

Dear Readers,

On Thursday June 12, 2008, the Parks and Open Space Committee wasn't the only committee disbanded by the Helotes City Council. The Forestry Committee suffered the same fate as the Parks and Open Space Committee. Alderman Cynthia Massey and Mayor Pro Tem Jeff Ellis placed an item on the agenda to repeal the Helotes Tree Ordinance that was enacted in 2006. The Helotes City Council unanimously passed the agenda item thereby immediately disbanding the Forestry Committee and rolling back protections given to the magnificent trees for which Helotes is known.

The 2006 Tree Ordinance was based on ordinances from the cities of Bulverde and San Antonio and enacted to protect Helotes from uncontrolled and unlimited tree removal such as had been experienced at the Hearthstone development. The 2006 Tree Ordinance also expanded the protections afforded to trees that had previously not been protected, both in terms of size and variety. Protecting a greater diversity of trees insures a community will not be denuded of trees should a blight wipe out an area which has a limited diversity of trees, something that could happen if oak wilt spread through those parts of Helotes with only live oaks.

At a time when other municipalities are strengthening protections provided to trees, Helotes has taken the unfortunate action to roll back protections. Developers and builders who appreciate a balanced community are stunned by this latest action. They clearly understand that gutting the Tree Ordinance greatly devalues the value of their investments. Sadly, others do not. In the short time since the ordinance was repealed, a number of majestic oaks on Bandera Rd have been removed, all for the expediency and ease of ill-advised construction choices.

Sincerely,  
Ron Green, President  
Helotes Heritage Association