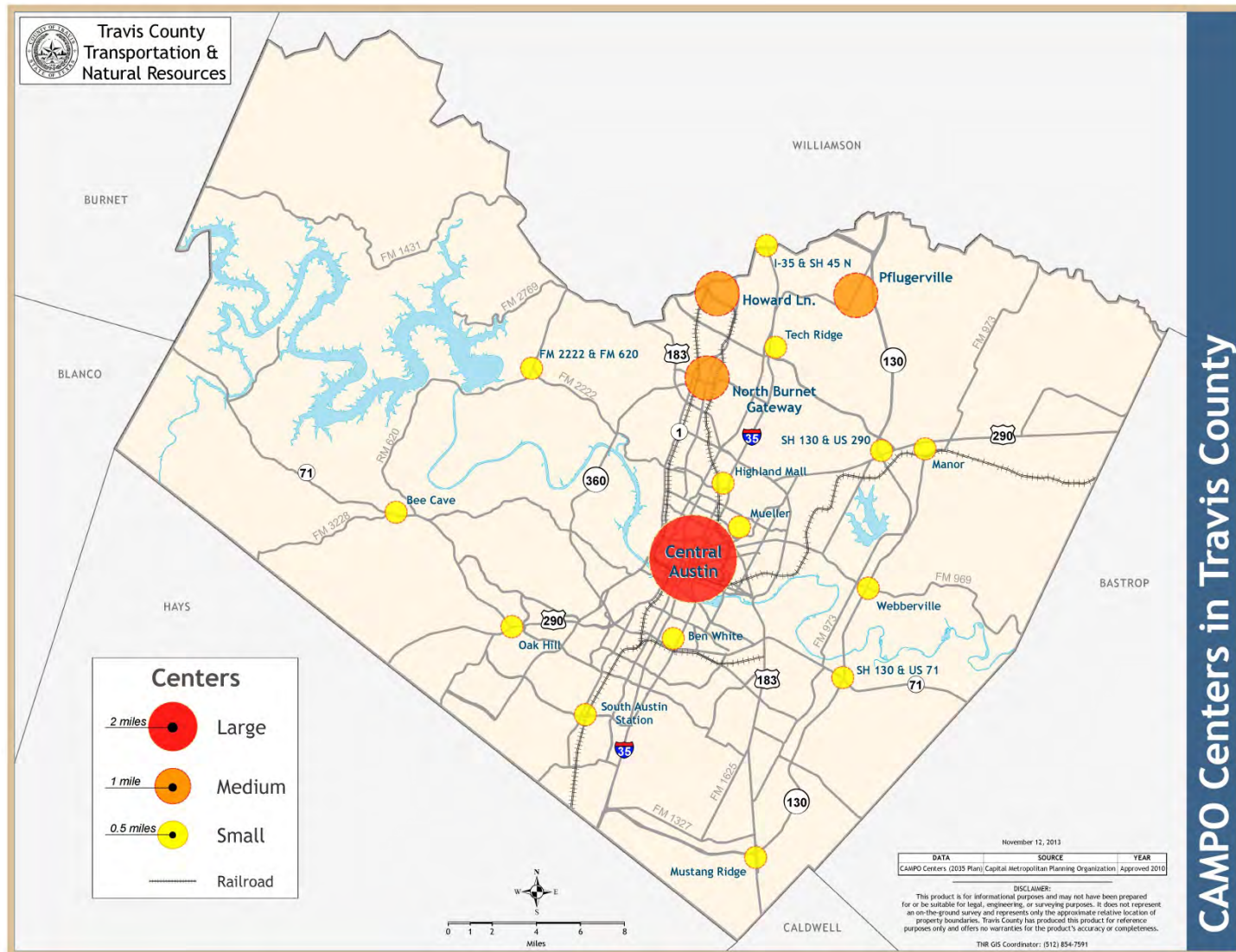
## Forecasted Distribution of Population

### *ALLOCATION OF FORECASTED POPULATION*

CAMPO Centers Concept- As part of the demographic forecast prepared by the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), a Centers Growth Concept scenario was developed to guide where future population would be allocated. The Centers Growth Concept is the implementation of a network of high density mixed use centers oriented around transportation investments included in the CAMPO long range transportation plan. In Travis County, there are currently 18 centers located mainly at the intersections of existing and/or future planned transportation systems which include rail, transit and roadway improvements. Currently, CAMPO staff and local jurisdictional planning staff are working to refine the Center’s map geography in preparation for development of the CAMPO 2040 transportation plan. Refinement to the plan will allow for a better alignment with local land use plans and approved development plans within the region. While current forecast data is representative of Center’s geography in the CAMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, this data will be updated as the region refines that geography (see *Figure 3*).

By implementing the Center’s concept, Travis County expects to direct its transportation investments and other incentives to target new growth and encourage development of a connected regional network of dense, mixed use centers that provide the ability to improve the region’s quality of life. Currently, Webberville is the only center located completely within the unincorporated area of Travis County. Six centers, (Pflugerville, SH 130 and US 290, Manor, Webberville, SH 130 and SH 71, and Mustang Ridge) are located along the SH 130 corridor. Another six centers are located in the I-35 corridor (Ben White, Central Austin, Mueller, Highland Mall, Tech Ridge and I-35 and SH 45 N. The population target ranges for medium centers range from 9,000 – 75,000 persons; the range for small centers is 1,000 – 10,000 persons.

Figure 3: CAMPO Centers





## C. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Opportunities and challenges arise from the interaction of development with the foundational land and water resources of unincorporated Travis County. Because understanding these relationships provides insight into how the County can best guide growth and conservation in its jurisdiction, analyses were completed to answer the following questions:

- How much land is needed to accommodate development over the next 25 years and is there enough?
- What are the existing and emerging development patterns in unincorporated Travis County?
- What are the county’s land and water resources and where are they located?
- Where do development trends and conservation values clash or complement one another?
- What opportunities and challenges can be “exploited” to balance development and conservation needs?

### Land Conversion Analysis

The region continues to see high growth rates and long-term forecasts of continued growth in residential housing and employment that will require areas within unincorporated Travis County to be developed. Some areas of the County will develop at faster rates and will be looked at to accommodate the region’s new growth. An analysis of how much developable land in the unincorporated area is available is provided below. Population forecasts for the next 25 years and the associated land development requirements to support that growth and current land supply data suggest that the unincorporated area will have more than enough developable land to accommodate expected growth.

Two different Scenarios were examined to see if there were limitations to the amount of developable land required to accommodate growth in the unincorporated areas of Travis County. Scenario 1 examined the developable acreage remaining if all prioritized land identified in the GreenPrint for Growth was preserved. Scenario 2 looked further and examined the amount of developable land remaining if prime farmland was also conserved in addition to the prioritized lands identified in the GreenPrint for Growth. A third Scenario that included water conservation priority lands was not evaluated and will be finalized in the next draft.

Land requirements to support the population increase from 2012 were calculated for a forecasted 2035 population. To determine the amount of land needed, first an analysis of the land requirements to support the existing 2012 population was performed (see *Figure 4*). The analysis uses Travis County Appraisal District (TCAD) data to identify current land use acreage in the unincorporated

areas of the County. From this data, five land use categories (residential, commercial, industrial, civic, and unclassified) were selected that provide a representation of which parcels are considered developed land. For 2012, it is estimated that 104,846 acres are developed within the unincorporated areas. This equates to approximately .59 acres per person. With an additional 111,706 persons forecasted to reside within the unincorporated area and the acreage requirement for that growth at .59 acres per person, an additional 65,468 acres will be required to accommodate this population growth.

**Figure 4: Land Requirement to Accommodate Population Growth to 2035**

Land Use 2012 (Unincorporated Area)	Unincorporated Acreage 2012	Acreage/ Person 2012	Additional Acreage Required for Pop Increase to 2035	
Residential	73,883	0.41	46,134	
Commercial	16,155	0.09	10,088	
Industrial	478	0.003	298	
Civic	10,196	0.06	6,367	
Unclassified	<u>4,134</u>	<u>0.02</u>	<u>2,581</u>	
Total Developed Area	104,846	0.59	65,468	
2010 Unincorporated Population:				178,895
2035 Forecasted Unincorporated Population:				290,601
Additional Unincorporated Population (2010 – 2035):				111,706

Translating the growth forecasts into demand for land requires assumptions regarding the future density of new developments. Using this type analysis produced a worst case scenario since it would extrapolate a trends based Scenario that is characterized by densities developed from an auto dependent population. It is hoped that the density at which future land is developed will be influenced by policies within this plan which allow more dense development that protects the region’s natural resources.

An analysis of available land for development was completed for the two Scenarios. In Scenario 1, GreenPrint lands that were identified as high priority to be preserved were identified as not to be developed. Within the unincorporated area, 179,840 acres were identified as being developable, meaning land that had no priority for preservation. After removing the amount of acreage required for new growth, approximately 114,000 acres remain or 64% of the estimated 2012 unincorporated developable (unprioritized) acreage (see *Figure 5*).

Scenario 2 provides a more aggressive preservation scenario that includes the GreenPrint high priority lands as well as the Prime Agriculture lands. Within the unincorporated area, 118,400 acres were identified as being developable. After removing the amount of acreage required for the new growth, approximately 53,000 acres remain or 45% of the estimated 2012 unincorporated developable (unprioritized) acreage.

**Figure 5: Unincorporated Developable Land (Unprioritized) Acreage**

	Unincorporated Developable (Unprioritized) Acres 2012	Acreage Required to Accommodate Population Growth to 2035	Unincorporated Developable (Unprioritized) Acreage Remaining 2035	% of Developable (Unprioritized) Acres Remaining after 2035
Scenario 1 - GreenPrint	179,840	65,468	114,372	64%
Scenario 2 – GreenPrint with Prime Agricultural Lands	118,400	65,468	52,932	45%

During the next 25 years, population forecasts and current land supply data suggest that the unincorporated area will have more than enough developable land to accommodate expected growth. It was estimated that new development will require approximately 66,000 acres, which will vary depending on how densely developers build and the implementation of the Centers Growth concept. Developable (unprioritized) land in the unincorporated area totaled between 118,000 to 180,000 acres, depending on the Scenario. The development requirements for the next 25 years result in a surplus of developable land that can adequately accommodate the expected growth to 2035.

## Existing and Future Development

Identifying opportunities and constraints in existing and future development will help determine where growth is occurring and is expected to occur in the future. Within Travis County, development identifiers help focus where lands are susceptible to being developed or may become developed within the planning horizon. Development Activity (see *Map 3*) and Activity Centers and Emerging Development (see *Map 4*) comprise the following development identifiers:

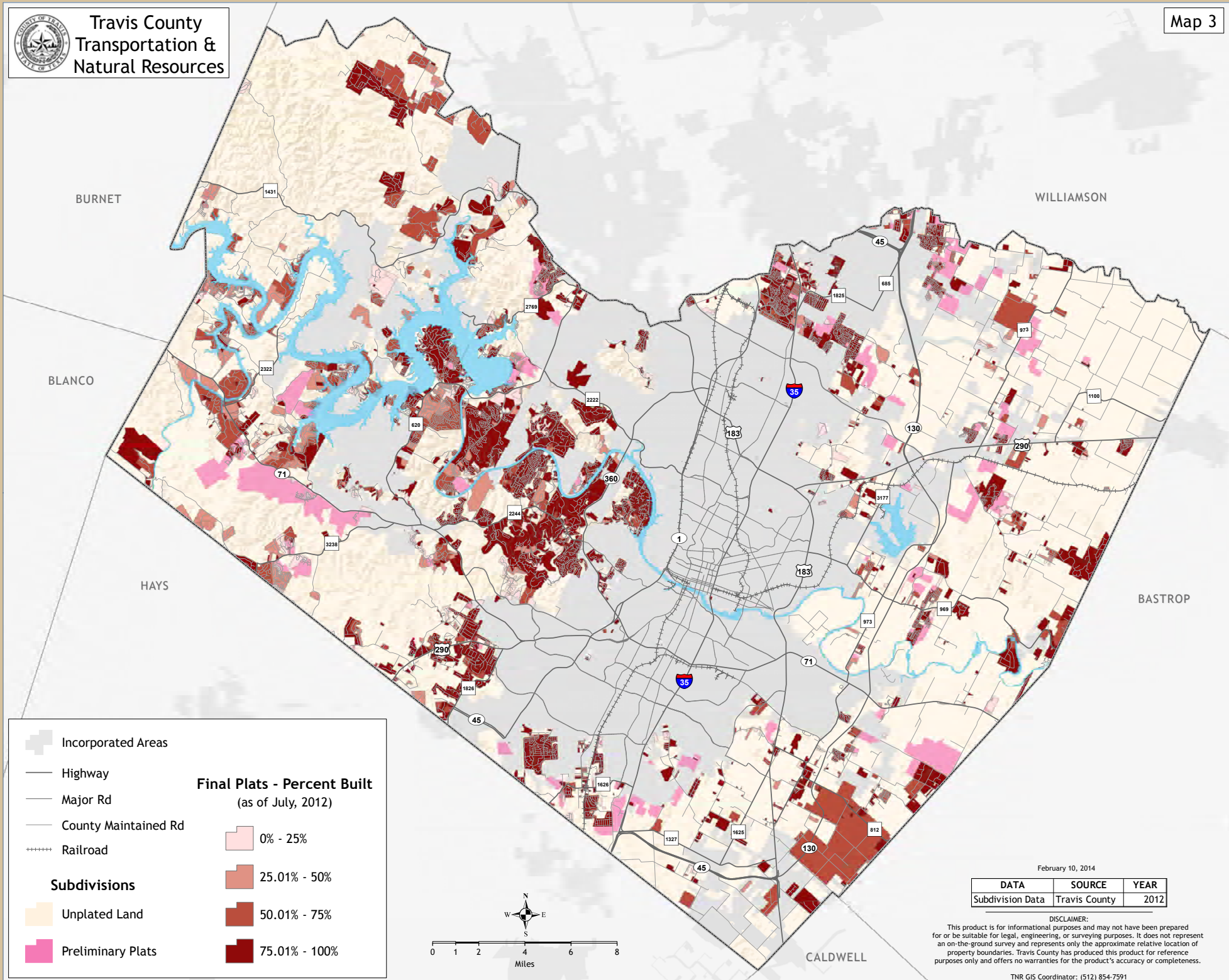
- Final and Preliminary Plat Subdivisions
- Vacant Platted Lot Inventory
- Emerging Projects
- CAMPO Centers
- Growth Along County Boundaries

Final and Preliminary Plat Subdivisions (Map 3): An indicator of where growth will occur is provided through land parcel status in the land development process. Locations of preliminary platted subdivisions, undeveloped platted subdivisions and existing platted subdivisions with vacant lots reveal areas that could more easily receive growth than areas that would need to begin the land development process.

- Directing growth to areas that have existing infrastructure requires less infrastructure investment.
- Northeastern Travis County, much of the preliminary platting is found east of SH 130 abutting the incorporated limits of the City of Pflugerville.
- Southeastern Travis County, large subdivisions that were platted before the 1900's that have large lots that could be re-subdivided.
- Southwestern Travis County, large preliminary plans exist along SH 71 W.
- Western Travis County has more vacant lots in final platted subdivisions than in eastern Travis County. While housing costs may be a large factor in this result, these areas may be more available to new housing starts as the economy rebounds.
- Far Northwestern Travis County shows little subdivision activity. Most activity in the unincorporated area has occurred along FM 1431 in Jonestown.

#### Emerging Development (Map 4)

Emerging projects reveal the beginnings of plans and agreements between developers and local jurisdictions on proposed developments. These type projects usually are more long term, potentially mixed use and are larger scale than normal single family developments.



**Final Plats - Percent Built**  
(as of July, 2012)

- 0% - 25%
- 25.01% - 50%
- 50.01% - 75%
- 75.01% - 100%

**Subdivisions**

- Unplated Land
- Preliminary Plats

**Infrastructure**

- Incorporated Areas
- Highway
- Major Rd
- County Maintained Rd
- Railroad

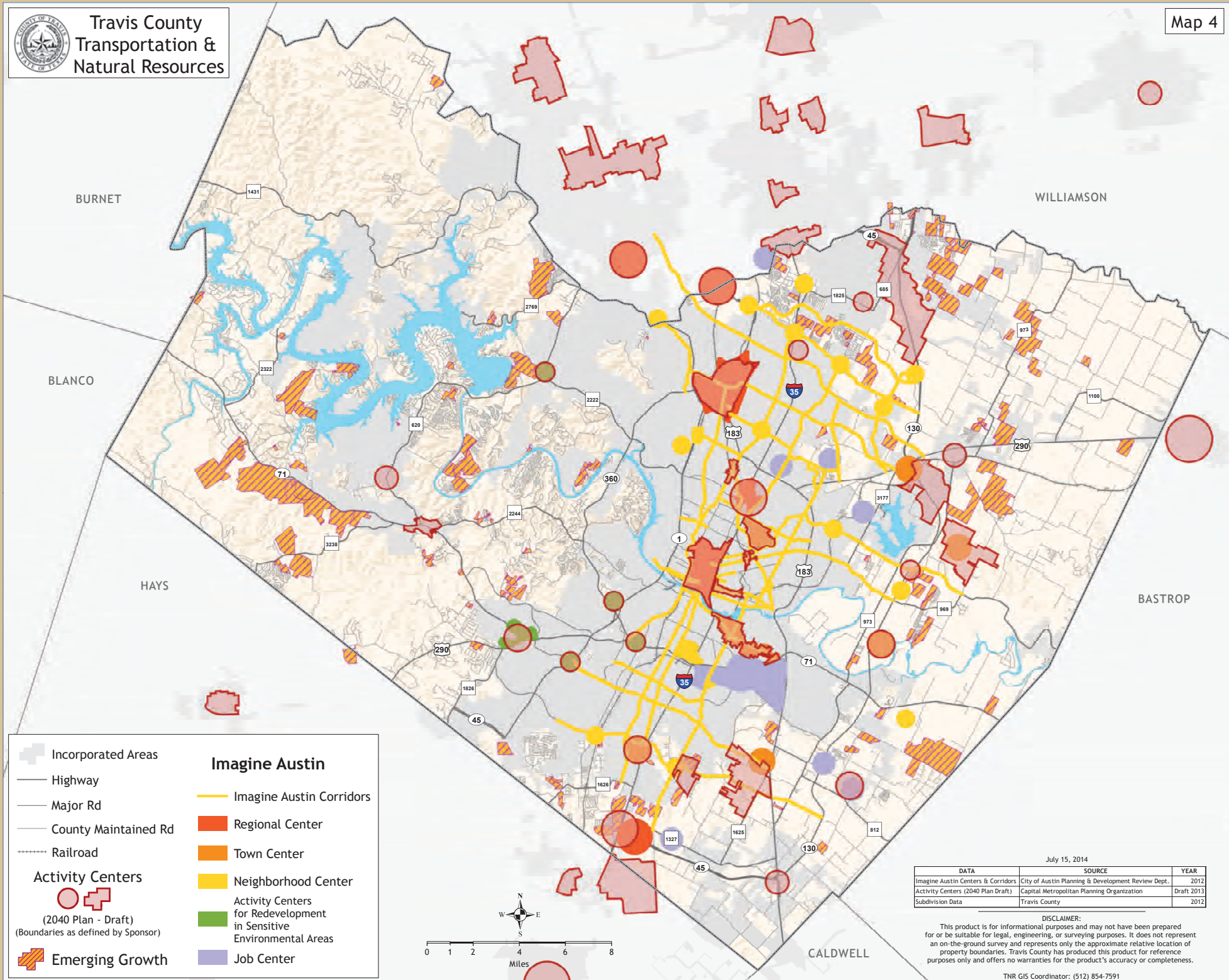


February 10, 2014

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Subdivision Data	Travis County	2012

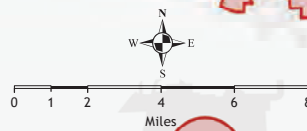
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- Incorporated Areas
- Highway
- Major Rd
- County Maintained Rd
- Railroad
- Activity Centers**
- (2040 Plan - Draft)  
(Boundaries as defined by Sponsor)
- Emerging Growth

- Imagine Austin**
- Imagine Austin Corridors
  - Regional Center
  - Town Center
  - Neighborhood Center
  - Activity Centers for Redevelopment in Sensitive Environmental Areas
  - Job Center



DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Imagine Austin Centers & Corridors	City of Austin Planning & Development Review Dept.	2012
Activity Centers (2040 Plan Draft)	Capital Metropolitan Planning Organization	Draft: 2013
Subdivision Data	Travis County	2012

July 15, 2014

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- Most emerging projects are occurring along the SH 130 corridor and along planned corridors that have proposed public private partnerships.
- Large area of emerging projects identified along SH 130 between US 290 East and FM 969.
- Emerging Projects in southeastern Travis County are adjacent to City of Austin limits except for Southeast Travis County MUDs along Pearce Lane.
- Emerging projects in western Travis County are smaller in size and development intensity.

