

Runoff pond at mall leaks, officials say

Barton Square working to fix anti-pollution system

By **Bob Burns**

American-Statesman Staff

Barton Creek Square mall officials say there are problems with their main storm-water runoff detention pond — which was designed to protect Barton Creek from pollution — and are taking steps to fix the structure.

Runoff is bypassing the largest filtration pond, which captures the majority of pollutants from rainfall runoff, said officials with the city's Environmental and Conservation Services Department. There are also problems with some of the drains that are part of the structure.

Mall officials say there is no threat to the environment, although they have no engineering data to back up the statement.

"We believe it's doing its job . . . but we're not able to provide accurate information on that without having engineers test it," said Rick Federmann, director of operations for the mall.

Federmann said that up to 50 percent of pollutants are removed from the mall parking lot by a sweeper truck before they are washed off the property by rainfall.

The issue was raised at Thursday's meeting of the Austin City Council when Austan Librach, director of the Environmental and Conservation Services Department, told the council that city inspectors had found problems with the pond's filtration devices.

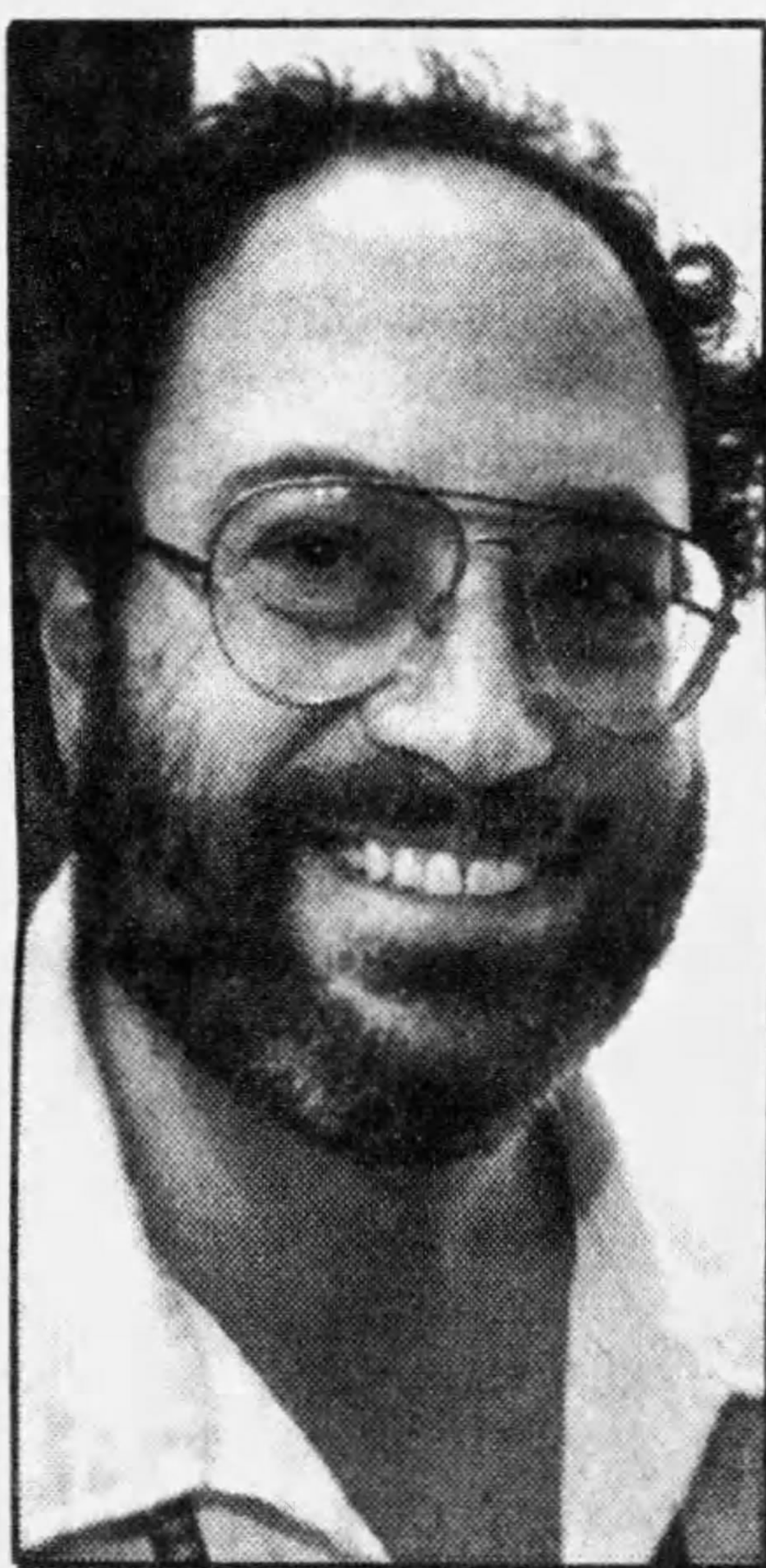
"It's leaking. It is not working well. It does need to be fixed," Librach told the council.

