

177-acre housing development planned near Circle C

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<http://www.statesman.com/news/local/177-acre-housing-development-planned-near-circle-c-2030842.html>

City and county officials have given the go-ahead on a preliminary plan for a 177-acre residential development near the intersection of MoPac Boulevard (Loop 1) and Texas 45 Southwest about two years after a controversial mixed-use project at the same site fell apart as developers sought City Council approval.

The Greyrock Ridge development, formerly known as Wildflower Commons, will be built near Circle C Ranch in an environmentally sensitive area that is partly within Austin's city limits. Environmental groups oppose the project's construction over the recharge zone of the Barton Springs portion of Edwards Aquifer and say it will create traffic problems on the southern end of MoPac.

Representatives for the 386-house subdivision's developer, Hanna MaGee LP No. 2, or the land's owners, Wildflower Commons I LP, could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

The Travis County Commissioners Court on Tuesday gave the project's transportation and engineering requests unanimous approval, including a waiver to have just one entrance from an external street — MoPac, just north of the development.

Commissioner Karen Huber, whose precinct includes the planned development, said she is concerned that only one entrance could pose problems in the case of a wildfire. County staff approved the waiver, and by law, commissioners could not reject it, Huber said.

The county approval comes nearly three months after the city's Zoning and Platting Commission approved environmental and subdivision requests.

"The single-family plan is better than the giant mixed-use plan that had been proposed," said Bill Bunch, executive director of the Save Our Springs Alliance, referring to the Wildflower Commons plan, which included a large retail store, condominiums and townhomes. "All those people are going to have to drive everywhere they go, though, because there's nothing else they connect to."

Bunch said he is also concerned that polluted runoff will harm the water quality of the aquifer and Barton Springs.

The development, however, will not be held under restrictions typically required of builders over the aquifer's recharge zone, said Don Perryman, a senior planner with the city who handled the Greyrock Ridge design.

In this instance, Perryman said, the city defers to the so-called Bradley agreement, a settlement struck years ago between the city and developer Gary Bradley that is compliant with the Save Our Springs ordinance that guides land use in the area around the proposed development.

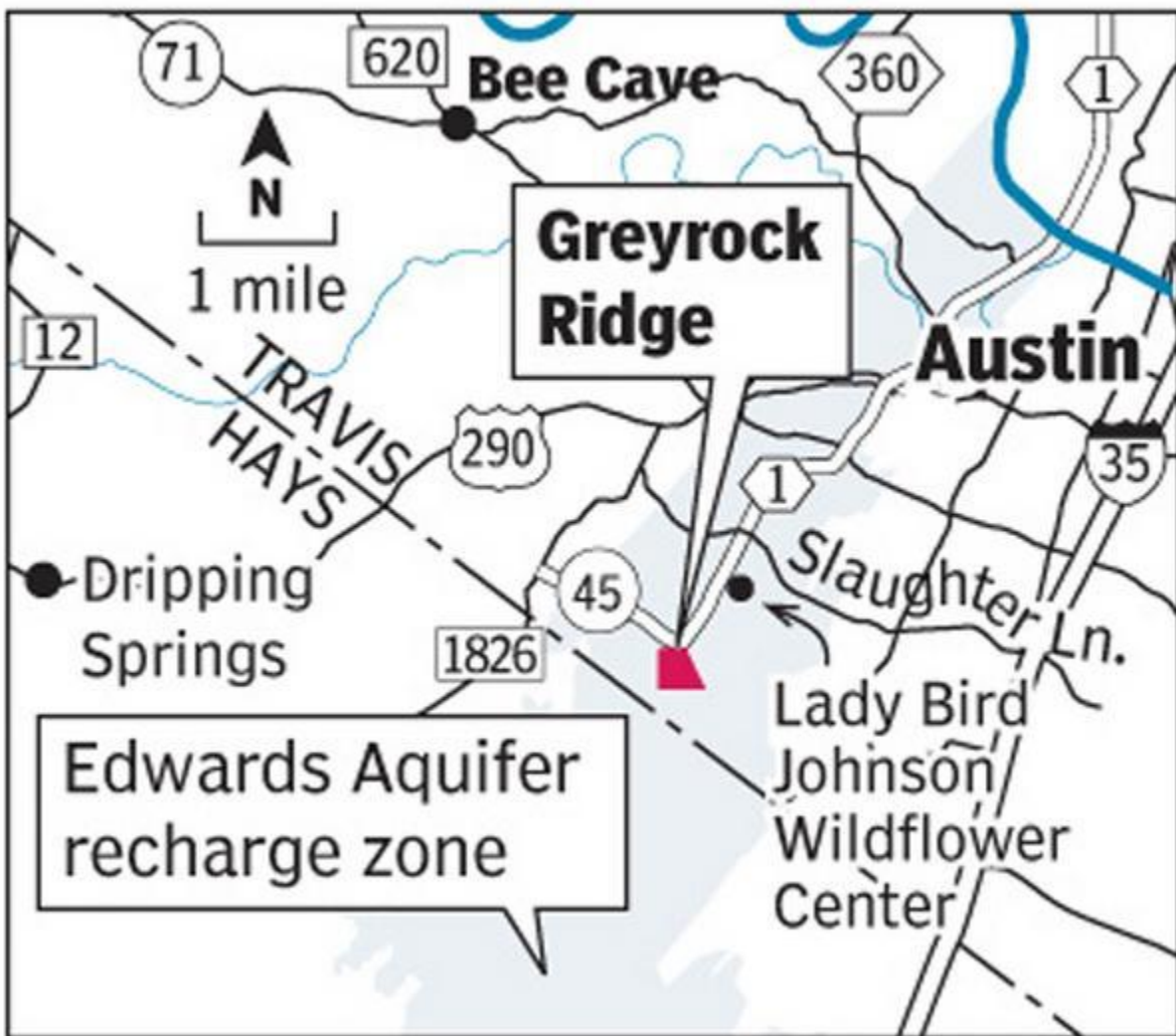
The Bradley agreement allows development to occur in denser clusters than otherwise would be permitted.

Perryman said about 15 percent of the development will be covered by rooftops, roads and other surfaces that don't allow rainfall to penetrate into the ground.

According to the preliminary plans, about 58 percent of the development will be home lots, each between 6,500 and 16,844 square feet; 31 percent will be open space; and the remainder will be roadways.

The development is largely surrounded by land that has been set aside for conservation. Just west of the proposed site, Standard Pacific Homes is building nearly 200 homes at Avaña.

Greyrock Ridge development



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