### *NORTHEAST QUADRANT*

Pflugerville to US 290 E: New growth will be occurring in the City of Pflugerville and its ETJ. This area is expected to see continued growth especially to the east of its incorporated area. Much of this future growth is characterized by single family preliminary plats adjacent to existing residential development in eastern Pflugerville. Current preliminary plats show approximately 3,000 residential units slated for development. Further east, there are large areas of mainly agricultural land that do not show potential for new development to occur and have no emerging projects. These are located mainly northeast of the City of Pflugerville and to some extent east of the SH 130 corridor. South of Pflugerville and west of SH 130, existing large residential developments (Pioneer Crossing and Harris Branch) continue to be developed. Newer residential developments (Cantarra, Entrada and Fossil Creek) have begun and will provide approximately 3,000 residential units at build-out. Just to the east and north of US 290 E, Shadow Glen, a mixed use development will provide another 3,000 units at build-out.

SH 130: Large, mixed use tracts that include single and multi-family residential uses are being planned that access this new transportation corridor that runs mostly in the unincorporated area of the County. South of US 290 East to the Colorado River along the SH 130 corridor is identified as a major future growth area in the next 25 years. The 2,047 acre Whisper Valley PUD is expected to include 4,737 single family homes; 1,451 multi-family units; 231,070 sq. ft. of office space and 429,130 sq. ft. of retail space. Wild Horse PUD, bisected by SH 130 expects to develop over 5,800 residential units and non-residential development that will occupy 6.3 million sq. ft. Additionally, single family residential developments (Eastwood and Wolf Subdivisions) will create just over 3,000 new single family residential units. Another area along Decker Lake Road will see 1,700 single family units and over 1,500 multifamily units developed at the Indian Hills, Lariat B Ranch and Gilbert Lane Subdivisions. In total, approximately 15,200 new single family residential units will be provided in this area.

South of FM 969, the proposed Rio de Vida MUD is shown as a future town center in the City of Austin's comprehensive plan, Imagine Austin. The development currently has no MUD agreement with the City of Austin; however, plans to develop over 8,000 single and multi-family units with commercial and retail uses continue.

### *SOUTHEAST QUADRANT*

Another area of high growth is planned to occur in southeastern Travis County just west of SH 130 along the extensions of Slaughter Lane and William Cannon Drive. Two large mixed-use developments, Goodnight Ranch (Slaughter Lane and Thaxton Road) and Pilot Knob MUD (along future Slaughter Lane and William Cannon Drive west of US 183 S) have just over 19,500 residential units planned.

Additionally, further to the east of SH 130 is the new Formula One (F1) site. While, the project was not included in the current population forecast, the impact on the surrounding area will be dramatic especially in the potential for new job growth. Northeast of the F1 site is another MUD development. Southeast Travis County MUDs propose nearly 4,000 units of single and multifamily residential and additional retail space. Another proposed high growth area lies at the intersection of IH 35 S and SH 45 SE. Sunfield development along the Hays County line is proposing the development of a master planned community of single and multi-family, commercial and light industrial land uses. Also, the City of Austin has identified the area surrounding the intersection as a Regional Center in its Imagine Austin Plan.

A large area of southeast Travis County is shown as final platted and with a majority of those lots developed. However, this was an early plat of large lots. While these lots are shown to be developed, it is possible that new development could occur in this area with the acquisition of lots and a re-subdivision of the properties.

### *SOUTHWEST QUADRANT*

In southwest Travis County, large amounts of land are held as preserve lands and water quality protection lands. These acquisitions have lessened the potential acreage for future development. Areas that are forecasted to see growth in the next 25 years include, the Village of Bee Cave located at RM 620 and SH 71 W along the SH 71 West highway corridor. Just west of Bee Cave, nearly 3,600 residential units are planned at Sweetwater Ranch, Lazy Nine MUD and West Cypress Hills; all take access off of SH 71W. While not a defined center, the City of Lakeway will grow along its southern boundary, west of the new medical center, and along Bee Creek Road. Additionally, at Lake Travis along Bee Creek Road, Vizcaya subdivision is planned for 275 residential lots.

### *NORTHWEST QUADRANT*

A large portion of northwest Travis County is part of the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife refuge. As with southwest Travis County, a large amount of acreage is in preserve and water quality protection lands. Limits to infrastructure and opportunities to develop outside endangered species habitat reduce this quadrant as a high growth area for the future. The cities of Jonestown and Lago Vista show continued growth north of Lake Travis.



### CAMPO Centers (Draft 2040) (Map 4)

The CAMPO Center concept is designed to direct future growth to areas with adequate public facilities including new development alternatives and compact mixed use centers that provide alternative transportation modes making it easier to live work and play. By directing the growth trend from traditional subdivision development to a “centers” type concept, more opportunities become available to provide for parkland, greenways, conservation of prime farmland and allow for sustainable water sources. Locations of existing and proposed centers provide opportunities to evaluate connections between centers and needs for supporting infrastructure.

- Many of existing CAMPO Centers have proposed emerging projects.
- Predominant center locations are in and along SH 130 and proposed transportation corridors.
- City of Austin identified neighborhood centers along northern city limits along proposed corridors.
- Opportunities exist to expand and connect centers in the unincorporated area along transportation corridors.
- Western Travis County has limited center development, connectivity will be problematic.

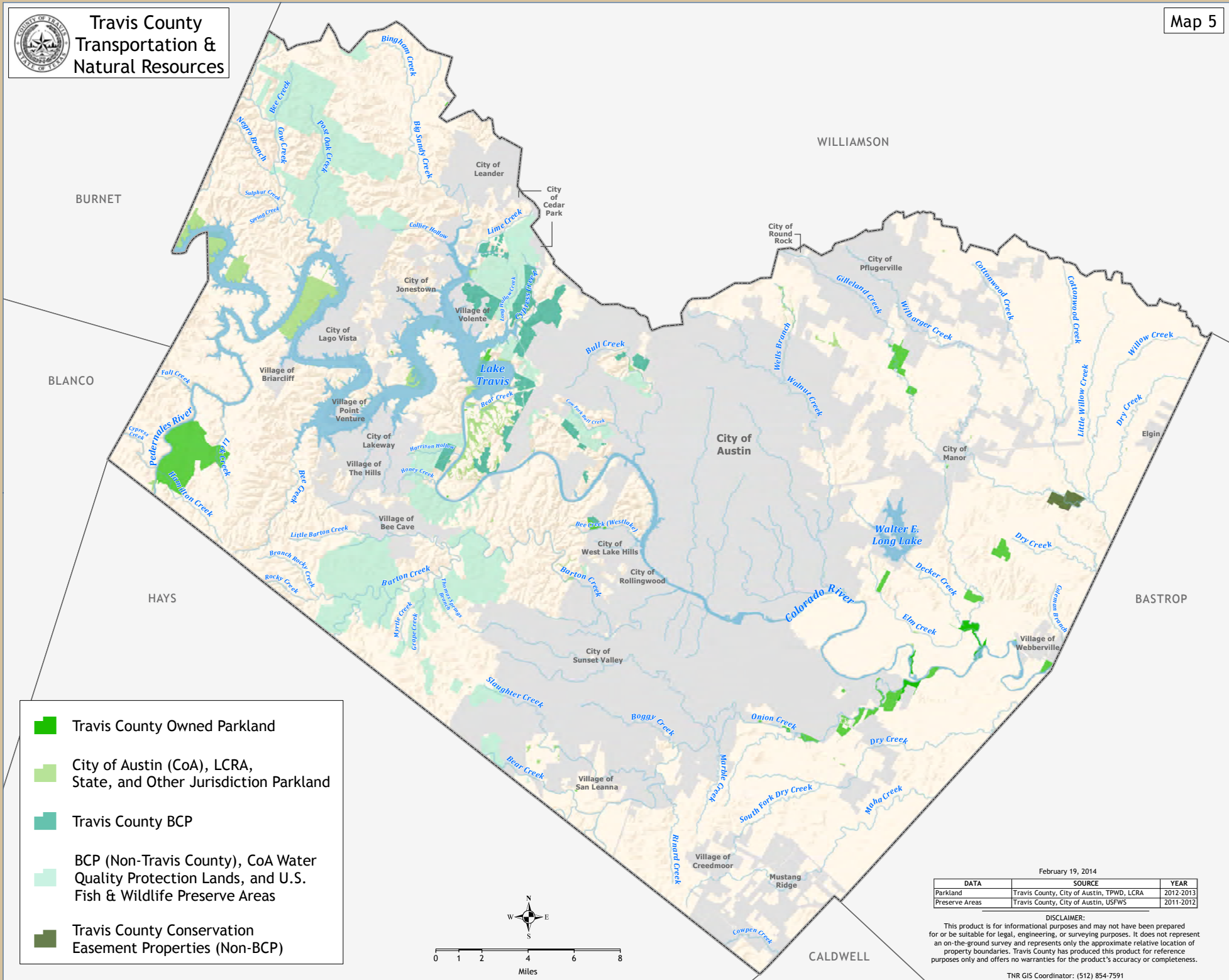
### Growth on County Boundaries

Significant growth will also occur just outside the County’s boundary. In northern Travis County, a medium center (Robinson Ranch) is located west of Burnet Road along SH 45 and will include 10,000 new residential units. In southern Travis County, growth will continue in the Buda and Kyle areas and new development is planned along I-35 at Estancia and the old Heap Ranch.

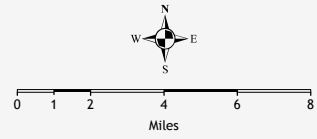
## Land Resources

### *LAND CONSERVED IN UNINCORPORATED TRAVIS COUNTY*

Approximately 60,000 acres, or 14% of unincorporated Travis County, has been conserved as parks, preserves, or conservation easements by Travis County, the State of Texas, Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), and the City of Austin (see *Map 5*). Most of this land has been conserved to protect endangered species habitat, and because this type of habitat is found exclusively west of the Balcones Escarpment, more land has been conserved in western Travis County than eastern: approximately one-quarter of western Travis County is conserved while approximately 2% of eastern Travis County is conserved (see *Figure 6*).



- Travis County Owned Parkland
- City of Austin (CoA), LCRA, State, and Other Jurisdiction Parkland
- Travis County BCP
- BCP (Non-Travis County), CoA Water Quality Protection Lands, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Preserve Areas
- Travis County Conservation Easement Properties (Non-BCP)



February 19, 2014

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Parkland	Travis County, City of Austin, TPWD, LCRA	2012-2013
Preserve Areas	Travis County, City of Austin, USFWS	2011-2012

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Figure 6: Land Conserved in Unincorporated Travis County

UNINCORPORATED TRAVIS COUNTY		LAND CONSERVED BY TRAVIS COUNTY					LAND CONSERVED BY OTHERS (USFW, State, LCRA, Municipalities)					TOTAL CONSERVED LAND	
Area	Acres	Park Acres	Preserve Acres	CE Acres	Total Acres	Land Area Conserved	Park Acres	Preserve Acres	CE Acres	Total Acres	Land Area Conserved	Acres	Land Area Conserved
NE	122,333	1,607	0	531	2,139	1.7%	132	0	0	132	0.1%	2,271	1.9%
SE	62,970	1,107	0	0	1,107	1.8%	16	0	0	16	0.0%	1,123	1.8%
SW	127,912	3,532	403	0	3,935	3.1%	2,663	18,875	0	21,538	16.8%	25,473	19.9%
NW	105,446	203	5,346	0	5,549	5.3%	3,789	20,430	0	24,219	23.0%	29,767	28.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>418,662</b>	<b>6,450</b>	<b>5,749</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>12,729</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>6,600</b>	<b>39,305</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>45,905</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>58,635</b>	<b>14.0%</b>

Note 1: "LAND CONSERVED BY TRAVIS COUNTY" includes Travis County-owned land that either a) is in unincorporated Travis County, b) has at least 15% of its area in unincorporated Travis County, or c) is adjacent to county-owned land in unincorporated Travis County.

Note 2: Northeast (NE), southeast (SE), southwest (SW), and northwest (NW) geographic areas are defined east-west by IH 35 and north-south by the centerline of the Colorado River.

Note 3: Balcones Canyonland Preserve or City of Austin water quality protection conservation easements are included in the "Preserve Acres" category. Other types of conservation easements are included in the "CE Acres" category.

### TRAVIS COUNTY'S ROLE

The County plays a significant role in conserving land in unincorporated Travis County: it has conserved approximately one-half of all parkland in the area; and contributes to the preserve inventory as a holder of Balcones Canyonland Preserve (BCP) land. More recently, the county has taken on the role – and is the only governmental entity doing so – of executing conservation easements not specifically intended to protect endangered species habitat or water quality (see *Figure 7*).

Figure 7: Travis County’s Role in Conserving Land in Unincorporated Travis County

PROVIDER	PARKS		PRESERVES		CONSERVATION EASEMENTS		TOTAL	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
Travis County	6,450	49%	6,600	14%	531	100%	13,581	23%
Other	6,600	51%	39,305	86%	0	0%	45,905	77%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,050</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>45,905</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>59,486</b>	<b>100%</b>

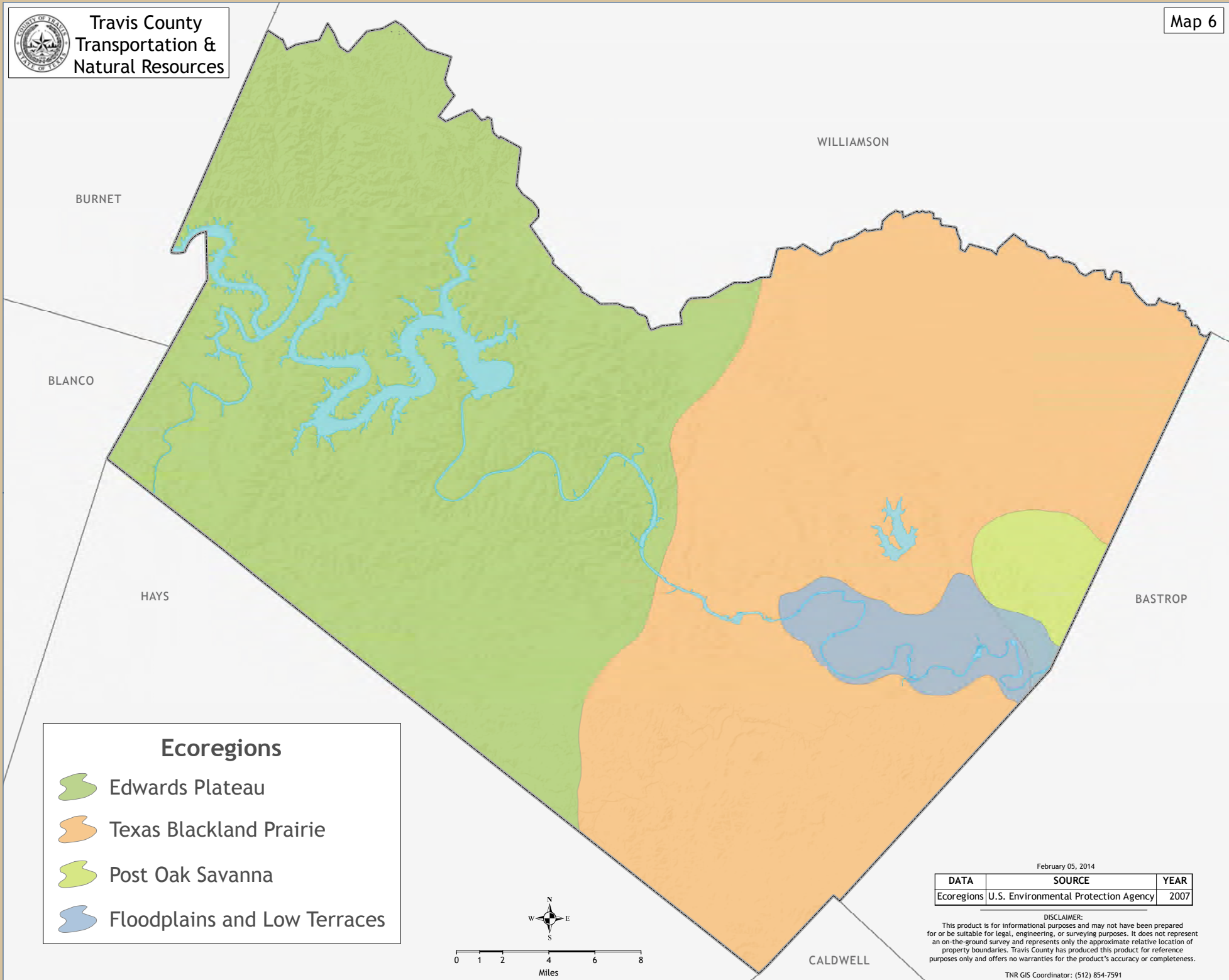
### CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Travis County has opportunities to conserve resources that have critical natural functions and that are integral to the rural character of the county. It has diverse ecoregions, prime farmland, threatened and endangered species habitat, and floodplains.





### ECOREGIONS

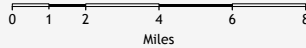
An ecoregion is an area of similar ecosystems identified through the analysis of the patterns and composition of biological communities and physical characteristics such as geology, climate, soils, land use, and hydrology. Travis County is an unusual Texas county because it has four ecoregions and rich ecological diversity that is not found in most other Texas counties. The four ecoregions are the Edwards Plateau, Texas Blackland Prairie, East Central Plains (hereafter referred to as Post Oak Savanna), and Floodplains and Low Terraces (see *Map 6*). Ecoregions, per se, have not been identified for conservation in previous County plans.

Edwards Plateau: The Edwards Plateau ecoregion is found in western Travis County. It is highly dissected by erosion and solution of porous limestone by springs, streams, and rivers both above and below ground. Its limestone geology also supports formation of crevices, cracks, sinkholes, caverns and grottos known as “karst” that provide vulnerable habitats for solitary and colonial bats, unique isolated invertebrates, and colonial birds like swifts and swallows. Karst also provides conduit for surface waters to reach the Edwards and Edwards–Trinity aquifers and for artesian groundwater to surface as springs. This portion of the Plateau in Travis County, i.e., the Balcones Canyonlands, has a higher representation of deciduous woodland than elsewhere on the Plateau, with plateau live oak, escarpment black cherry, Texas mountain-laurel, madrone, and Lacey oak.