Officials with the environmental department had few additional details about the problems Friday.

"Apparently some or all of the flow in at least one of the ponds . . . is going around the pond," said Chuck Lesniak of the environmental department.

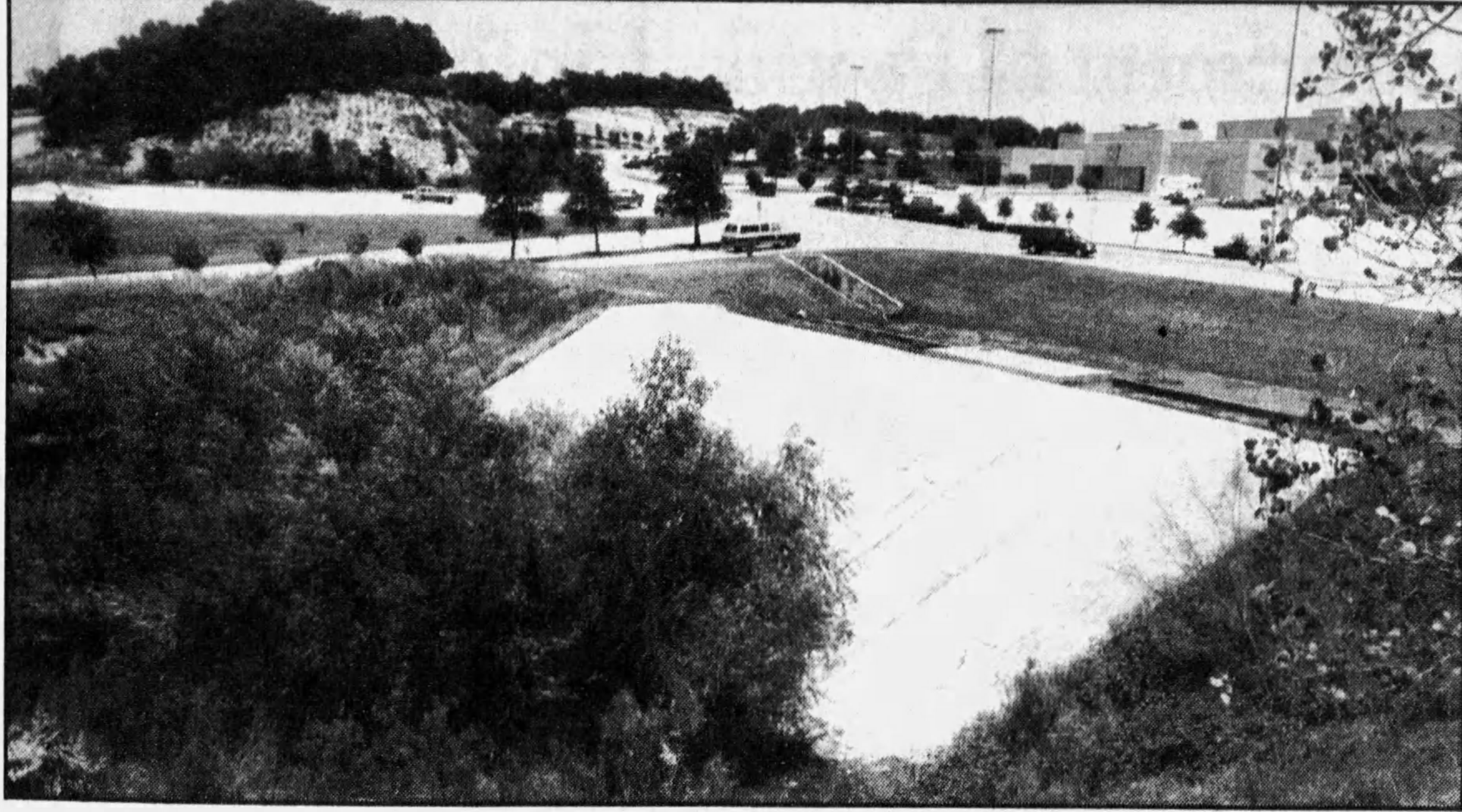
Mall officials have been ordered to fix the problems and have a meeting with city officials to discuss the situation set for this week, Lesniak said.

