Sensitive Areas and Mineral Resources Element

Introduction

The Economic Growth, Resource Protection and Planning Act of 1992 requires all comprehensive plans in the state of Maryland to include a Sensitive Areas element that describes, at minimum, protection for streams and stream buffers, the 100-year floodplain, steep slopes, and the habitats of threatened or endangered species. The Planning Act also requires a mineral resources element. This chapter describes environmental resources in Hagerstown, and establishes policies to balance the City's growth management goals with environmental considerations.

Goals

1. Continue to recognize and protect sensitive areas.

Sensitive Areas

Antietam Creek, shown in Figure 10-1, is Hagerstown's primary stream. More than three-quarters of the City's land area, and more than half of the land in the Medium-Range Growth Area are in the Antietam Creek watershed. Other portions of the City and Medium-Range Growth Area are in the Conococheague Creek and St. James Run watersheds. Hamilton Run and Marsh Run, both tributaries to Antietam Creek, also run through the City and the Medium-Range Growth Area. All of the streams in and around Hagerstown drain into the Potomac River.

Table 10-1 lists the amount of wetland and floodplain found in the City of Hagerstown and the Medium-Range Growth Area. As shown in Figure 10-1, floodplains are generally found along Antietam Creek and its tributaries (especially Hamilton Run and Marsh Run[1] outside the City), while wetlands are typically found near waterways and ponds. Figure 10-2 shows slopes greater than 15 percent in and around Hagerstown. Most steep slopes are found along the banks of Antietam Creek.

The Floodplain Management chapter of the City Code prohibits or heavily restricts most development in the 100-year floodplain. As a result, existing development near Antietam Creek is limited. Portions of some residential neighborhoods and individual lots along Hamilton Run are near or in the 100-year floodplain, and Longmeadow Shopping Center sits atop a segment of Hamilton Run.

Buffers around streams and wetlands filter and reduce the velocity of runoff from development. Hagerstown's zoning and subdivision ordinances do not require buffers wider than the 25' buffer already mandated by the state Nontidal Wetlands Act of 1989. The existing state law applies to all wetlands, including creeks, streams, and other bodies of water. In Hagerstown, nearly all development is at least 25 feet from the banks of

[1] There are two waterways in and around Hagerstown named "Marsh Run". This reference indicates the waterway that joins Antietam Creek near the intersection of Antietam Drive and Security Road

Antietam Creek, Hamilton Run, and other nontidal wetlands. Marsh Run[2] is almost entirely channelized within the City, and thus has no buffer or floodplain. Portions of the buffer zones around Antietam Creek and its tributaries are forested, which improves the effectiveness of buffer zones.

Table 10-1: Wetlands and Floodplains

Facility	Acreage in City	Portion of City Land Area (7,321 acres)	Acreage in Medium-Range Growth Area	Portion of Medium-Range Growth Area (14,495 acres)
100-Year Floodplain [a]	362	4.9 %	551	3.8 %
Wetlands [b]	20	0.3 %	40	0.3 %

a: Floodplain mapping was conducted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in 1984 and published in 1996
b: Wetlands were mapped by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources between 1988 and 1995.
Both data sets were acquired online at http://dnrweb.dnr.state.md.us/gis/data/index.html.