**Ecoregions**

-  Edwards Plateau
-  Texas Blackland Prairie
-  Post Oak Savanna
-  Floodplains and Low Terraces



February 05, 2014

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Ecoregions	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	2007

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Mature, large Ashe juniper – known locally as “cedar” – within mixed hardwood woodlands are also found in deep canyons. Some remnants of eastern swamp communities, including bald cypress, American sycamore, and black willow, occur along major stream courses. It is likely that these trees have persisted as relics of moister, cooler climates following the Pleistocene glacial epoch. Elevations in Travis County drop sharply from the top of the Plateau off the eastern edge of the Escarpment to the Blackland Prairies.

Texas Blackland Prairie: The Texas Blackland Prairie ecoregion is found in eastern Travis County. It is underlain by Upper Cretaceous marine chinks, marls, limestones, and shales which give rise to the characteristic black, calcareous, alkaline, heavy clay soils. Early settlers were drawn to this region by these productive soils, gentle topography, and luxuriant native grasslands. Although historically a region of tall-grass prairies, today much of the land is devoted to cropland, non-native pasture, and expanding urban uses. Few remnant native prairie sites remain. Historical vegetation was dominated by little bluestem, big bluestem, yellow Indiangrass, needlegrass, and tall dropseed. Woody vegetation including mesquite, sugar hackberry, cedar elm, Osage orange, and other woody species grow along fence lines and field borders. On steep or sloping terrains not subject to cultivation, it is common to find eastern red cedar, Ashe juniper, Texas persimmon, elbowbush, possumhaw holly, and live oak<sup>1</sup>. Stream bottoms may be wooded with bur oak, Shumard oak, elm, ash, eastern cottonwood, and pecan.

Post Oak Savanna: The Post Oak Savanna ecoregion is found in far eastern Travis County, starting a transition zone between the Texas Blackland Prairie and east Texas pine forests, changing in small ways in soils, vegetation, plant communities, fish and wildlife. It is gently rolling to hilly, supporting a mosaic of woodlands mixed with prairie pockets, and cross-cutting streams. The dominant vegetation is an open deciduous forest or woodland of post oak, blackjack oak, and other drought-tolerant southeastern species. The Post Oak Savanna represents the southernmost extension of the transitional oak forests that separate the eastern United States and the Great Plains.

Floodplains and Low Terraces: The Floodplains and Low Terraces ecoregion is found along the Colorado River corridor in eastern Travis County. While there are many finer-scale floodplains (e.g. Onion Creek, Pedernales River) in our county, the Floodplains and Low Terraces is a larger category floodplain following the mainstem Colorado River. This ecoregion maps primarily the recent alluvial deposits and not the older, high terraces. These bottomland forests contain bur oak, Shumard oak, sugar hackberry, elm, ash, eastern cottonwood, and pecan; however, most of these forests have been converted to cropland and pasture.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/habitats/cross\\_timbers/ecoregions/blackland.phtml](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/land/habitats/cross_timbers/ecoregions/blackland.phtml)

**PRIME FARMLAND**

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines prime farmland as having the combination of soil properties, growing season, and moisture supply to produce sustained, high yields of food, forage, and fiber crops if managed according to acceptable farming methods. In Travis County, almost all prime farmland is found in eastern Travis County (Map 6). It is valued for its agricultural productivity and rural character. Its conservation has been previously identified as a priority in Travis County’s Parks Master Plan, Conservation Subdivision Ordinance, and the Colorado River Corridor Plan (CRCP). More recently, Travis County partnered with the USDA to conserve prime farmland through the federal Farms and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP).

**THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES HABITAT**

An endangered species is a population of organisms which is at risk of becoming extinct because it is very limited in range, few in numbers, and/or threatened by environmental conditions such as habitat loss, predation, or disease. In Travis County, several bird, aquatic, and cave-dwelling species are federally listed as threatened or endangered (see *Figure 8*). Of these, two endangered song birds and six endangered karst invertebrates are protected under the Balcones Canyonland Conservation Plan (BCCP)<sup>2</sup>. Although not protected under the BCCP, several rare salamander species that inhabit Travis County were recently federally listed as threatened or endangered species: the Barton Springs salamander (*Eurycea sosorum*) and Austin Blind salamander (*Eurycea waterlooensis*) are listed as endangered and the Jollyville Plateau salamander (*Eurycea tonkawae*) is listed as threatened.

**Figure 8: Threatened and Endangered Species in Travis County**

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Vireo atricapillus</i>	Black-Capped vireo
<i>Setophaga chrysoparia</i>	Golden-Cheeked warbler
<i>Neoleptoneta myopica</i>	Tooth Cave spider
<i>Texella reddelli</i>	Bee Creek Cave harvestman
<i>Texella reyesi</i>	Bone Cave harvestman
<i>Tartarocreagris texana</i>	Tooth Cave pseudoscorpion
<i>Rhadine persephone</i>	Tooth Cave ground beetle
<i>Texamaurops reddelli</i>	Kretschmarr Cave mold beetle
<i>Eurycea sosorum</i>	Barton Springs salamander
<i>Eurycea waterlooensis</i>	Austin Blind salamander
<i>Eurycea tonkawae</i>	Jollyville Plateau salamander

<sup>2</sup> In 1996, the USFWS issued a 10 (a) “incidental take” permit to Travis County and the City of Austin authorizing the implementation of the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (BCCP) thereby providing a method for landowners to develop their property by mitigating impact of their land use activities on protected endangered species.



BURNET

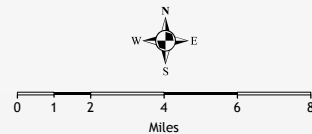
WILLIAMSON

BLANCO

HAYS

BASTROP

 Prime Farmland



January 22, 2014

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Soils	USDA National Resources Conservation Service	2002

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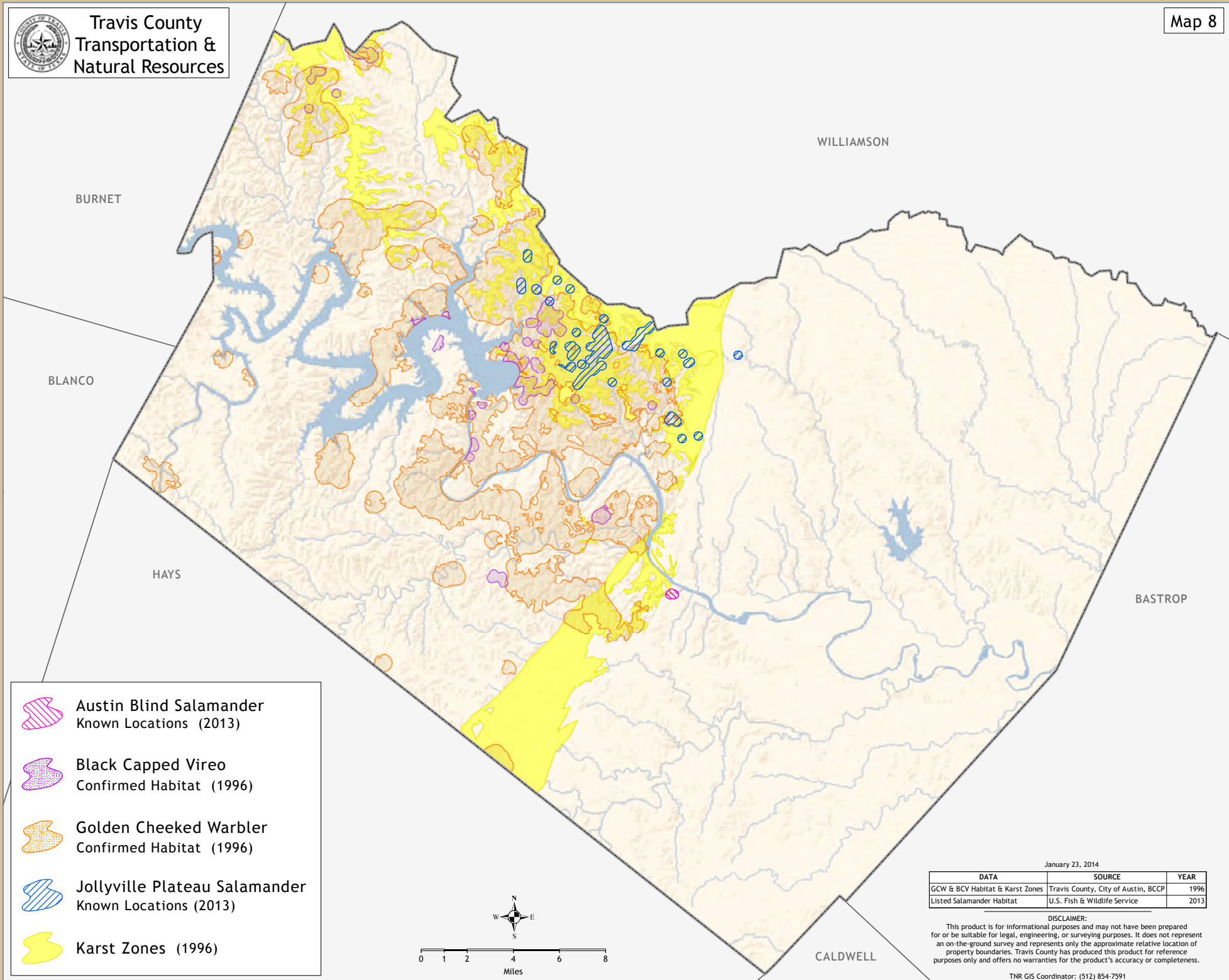
CALDWELL



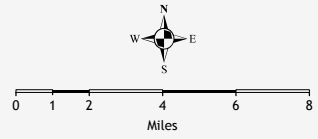
As shown on *Map 8*, known habitat for threatened and endangered species is found in the western half of Travis County. The Barton Springs and Austin Blind salamanders are confined to the outlets at Barton Springs near central Austin; the Jollyville Plateau salamander lives primarily in the springs and streams of northwest Travis County; habitat for cave-dwelling species is found in the areas of outcrop of the Edwards Limestone running north-south through the county and northwest along the Williamson County boundary; and areas where, as of 1996, there have been confirmed sightings of Golden-Cheeked warblers and Black-Capped vireos are concentrated in north-central part of the county but scattered throughout western Travis County. The Balcones Canyonland Conservation Plan (BCCP) obligates Travis County to conserve endangered species habitat covered by the plan and protect other non-BCCP protected species as required by the Endangered Species Act passed by Congress in 1973.

### **FLOODPLAINS**

The largest expanses of floodplain are found in eastern Travis County, along the Colorado River and its tributaries (see *Map 9*). As transitional zones between waterways and uplands, these areas play an important role in attenuating polluted runoff, maximizing groundwater recharge and storage, and mitigating storm water damage. In their proper functioning condition, that is, vegetated with bottomland forest, grassland, riparian, and upland species, their natural benefits are most pronounced. In Travis County, these benefits have been compromised through the historic clearing of land for timber and farming, the damming of the Colorado River, and, most recently, land use changes associated with development, road construction, and aggregate mining of alluvial deposits. Conserving floodplains along the Colorado River and its tributaries are high priorities in the *Parks Master Plan*, the *Trust for Public Lands Travis County Greenprint for Growth*, and *Colorado River Corridor Plan (CRCP)*.



-  Austin Blind Salamander  
Known Locations (2013)
-  Black Capped Vireo  
Confirmed Habitat (1996)
-  Golden Cheeked Warbler  
Confirmed Habitat (1996)
-  Jollyville Plateau Salamander  
Known Locations (2013)
-  Karst Zones (1996)

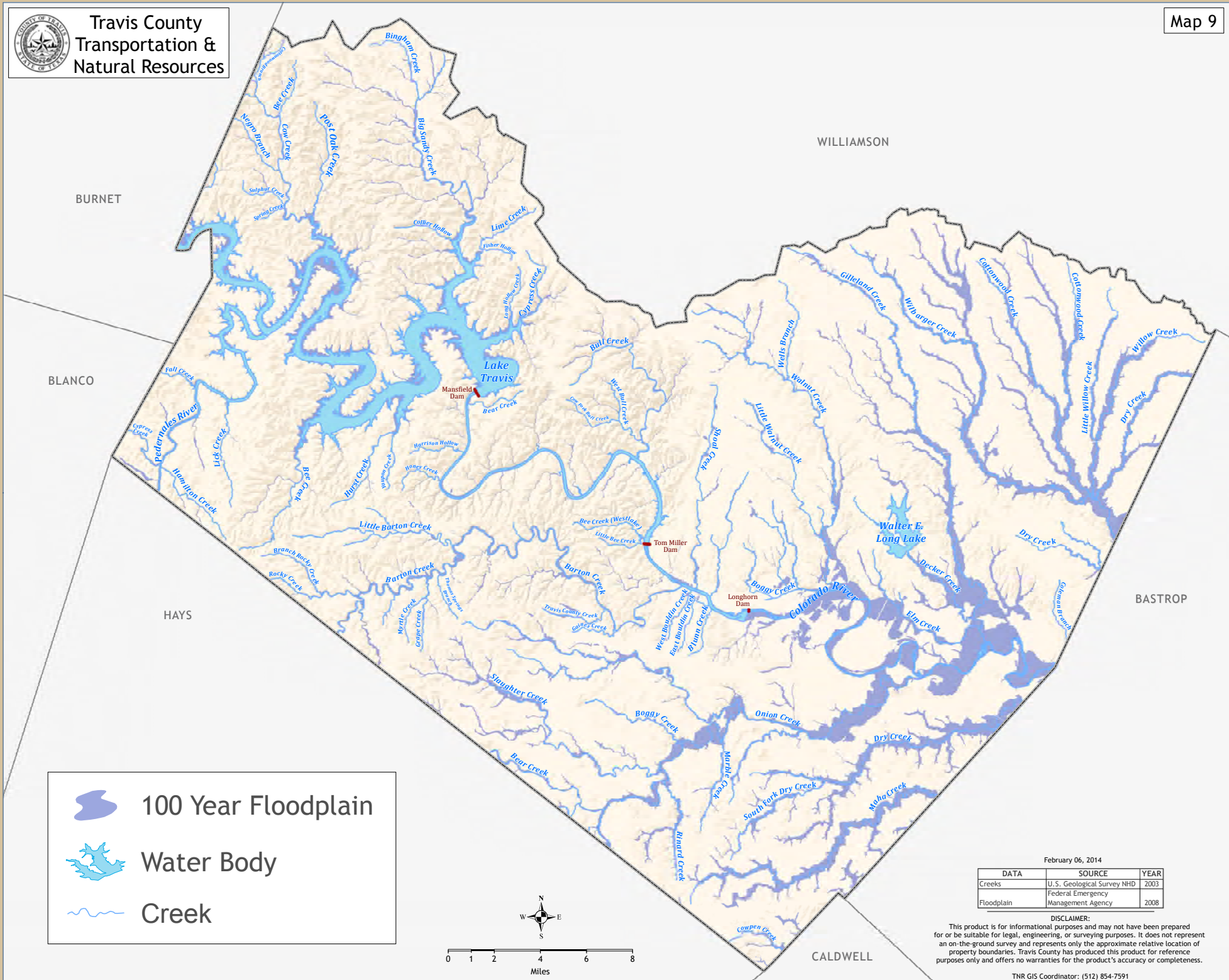





January 23, 2014

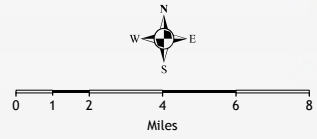
DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
GCW & BCV Habitat & Karst Zones	Travis County, City of Austin, BCCP	1996
Listed Salamander Habitat	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	2013

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Threatened & Endangered Species Habitat



-  100 Year Floodplain
-  Water Body
-  Creek



February 06, 2014

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Creeks	U.S. Geological Survey NHD	2003
Floodplain	Federal Emergency Management Agency	2008

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## Water Resources

Unincorporated Travis County has significant water resources that need to be protected for ecological purposes and domestic, agricultural, recreational, commercial, and industrial uses. Surface water resources include Lake Travis and its tributaries and the Colorado River and its tributaries (see Map 9). Groundwater resources include the Trinity and Edwards outcrop regions in western Travis County and the Colorado River Alluvial Aquifer in eastern Travis County (see *Map 10*). Springs are also found throughout the county (see *Map 11*).

### *LAKE TRAVIS AND TRIBUTARIES*

Lake Travis is formed by the impoundment of the Colorado River at Mansfield Dam and is the most significant reservoir on the river because of its tremendous water storage capacity. It is a primary source of fresh water for communities and major industries throughout Travis County and helps drive the area's strong economy and population growth. It also is a major recreational resource that is estimated to generate, when full, approximately \$200 million in revenue for state and local governments. The Pedernales River is the largest tributary to Lake Travis in the county. As of April 2013, in its Current Water Quality Report, the LCRA rated both Lake Travis and the Pedernales River as having "excellent" water. Bee Creek, Cow Creek, Cypress Creek, Hurst Creek, and Sandy Creek are major creek tributaries of the lake.

### *COLORADO RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES*

The Colorado River provides water for local residential, agricultural, and commercial uses but it's also a source of water for the City of Pflugerville in the northern part of the county. Major tributaries are Onion Creek, with a watershed of approximately 343 square miles, and Gilleland Creek. The water quality of the Colorado River at Austin was rated "fair" in the LCRA's April 2013 Current Water Quality Report.

### *EDWARDS OUTCROP*

The Edwards Outcrop is an environmentally important recharge zone allowing fresh water to replenish the Edwards Aquifer. Much of it is located within incorporated parts of the county, however, so Travis County has limited responsibility for its protection.