The problem is with the largest filtration pond, which is near MoPac Boulevard (Loop 1), mall officials said. It is designed to capture most of the runoff



Librach

See Runoff, B3



Staff photo by Tom Lankes

Ponds at Barton Creek Square mall are designed to protect nearby Barton Creek from pollution, capturing

through filtration the majority of pollutants from rainfall runoff. Runoff is bypassing the largest filtration pond.

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Barton Square fixing anti-pollution system

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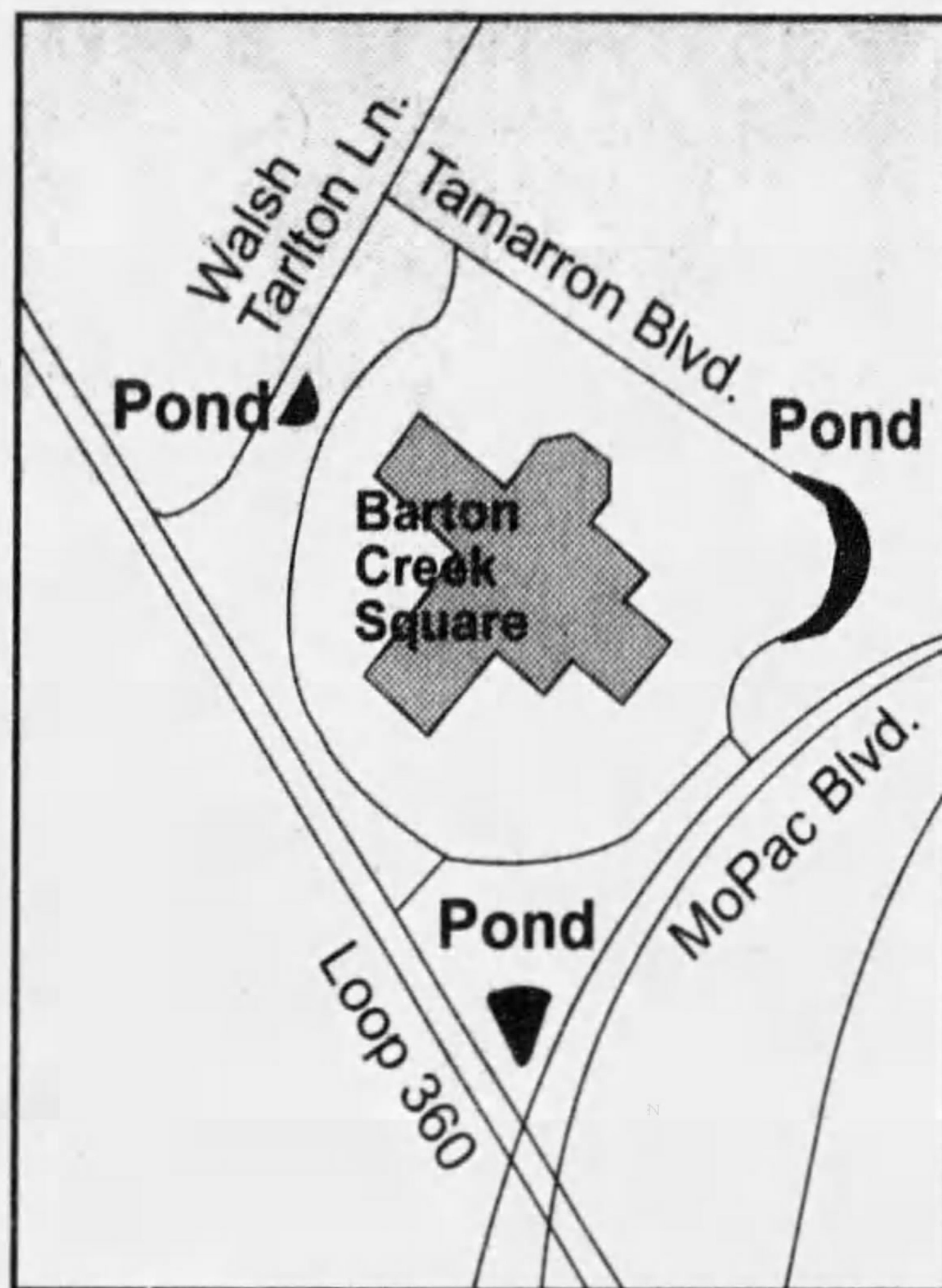
leaving mall property.

Federmann said some caps have been cracked off a French drain under the sand through which water filters. He said that would be fixed by Monday.