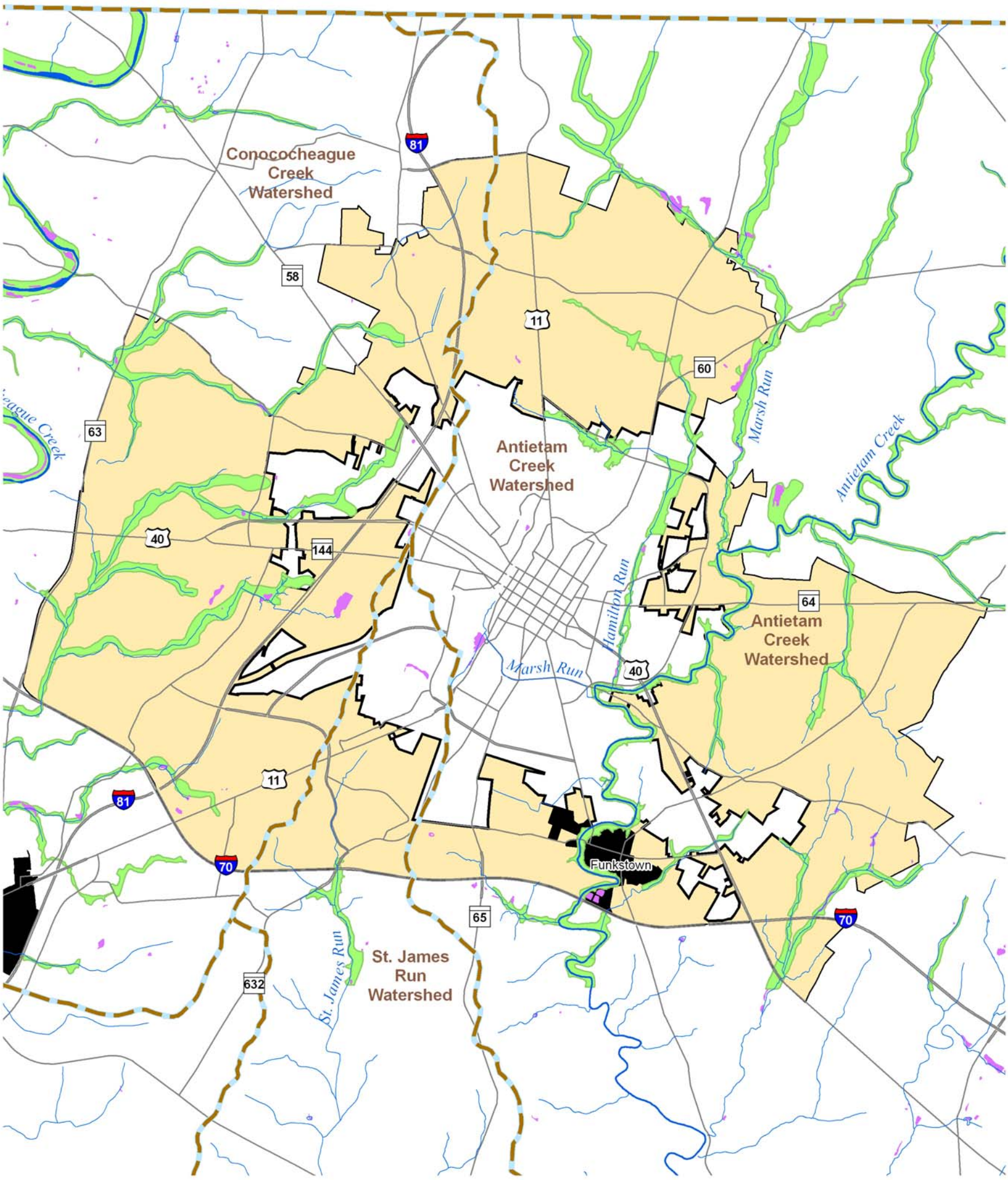
Neither the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' geospatial data center nor the 2002 Washington County Comprehensive Plan (see Map 34) indicates the presence of endangered or threatened species in Hagerstown or the Medium-Range Growth Area.

Hagerstown's Forest Conservation Ordinance protects existing forest and tree stands, and encourages afforestation and reforestation, with the goal of having 20 percent of newly developed land covered by forest or street tree canopy coverage. In recognition of these efforts, Hagerstown has also been a recipient of the National Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA award for more than two decades.

Mineral Resources

The Hagerstown region is underlain primarily with limestone, but mineral extraction does not occur in Hagerstown or in the Medium-Range Growth Area. One active limestone quarry exists outside the growth area, near the Security neighborhood (east of the City, between Marsh Run and Antietam Creek).

[2] This reference to "Marsh Run" indicates the waterway that is adjacent to, or in the middle of, Memorial Boulevard within the City.



