

Memorandum

DATE: March 18, 2024
TO: Victoria MPO
CC:
FROM: ATG|DCCM
RE: Environmental, Cultural, and Historic Asset Analysis

Introduction

The transportation system interacts closely with the natural and cultural landscape. For one, roadways and active transportation facilities provide access to and between historic sites, cultural assets, natural spaces, and other critical places of interest. In addition, transportation facilities have the potential to negatively impact natural resources such as wetlands, habitats, and historic places. For this reason, the project team has conducted a spatial analysis to better understand the environmental, cultural, and historic assets that exist within the Victoria MPO MTP study area of Victoria County.

Hydrological Features

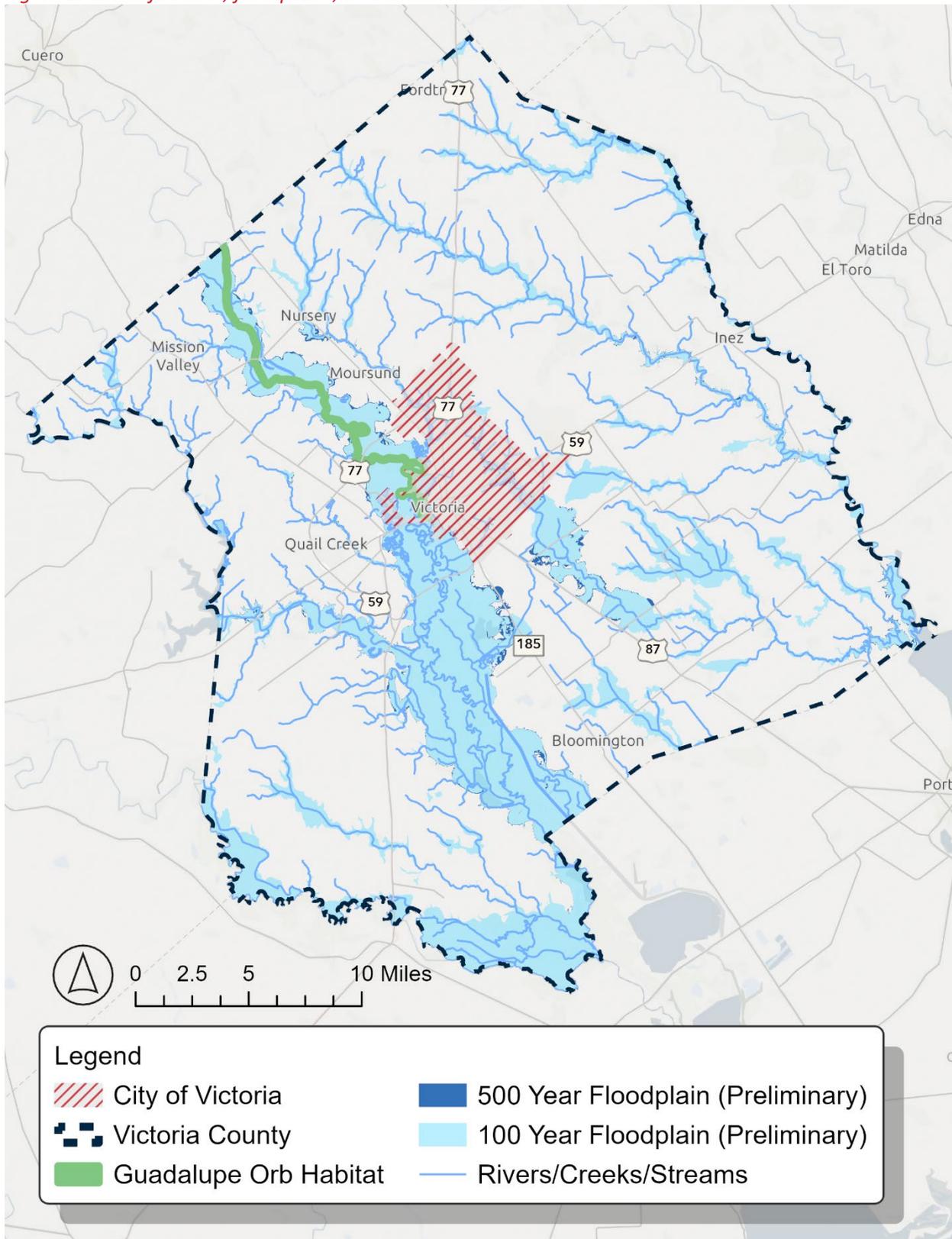
Figure 1 shows hydrological features such as rivers, creeks, and floodplains. Additionally, waterways in the study area are the habitat of the Guadalupe Orb (*Cyclonaias necki*), a rare species of mussel. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) proposed that the Guadalupe Orb be designated and listed as endangered in 2021.¹ This mussel is distributed through Kerr, Kendall, Comal, Guadalupe, Caldwell, Gonzales, DeWitt, and Victoria counties. Critical habitat for this species is present along the Guadalupe River within the northwestern portion of the study area.