### *TRINITY OUTCROP*

The Trinity Outcrop, west of the Edwards Outcrop, allows fresh water to percolate downward into the Trinity Aquifer that is the main source of well-water for both public and private users in unincorporated western Travis County. Its supply is threatened, however, by increased consumption by a growing population and limited recharge of its supply as multi-year droughts continue. This

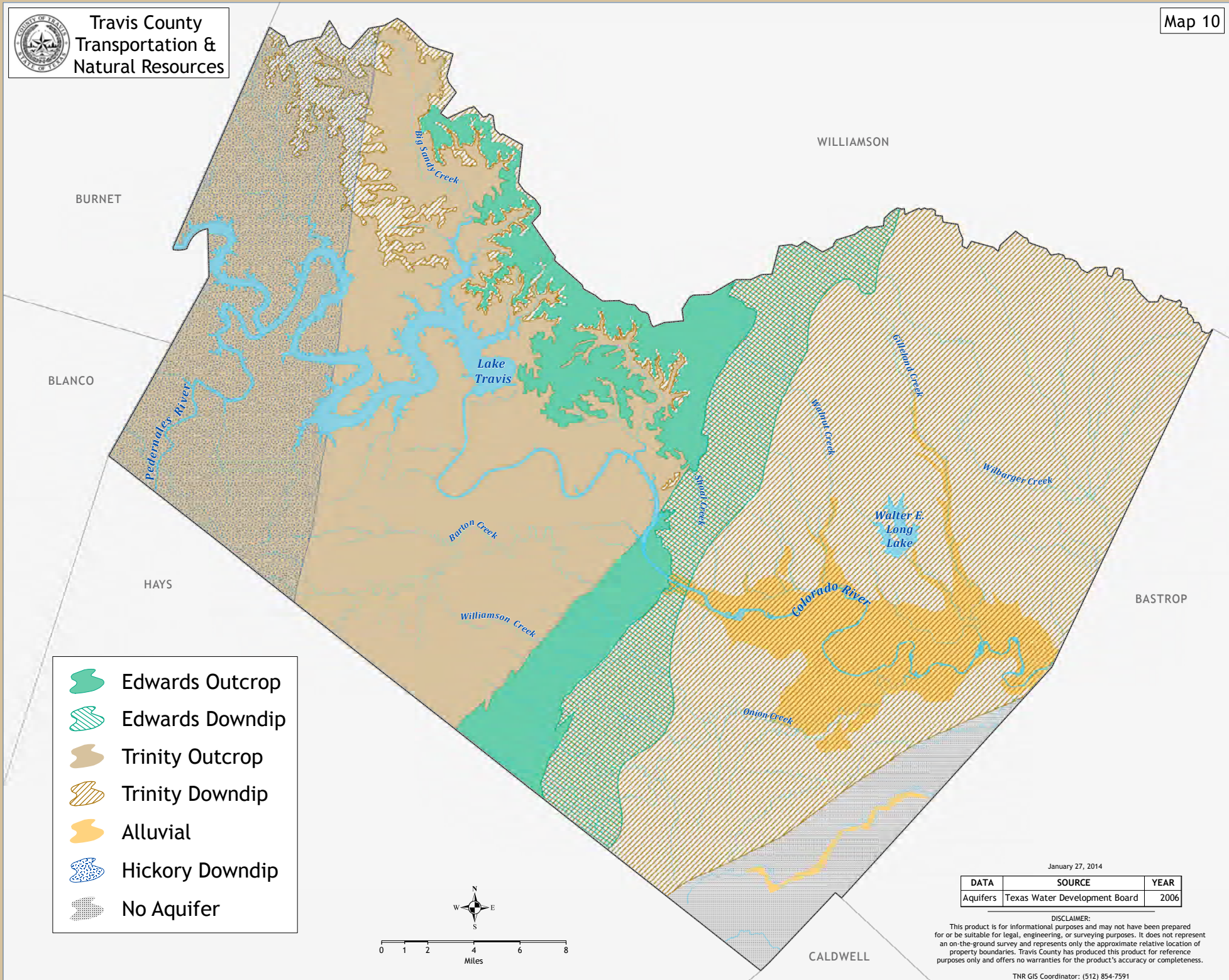
situation was so dire that in October 2010, the Travis County Commissioners Court suspended approval of subdivisions using Trinity Aquifer groundwater and created a stakeholder committee to develop new subdivision regulations regarding water availability. The Commissioners Court subsequently adopted the Water Availability Rule in January 2012 thereby requiring a subdivider of land to demonstrate that a sound and adequate source of water is available commensurate with projected population demand.

#### *COLORADO RIVER ALLUVIAL AQUIFER*

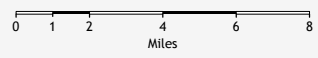
The Colorado River Alluvium is the only fresh groundwater supply east of the Edwards artesian zone in eastern Travis County. It is a locally important public and private well-water supply but its small size and limited capacity cannot support growth in that area. The quality of its water is already degraded in some locations due to elevated nitrate levels and is further threatened by polluted runoff from agriculture and aggregate mining operations.

#### *SPRINGS*

Springs are locations where groundwater naturally comes to the surface. They are found throughout Travis County. Many are protected as part of the Balcones Canyonland Preserve (BCP) but unprotected areas of concentrated springs are found in the Post Oak Savanna region of eastern Travis County and in the vicinity of Hamilton Creek and Hamilton Pool in southwest Travis County.



-  Edwards Outcrop
-  Edwards Dwndip
-  Trinity Outcrop
-  Trinity Dwndip
-  Alluvial
-  Hickory Dwndip
-  No Aquifer

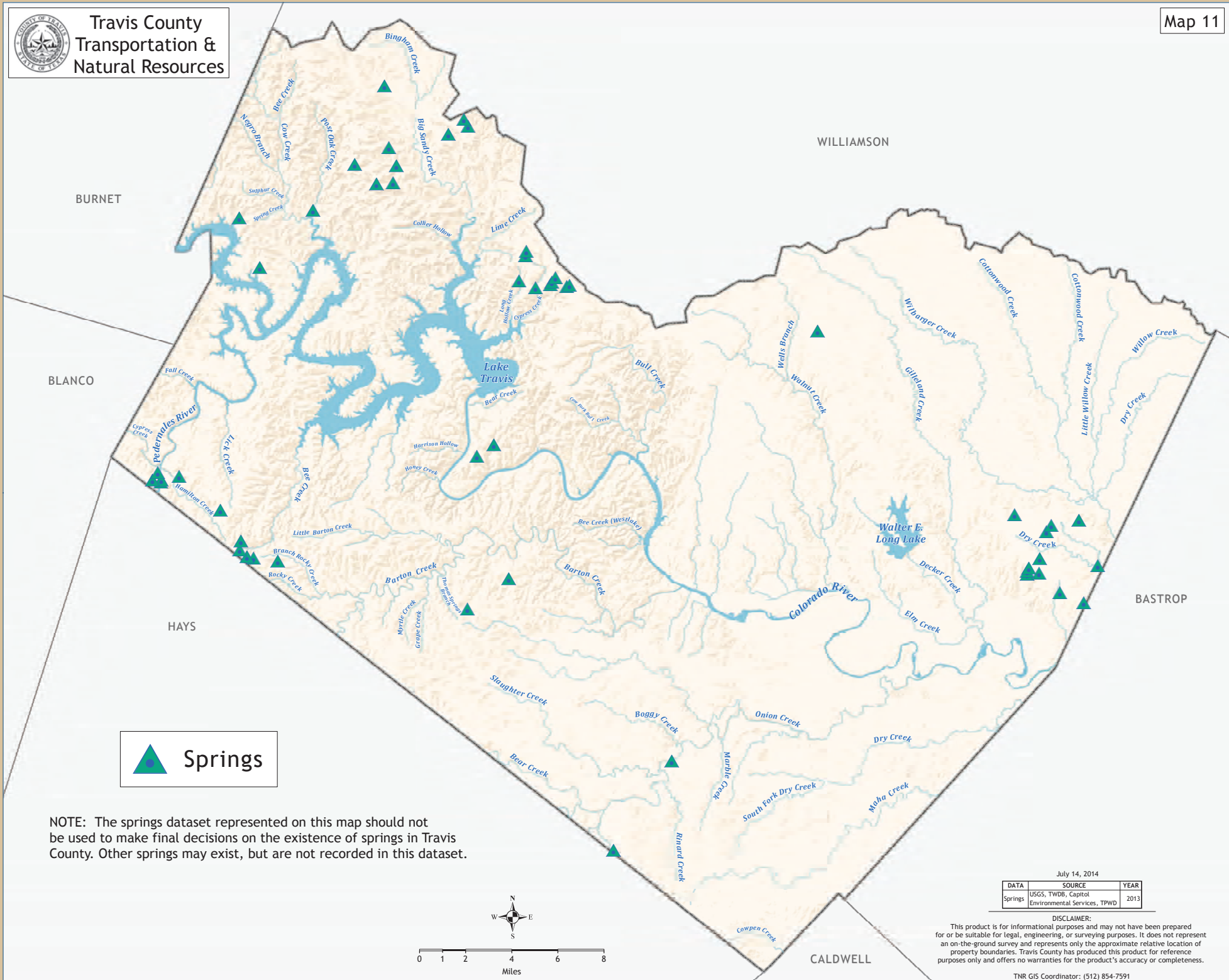



January 27, 2014

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Aquifers	Texas Water Development Board	2006

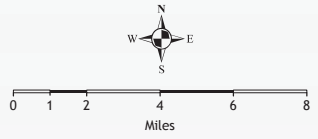
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 Springs

NOTE: The springs dataset represented on this map should not be used to make final decisions on the existence of springs in Travis County. Other springs may exist, but are not recorded in this dataset.



DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Springs	USGS, TWDB, Capital Environmental Services, TPWD	2013

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## Opportunities and Challenges

For LWTP purposes, unincorporated Travis County is divided into areas that have similar development patterns and land and water characteristics and, subsequently, similar opportunities and challenges with respect to how the County guides growth and conserves land. The specific “Opportunities-Challenge Areas” (see *Map 12*) discussed in this section are as follows:

- SH 130 North Growth Corridor
- SH 130 South Growth Corridor
- Rural Northeast Travis County
- Colorado River Corridor
- Rural Southwest Travis County
- Lake Travis
- Rural Northwest Travis County
- Balcones Canyonlands

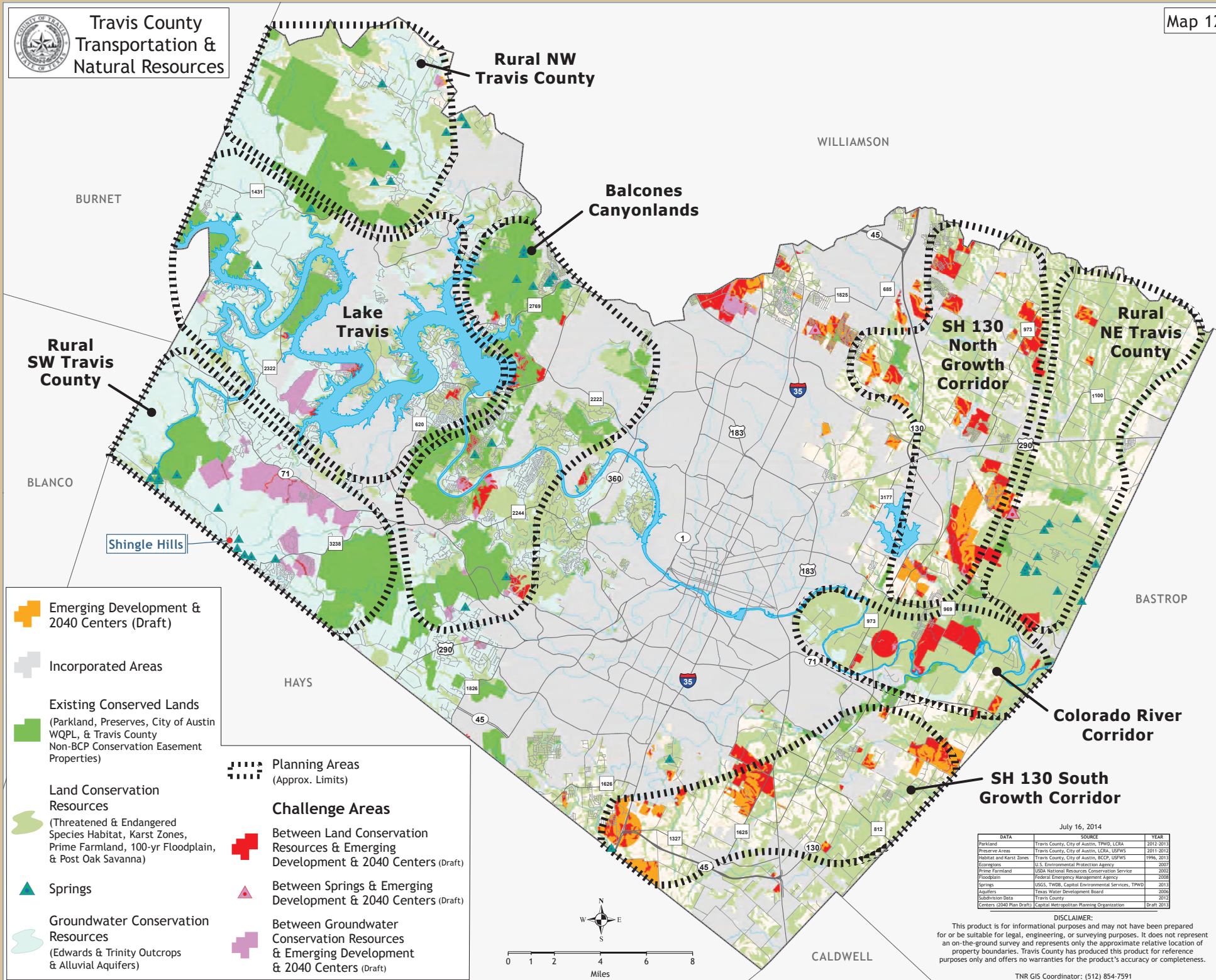
### SH 130 North Growth Corridor (Precinct 1)

The SH 130 North Growth Corridor is a crescent-shaped area that roughly follows the alignment of SH 130 and extends from Williamson County to FM 969. Most of the corridor is located within the municipal and ETJ boundaries of the cities of Austin, Manor, and Pflugerville.

High Growth Area: Construction of SH 130 and SH45 toll roads and the availability of developable land are spurring growth in this area. Numerous single-family and multi-family subdivisions have been developed; and the number of plans for large, mixed-use developments is making this one of the potentially most concentrated area of new growth in unincorporated Travis County. Tremendous growth continues in the region. Forbes magazine estimated Austin’s population growth at 2.5 percent in 2013 making it the highest of all geographic regions in the country. The City of Austin’s demographer estimates that this growth equates to 110 new residents moving into the Austin Metro area each day. The potential location of this new growth is shown through the numerous emerging projects identified along the corridor. These future projects have estimates of nearly 80,000 new residential units along the corridor.

Need Private Sector Investments in Infrastructure: The city of Austin views the corridor as a suitable place for dense, mixed-use development in their Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). However, much of the area requires infrastructure investments to support





Emerging Development & 2040 Centers (Draft)

Incorporated Areas

Existing Conserved Lands  
(Parkland, Preserves, City of Austin WQPL, & Travis County Non-BCP Conservation Easement Properties)

Land Conservation Resources  
(Threatened & Endangered Species Habitat, Karst Zones, Prime Farmland, 100-yr Floodplain, & Post Oak Savanna)

Springs

Groundwater Conservation Resources  
(Edwards & Trinity Outcrops & Alluvial Aquifers)

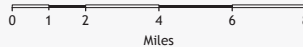
Planning Areas  
(Approx. Limits)

**Challenge Areas**

Between Land Conservation Resources & Emerging Development & 2040 Centers (Draft)

Between Springs & Emerging Development & 2040 Centers (Draft)

Between Groundwater Conservation Resources & Emerging Development & 2040 Centers (Draft)



July 16, 2014

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Parkland	Travis County, City of Austin, TPWD, LCRA	2012-2013
Preserve Areas	Travis County, City of Austin, LCRA, USFWS	2011-2012
Habitat and Karst Zones	Travis County, City of Austin, BCCP, USFWS	1996, 2013
Ecoregions	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	2005
Prime Farmland	USDA National Resources Conservation Service	2002
Floodplain	Federal Emergency Management Agency	2006
Springs	USGS, TPWD, Capital Environmental Services, TPWD	2013
Aquifers	Texas Water Development Board	2006
Subdivision Data	Travis County	2012
Centers (2040 Plan Draft)	Capital Metropolitan Planning Organization	Draft 2011

**DISCLAIMER:**  
This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries. Travis County has produced this product for reference purposes only and offers no warranties for the product's accuracy or completeness.

TNR GIS Coordinator: (512) 854-7591

the intensity of the development proposed. In 2006, the City of Austin completed a study looking at the creation of an infrastructure district to fund needed water transmission lines, major wastewater collection lines, arterial roadway improvements and regional drainage facilities along the corridor. The study, however, found that the costs of the required infrastructure exceeded the district's forecasted revenues, requiring the city to finance the difference. Because the city was unwilling to take on this debt, a district was not established, and large scale infrastructure investments have not been made. While the city was unwilling to assume debt to build the infrastructure required for mixed-use development, improvements are being financed through other means: Municipal Utility Districts (MUDs), Public Improvement Districts (PIDs), and partnerships to an extent not seen elsewhere in unincorporated Travis County.

Current planning continues to point to this area as a “desired” area for growth in that the City of Austin's comprehensive plan, *Imagine Austin*, promotes a compact and connected city by directing development away from sensitive environmental resources, and protects existing open space and natural resources. Much of the future growth areas found on the City of Austin's Growth Concept Map follow along the SH 130 corridor.

Arterial Roadways Improved: Travis County and City of Austin have been investing in arterial roadway infrastructure to facilitate mobility within the corridor. Improvements are planned or already completed for Pecan Street, Howard Lane, Wells Branch Parkway, Parmer Lane, Braker Lane, and Decker Lake Road to improve connections to SH 130 and movement within the corridor. Additionally, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) is completing toll improvements to US 290 E from US 183 to the east of Parmer Lane. Once completed, the Manor Expressway will be a 6.2-mile limited-access toll road with three lanes in each direction. The existing US 290 E will be widened and will remain non-tolled. As these new improvements provide for more mobility, it is expected that development will occur along these arterials as other types of infrastructure are provided.

Development Outpaces Prime Farmland Conservation: This is the part of the county where the most development is occurring and where there is a corresponding loss of farmland. There are still opportunities to protect this resource, however, through conservation developments (in accordance with the County's Conservation Subdivision Ordinance) and conservation easements.

Land Conserved through Parkland Acquisition: Of the land conserved in the corridor, most of it is done so through parkland acquisition: the County has purchased approximately 1,000 acres since 1995 for Northeast Metro Park near Pflugerville and the Gilleland Creek Greenway that runs the length of the corridor. Most of the land is obtained through fee simple purchase, but a significant amount is gained through landowner dedications required by the County and City of Austin's parkland dedication

ordinances. In some cases, the dedications exceed the amount required by the ordinance because developers appreciate the marketability of having greenways adjacent to their subdivisions as well as the savings realized from not having to maintain the property or pay taxes on the land.

Creek Corridor Potential: Wilbarger Creek is a major creek with corridor potential. It connects cities of Pflugerville and Manor. Like the Gilleland Creek Greenway, it can serve multiple purposes: recreation, wildlife corridor, groundwater recharge, flood mitigation, and water quality mitigation.

#### SH 130 South Growth Corridor (Precinct 4)

The SH 130/45SE Southeast Growth Corridor is separated from the northern crescent by the Colorado River Corridor. As with the northern corridor, the Southeast Growth Corridor follows the approximate alignment of SH 130 and includes SH 45 SE. Most of the corridor is located within the municipal and ETJ bounds of the cities of Austin, Mustang Ridge and Creedmoor.

Development is Imminent: The SH 130 South Growth Corridor has less proposed new development than the northern part of the corridor. However, with the Circuit of the Americas track located in this area, and availability of suitable land for development, it is expected that growth will occur at the same levels as seen in the northern part of the corridor. This new development is already being realized through the creation of the 1,600 acre Southeast Travis County MUD planned along Pearce Lane. The municipal utility district will be able to tax residents so that water, sewage, drainage and other infrastructure can be developed. The development will be predominately single family residential. Another sizeable planned development is the Pilot Knob MUD's located near the intersection of US 183 S and FM 1625. Approximately 14,500 residences and 3.8 million square feet of commercial space is planned to be developed over the next 40 years. Further west, surrounding the intersection of IH 35 S and SH 45 SE are the proposed Sunfield and Estancia developments. These large mixed use developments are proposed to add approximately 20,000 and 8,000 residential units respectively within the corridor.

Arterial Roadways Improved: Since the opening of SH 130, Travis County has invested in roadway infrastructure to make connections to the toll road through improvements to Slaughter Lane, William Cannon Drive and Elroy Road. Improvements have also been made to provide better access to the residents living in the Del Valle and Elroy communities. Court approved funding of a new road, Maha Loop Road, will provide increased connectivity to SH 71 E and additional access to Del Valle School facilities and the Circuit of the Americas site.

