

URBAN WATERWAY BENCHMARKING STUDY

JULY 2011

OVERVIEW

With the pending transformation of Austin's Waller Creek into an urban greenway with pedestrian and bicycle access, a survey was conducted to characterize how other communities have located trails in proximity to waterways. To that end, staff from the City of Austin's Watershed Protection Department researched existing trail projects in close proximity to waterways within key cities across the United States. The cities selected were approximately the size of Austin, had a creek or other waterway located within an urban setting— either near an entertainment district, convention center or a downtown district.

In December 2010, a cover letter and questionnaire were emailed to staff from the various cities. Of the 23 questionnaires sent (some cities had more than one creek side project or contact person), 19 were returned.

KEY FINDINGS

- Of the 19 respondents, 16 have trails located in the 100-year floodplain boundaries. Of those 16:
 - 4 are below the 2-year floodplain elevation
 - 3 are above the 2-year floodplain elevation
 - 1 is above the 10-year floodplain elevation
 - 4 are above the 25-year floodplain elevation
 - 4 are above the 100-year floodplain elevation
- Three (Rutherford, NC, Oklahoma City Bricktown Canal and Oklahoma River) have trails built outside of the 100-year floodplain boundaries.
- For those 16 with bridge crossings, 10 are above the 25-year floodplain elevation.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

- **Trail project location, Q. 1 (Total = 19)**
 - Urban 13
 - Suburban 1
 - Both 5

- **16 trail projects have portions of their trails located within the 100-year floodplain, Q7a (Total =19)**
 - Yes 16
 - No 3

- **Trails with any portion elevated above the ground surface, Q8 (Total =19)**
 - Yes 16
 - No 3

- **For the 16 trail projects that have bridges that are perpendicular to a waterway, Q9a. (Total = 16)**
 - 2 are below the 2-year floodplain elevation
 - 1 is above the 2-year floodplain elevation, but below the 10-year
 - 3 are above the 10-year floodplain elevation, but below the 25-year
 - None are above the 25-year floodplain elevation, but below the 100-year
 - 10 are above the 100-year floodplain elevation

- **Of the 16 that answered yes that portions of the trail are elevate above the ground surface and parallel to a waterway, Q9b and (Total = 16)**
 - 6 are below the 2-year floodplain elevation
 - 3 is above the 2-year floodplain elevation, but below the 10-year
 - 2 are above the 10-year floodplain elevation, but below the 25-year
 - 1 is above the 25-year floodplain elevation, but below the 100-year
 - 4 are above the 100-year floodplain elevation

PARTICIPATING CITIES AND PROJECTS

Texas

Arlington: Trinity River (Johnson Creek)

Dallas: Trinity River Corridor Project

Fort Worth: Trinity River Vision Project (Trinity River Vision Authority)
Trinity River Vision Project (City of Fort Worth)

Houston: Houston Bayous (Project Brays Buffalo Bayou, Armand Bayou)

San Antonio: San Antonio River Improvements Project (Museum/Downtown Reach)

Waco: Brazos River Corridor (Downtown River Walk)

Colorado

Boulder: Boulder Creek Path

Colorado Springs: Midland Trail (along Fountain Creek)

Colorado Springs: Pikes Peak Trail (along Monument Creek)

Denver: City of Denver River Trails

Fort Collins: Poudre Trail

North Carolina

Raleigh: House Creek Greenway

Rutherfordton: Rutherfordton Creek Trail

Wilmington: Wilmington City Creek Trails

Oklahoma

Oklahoma City: Bricktown Canal

Oklahoma City: Oklahoma River (Canadian River Section)

Tulsa: Tulsa River Trails

Utah

St. George: Virgin River Trail