As shown in Figure 1, there are numerous creeks and streams throughout the study area, with the Guadalupe River running across the county, southwest of the City of Victoria. Due to the presence of the river and other creeks, large portions of the study area lie within the 100- and 500-year floodplains. Flood data in the map comes from the City of Victoria GIS Map Viewer website, which shows FEMA's 2022 Preliminary National Flood Hazard Layer (NFHL). According to a FEMA press release from January 2024, new flood maps for Victoria County have been finalized and will become effective on July 17, 2024.² It is also important to note the study area's proximity to the Gulf of Mexico, which makes it susceptible to flooding from storm surges. The transportation system provides mobility around hydrological features and access to associated recreational opportunities, but also must account for evacuation away from natural hazards.

¹ <https://www.gbra.org/news/2022/03/guadalupe-orb/>

² <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20240117/victoria-county-texas-flood-maps-become-final>

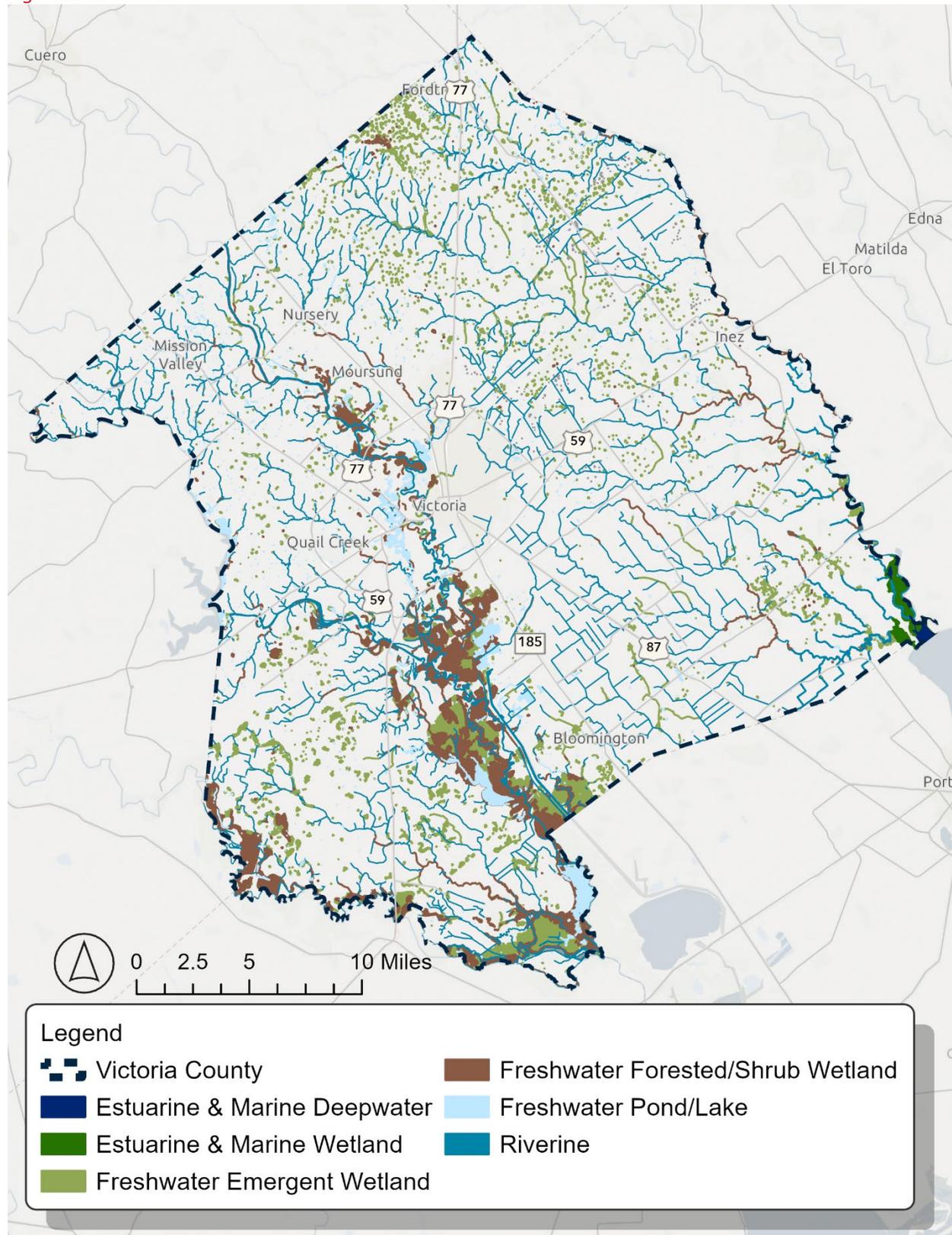
Figure 1: Water features, floodplains, and critical habitat



