

News from the Helotes Heritage Association

Dear Readers,

Last Thursday there were two important issues on the City of San Antonio City Council agenda that affect the density and type of development over the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone. The issues were whether to rezone an area near the Rim and the Kyle Seale area at 1604 and Hausman Rd from residential to commercial. The vote on the Rim property was postponed until more information regarding the potential impact the rezoning would have on Camp Bullis can be gathered.

Unfortunately, the San Antonio City Council voted in favor of rezoning the Kyle Seale property to commercial. Voting against the rezoning were Patti Radle, Mary Alice Cisneros, and Mayor Hardberger. The zoning will allow for the construction of big box stores and higher density development over the recharge zone. The only minor victory was that impervious cover was capped at 50% rather than 65%.

Following is a statement that was read by HHA in opposition to the proposed Kyle Seale rezoning. With so little undeveloped recharge zone land remaining in Bexar County, it was unfortunate the San Antonio City Council could not have demonstrated more vision for the Edwards Aquifer. It is critical that every effort need to be taken to protect this precious, yet vulnerable, resource.

Sincerely,
Ron Green
HHA, President

Statement submitted at the
City of San Antonio City Council Meeting
Thursday, June 21, 2007

The San Antonio City Council is to vote today whether to rezone property near the intersection of Hausman and 1604 from residential to commercial. The Helotes Heritage Association can understand why some private interests want to see land located in the 1604 corridor zoned to allow for heavy commercial development. The problem with this is that the land in question is located squarely in the middle of the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone.

The proposed C-2 commercial zoning would allow for big box stores such as a Lowes or a WalMart. These enterprises sell pesticides, herbicides, solvents, and similar products and store large amounts of these toxins on their premises. Under ideal conditions, these products are handled responsibly and pose no threat to the environment. However, ideal conditions are not always achieved. From time to time, poor practices result in these toxins washed off site where they can get into streambeds and then into the groundwater.

The greatest threat from these types of commercial enterprises, however, is not from day-to-day practices; it comes from catastrophic events such as fires. Too sadly, we learned what threats we face when we have a serious fire over the recharge zone. Fortunately we only got some soot in the Edwards Aquifer from the Helotes mulch fire and it cleared out in a few days.

What would happen if a big box store built over the recharge zone were to catch fire? The amount of water required to battle a fire in a 200,000 sq ft big box store would fill on-site detention ponds

in less than 30 minutes. That means you better snuff out the fire in a half hour or let it burn and in either case hope no toxins are washed off site. Because if the fire is over the recharge zone, those toxins would be washed directly into the Edwards Aquifer.

And these toxins are serious business. They would not simply degrade the smell and taste of groundwater like soot. These toxins are carcinogens and when they enter the Edwards Aquifer, they will be there for a long, long time. Because of this, HHA strongly opposes rezoning the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone to allow for businesses that handle pesticides, herbicides, solvents, and other toxins.

Twice the taxpayers of San Antonio stepped forward and pledged 10s of millions of tax dollars for Prop 3 and Prop 1 to protect the Edwards Aquifer contributing and recharge zones. However, property values in Bexar County are so dear the SET Committee has been forced to go to Medina and Uvalde counties to find recharge zone land that's affordable.

Today, this honorable chamber has an opportunity to walk with their constituents and take a giant step to protect this valuable resource and to do it without spending millions of dollars. We ask this chamber to deny rezoning the recharge zone of the Edwards Aquifer that would allow for this inappropriate use of our land.

Sincerely,
Ron Green, PhD, President
Helotes Heritage Association