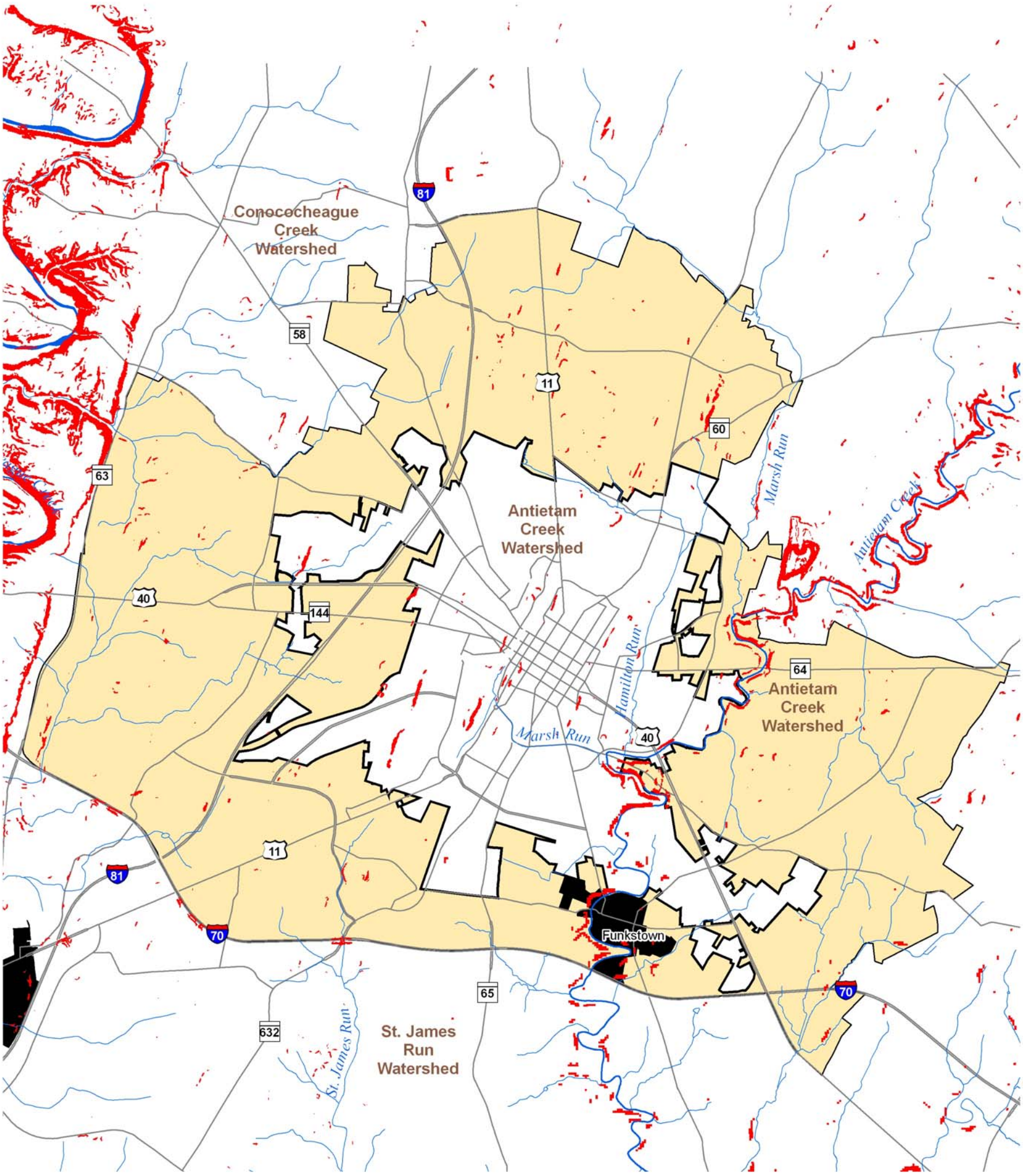
City of Hagerstown Comprehensive Plan

Figure 10-1: Sensitive Areas

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

Legend

- Watershed Boundaries
- Wetlands
- 100-Year Floodplain
- Medium Range Growth Area



City of Hagerstown Comprehensive Plan

Figure 10-2: Steep Slopes

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

Legend

- Slopes Greater than 15%
- 2007 Corporate Boundaries
- Medium Range Growth Area

Sensitive Areas and Mineral Resources Policy

Policy 10-1. New development and redevelopment in Hagerstown and the Medium Range Growth Area will avoid stream buffers and 100-year floodplains.

New development and redevelopment will also avoid steep slopes (greater than 15 percent) where possible. Proper slope stabilization will be required where development or redevelopment on steep-slope areas is desirable.

Sensitive Areas and Mineral Resources Implementation Action

Action 10-1. Develop stream buffer and steep slope regulations to guide future development and redevelopment.

Action 10-2. Encourage the planting of native tree species in stream buffer zones.

Action 10-3. Use the Forest Conservation Ordinance and work cooperatively with landowners and developers to identify priority areas for tree and forest conservation.

Action 10-4. Encourage exploration and use of green building standards and other environmentally friendly development standards where appropriate and feasible.