Sources: City of Victoria GIS Map Viewer (FEMA 2022 Preliminary NFHL) and US National Fish and Wildlife Service (habitat data)

Figure 2 shows wetland ecosystems in the study area based on the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory. Estuarine, marine, freshwater emergent, and freshwater forested/shrub wetlands can be found throughout the study area, especially towards the south and southeast. Wetlands support many aquatic and terrestrial species and play an essential role in storm surge and stormwater runoff management. Transportation projects listed in the 2050 MTP should consider possible impacts and mitigation strategies to ensure protection for wetlands in the region.

Figure 2: Wetlands



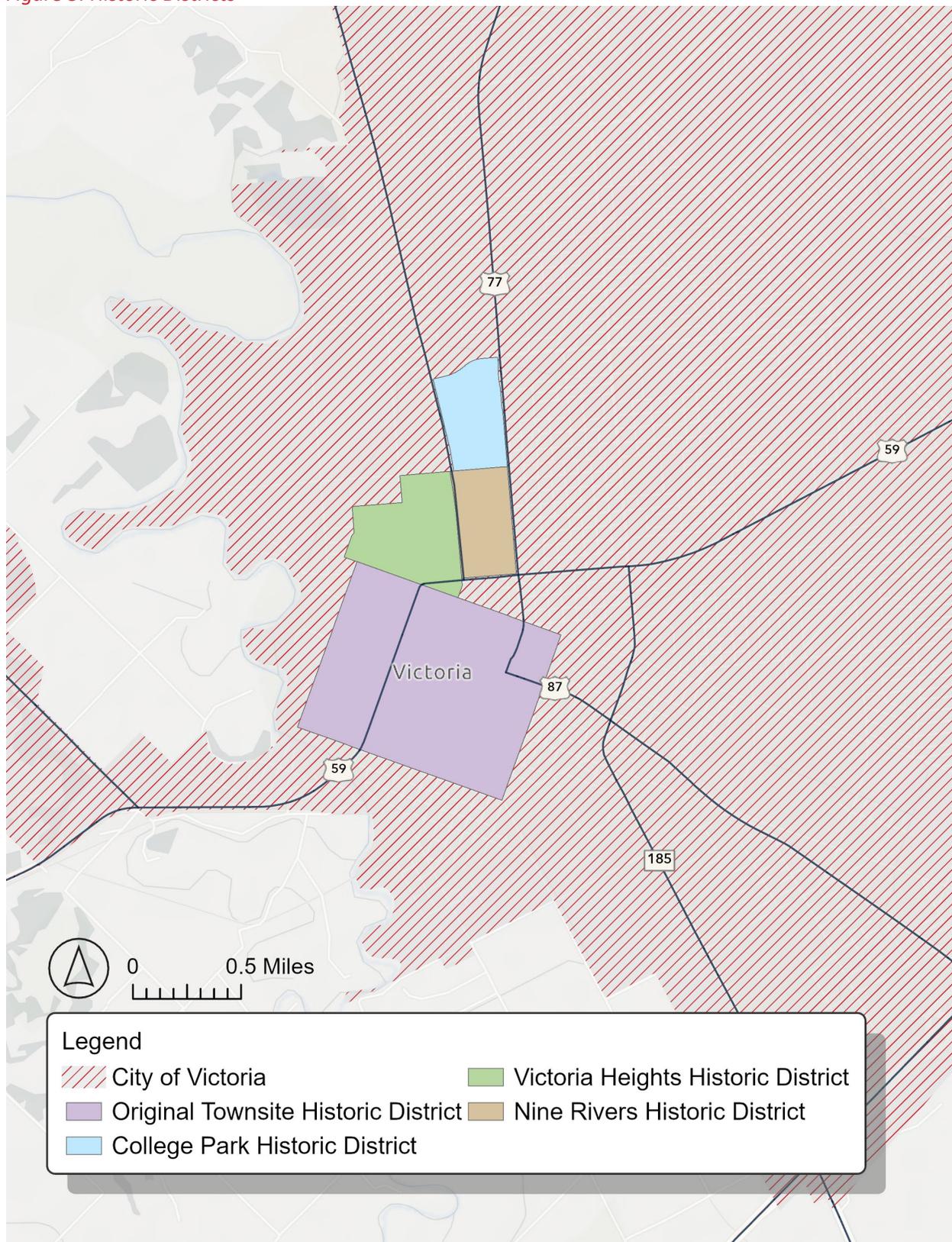
Source: National Wetlands Inventory (NWI)