Land Conserved through Parkland Acquisition: As in the northern part of the corridor, land has been conserved through parkland acquisition: the County has acquired approximately 1,235 acres since 1995 for the Onion Creek Greenway. As elsewhere in the county, there are opportunities to conserve land through conservation developments and conservation easements.

#### Rural Northeast Travis County (Precinct 1)

Rural Northeast Travis County extends from Williamson County to the Colorado River Corridor, bounded by the SH130 North Growth Corridor to the west and Bastrop County line to the east. A small portion is within the City of Elgin but it is mostly unincorporated land. Much of this area is unincorporated and located outside of any jurisdiction's ETJ.

Slower Pace of Development: This area has limited utilities and a network of two-lane county roads serving rural areas. As the cities of Elgin, Manor and Pflugerville grow, however, utilities will become more available and development can be expected to expand into the area. This growth, though, is expected to be much slower than that occurring in both the SH 130 corridor to the west.

Diverse Eco-regions to Protect Ahead of Development: Because of relatively low development pressure, there is an opportunity to conserve land ahead of development. This is particularly advantageous because this is an ecologically diverse part of the county: it has two different eco-regions -- Blackland Prairie and Post Oak Savanna -- one of which -- Post Oak Savanna -- is only found in this part of the county.

Land Protected through parkland Acquisitions and Conservation Easements: To date, the County has conserved land in this area through parkland acquisition and conservation easements: in 2001, it purchased approximately 273 acres for the East Metro Park; more recently approximately 530 acres of prime farmland have been conserved through the County's conservation easement program that is being implemented in partnership with landowners and the USDA's Farm and Ranch Protection Program (FRPP). Although this program is available to landowners in other parts of the county, landowners acted proactively in this area and established the Wilbarger Creek Conservation Alliance to pursue conservation easement partnerships with the County and USDA.

Creek Corridor Potential: As in the SH 130 North Growth Corridor, Wilbarger Creek has corridor potential. It extends from the City of Manor to privately conserved lands further east, and it can be relatively easy to connect it to East Metro Park. Similarly, it can serve multiple purposes and be established through different public and private initiatives.

Numerous Springs: As seen in Map 12, springs are concentrated in the Post Oak Savanna eco-region that can be protected ahead of development.

#### Colorado River Corridor (Precincts 1 and 4)

The Colorado River Corridor, for these planning purposes, extends from the eastern limit of incorporated City of Austin to the Bastrop County line. Its northern and southern boundaries follow the approximate limits of the river's 100-year floodplain. Most of it lies within the ETJs of the cities of Austin and Webberville.

Residents and Mining Interests Clash: Spurred on by the recent permitting of large tracts of land for mining, residents lobbied the county to address their concerns about the impact of mining operations on their quality of life: they expect dust, noise, impairment of water resources, loss of agricultural lands and rural character, and negative impacts on their property values to worsen as mining operations expand. The county's limited authority, however, to enforce land use regulations restricts the type of actions the county can take to protect landowners. In this particular case, the county undertook several actions to mitigate the impacts of incompatible land uses occurring side-by-side: 1) executed the Agreement for the Acquisition of Open Space Parkland in Lieu of Condemnation with TXI, 2) contracted services for monitoring the impact of mining on noise levels and air and water quality, and 3) contracted services to complete the Colorado River Corridor Plan (CRCP), a conceptual plan for the corridor that identifies preferred land use patterns that has growth along the major highways, large tracts of rural land preserved, and clashes of incompatible land uses minimized.

Infrastructure Drives Pace of Development: The extent and pace of residential and mixed-use development in the corridor is dependent in large part on the availability of water and sanitary sewer infrastructure. The proposed development of Rio de Vida, a mining reuse project for mixed use municipal utility district (MUD) that would yield over 8,000 homes and apartments, demonstrates this point. In this case, a MUD was established to finance infrastructure. The City of Austin and district, however, could not reach an agreement over water and sewer rights so the district was dissolved in 2012. Although this MUD was dissolved, the developer has expressed his desire to develop the area and is exploring other opportunities.

Residents Lobby for Annexation: Residents of Austin Colony are actively seeking opportunities to provide land use protection, infrastructure improvements, and quality of life improvements through annexation by the City of Austin or municipal incorporation of the area.

Congestion a Local Problem: Additional residential development has led to increased congestion and travel times within the corridor. As a response to these conditions, improvements to provide better access to the new middle school were funded in 2011 and a partnership with TXDoT to add capacity to FM 969 from FM 3177 to Austin Colony Blvd was established.

New Bridge to Improve Regional Mobility: Construction of a bridge over the Colorado River connecting Burleson Manor Road to SH 71 E is proposed in the CAMPO 2035 plan. This major transportation improvement will improve connectivity and regional mobility and also stimulate development in areas that are not currently served by a well-developed roadway network.

Prime Farmland Lost to Aggregate Mining: The Colorado River corridor is home to the largest contiguous area of Prime farmland in the county. Aggregate mining, driven by demand for building materials, however, is superseding agricultural use of the land. Although mining is an historic activity, it is now occurring on a larger scale than previously experienced and it is planned to continue over the next few decades.

“Concurrent Reclamation” Softens Impacts of Mining: There are several legacy quarries and mines in the corridor which have matured, without human intervention, into wildlife habitat with some wetland functions. But without the softening effects of time, traditional drag line operations close with unsightly spoil piles and unnatural land contours that are not suitable for reuse. More recent requirements for closing mines, though, dictate that post-mining landscapes have contours and elevations that approximate pre-mining landscapes. Mines are closed with agreed upon slopes, re-vegetation, and stabilization that make the post-mined land environmentally sustainable and suitable for agricultural, residential, or commercial uses.

Land Conserved through Parkland Acquisition: As in other parts of the county, land is primarily conserved through parkland acquisition: the County has acquired approximately 320 acres along Gilleland Creek and the Colorado River. At this time, the only farmland being conserved in the corridor is that which is acquired incidentally for the greenways and river corridor (There is, however, landowner interest in protecting their working farms through conservation easements).

River Corridor Potential: In addition to the Gilleland Creek corridor, that crosses the Colorado River floodplain, there is potential to develop a corridor along the Colorado River. Travis County currently has parkland along the river that could be the foundation of a Colorado River corridor.

Alluvial Aquifer Impacted by Development: The Colorado River Alluvial Aquifer is a locally important source of water that could be altered by the removal of alluvial material. The extent and nature of the impact of this activity on the aquifer is not known, but the

County is monitoring water quality in the area for the purpose of understanding the potential impacts on the aquifer from mining. The aquifer has met local demand for water historically for agriculture and limited domestic use but its capacity is inadequate to support additional urbanizing trends. As a result, the County has prohibited its use as a water supply for new subdivisions.

#### Rural Southwest Travis County (Precinct 3)

Rural Southwest Travis County extends from the eastern edges of the cities of Lakeway and Bee Cave west to Blanco County and southwest to Hays County. Its northern boundary is Lake Travis. Much of this area is unincorporated and located outside of any jurisdiction's ETJ.

Growth Hinges on Infrastructure Development: This area is attractive for development because it is the last area in the county that has large, contiguous tracts of undeveloped land and it is served by the SH 71 and Hamilton Pool Road transportation corridors. The degree this area develops, however, hinges on whether transportation improvements are provided and water is available to support growth. Limited water infrastructure has slowed development and road improvements have been controversial: some residents have objected to and delayed improvements to Hamilton Pool Road and the construction of the Reimers-Peacock arterial.

Development Threatens Water Quality: Southwest Travis County has important ground and surface water resources: it lies over the Trinity Aquifer, a locally important source of water, and includes the Pedernales River and other tributaries of Lake Travis – a regionally important source of water. Mitigating the impact of increased impervious cover on both groundwater and surface water quality and facilitating recharge of the aquifer are therefore critical objectives, and time sensitive along SH 71 and Hamilton Pool Road.

Best Construction Practices Needed: When development pressure began in the early-to-mid 2000's, several instance of water pollution of local waters, including Lick Creek, Hamilton Creek and Hamilton Pool, has occurred. Although primary regulatory responsibility fell to the LCRA and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), residents lobbied Travis County to help resolve the problem. The County did issue violation notices for storm water management failures, but these events prompted the county to strengthen its regulatory powers for protecting water quality. Beginning in 2005, the county adopted more stringent water quality protection rules as part of its development regulations.

Land Protected through Parkland Acquisition and Water Conservation Easements: Travis County has been conserving land in this part of the county through parkland acquisition. Since 2001, it has assembled more than 3,000 acres on the Pedernales River, adjacent to Hamilton Pool Preserve. This is in accordance with the Southwest Travis County Growth Dialogue (SWTCGD)

recommendation to conserve approximately 6000 acres in the area (SWTCGD was a forum organized by the LCRA and Travis County to facilitate a discussion about development and conservation issues in their community). The City of Austin has also assembled large tracts of land for water quality protection that are protected through conservation easements.

Creek and River Corridor Potential: Hamilton Creek runs from the county highpoint at Shingle Hill to the Hamilton Pool Preserve, making it a particularly critical water way and strong candidate for corridor development. Hamilton Pool, in fact, was recently contaminated by runoff from a construction site in Hays County, forcing Travis County to take legal action against the developer of the property that generated the pollution for its cleanup. The creek also flows into the Pedernales River, the major tributary of Lake Travis in Travis County along which the County has purchased parkland as the foundation of a corridor system.

Numerous Springs: As seen in Map 12, there numerous springs in the vicinity of Hamilton Creek and Hamilton Pool that can be protected ahead of development.

#### Lake Travis (Precinct 3)

The Lake Travis area extends east-west from Burnet County to Mansfield Dam and captures the north and south shore of the lake. It includes portions of the cities of Lakeway, Volente, Lago Vista, Jonestown, Point Venture, and Briarcliff, communities that developed around populations attracted to a lake-centered lifestyle.

An Economic Driver: Lake Travis is a natural resource that drives the economy at both the regional and local level. It is a primary source of fresh water for communities and major industries throughout Travis County and helps drive the area's strong economy and population growth. It also is a major recreational resource that is estimated to generate, when full, approximately \$200 million in revenue for state and local governments. That is not the case at this time: due to an ongoing drought, many businesses lake-related activities are closing, on either a temporary or permanent basis. And property values are affected as well: the overall value of waterfront property and real property in the general area of the Highland Lakes typically experiences downward pressure that parallels the decline in water levels and associated economic activities.

Population Concentrated in Incorporated Lake Communities: Much of the population within this area is concentrated in incorporated areas along Lake Travis. The north shore communities of Lago Vista, Jonestown and Volente and south shore communities of Lakeway and Briarcliff have experienced the same rapid growth occurring in the Central Texas region. With an increased aging population and many of these communities supporting retirement developments, population growth is forecasted to continue to impact the quality of life for the citizens within this area.



Unincorporated land in this area has seen less development due to the inability and high cost to provide supportive infrastructure. However, growth continues along the two main corridors that serve this area, RR 620 and FM 1431

Limited Transportation Corridors Cause Congestion: Increased local traffic and increased through traffic using RR 620 are impacting residents living within the area. RR 620 provides local access to south shore communities, but also is the last crossing of the Highland Lakes/Colorado River before US Hwy 281 in Marble Falls. With limited alternatives to relieve this major traffic corridor, congestion continues to increase along RR 620. Currently, no improvements are identified for this section of RR 620 in the CAMPO 2035 Transportation Plan. The Plan does call for a transportation study to be undertaken; however, with these limited options, communities have begun voicing and undertaking plans to address this congestion. The City of Lakeway has taken the lead to look at an “ambitious” transportation plan to increase mobility within the corridor. This plan calls for elevated tollways and crossings of BCP lands that would require “cooperation and compromise” from many of the stakeholders within this area.

Environmental Conditions Limit Mobility Options in RR 620 Corridor: Proposed improvements to transportation are limited due to topography inherent to western Travis County, crossing of the Lake, and surrounding BCP lands. Desires to develop new transportation corridors and/or provide for added capacity not only are impacted by the natural environment, but also public opinions about preserving the “Texas Hill Country environment”, scenic vistas, recreational opportunities and water quality. Rapid growth in the area challenges the balance of protection of critical natural and water resources and providing efficient, safe and reliable transportation.

No Identified CAMPO Activity Centers and Emerging Growth Developments in Unincorporated Area: Changes in land use and development practices has been one solution undertaken by the CAMPO region to reduce congestion. The allowance for dense, mixed use development served by a mix of transportation choices can lead to changes in mobility patterns within the region. However, currently, this type development has not been identified within this area of Travis County. Challenges are seen in whether the development community and the residents in the area will see that this type of development is compatible with values of many of the residents. The County’s conservation development ordinance is another opportunity allowing for changes in how development impacts the area’s natural resources.

Large Tracts of Land Conserved by LCRA: The LCRA obtained large tracts of land beyond what they needed to build Lake Travis, and subsequently established 10 new parks on surplus land above lake level (seven of which are managed by Travis County). With

ownership of approximately 2,200 acres of the nearly 2,400 acres of parkland on the lake, the LCRA is clearly the most significant conserver of land in this area.

Changing Lake Levels Challenge Recreation Providers: Lake Travis is designed to rise and fall, with extremes that have ranged from its current low – lowest elevation since 1964 – of approximately 628 feet mean sea level (ft msl) to a high of 710 ft msl in 1991. Both conditions create special engineering, construction management challenges and expenses for recreation providers. Facilities have to be designed and built to withstand inundation. Conversely, facilities do not function as intended when lake levels drop dramatically: boat ramps are not useable and amenities, such as restrooms, are too far from park visitors to be useful.

#### Rural Northwest Travis County (Precinct 3)

Rural Northwest Travis County is bounded on its east side by the cities of Leander, Jonestown, and Lago Vista, the north and west by Williamson and Burnet counties, and south by Lake Travis. Much of this area is unincorporated and located outside of any jurisdiction's ETJ.

Little Imminent Development: There is limited development emerging in this area because there is limited infrastructure in place to support large scale developments. No road improvements are planned within this region.

Land Conserved Through Habitat Protection: The US Fish and Wildlife Refuge is the largest preserves in the county, established to protect threatened and endangered species habitat, and according to plan it will get larger.

Creek Corridor Potential: Both Big Sandy Creek and Cow Creek have corridor potential. As elsewhere in the county, they can serve multiple purposes and be established through a combination of public and private initiatives.

Water Resources Protected Through Habitat Preservation: Although habitat protection is the primary purpose of the US Fish and Wildlife Refuge, the preserve also protects the important Trinity and Edwards outcrops, headwaters of tributaries flowing into Lake Travis and numerous springs.

#### Balcones Canyonland Area (Precincts 2 and 3)

The Balcones Canyonland area extends from the northern Travis County boundary to approximately the “Y” at Oak Hill. It includes incorporated areas of the cities of Austin, Bee Cave, Lakeway, Oak Hill, Volente, and West Lake.

Development Constrained: This area is distinguished by land use pattern of scattered, densely developed areas adjacent to and within the mosaic of Balcones Canyonland Preserve (BCP). Several factors constrain development of new subdivisions: protected species limited amount of land available for development, and steep, costly-to-develop terrain. However, suitable sites can be planned, permitted and mitigated through several regionally available processes.

BCP Substantially Complete and a Success: The Balcones Canyonland Conservation Plan (BCCP), an Endangered Species Act (ESA) incidental take permit, facilitates continued development in western Travis County by acquiring and managing the Preserve system that offsets impacts from development to certain federally protected species. Land acquisition for the preserve is substantially complete: as of February 2014, the Preserve is comprised of 30,516 acres for the benefit the golden-cheeked warbler (Warbler) and black-capped vireo (Vireo); and 47 of the 62 karst features listed in the BCCP protected. Travis County is currently managing approximately 7600 acres of the BCP. Although the Preserve exceeds the minimum size of the required 30,428, permit holders still need to acquire habitat for the Warbler and Vireo to meet the Preserve design configuration specifications outlined in the Permit.

New Federally Listed Species: In September 2013, two new springs- and groundwater-dependent species which occur in western Travis County were listed under the ESA – Jollyville Plateau Salamander and Austin Blind Salamander. Neither are covered by the BCCP incidental take permit, meaning that landowners’ and developers’ projects which may affect these species will not have the expedited ESA compliance mechanisms to address their mitigation needs. Project sponsors will need to pursue individual incidental take permits with US Fish and Wildlife Service; this is a lengthy process. A regional incidental take permit for Jollyville Plateau Salamander, similar to the BCCP could put protective and permitting measures in place to facilitate development in western Travis County.

Water Resources Protected Through Habitat Preservation: Although habitat protection is the primary purpose of the BCP, the preserve also protects the important Trinity and Edwards outcrops (karst terrain which provides aquifer recharge), headwaters of tributaries flowing into Lake Travis and numerous springs.



## D: GROWTH GUIDANCE PLAN

### Introduction

The LWTP Growth Guidance Plan consists of the goals, objectives, concepts, and policies described herein. It integrates market trends and community values relative to both development patterns and conservation priorities. It provides the framework for developing TNR's annual work plans, setting budget and capital improvement priorities, developing growth-related policies and practices, and determining TNR's legislative agenda.

### Goals and Objectives

#### Goal A: Improve the Quality of Life of Travis County Residents

Objective A-1: Maintain or improve standard of living including access to clean water and affordable transportation.

Objective A-2: Maintain or improve community safety through hazard mitigation

Objective A-3: Maintain or improve roadway and pedestrian safety

Objective A-4: Provide facilities including parks and bike and pedestrian trails to support healthy lifestyles

#### Goal B: Optimize Benefits of Land and Water Resources

Objective B-1: Protect the rural and natural character of Travis County

Objective B-2: Protect water resources

Objective B-3: Protect outdoor recreational opportunities

Objective B-4: Protect ecosystems and wild life habitat

Objective B-5: Enhance property values

#### Goal C: Optimize Use of Travis County Resources

Objective C-1: Maximize value of CIP investments

Objective C-2: Distribute Travis County resources effectively

Objective C-3: Minimize loss-of-life and damages to residents and county property

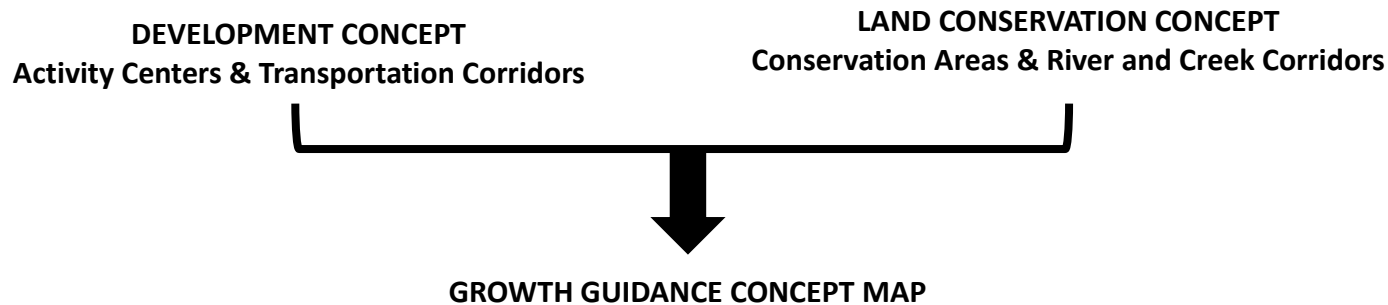
Objective C-4: Improve cost effectiveness of long-term operation and maintenance activities

Objective C-5: Optimize Travis County resources through leveraging

## Balancing Development and Land Conservation

This plan seeks to balance development with land conservation and subsequently has two main components: the Development Concept and the Land Conservation Concept which feed into the Growth Guidance Concept.

