



Request for Coverage

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City Council to Consider Controversial Steubing Ranch Rezoning

When: Thursday, October 1, 2009 after 2:00 pm (Item Z17 on the agenda)

Where: City Council Chambers

What: Steubing Ranch Rezoning Request Z2009076 – ERZD

Nearly 400 acres contiguous to Camp Bullis will be discussed at San Antonio City Council this Thursday as [a request for rezoning](#) that would compromise current protections to allow for more intensive urban development. Developers of the Steubing Ranch, near US 281 and Loop 1604, wish to construct a mixed commercial/residential development. The [Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance](#) (GEAA), and our member groups including [AGUA](#), will be urging City Council to postpone or deny this request for rezoning. Also of concern for the US Army is the fact that US Fish and Wildlife has not yet approved the endangered species survey submitted by the developers.

In July of 2009 the City Zoning Commission approved Kestrel Development's bid to build a mixed-use development on Steubing Ranch, Bexar County's last large tract of open land, despite pleas from nearby residents and Fort Sam Houston environmental attorney Jim Cannizzo. As of this date, US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) is waiting on supplemental information requested from the developers before making a recommendation regarding endangered species habitat on this site. US Army officials have informed us that they will not withdraw their objections to the development until the USFWS completes its recommendations.

According to a San Antonio Express News article¹ dated 7/30/09, "San Antonio District 9 City Councilwoman Elisa Chan said she wouldn't sign off on a zoning change for Stone Oak's contested 390-acre Steubing Ranch development until traffic and **military concerns** are addressed." The project lies within Ms. Chan's District 9.

GEAA and AGUA have sent a request to Councilwoman Elisa Chan to postpone consideration of this item until the following concerns are addressed:

- Developers want a large **increase in allowable impervious cover**. Currently, the tract is limited to 30%, and the applicants are asking for 43%. This is well above the level where water quality degradation occurs.
- **Endangered species surveys** produced by the developer have not been approved by US Fish and Wildlife Service, despite requests by the Army. The land is in an area that is habit for golden cheek warblers and karst invertebrates².
- SAWS has identified several sensitive geologic features and a significant fault on the property. Such features are **direct conduits into our drinking water supply**.

GEAA has also submitted recommendations as to how these concerns might be resolved and has expressed willingness to work with the developer towards this result.

¹ Scrutiny tightens on Steubing Ranch plan in Stone Oak
http://www.mysanantonio.com/community/north_central/Scrutiny_tightens_on_Steubing_Ranch_plan_in_Stone_Oak.html

² Site Maps showing warbler and karst invertebrate habitat
<http://www.aquiferalliance.org/AquiferAllianceWebUtilities/LibraryInitiatives.aspx>



**Steubing Ranch – City of San Antonio Zoning Case Number Z2009076 – ERZD
City Council Agenda Item Z 17, October 1, 2009**

After reviewing the case and speaking with Texas Commission on Environmental Quality Region 13 office, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the case manager at the City of San Antonio, and the U.S. Army representative, the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance (GEAA) and Aquifer Guardians in Urban Areas (AGUA) offer the following recommendations regarding the request for rezoning the 389 acre Steubing ranch:

- Postpone the case until the USFWS Austin comes to a conclusion and is able to advise on the results of the submitted endangered species survey. As of September 28, 2009 USFWS Austin is waiting on requested supplemental documentation. The Army is waiting for USFWS conclusion to make any recommendations. Optimal outcome would be for the open space to be designated a preserve and designed consistent with Recovery Plan guidelines.
- Another reason to postpone is that the recommendation for approval by San Antonio Water System (SAWS) was made without the review of a proper Water Pollution Abatement Plan, using a Geological Assessment completed by the engineering firm hired by the developer and despite city staff recommending denial.

No solution is offered by SAWS in regard to hydrocarbon contamination; we recommend implementing Low Impact Development (LID) practices for street and parking lot design, and prohibiting the use of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon (PAH) seal coat on all paved areas. LID practices will provide an increase in property values as a benefit to homeowners and surrounding neighborhoods, an incidental reduction in impervious cover without loss of parking spaces, a benefit to the City in reducing storm water volume channeled into the Municipal Storm Sewer system, a reduction in infrastructure costs to the developer, and more habitat preserved for endangered species on the site.

In the SAWS summary there is a section titled General Concerns that lists two items: contamination by hydrocarbons and pesticide use. The SAWS recommendation is for the seller to inform the purchaser in writing about Best Management Practices found in guides published by the Edwards Aquifer Authority and/or the US Natural Resource Conservation Service. A further measure of protection is necessary; our recommendation is using the Integrated Pest Management site-wide. The seller may list this in the deed restrictions for individual, multi-family and commercial lots.

These recommendations fit the original intent of the Neighborhood Preservation District zoning and represent a compromise for moving toward the new Master Planned Community Development zoning designation. Earlier this year similar recommendations were made to a proposed development on the Recharge Zone and the owners, American Campus Communities, the engineers, Bury and Partners, and the attorneys Drenner & Golden Stuart Wolff were amenable and agreed to the recommendations in spite of having all the plans drawn up already. This is a good example of development being responsive to the City and putting forth their best effort. Their feedback was positive and they stated that their client was happy because the zoning was approved and implementing GEAA's recommendations saved them money. Please contact Mr. Stephen Drenner if you would like to speak about that case. His number is 512-404-2201 or 210-745-3701. His email is sdrenner@drennergolden.com.