Historic and Cultural Assets

The City of Victoria is important to the history of the state. Historic buildings and districts preserve the character of the past and ensure that future generations have the opportunity to observe foundational parts of the city. As shown in Figure 3, the area around downtown Victoria contains several historic districts. The Original Townsite Historic District is bounded by North Street, East Street, West Street, and W Water Street. This area contains buildings from the mid-19th century and on, such as the Victoria County Courthouse (1892) and numerous historic houses and churches. The area around downtown Victoria contains three additional historic districts which abut each other and are generally located between Rio Grande Street to the south and Airline Road to the north.

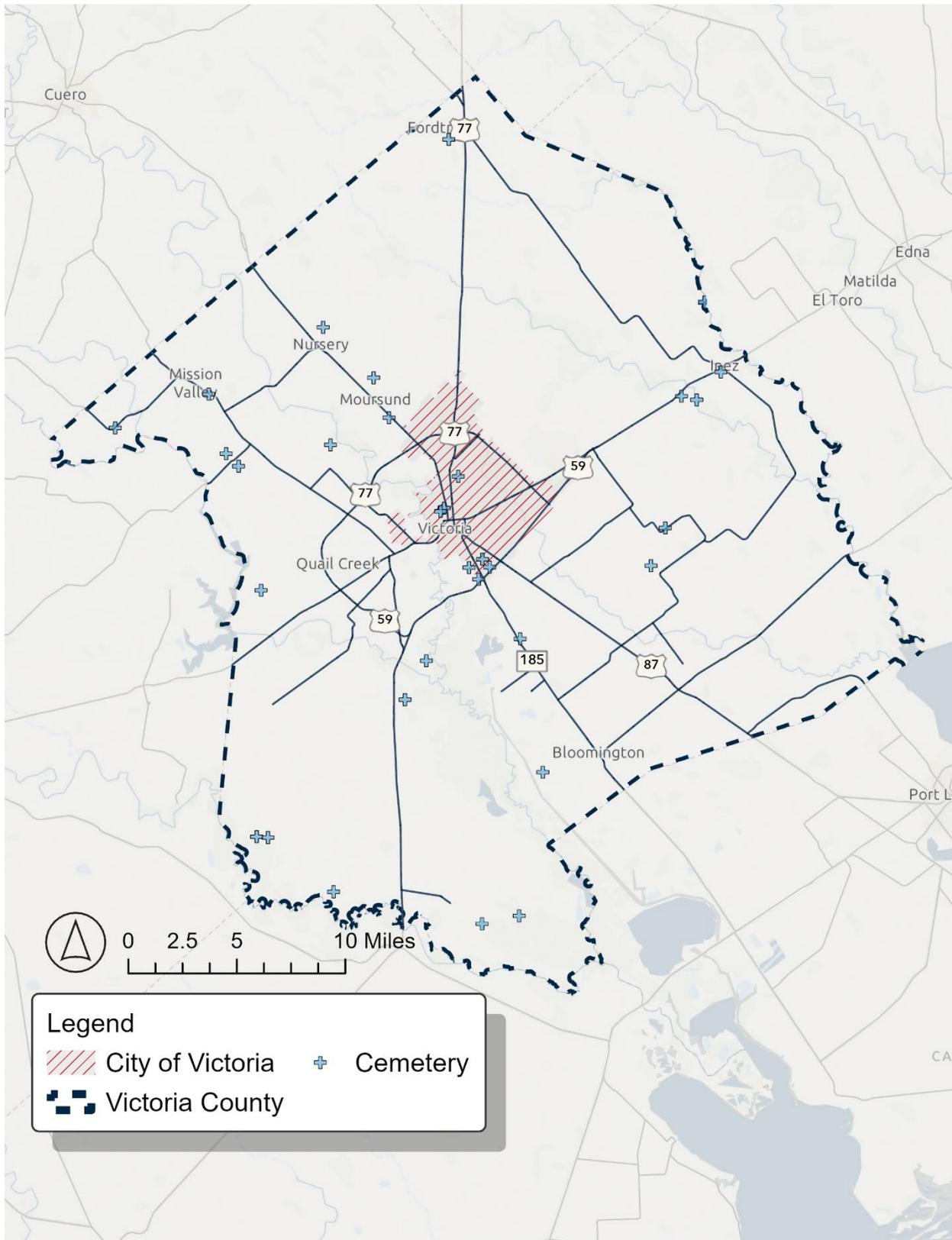
Figure 4 shows the cemeteries within Victoria County, which are also important community and historic spaces. Memorial Park Cemetery, for example, contains the graves of over 230 individuals and Texas soldiers that were interred around the 1840s.