They became aware of the problems during annual maintenance inspections of the pond.

The three detention ponds at the mall were state-of-the-art when they were built in 1981, mall officials said. Officials have been trying to keep up with changes in technology by adding things like rock gabion sedimentation bases

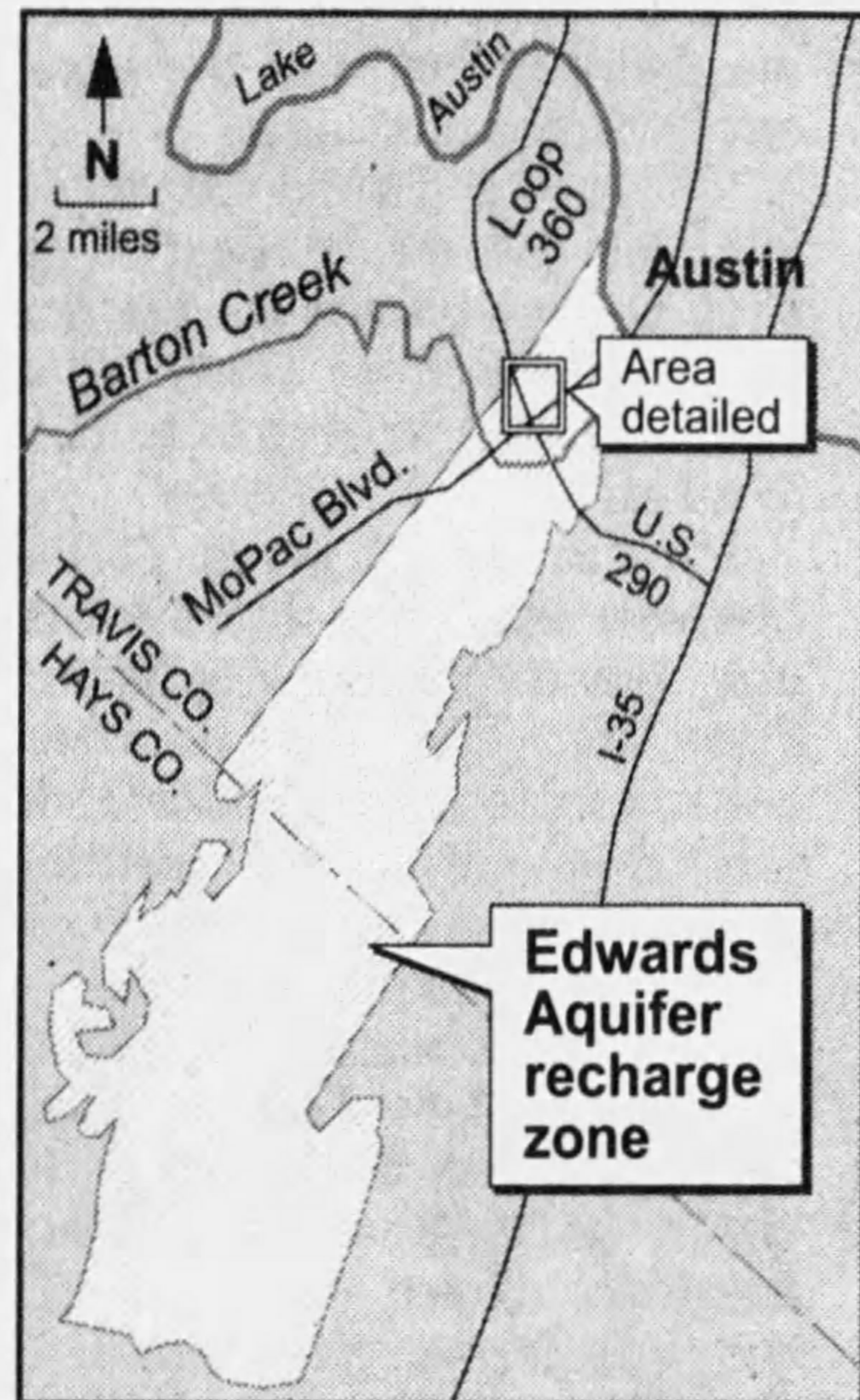
Barton Creek Square storm-water runoff detention ponds



— wire baskets filled with rocks — to improve performance.

The ponds are inspected on a daily basis and annual maintenance is performed on them every summer.

“When the pond was originally



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built, it was either the first or one of the first ponds built in this city, so it was a time of exploration for everybody,” said Federmann. “We are doing what we can to maintain the ponds in as good or better shape than when they were built.”