

Frequently Asked Questions About the Proposed Water Quality Protection Zone (WQPZ) Ordinances

1. I received a notice about a proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment and Subdivision Regulation Amendment. Why did I receive this notice?

Cleveland County records indicate that you own property in the Lake Thunderbird watershed. A map of the watershed is shown on the back of the letter you received. The proposed ordinance is applicable to the Lake Thunderbird watershed.

NOTE: You received notice because of a proposed zoning overlay district. That proposal was removed from consideration by the Planning Commission on June 23, 2011. The remaining ordinance is an amendment to our subdivision regulations which would affect only those who choose to subdivide (create lots on) their property.

2. What is the purpose of these proposed ordinances?

Several years ago, the City began work on a Storm Water Master Plan. Issues like storm water pollution and continuing degradation of water quality in Lake Thunderbird were addressed in that Plan. The Lake provides 75% of Norman's drinking water as well as drinking water for Del City and Midwest City. The Lake has been classified as "impaired" by the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality. It has been reported that levels of chlorophyll-A are seven times greater than regulation standards. It has further been reported that the elevated amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus, dissolved solids and sediment put the Lake at risk of developing algal toxins that threaten public health and recreational uses. The Storm Water Master Plan recommended that the City enact regulations that would provide buffers around the streams in the Lake Thunderbird Watershed as part of the overall effort to improve water quality.

These proposed ordinances are designed to do three things:

- Improve the quality of storm water before it enters Lake Thunderbird,
- Reduce flooding due to development along streams, and
- Reduce streamside erosion

3. What do the two ordinances do?

Subdivision Regulations (O-1011-52): The City's subdivision regulations exist to create a procedure by which land is developed i.e. subdivided through a plat or rural certificate of survey, in order to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of present and future residents, and to bring about the

coordinated, efficient, and economic development of the City of Norman. (See City Code, Section 19-102).

The proposed changes to the subdivision regulations would require that new or expired plats and new Rural Certificates of Survey designate Water Quality Protection Zones (WQPZ) along streams. As originally presented, a variation process is proposed to allow developers or applicants to reduce the size of these zones upon a showing that specific water quality goals related to phosphorus and nitrogen are being met. With the substitute ordinance, Developers may reduce the WQPZ without going through a variation process, upon a showing that water quality goals are being met and flooding concerns are being addressed.

Zoning Overlay District (O-1011-53): The City's zoning ordinance regulates the use of property. Your existing zoning of your property does not change with these ordinances. The current use of your property does not change either; however, new construction and new developments in areas that aren't already platted or subdivided would be required to follow it. The proposed overlay district would restrict new uses of property within the WQPZ. For example, no structures are allowed in the WQPZ and certain uses, like animal feedlot operations, are restricted within a specified number of feet from the stream. A variance process exists to allow for consideration of uses that would otherwise be prohibited in the WQPZ.

NOTE: This ordinance was removed from consideration by the Planning Commission on June 23, 2011.

4. What is a Water Quality Protection Zone?

A vegetative strip of land along a stream.

5. How wide is the proposed Water Quality Protection Zone?

Generally speaking, the WQPZ is typically a strip of land on a larger parcel that abuts a stream. The WQPZ is the greater of the following:

- 100 feet in width measured from the top of the stream bank out on either side of the stream
- The width of the 100 year floodplain established by the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA)
- The width of land adjacent to streams that would be covered with water in the event a 100 year flooding event occurred during a time when all property within the watershed has been fully built out in accordance with the current Norman Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan (Stream Planning Corridor or SPC)

As noted, the width can be reduced if water quality goals are being met and flooding concerns are being addressed.

6. What property in the Lake Thunderbird Watershed would be affected by these proposed ordinances?

Subdivision Regulation Amendments (O-1011-52): The proposed amendment to the subdivision regulations is not retroactive. The new regulations would only affect property that:

- Is platted/developed in the future,
- Is located in the Lake Thunderbird Watershed, and
- Contains a stream or designated floodplain

Zoning Overlay District (O-1011-53): The proposed overlay district is not applicable to current uses of property in the Lake Thunderbird Watershed. The overlay district would only affect property:

- On which there is proposed new construction or new development on property not already platted or filed as a Norman Rural Certificate of Survey or lot of record;
- Is located in the Lake Thunderbird Watershed; and
- Contains a stream or designated floodplain

NOTE: This ordinance was removed from consideration by Planning Commission on June 23, 2011.

7. Do these proposed ordinances impose a new rate or tax on my property?

No. Taxes and utility rates in the City of Norman can only be imposed by a vote of the people.

8. Do these ordinances require me to dedicate any property to the City?

No. Drainage easements for the designated Water Quality Protection Zone are required by the amendments to the Subdivision Regulations for new or expired preliminary plats and Norman Rural Certificates of Survey to allow the City access in the future for maintenance of streams and flood control efforts. As a property owner, you retain title to your property and are not required to provide any access to the general public to the Water Quality Protection Zone.

9. When is the Planning Commission meeting?

Thursday, June 23, 2011 at 6:30pm in the Council Chambers in the City Municipal Building at 201 W. Gray Street.

10. When will these ordinances be considered by the City Council?

Tuesday, June 28, 2011 at 6:30pm in the Council Chambers in the City Municipal Building at 201 W. Gray Street.

11. Where can I find more information?

In addition to the information on the website, copies of the ordinances and map can also be obtained from:

- the City of Norman Planning and Public Works Departments, as well as from the City Clerk's office located at 201 W. Gray
- Norman Public Library located at 225 N. Webster, and
- Norman Chamber of Commerce located at 115 E. Gray.