Figure 3: Historic Districts



Source: City of Victoria GIS Map Viewer

Figure 4: Cemeteries



Source: TxDOT Open Data Portal

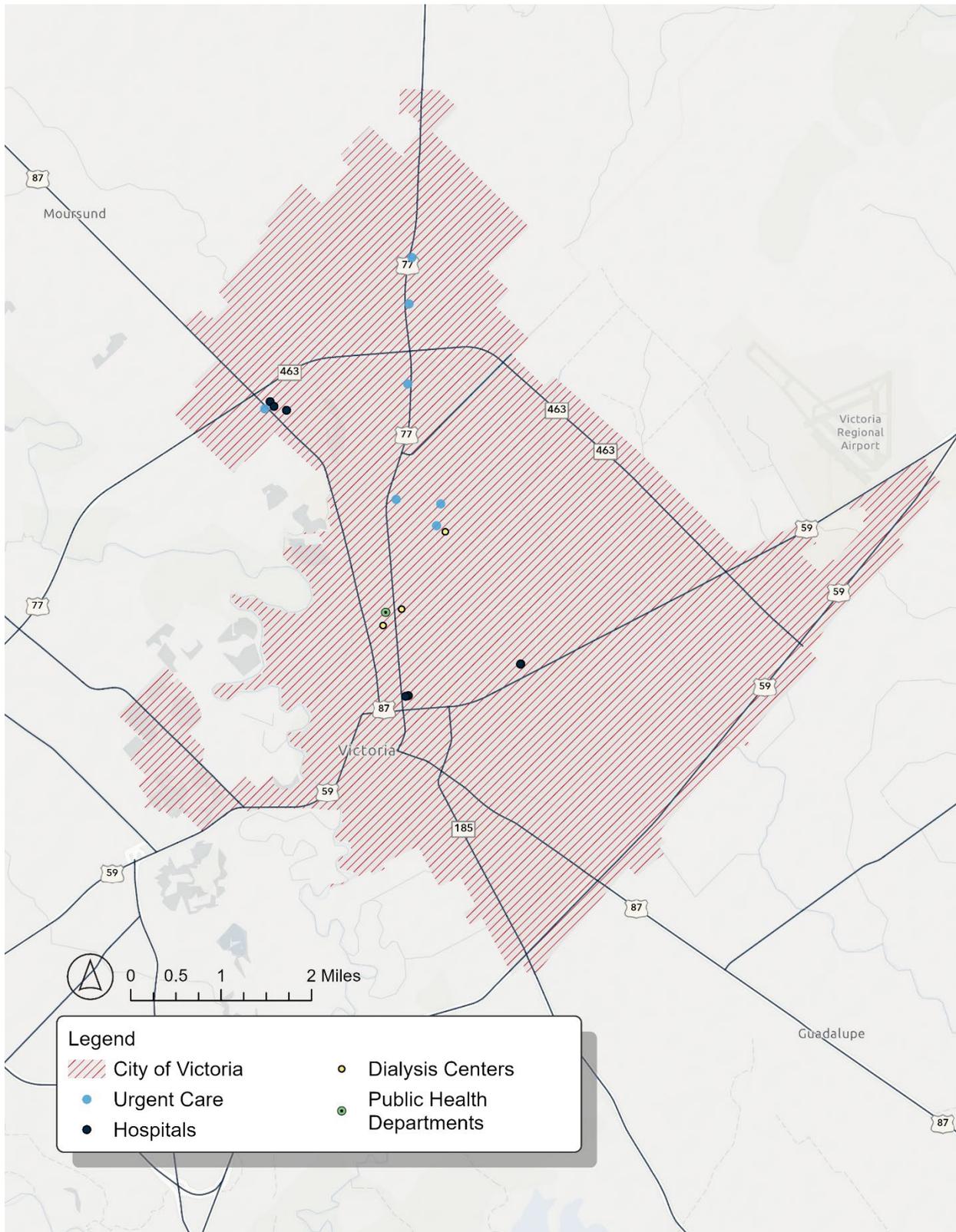
Other Points of Interest

Figure 5 through Figure 8 illustrate other points of interest within the study area. In addition to environmental, historical, and cultural sites, these locations are examples of other places that should receive consideration for transportation projects. The maps show the following features, using