Figure 9: Growth Guidance Maps



### “Activity Centers and Transportation Corridors”

#### ACTIVITY CENTERS

Traffic congestion continues to be a major concern for residents in the region. More and more the region views the solution to congestion through expanding choices through the provision of alternatives in land development and mobility options. The continuance of relieving congestion through expanding traditional transportation modes; i.e., adding lane capacity to roadways, remains an important role for Travis County as part of the regional solution. However, local public transportation survey results have shown a desire to look at additional transportation choices, including the link between land use and transportation. The surveys were completed as part of the development of the CAMPO 2035 Plan and the City of Austin Strategic Mobility Plan. A summary of the surveys can be found in the LWTP Background Report, Section D. Public Opinion, under Transportation.

Where and how the region grows will impact the progress of improving the region’s congestion problem and quality of life. One way to improve the traffic created by future growth is through providing for an alternative way to develop land known as Activity Centers. While traditional subdivision developments will continue throughout the County, Activity Centers allow for another choice in how people, live, work and play. Taking its lead from the six county CAMPO policy board, TNR's plan strives to minimize conventional urban sprawl and encourage an alternative choice for managing growth through multiple activity centers. CAMPO

defines Activity Centers as planned and built mixed use developments that have the density and diversity of land use and design attributes that produce lower personal vehicle miles traveled that are supported through vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle and transit traffic (Transportation Corridors). Current Activity Center locations were approved by the CAMPO Transportation Policy Board for use in the development of the CAMPO 2040 long range transportation plan. Locations were identified by local jurisdictions and implementing agencies to provide a framework for regional transportation planning and in many cases are included in local plans and have received development approvals.

Activity Centers provide another development choice that creates the ability to locate new growth in higher density, mixed developments that can be oriented around planned transportation investments. The market has already begun to plan and develop using this type growth concept especially in eastern Travis County along the SH 130 corridor. Examples such as Whisper Valley along FM 973, Pilot Knob MUDs at William Cannon Dr. and US 183 S and the development occurring in the South Austin Regional Center show that an alternative to existing residential growth is an option in the market today.

Benefits of encouraging an alternative growth pattern can lead to:

#### Improvements in quality of life

- Reduces time in congestion; housing located near jobs (reduced work trip length)
- Increases choice for all transportation options (motor vehicles, walking, bicycling, and transit)
- Increases housing options through new types of residential development (live, work ,play)
- Compact growth allows for increased natural resource opportunities
- Improves air quality

#### Benefits to land and water resources

- Accommodates new growth away from sensitive natural resources
- Compact growth reduces impact on surrounding natural resources
- Encourages efficient use of land and water resources in all parts of the County

#### Reduced transportation costs

- Reduces fuel consumption and travel times related to personal travel
- Compact development area reduces infrastructure and maintenance costs
- Provides transportation choice for all modes (motor vehicles, walking, bicycling, and transit)

- Reduces infrastructure redundancy

### TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

Transportation Corridors are roadways that accommodate motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit and provide connectivity to and between Activity Centers. Corridors support and influence new and existing development that surrounds that infrastructure. By linking multiple Activity Centers and other transportation features through the movement of people and freight successfully, direct impacts to economic development occur within the corridor. Successful Transportation Corridors will continue to emphasize the automobile as the primary mode of transportation and will continue to be into the foreseeable future. Automobiles will always be a transportation choice and these corridors will help provide additional choices such as sidewalks, trails, bicycle facilities and transit options where appropriate.

Transportation Corridors help to:

- Provide connectivity to and between Activity Centers and other transportation features, SH 130, IH 35, transit centers, etc.
- Provide opportunity to increase transportation choice (motor vehicles, walking, bicycling, and transit)
- Provide opportunities for economic development along the corridor
- Provide economic benefits through increased mobility thereby improving fuel consumption cost and time savings

### Transit and Transportation Corridors

CAMPO's policy and TNR's recommendation to support Activity Center and Transportation Corridor growth management strategies is not intended to preclude the use of any mode of travel. However high cost modes, such as rail and regular bus service, require careful consideration of cost-effectiveness and the support of market forces.

TNR's plan is not intended to get the County into the transit business but it is suggested that the County can do more to help existing service providers expand their service areas and enhance the quality of those services by partnering on infrastructure improvements with Cap Metro and the Capital Area Rural Transportation Services (CARTS). There are limited transit options (regular bus service) in the unincorporated areas of the County. Most unincorporated areas that lie outside the Capital Metro service area must rely on rural transit services provided by CARTS. While these services are an important part of the regions' mobility, improved daily transit service and the ability to access these services will be required to support residents that desire to choose a transit option over taking their motor vehicle.



Currently, Cap Metro, CARTS and Travis County are working on ways to improve service including identifying funding mechanisms and partnerships to improve service and the access to service within and especially outside the Cap Metro service area. Before providing transit services, areas must meet certain service criteria. While the County has limited authority to influence density, ridership, and land use, other factors can be improved.

Road improvements, service partnerships and new funding sources are areas where the County can look to bring about or improve existing transit services to unincorporated areas. Currently, the County makes improvements to roadways through the building of new arterials and new sidewalks that improve connectivity and access to transit stops. Partnerships that allow for the sharing of facilities such as the County’s Interlocal Agreement with CARTS to utilize part of the SE Metro Park as a transit station is another type opportunity that can be expanded. Finally, new funding sources to provide for improvements to improve or establish transit services have been identified. Areas in the Austin/Round Rock urbanized area that are outside the Cap Metro service area have access to 5307 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) federal funds. The County has identified these funds as a new opportunity to provide for sidewalk improvements to transit stops or transit centers. The County would be a sub-recipient of these funds and work with Cap Metro and CARTS to identify areas needing improvement. In the future, TNR will be bringing forward to the Commissioners Court additional information on 5307 funds.

#### “Conservation Areas and River and Creek Corridors”

##### **CONSERVATION AREAS**

Conservation Areas are comprised of contiguous, uninterrupted tracts of land that has been prioritized for conservation – such as prime farmland – and is a configuration that is preferred over smaller, isolated tracts because it optimizes the benefits of conserving land:

- Preserves water-shed based natural drainage patterns and groundwater systems
- Reduces fragmentation of wildlife habitat and ecosystems
- Increases opportunities for recreational wilderness experience
- Preserves area-wide rural landscapes and vistas
- Enhances property values of residences with scenic views

## RIVER AND CREEK CORRIDORS

River and Creek Corridors are minimally developed lands following waterways, often used for passive recreation or agriculture, and ideally connect conservation areas. In eastern Travis County, they typically include floodplains and riparian zones. It is configuration preferred over non-linear, land-locked parcels because it optimizes benefits of conserving land:

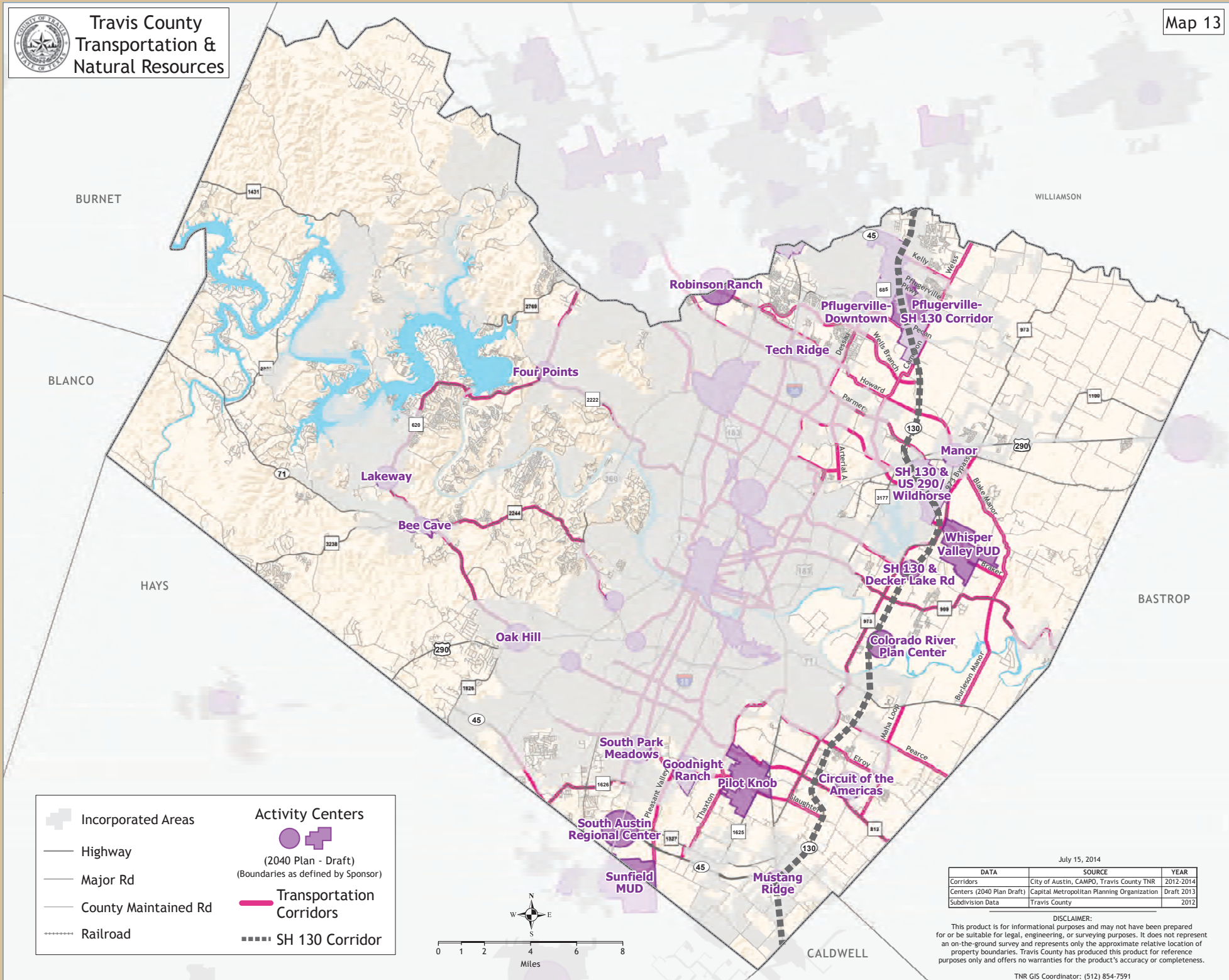
- Leaves flood-prone areas in a natural or restored state, reducing non-point source pollution of waterways
- Facilitates storm water treatment through pollutant attenuation
- Reduces land erosion and stream bed scouring
- Provides wildlife corridors
- Accommodates trails and supports connectivity
- Provides recreational access to rivers and creeks
- Maximizes impact on property values

## DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Texas counties have limited authority to control land. However, Travis County seeks to increase its ability to guide new growth using expanded subdivision development authority and powers related to the regulation and development of supporting transportation infrastructure. The Development Concept map (see map 13) identifies the areas where the County will encourage the location of new growth in the unincorporated area. Identified by the County and other municipal jurisdictions through the MPO transportation planning process, these Activity Center locations and Transportation Corridors allow additional choices in land development; one that is compact, connected and supports opportunities to protect land and water resources.

## ACTIVITY CENTERS

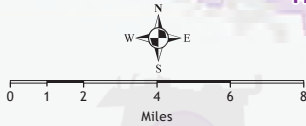
Map 13 defines the location of Activity Centers and provides the name of the Center as provided by its sponsoring agency to CAMPO. The Activity Centers shown on the map are located in or partly in the unincorporated area of Travis County or lie in close proximity to the unincorporated area. Some Activity Centers locations are farther along in the development process than others. Those that have MUD and PUD agreements or approved site plans are usually shown with boundaries as defined in the agreements. Others in earlier stages of the land development process may be in conceptual and/or planning stages and are identified with circular symbols related to the proposed size and type of Activity Center proposed. More information on Activity Centers is found in Figure 10: Activity Center Information.



**Incorporated Areas**  
 Highway  
 Major Rd  
 County Maintained Rd  
 Railroad

**Activity Centers**  
 (2040 Plan - Draft)  
 (Boundaries as defined by Sponsor)

Transportation Corridors  
 SH 130 Corridor



July 15, 2014

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Corridors	City of Austin, CAMPO, Travis County TNR	2012-2014
Centers (2040 Plan Draft)	Capital Metropolitan Planning Organization	Draft 2013
Subdivision Data	Travis County	2012

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Figure 10: Activity Center Information

<b>Center Name</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Boundary</b>	<b>Source</b>
Robinson Ranch	Austin	Regional Center	Undefined	Imagine Austin
Pflugerville SH 130 Corridor	Pflugerville	Community Center	Defined	Pflugerville 2030 Comprehensive Plan
Pflugerville Downtown	Pflugerville	Regional Center	Undefined	Pflugerville 2030 Comprehensive Plan
Tech Ridge	Austin	Neighborhood Center	Undefined	Imagine Austin
Manor	Manor		Undefined	
SH130 & US 290/Wildhorse	Austin	Town Center	Defined	Approved PUD
Whisper Valley PUD	Travis	Town Center	Defined	Approved PUD
SH 130 and Decker Lake Road	Travis	Neighborhood Center	Undefined	Approved Site Plan
Colorado River Plan Center	Travis	Town Center	Undefined	Colorado River Corridor Plan, Imagine Austin
Circuit of the Americas	Austin	Job Center	Undefined	Imagine Austin
Pilot Knob MUD	Travis	Town Center	Defined	Approved MUD
Goodnight Ranch	Travis	Neighborhood Center	Defined	Approved PUD
Mustang Ridge	Mustang Ridge		Undefined	
South Austin Regional Center	Travis	Regional Center	Undefined	Approved Site Plan
Sunfield MUD	Buda	Community Node/Business	Defined	Approved Site Plan
Oakhill	Austin	Activity Center for Redevelopment in Sensitive Environmental Areas	Undefined	Imagine Austin
Bee Cave	Bee Cave	Town Center	Defined	Comprehensive Plan
Lakeway	Lakeway		Undefined	Comprehensive Plan
Four Points	Austin	Activity Center for Redevelopment in Sensitive Environmental Areas	Defined	Imagine Austin

The location of these Activity Centers as well as the Transportation Corridors that support them were identified through the following:

Development Master Plans and Comprehensive Plans: Activity Centers were identified and supported by jurisdictions and other implementing planning agencies through previous comprehensive or development plan approvals. These locations in the unincorporated area within jurisdictional ETJ's allow local jurisdictions to achieve the objectives of their approved local plans.

Examples include the City of Pflugerville’s SH 130 Corridor which is identified as a specific boundary that is centered along future growth planned along the SH 130 corridor. Others comprehensive plans provided locations that show the City of Bee Cave boundary and locations identified in the City of Austin’s Imagine Austin Plan. Additional locations are identified related to forecasted growth around the South Austin Regional Center (Estancia Development Plan) and from future development identified in the Colorado River Corridor Plan.

Developer Agreements and Arterial Partnerships: In some cases, the County has entered into arterial public/private agreements with developers to support the development of Activity Centers. The City of Austin and Travis County have worked with developers in east and southeast Travis County; Pilot Knob MUD’s and in the Manor area, Whisper Valley PID and SH130 & US 290/Wildhorse MUD, to allow for connected, more dense type developments through the use of public/private arterial partnerships that help establish Transportation Corridors.

Adjacency to Utilities Drives Locations of New Development: Undeveloped land near developing or recently developed tracts that have adequate infrastructure are identified as “lands most susceptible” to change. Past trends within the region show that this growth was accommodated in low density single family developments along the edges of existing urban areas. Opportunities exist to help direct a more dense growth pattern to these areas along the periphery of the incorporated areas of the County away from sensitive natural resources and proposed conservation areas. Goodnight Ranch and SH 130 and Decker Lake Road Centers are examples of this type development supported by arterial public/private partnerships.

SH 130 Growth Corridor: Forecasted growth is occurring along the SH 130 Corridor. Many of the large mixed use centers are located along this corridor as population continues to locate linearly. As utilities are provided, transportation connectivity utilizing Transportation Corridors will be the critical element in the success of Activity Centers within this area of the County. It is not only important to consider that supporting growth in this corridor helps limit the pressure to develop environmentally sensitive lands in western Travis County, but wise siting of activity centers could also result in protection of natural resources in eastern Travis County. These opportunities lie in land areas unconstrained by flood plains, endangered species habitat, water resources, or prime farmland areas.

RM 620 Corridor: Jurisdictions in western Travis County, Bee Cave, Lakeway and Cedar Park have identified portions of their communities as Activity Centers. These centers will require improved multi-modal transportation corridors along RM 620 and connecting to RM 620 from other Activity Centers and the City of Austin.

### *TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS*

Transportation Corridors are defined as roadways that provide connectivity within and between Activity Centers and other transportation features. Travis County can use transportation investments as a tool to encourage where growth should be accommodated. By improving these Corridors with additional roadways or adding lanes to existing roadways, capacity and multi-modal options that allow commuters transportation choices, changes in where growth is planned for can be made.

Map 13 also identifies the location of Transportation Corridors within the unincorporated areas of the County. Identified are two areas of emphasis in the development of the Transportation Corridor concept, the SH 130 corridor and the RM 620 corridor. Predominantly, the Development Concept has Transportation Corridors planned along the SH 130 corridor which provide connectivity to:

- SH 130
- Activity Centers (supporting and connecting to other Activity Centers)
- Austin’s urban area
- Regional population centers

Transportation Corridors such as Howard Lane, Parmer Lane, Braker Lane, FM 969, Pearce Lane, FM 812 and Slaughter Lane support east/west connectivity from Center locations occurring along the SH 130 Corridor and to Austin’s urban core. Improved Corridors to the east, north and south make connecting to the major highways (US 290 E, SH 71 E, and IH 35) that connect to major population centers of Dallas/Fort Worth, San Antonio and Houston an important part of the Corridor plan.

The RM 620 corridor is a major western Travis County Transportation Corridor connecting the Activity Centers of Bee Cave, Lakeway, Four Points and the City of Cedar Park. SH 71 W, RM 2222 and RM 2244 are also identified as Transportation Corridors in that they

provide connectivity from western Activity Centers into Austin’s urbanized area. As with the SH 130 corridor, prioritized investments in transportation infrastructure should be made to support these western Activity Centers.

## LAND CONSERVATION CONCEPT

### *A CONSERVATION TRADITION*

The conservation component of the *LWTP* is built upon twenty years of conserving land in unincorporated Travis County. Through previous plans and programs, *all of which were vetted by the public and adopted by the Commissioners Court*, the County developed and subsequently implemented two major initiatives: to develop a preserve for endangered species habitat protection (*Balcones Canyonland Conservation Plan, 1995*) and to acquire parkland (*Travis County Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan, 2006 and Colorado River Corridor Plan, 2012*). In 2012 it also initiated its *Conservation Easement Program* to establish conservation easements on private properties, most of which are working farms, in partnership with willing landowners. The purpose of this plan is to chart a course for conserving land in over the next twenty years.

