

News from the Helotes Heritage Association

Dear Readers,

I want to forward the following alert sent by GEAA (Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance). The referenced bill would curtail one of the few opportunities that neighborhoods have to secure parks and open spaces. Please contact your legislators in Austin and voice your opposition to this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Ron Green
HHA, President

Oppose HB 2403

Real Estate Transfer Fees are increasingly being used to fund open space acquisition and affordable housing programs. Every time a house sells the buyer pays a specific percentage of the sales price into a fund. Nonprofit groups use the fund to purchase open space to mitigate the impacts of development or to support the construction of low-cost housing.

They are used to more fairly apportion the cost of amenity centers, parks, etc., among the homeowners who will be using them over the next 30 years, instead of placing the entire burden on the initial homebuyers. This trend is just now catching on in Texas, but it has spread rapidly in other states.

Realtors are seeking to ban such fees through HB 2403, claiming the additional cost creates a barrier to the sale of homes. Some regulation to this new funding approach may be warranted and deserve review, such as a cap on fees, required disclosure of transfer fees, and ensured responsible controls on transfer fees (such as requiring funds be used on projects within fifty miles of community). However, an outright ban would eliminate a valuable tool for protecting open space and creating more affordable housing and should be rejected.

A similar bill in the California legislature died in committee after failing to win a single vote. Environmental Groups, Builders, Developers and Affordable Housing Proponents teamed together to oppose the California bill. However, unlike California, where there was vigorous open debate, these Texas bills have slipped under the radar.

Please oppose HB 2403.

For more information, contact Luke Metzger at 512-479-0388 or luke@environmenttexas.org.