data from FEMA's Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT):

- Healthcare locations: hospitals, urgent care, public health departments, and dialysis centers
- Public safety: fire departments and law enforcement
- Schools: public, private, and universities/colleges
- Other: nursing homes, mobile homes, SNAP retailers

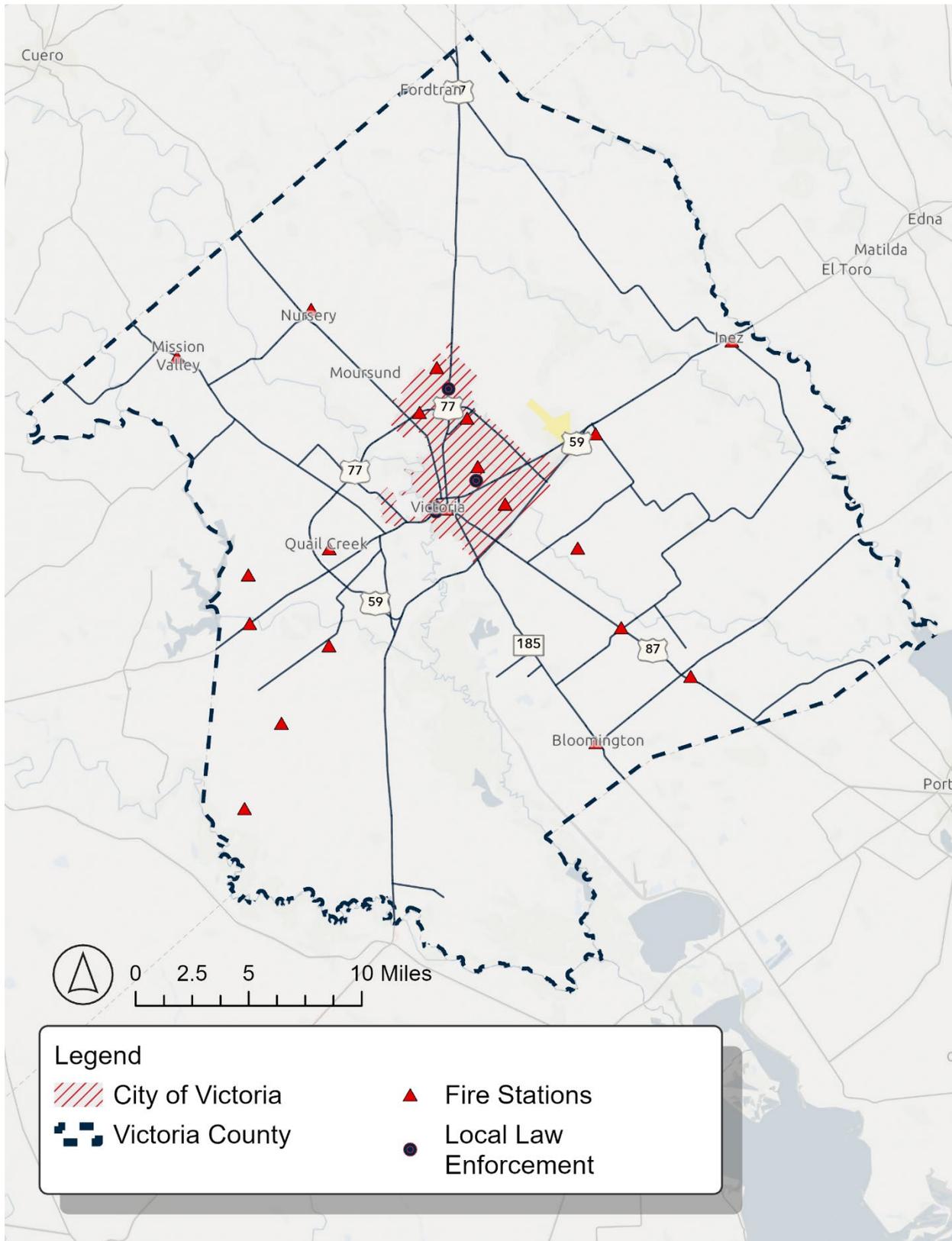
Accessibility to each of these sites through the multimodal transportation system benefits the study area as a whole.