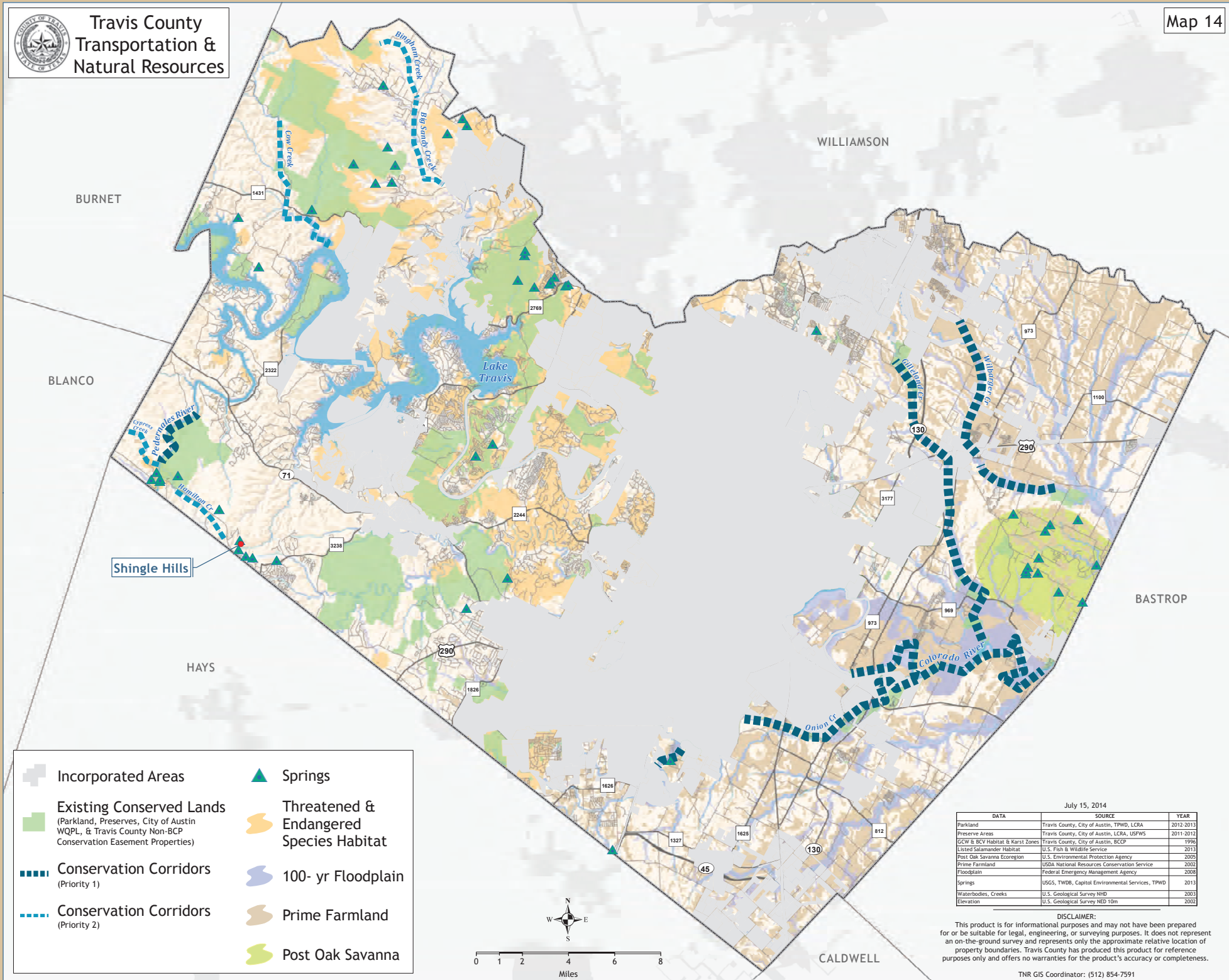
The Land Conservation Concept is illustrated in map 14 and shows the locations of a) natural resources prioritized for protection as “Conservation Areas” and b) waterways prioritized for protection as “Rivers and Creeks Corridors”.

### *CONSERVATION AREAS*

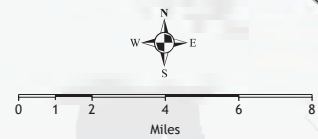
Specific “Conservation Areas” are not shown on the Land Conservation Concept map because they will be established as opportunities arise related to funding, land owner initiatives, and public/private partnerships. Prime farmland and floodplains may also be conserved as part of conservation corridors.

100-year Floodplains: The limits of the 100-year floodplains are the minimum limits of proposed corridors and thus flood plains are protected through corridor conservation, particularly in eastern Travis County where broad 100-year flood plains are found.

Prime Farmland: Prime farmland will continue to be conserved along corridors in eastern Travis County where floodplain and prime farmland are co-located. Prime farmland located within the Post Oak Savannah will be conserved as Post Oak Savannah is



	Incorporated Areas		Springs
	Existing Conserved Lands (Parkland, Preserves, City of Austin WQPL, & Travis County Non-BCP Conservation Easement Properties)		Threatened & Endangered Species Habitat
	Conservation Corridors (Priority 1)		100- yr Floodplain
	Conservation Corridors (Priority 2)		Prime Farmland
			Post Oak Savanna



July 15, 2014

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Parkland	Travis County, City of Austin, TPWD, LCRA	2012, 2013
Preserve Areas	Travis County, City of Austin, LCRA, USFWS	2011-2012
GCW & BCV Habitat & Karst Zones	Travis County, City of Austin, BCCP	1996
Listed Salamander Habitat	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	2013
Post Oak Savanna Ecoregion	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	2005
Prime Farmland	USDA National Resources Conservation Service	2002
Floodplain	Federal Emergency Management Agency	2008
Springs	USGS, TWDB, Capitol Environmental Services, TPWD	2013
Waterbodies, Creeks	U.S. Geological Survey NHD	2003
Elevation	U.S. Geological Survey NED 10m	2002

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conserved. In other circumstances, prime farmland will be conserved to establish new or expand existing conservation areas dedicated to protecting prime agricultural lands.

Post Oak Savannah: Post Oak Savannah will be conserved to optimize protection of springs and prime farmland within this eco-region, preserves interface with adjacent Blackland Prairie and Floodplain and Lower Terraces eco-regions, and to establish new or expand existing conservation areas within the Post Oak Savannah region.

Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat: Threatened and endangered species habitat will be conserved to meet the configuration requirements of the Balcones Canyonland Conservation Program (BCCP).

Springs: The cluster of springs in southwest Travis County will be protected through conservation of the Hamilton Creek Corridor. Springs located within the Post Oak Savannah eco-region of eastern Travis County will be conserved in conjunction with Post Oak Savannah conservation.

#### *RIVER AND CREEK CORRIDORS*

A river or creek is targeted for protection and ranked as “Priority 1” or “Priority 2” according to the extent it satisfies the following conditions (see figure 11):

- Protects regionally significant resource (Priority 1)
- Indirectly protects regionally significant resource (Priority 2)
- Connects to Activity Center(s) (see map 13)
- Balances distribution of conservation lands
- Protects Travis County conservation investments
- Supports other corridor plans

Figure 11: River and Creek Corridor Priority Conditions

	Protects Regionally Significant Resource	Indirectly Protects Regionally Significant Resource	Connects to Activity Center	Balances Distribution of Lands Conserved	Protects County Conservation Investments	Supports Other Corridor Plans
<b>PRIORITY 1 CORRIDORS</b>						
Pedernales River	■	■			■	■
Colorado River			■	■	■	■
Onion Creek			■	■	■	■
Gilleland Creek			■	■	■	■
Wilbarger Creek			■	■	■	■
<b>PRIORITY 2 CORRIDORS</b>						
Cypress Creek		■			■	
Hamilton Creek		■			■	
Cow Creek		■				
Bingham/Big Sandy Creeks		■				■

**PRIORITY ONE CORRIDORS**

Pedernales River Corridor (underway): This phase of the *Pedernales River Corridor* builds upon the County’s previous commitments to protect the river as both a place that attracts visitors, from central Texas and beyond -- for rock climbing, white bass fishing, and enjoying the Hill Country landscape -- and as the largest tributary of Lake Travis. The intent is to protect the Hill Country character and environmental quality of the area, in general, and the view shed and environmental quality of the river canyon, in particular, and in doing so, protect the County’s investment in Hamilton Pool Preserve and Milton Reimers Ranch Park. This proposal is consistent with goals of the *Southwest Travis County Growth Dialogue* and The Nature Conservancy’s *Pedernales River Project*.

Colorado River Corridor (underway): The Colorado River is a significant resource in eastern Travis County, providing water to nearby residents, City of Pflugerville, and downstream communities. It is popular for fishing, boating, and wildlife viewing, particularly birding. The corridor will extend from the “Activity Center” at the SH 130 crossing of the river to Webberville Park, near the Bastrop County line. Protecting this resource will increase the inventory of conservation lands in eastern Travis County and help balance the

distribution of conserved land throughout the county. It also builds upon investments the County has made in parkland along the river corridor. The corridor plan is consistent with the conservation priorities set in *The Travis County Greenprint for Growth* and *Discovering the Colorado: A Vision for the Austin-Bastrop Colorado River Corridor*.

Onion Creek Corridor (underway): The Onion Creek Corridor -- a large portion of which is already protected as City of Austin, County, or State of Texas parkland -- connects several centers in the SH 130 corridor. Travis County parkland has been acquired most recently and extends (including ABIA outparcels) from approximately US 183 to the Colorado River. This greenway increases the inventory of conserved land in eastern Travis County and is consistent with the conservation priorities set in *The Travis County Greenprint for Growth* and the *City of Austin Urban Trails Master Plan*.

Gilleland Creek Corridor (underway): The Gilleland Creek Corridor has been completed in part as the Gilleland Creek Greenway, the second greenway project undertaken with Travis County resources. It connects to centers near the City of Manor, linking them to Northeast Metro Park near Pflugerville and the Colorado River to the south. Protecting this resource will increase the inventory of conserved lands in eastern Travis County and help balance the distribution of conservation land throughout the county. It also builds upon investments the County has made in parkland along the creek. It is consistent with conservation priorities set in *The Travis County Greenprint for Growth* and the *City of Austin Urban Trails Master Plan*, *Pflugerville's Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan*, and the private-sector *Emerald Star of Texas Regional Trail*.

Wilbarger Creek Corridor: The Wilbarger Creek Corridor will run from Pflugerville city limits, past the City of Manor, to land, near the Bastrop County line, that was conserved in a three-way partnership of the landowner, Travis County, and USDA through its Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP). The Wilbarger Creek Corridor is consistent with priorities set in *The Travis County Greenprint for Growth*, the *Pflugerville's Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan*, the private-sector *Emerald Star of Texas Regional Trail Plan*, and the landowner-initiated *Wilbarger Watershed Conservation Plan*.

#### **PRIORITY TWO CORRIDORS**

Cypress Creek Corridor: Cypress Creek is prioritized for protection as a corridor because it is both an exceptionally scenic creek and flows into the regionally significant Pedernales River.

Hamilton Creek Corridor: Although not a regionally significant resource in and of itself, Hamilton Creek flows through Hamilton Pool to the Pedernales River, indirectly protecting two regionally significant resources that the County has invested in. In fact, Hamilton Pool was recently degraded by pollution when runoff from a construction site drained into the pool via the creek, and Travis County was forced to take legal action against the developer of the property that generated the pollution and was subsequently awarded damages from the suit that resulted in remediation and restoration of the creek and pool.

Cow Creek Corridor and Bingham Creek/Big Sandy Creek Corridor: Cow Creek and Bingham Creek/Big Sandy Creek are prioritized for protection they are major tributaries of Lake Travis. Bingham Creek/Big Sandy Creek Corridor also supports the *Leander Trails Master Plan*.

#### CONSERVATION INITIATIVES WEST

- Complete land acquisition for the Balcones Canyonland Preserve (BCP)
- Continue to conserve land for the Pedernales River Corridor
- Maintain Hamilton Creek and Cypress Creek corridors as secondary priorities
- Maintain Cow Creek and Bingham/Big Sandy Creek corridors as secondary priorities

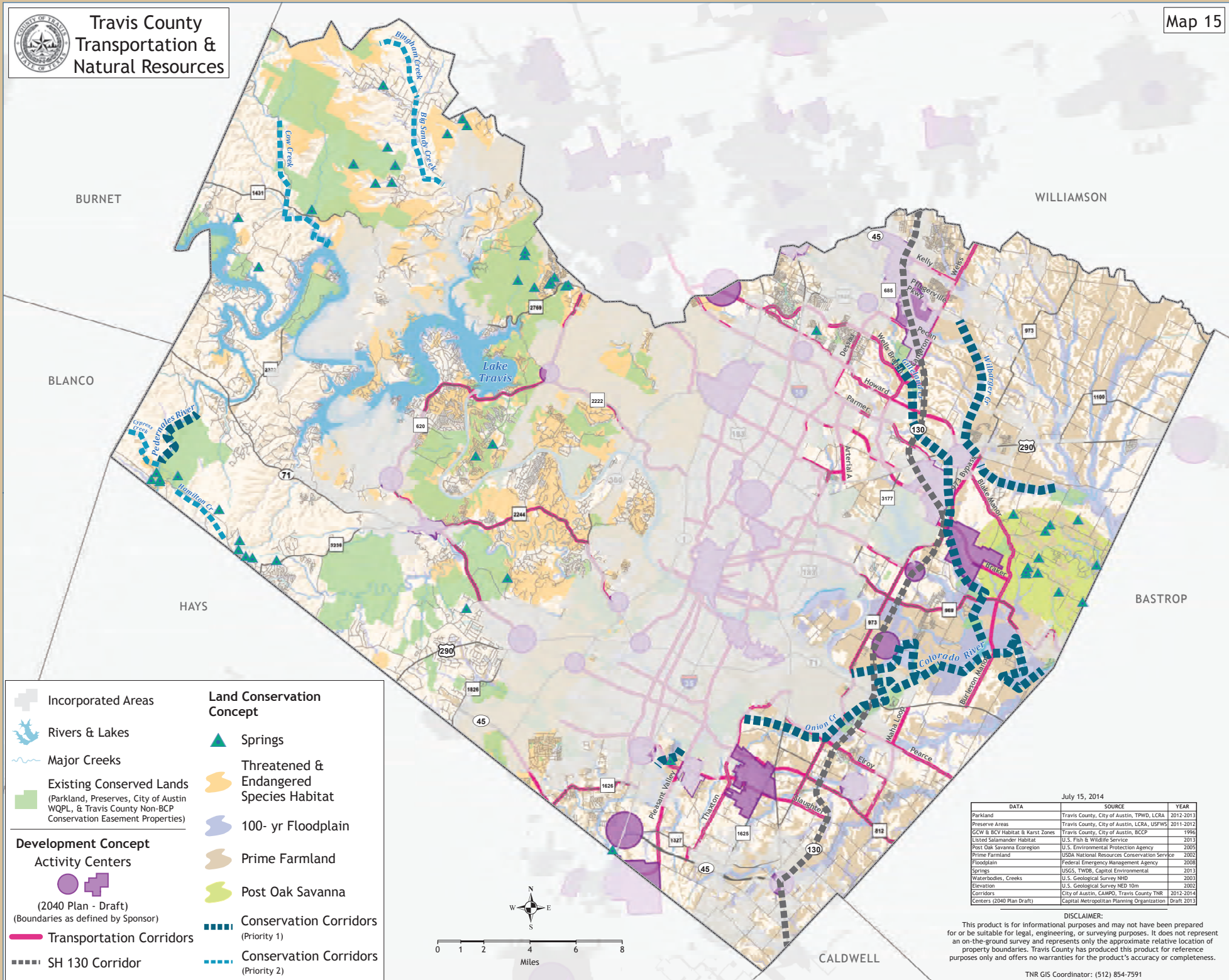
#### CONSERVATION INITIATIVES EAST

- Complete Onion Creek Greenway (Bluff Springs, McKinney Falls Parkway to Colorado River)
- Complete Gilleland Creek Greenway (Northeast Metro Park to Colorado River)
- Continue to conserve land for the Colorado River Corridor
- Initiate land conservation for the Wilbarger Creek corridor
- Initiate farmland conservation program
- Initiate Post Oak Savanna conservation program to include adjacent Blackland Prairie and Colorado River Floodplain eco-regions

## GROWTH GUIDANCE CONCEPT

The Growth Guidance Concept map illustrates an integrated view of Travis County’s preferred development and conservation land use patterns (see map 15). Key aspects of the plan are:

- The Growth Guidance Concept focuses attention on the areas where both development and conservation interests need to be considered.
- Development pressure on land and water resources is greater in the eastern part of the county than the western part but compact development along the SH 130 corridor allows conservation to occur ahead of development
- Development associated with Elgin Activity Center in Bastrop County is pressing northeast Travis County where prime farmland and potential conservation corridors are located.
- The Manor Activity Center is notable because it is a bridge between the Wilbarger Creek corridor on its northeast side and the Gilleland Creek Corridor on its southwest side
- A comprehensive bike and pedestrian trail system – interconnecting transportation and conservation corridors – can be developed in the SH 130 corridor
- The Colorado River and eastern creek corridors connect to Activity Centers and mitigate impacts of increased impervious cover on land and water resources, bring nature close to where people live, and positively affect real estate values.
- Transportation Corridors cross numerous flood plains, including the Colorado River’s broad floodplain, and are areas of potential conflicts
- Conservation of the Post Oak Savanna and adjacent Blackland Prairie and Colorado River Floodplain is time sensitive because development is encroaching from the west
- Location of BCP limits Transportation Corridor development in western Travis County.



**Incorporated Areas**

**Rivers & Lakes**

**Major Creeks**

**Existing Conserved Lands**  
(Parkland, Preserves, City of Austin WQPL, & Travis County Non-BCP Conservation Easement Properties)

**Development Concept**

**Activity Centers**  
(2040 Plan - Draft)  
(Boundaries as defined by Sponsor)

**Transportation Corridors**

**SH 130 Corridor**

**Land Conservation Concept**

**Springs**

**Threatened & Endangered Species Habitat**

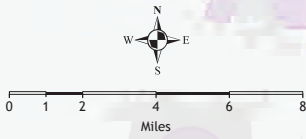
**100- yr Floodplain**

**Prime Farmland**

**Post Oak Savanna**

**Conservation Corridors (Priority 1)**

**Conservation Corridors (Priority 2)**



July 15, 2014

DATA	SOURCE	YEAR
Parkland	Travis County, City of Austin, TPWD, LCRA	2012-2013
Preserve Areas	Travis County, City of Austin, LCRA, USFWS	2011-2012
GCW & BCW Habitat & Karst Zones	Travis County, City of Austin, BCCP	1996
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Floodplain	Federal Emergency Management Agency	2008
Springs	USGS, TWDB, Capitol Environmental	2013
Waterbodies, Creeks	U.S. Geological Survey NHD	2003
Elevation	U.S. Geological Survey NED 10m	2002
Corridors	City of Austin, CALMO, Travis County TNR	2012-2014
Centers (2040 Plan Draft)	Capital Metropolitan Planning Organization Draft	2013

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## GROWTH GUIDANCE POLICIES

### LAND

**POLICY L-1:** Encourage development that is consistent with the County’s “Activity Centers and Transportation Corridors” concept and has minimal impact on land and water resources.

**POLICY L-2:** Develop an interconnected, multi-purpose, system of parks, preserves, privately conserved properties, and conservation subdivisions that protect high-priority land and water resources and complement “Activity Centers and Transportation Corridors” land use patterns.

**POLICY L-3:** Prioritize conservation of the following lands:

- Prime Farmland (designated by the USDA)
- Post Oak Savanna
- Threatened and endangered species habitat protected by the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan<sup>3</sup> (BCCP)
- Land with numerous springs
- Land along the Colorado River and its major tributaries
- Land along the Pedernales River and other Lake Travis tributaries

**POLICY L-4:** Support conservation in eastern Travis County that helps balance conservation county-wide and protects land and water resources in advance of development in high growth areas.

