

Comments for City Council on Tree Ordinance May 6, 2010

It seems that every few years City Council requires a large group of people to take off work and come down to Council Chambers to voice what should be obvious to all of you. We want our air, our water, and our trees protected.

San Antonio is one of the few major cities in America that does not employ a Director of Planning to advocate for rational and sustainable development. Instead, planning staff resides under the Department of Development Services, whose mission is to facilitate development. So, is it any wonder that we have debacles like the sliding homes of Rivermist and Mirasol Homes. We rely on our City government to protect our well being and quality of life, only to find that we have been repeatedly let down.

While you are to be applauded for many recent efforts, you should also be very concerned when a representative of one of San Antonio's major employers, the US Army, regularly comes before the Planning and Zoning commissions to advocate measures to facilitate operations at Camp Bullis and finds that his voice falls on deaf ears. Instead, these bodies favor the opinions, no matter how self serving and unsubstantiated, of the building and real estate industries.

San Antonio has the worst tree preservation ordinance of any major city in Texas. We think we deserve better. I urge you to, at the very least, amend the ordinance before you to require 55% tree canopy cover on the Edwards Aquifer Recharge, Transition and Contributing zones.

Of course, the most fool proof way of protecting the aquifer and trees is by purchasing land and development rights. So, I also urge you to approve item 16 on the agenda – a resolution to reauthorize the dedication of 1/8 cent sales tax for aquifer preservation. Thank you.