Figure 5: Healthcare



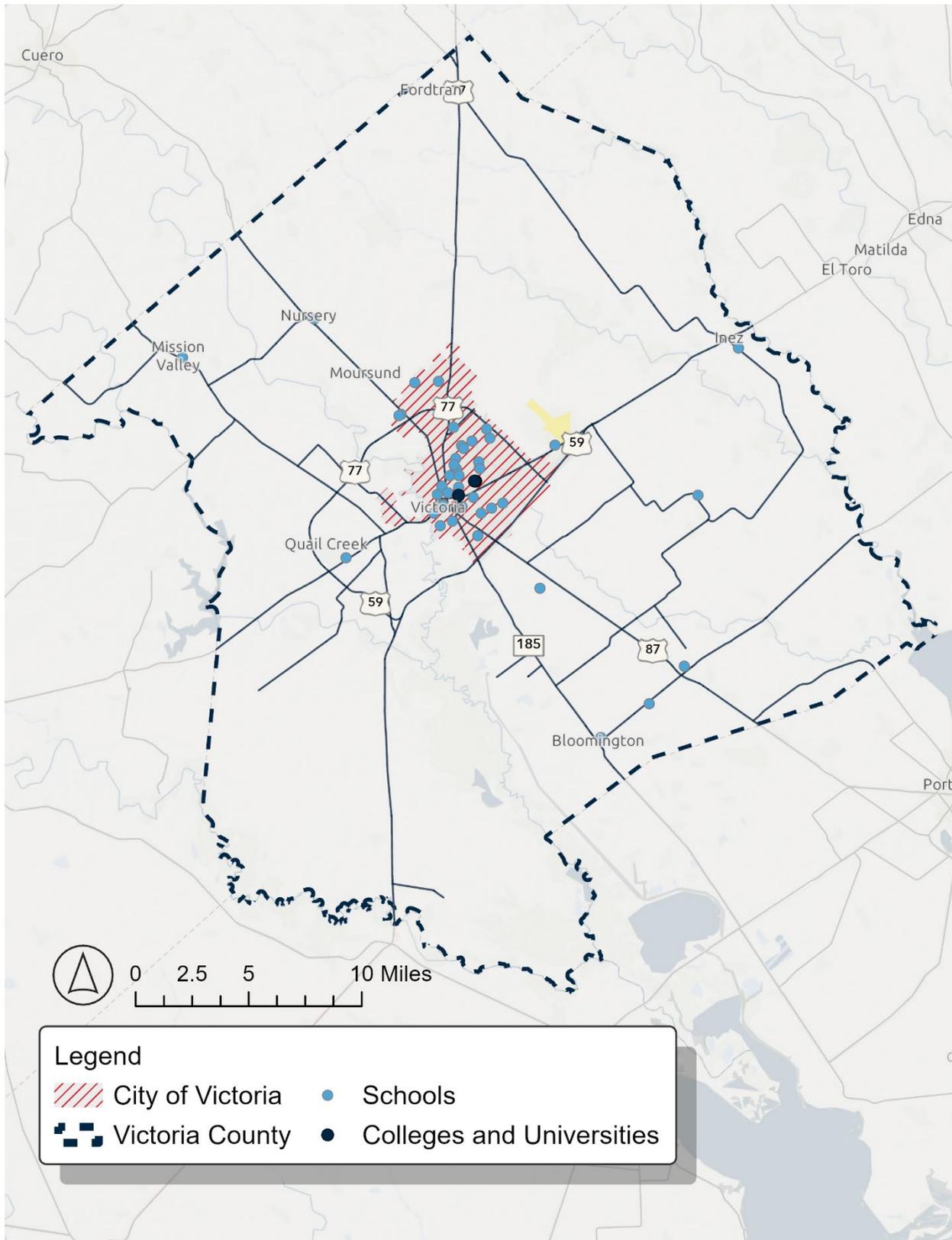
Source: FEMA Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT)