**POLICY L-5:** Develop a park and preserve system that provides opportunities for the public to enjoy nature-based recreation throughout the county.

**POLICY L-6:** Manage the Balcones Canyonland Preserve<sup>4</sup> (BCP) with best practices to conserve rare, threatened, and endangered species habitats and systems.

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<sup>3</sup> **Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan** (“BCCP”)-Travis County and the City of Austin were jointly issued a regional permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that allows incidental “take” of eight locally occurring federally-listed endangered species under Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act. “Take” is the removal of occupied endangered species habitat or species displacement due to development of habitat areas. This community-based solution, referred to as the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan (“BCCP”), calls for the creation of a preserve system to protect these eight endangered species as well as 27 other species believed to be at risk.

**POLICY L-7:** Use best management practices to maintain or restore native woodlands, prairies, riparian zones and other ecosystems and control invasive species on County-owned land.

**POLICY L-8:** Regulate development to decrease loss-of-life and property damage from flooding, fire, and other hazards.

**POLICY L-9:** Reduce wildfire potentials in parks and preserves through forest management, prescribed fire, site and ecotype-appropriate fuels management, adjacent landowner outreach promoting FireWise and Community Wildfire Protection Plan recommendations, and other best management practices.

**POLICY L-10:** Require best management practices for the construction of streets, structures, and drainage facilities in subdivision developments and transition to sustainable construction and O&M practices.

**POLICY L-11:** Develop and implement strategies for minimizing light pollution and maintaining dark skies.

**POLICY L-12:** Support state, county, and local regulation of billboards.

**POLICY L-13:** Develop and implement design standards for protecting the natural and rural character of county roads.

**POLICY L-14:** Provide information and resources to private landowners to promote best conservation and management of native ecosystems, especially on sites adjacent to parks and preserves.

**POLICY L-15:** Support local government decisions regarding the location of Activity Centers and Corridors.

## WATER

**POLICY W-1:** Encourage and support residents and businesses on best methods to manage water resources including rainwater harvesting and xeriscape practices.

**POLICY W-2:** Support efforts to reduce reliance upon Lake Travis and groundwater resources including conservation, piping from other sources, and new impoundments.

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<sup>4</sup> **Balcones Canyonlands Preserve** (“BCP”) To minimize and mitigate the impacts of take, the Permit Holders agreed to: 1) assemble a minimum of 30,428 acres of endangered species habitat in western Travis County known as the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (“BCP”), 2) secure protection for a series of karst (cave) features and rare plants throughout Travis County 3) provide for ongoing maintenance, patrolling, and biological management of the preserved habitat; and 4) conduct biological monitoring and research activities supporting the BCCP permit terms and conditions.



**POLICY W-3:** Use water quality protection rules to protect ground and surface water resources throughout our jurisdiction from potential land development impacts.

**POLICY W-4:** Use regulatory authority to ensure adequate groundwater is available for future subdivision needs and establish a groundwater conservation district in SW Travis County to protect the Trinity Aquifer from further unsustainable withdrawals.

**POLICY W-5:** Protect Lake Travis water quality in accordance with the Travis County water quality protection standards and by conserving land along tributaries.

**POLICY W-6:** Protect the Colorado River Alluvial Aquifer.

**POLICY W-7:** Protect watersheds and headwaters up-gradient of spring sites known to be habitat of the Jollyville Plateau salamanders.

**POLICY W-8:** Integrate storm water, flood mitigation, and water resource protection planning and programming.

**POLICY W-9:** Develop and implement protocols for designing, constructing, and maintaining sustainable Rights-of-Way (ROWs).

**POLICY W-10:** Use sustainable practices to reduce water consumption in County parks.

**POLICY W-11:** Promote and use best management practices to control invasive aquatic species on County-owned properties.

**POLICY W-12:** Promote and educate public on invasive species management.

## TRANSPORTATION

**POLICY T-1:** Support development of high density, mixed use Activity Centers through the use of transportation investments that integrate land use and transportation.

**POLICY T-2:** Reduce demand on the region's roadway system by developing a transportation network that provides people with multiple ways to travel.

**POLICY T-3:** Prioritize transportation options that allow for choice within and connecting Activity Centers.

**POLICY T-4:** Avoid and minimize impacts of transportation on sensitive natural and cultural resources, especially threatened and endangered species habitat.

**POLICY T-5:** Provide bike lanes, sidewalks or shared use paths on arterial roads.

**POLICY T-6:** Connect multi-use trails in County parks to the regional bike and pedestrian system.

**POLICY T-7:** Formulate policies guiding County’s role in transit.

**POLICY T-8:** Incorporate regional transit plans in the planning and development of County transportation facilities.

**POLICY T-9:** Plan for and develop a road network that facilitates emergency access and evacuation.

**POLICY T-10:** Support efforts to minimize residents’ harmful exposure to hazardous materials transported by road, rail or pipeline.

**POLICY T-11:** Consider the total project context during the design process that balances transportation, land use, economic, social and environmental goals and objectives.

#### GROWTH GUIDANCE TOOLS

**POLICY GGT-1:** Use existing regulatory authority to guide development.

**POLICY GGT-2:** Pursue additional authority to prevent incompatible land use conflicts in unincorporated Travis County.

**POLICY GGT-3:** Allocate funds for capital improvements supporting “Activity Centers”, “Corridors”, or conservation of County-prioritized lands.

**POLICY GGT-4:** Support incentives for capital improvements supporting “Activity Centers”, “Corridors”, or conservation of County-prioritized lands.

**POLICY GGT-5:** Protect County-prioritized land and water resources through park and preserve land acquisitions, parkland dedications, conservation easements, floodplain buy-out programs, and the Conservation Subdivision Ordinance.

**POLICY GGT-6:** Coordinate with local jurisdictions, agencies and the private sector to promote connectivity and compatible development of land, water, and transportation systems.

**POLICY GGT-7:** Prioritize investments in arterials connecting to SH 130.

**POLICY GGT-8:** Use platting, permitting, other growth information to identify market-driven Activity Center and Corridors.

## PLANNING AND POLICY FORMULATION

**POLICY PPF-1:** Comply with all applicable local, state and federal rules, regulations and permits.

**POLICY PPF-2:** Engage county residents, stakeholders, and experts in planning and policy formulation processes.

**POLICY PPF-3:** Use statistically valid data to identify Travis County residents’ opinions and preferences.

**POLICY PPF-4:** Coordinate departmental planning to optimize use of County resources.

**POLICY PPF-5:** Ensure that public facilities are planned in advance of public need.

**POLICY PPF-6:** Complete and regularly update departmental plans and studies to guide development of county-wide bond programs and other capital investment decisions.

**POLICY PPF-7:** Monitor growth in unincorporated Travis County to identify “horizon issues”.

**POLICY PPF-8:** Coordinate land use and transportation policies with local jurisdictions, agencies and the private sector.

**POLICY PPF-9:** Specify procedures for waiving conditions of a plan or policy when environmental, fiscal, or other types of constraints make its implementation unfeasible.

## FINANCE

**POLICY F-1:** Leverage County capital improvement funds with federal and state grants, private sector partnerships, contributions from other jurisdictions and agencies, and user and impact fees (see Appendix A: Funding for Capital Improvements).

**POLICY F-2:** Assess impacts of capital improvements, program expansions, and federal/state mandates on the O&M costs.

**POLICY F-3:** Analyze efficiency and cost effectiveness of capital investments and seek innovative ways to reduce costs.

**POLICY F-4:** Analyze the fiscal impact on County resources of providing new types of services or facilities.

**POLICY F-5:** Analyze fiscal impact of creating Transportation Reinvestment Zones (TRZs).

## E: ACTION PLAN

### Funding Capital Improvements

Travis County's traditional revenue sources for capital improvements have been General Funds, Certificates of Obligations, and General Obligation Bonds, of which only General Obligation Bonds require voter approval. Less commonly-used sources are Participation Agreements (public/private partnerships), Tax Abatements, and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Bonds. Transportation Infrastructure Reinvestments Zones (TIRZ) and 380/381 Agreements have not been used but are potential funding sources.

State and federal funding distributed through CAMPO is more and more difficult to obtain due to increased competition and CAMPO allocation policies. All demands will force us to seek new or unconventional funds such as federal transit monies that could be used to improve infrastructure such as sidewalks that support transit, walking, and biking.

Unprecedented growth has also demanded collaboration among city, county, TXDoT, the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA) and developers. Of particular concern is the State's continuing funding shortage leading to the County's increasing funding of improvement to the state highway system, improvements demanded by frustrated county residents who do not care about jurisdictional boundaries but care greatly about the safety and congestion on the roads they rely upon for work, school, shopping, etc.

### LWTP Applications

- Sets priorities for growth-related funding in Travis County's Annual Budget
- Sets priorities for transportation and conservation-related Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs)
- Guides formulation of growth-related policies and practices
- Guides long range, collaborative planning efforts such as the Colorado River Corridor Plan (CRCP)
- Guides transportation and conservation-related public/private partnership
- Sets Travis County's growth-related agenda for Texas State legislative action
- Guides Travis County Annual Work Plans

## An Umbrella Plan

The *LWTP* is an umbrella plan for growth-related capital improvement plans, regulations, permits, programs, and services. Many are already in place and only need to be monitored and updated as required. Other actions, however, need to be undertaken to accomplish the plan's goals to improve the quality of life of Travis county residents, optimize the benefits of land and water resources, and use Travis County resources wisely. Key actions follow:

## Capital Improvement Planning

### Land

#### **Parks and Land Conservation Master Plan**

Update the Parks Master Plan in accordance with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) master plan guidelines, Conservation Subdivision Ordinance requirements, and Travis County growth guidance planning policies.

#### **Parks and Land Conservation Bond Program**

Develop project selection and prioritization criteria consistent with Travis County growth guidance policies and prepare a preliminary list of parks and land conservation projects to be finalized by a citizen bond advisory committee (appointed by Commissioners Court).

#### **Conservation Easement Program Update**

Review *Travis County Conservation Easement Program Guidelines* with the Land Conservation Work Group and revise as necessary for consistency with Travis County growth guidance policies.

### Water

#### **Drainage Bond Program**

Develop project selection and prioritization criteria consistent with Travis County growth guidance policies and prepare a preliminary list of drainage projects to be finalized by a citizen bond advisory committee (appointed by Commissioners Court).

### Transportation

#### **Transportation Plan**

Develop a comprehensive multimodal transportation plan for the unincorporated area of Travis County in accordance with growth guidance planning polices and is coordinated with the development of CAMPO's regional transportation plan.

**Bike/Ped/Trail Plan**

Develop a comprehensive plan that integrates pedestrian, bicycle and trail facilities.

**High Accident Study**

Update study to identify and provide recommendations for improving high accident locations within unincorporated Travis County.

**Transportation Bond Program**

Develop project selection and prioritization criteria consistent with Travis County growth guidance policies and prepare a preliminary list of transportation projects to be finalized by a citizen bond advisory committee (appointed by Commissioners Court).

**Extreme Weather Vulnerability Assessment**

Participate with stakeholders in an assessment that allows the region to identify and rank transportation system components that are vulnerable to extreme weather events such as flooding, drought, extreme heat events and wildfires.

Inter-related

**Natural Disaster Mitigation Plan**

Update the plan to identify and prioritize capital improvement projects for mitigating natural disasters.

Regulation and Permitting

Land

**Conservation Subdivision Ordinance**

Review, update, and obtain Court approval of a revised *Conservation Subdivision Ordinance*.

**Single Office Agreements**

Identify opportunities to establish Inter-local Agreements (ILAs) with willing municipalities to regulate subdivision plats and permits in ETJs and execute where feasible.

**Threatened and Endangered Species Monitoring**

Monitor listing of new threatened and endangered species and identify impacts of habitat on development.

Water

**Trinity Aquifer Groundwater Conservation District**

Establish a stakeholders group and facilitate establishment of a Trinity Aquifer Groundwater Conservation District.

**Colorado River Alluvial Aquifer**

Assess the impacts of growth on the quality and quantity of the Colorado River Alluvial Aquifer and develop water resource protection rules.

**Regional Water Issues Organization**

Support Commissioners Court’s participation in a collaborative regional organization for the purpose of identifying needs and options assuring adequate water supply service for the region.

Transportation

**Transportation Criteria Manual**

Participate with the City of Austin in the updating of transportation guidelines and design criteria for use in the unincorporated area of Travis County.

Inter-related

**Growth Guidance Legislative Issues**

Identify growth guidance issues related to land, water, and transportation that require legislative action.

New Programs and Services

Land

**Dark Skies Initiative**

Research and report on “dark skies” issues and opportunities, including an assessment of the fiscal, quality of life, and environmental benefits and disadvantages of the initiative.

**Farmland Preservation Initiative**

Research and report on preserving prime farmland issues and opportunities, including an assessment of the fiscal, quality of life, and environmental benefits and disadvantages of the initiative.

**Scenic Roadways Initiative**

Research and report on scenic roadway issues and opportunities, including an assessment of the fiscal, quality of life, and environmental benefits and disadvantages of the initiative.

**Public Outreach Program: Best Land Conservation Practices**

Propose a program for promoting best land conservation practices including an assessment of the fiscal, quality of life, and environmental benefits and disadvantages of implementing the program.

**Public Outreach Program: FireWise**

Propose a program for promoting FireWise practices including an assessment of the public safety, fiscal, and environmental benefits and disadvantages of implementing the program.

Water

**Sustainable Roadside Protocols**

Research and report on Sustainable Roadside issues and opportunities, including an assessment of the fiscal, quality of life, and environmental benefits and disadvantages of implementing the protocols.

**Integrated Storm water, Floodplain Management, and Water Quality Program**

Consider further integration of development reviews related to drainage, storm water, floodplain, and water quality.

**Water Supply Service**

Research and report on water supply service issues and opportunities, including an assessment of the fiscal, quality of life, and environmental benefits and disadvantages of implementing the protocols.

Inter-related

**Resource Leveraging Program**

Research and report on a program for proactively leveraging resources to implement the LWTP, including an assessment of the fiscal benefits and disadvantages of implementing the program.

**Public Needs and Preference Studies**

Research and evaluate opportunities to partner with local entities for regular, scientific surveys of county residents' needs and preferences.

**Prosperous Places Program**

Evaluate feasibility of using CAPCOG's Prosperous Places Program's advanced strategic planning and community analytics effort for County purposes.

**Sustainability Indicators Project**

Evaluate feasibility of participating in the Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project analytics program.

**Growth Monitoring and Impacts Report**

Research and report annually on growth in unincorporated areas of the County and its fiscal and environmental impacts.



# APPENDIX A: FUNDING FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS<sup>1</sup>

TYPE OF FUNDING	SOURCE OF FUNDING				NOTES
	<i>Travis County</i>	<i>Landowner/ Developer</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Other</i>	
County and City General Funds, General Obligation Bonds, and Certificates of Obligation	X		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional revenue sources for financing capital improvements.</li> <li>• Many cities traditionally funds roads only inside city limits.</li> </ul>
Participation Agreement	X	X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-County revenue source for financing roads: combine County and City funding with landowner funding (public/private partnership).</li> <li>• Many cities traditionally funds roads only inside city limits.</li> </ul>
Public Improvement District (PID) (with bonds or without)		X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-County revenue source for financing capital improvements: Landowners pay assessments.</li> <li>• Has been used by City and landowners: Indian Hills, Whisper Valley, and Estancia.</li> <li>• City funds roads in city limits <u>and ETJ</u>.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Tom Nuckols, Travis County Attorney.

Public Improvement District (continued)					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PID can either issue bonds <u>or</u> serve as a post-construction lien device to defer payment of landowner’s share until after a developer has bought the land.</li> <li>• Potential for creating a “roadway construction revolving fund” for future roadways.</li> <li>• Can combine with Participation Agreement to create public/private partnership.</li> </ul>
Road District Bonds		X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-County revenue source for financing capital improvements: Landowners pay district property tax or assessment.</li> <li>• Successful roads districts include Golden Triangle and Bee Cave-Galleria.</li> <li>• District can fund roads in city limits <u>and ETJ</u>.</li> <li>• Can combine with TIF or TIRZ to create public/private partnership.</li> </ul>
Tax Abatement	X		X	X (other taxing entities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taxing entities can abate taxes in exchange for private entity building roads (public/private partnership).</li> <li>• Traditional model for economic development.</li> <li>• Taxing entities other than ISDs may participate.</li> </ul>

Tax Abatement (continued)					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can fund roads in city limits <u>and ETJ</u>.</li> <li>• Diverts tax revenue needed for County services.</li> </ul>
City Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Bonds.	X		X	X (other taxing entities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City issues bonds backed by pledge of tax revenue from taxing entities.</li> <li>• Traditional model for economic development.</li> <li>• Other taxing entities may participate.</li> <li>• Can fund roads in city limits <u>and ETJ</u>.</li> <li>• City can commit property <u>and sales tax</u> increment to pay back bonds.</li> <li>• Travis County can commit county property tax increment to pay back bonds.</li> <li>• Diverts tax revenue needed for City/County services.</li> </ul>
City or County Transportation Infrastructure Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ)	X		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City issues bonds backed by pledge of tax revenue from taxing entities.</li> <li>• County can pledge tax revenue, but not issue bonds.</li> <li>• Can fund roads in city limits <u>and ETJ</u>.</li> <li>• Combine with road district: District issues bonds and City and County pledge tax increment to district.</li> <li>• Diverts tax revenue needed for City/County services.</li> </ul>

Venue Statute Bonds				X (tourists)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-County revenue source for financing capital improvements: hotel tax, rent car tax, parking tax, etc.</li> <li>• Limited to certain types of facilities.</li> <li>• Has been used by City of San Antonio, Bexar County, City of Austin, and Harris County.</li> <li>• Can fund roads in city limits <u>and</u> ETJ.</li> <li>• Requires an election.</li> </ul>
County Assistance District				X (consumers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-County revenue source for financing capital improvements: District can impose sales tax for roads and economic development.</li> <li>• Cannot result in sales tax above state maximum of 8.25%.</li> <li>• Requires an election.</li> <li>• Commissioners Court can be governing body of district.</li> <li>• Potential for County to collect sales tax outside city limits?</li> </ul>
Existing City Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT)				X (tourists)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-County revenue source for financing capital improvements: City can use HOT to “transport tourists from hotels to tourist attractions.”</li> <li>• Road must be owned and operated by the city <u>or</u> privately-owned, but</li> </ul>

					partially financed by the city.
Neighborhood Empowerment Zone			X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allows city to abate property taxes and refund sales taxes.</li> <li>Simpler process than traditional tax abatements.</li> </ul>
Municipal Management District (with or without bonds).		X		X (consumers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-County revenue source for financing capital improvements: District can impose sales tax and assessments.</li> <li>TCEQ or Legislature must create.</li> <li>Applies to commercial property only.</li> <li>Board consists of residents or property owners.</li> </ul>
Municipal Development District (with or without bonds).				X (consumers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-County revenue source for financing capital improvements: District may impose sales tax.</li> <li>May include city limits <u>and</u> ETJ.</li> <li>City appoints board.</li> <li>Requires an election in the district.</li> </ul>
State Infrastructure Bank				X (TxDOT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TxDOT can loan money for state roads.</li> </ul>
380/381 Agreements	X	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great flexibility.</li> <li>Can be used to combine any of the above tools.</li> </ul>