Figure 6: Fire Stations and Law Enforcement



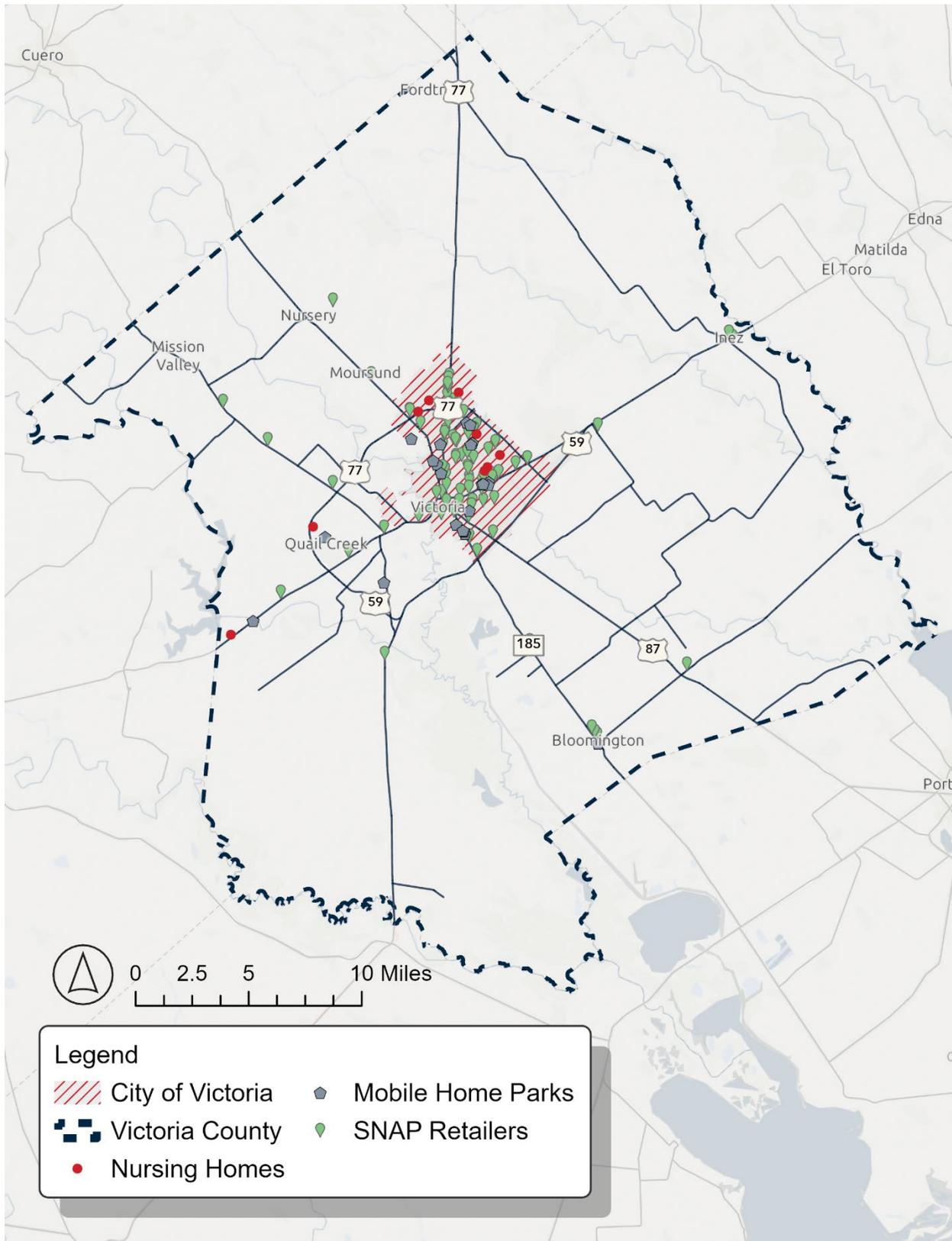
Source: FEMA Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT)

Figure 7: Schools and Universities



Source: FEMA Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT)

Figure 8: Other Points of Interest



Source: FEMA Resilience Analysis and Planning Tool (RAPT)