

## OPEN LETTER TO LOWE'S EXECUTIVES, REPRESENTATIVES AND SHAREHOLDERS

“Do the Right Thing: Move off the Edwards Aquifer”

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As some of you may know, the Austin community just suffered through a bruising battle between local environmental, neighborhood, and business groups, and developers Endeavor Realty and the Wal-Mart Corporation over Endeavor and Wal-Mart's plans to build a large, “big box” Supercenter over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. The community groups won this battle, and Endeavor and Wal-Mart have voluntarily agreed to abandon their plans.

Lowe's, unfortunately, has similar plans to build a “big box” development over our aquifer. We now ask you to voluntarily abandon these plans before this battle escalates further. There may be places for large Lowe's Home Improvement Centers in the Austin area, but the recharge zone of the Edwards Aquifer is not such a place. The on-site and off-site impacts of this type of “big box” development are far too intense for such an environmentally sensitive area. The water that flows down into the limestone aquifer in this area not only supplies beloved Barton Springs—often referred to as the Soul of Our City—it also supplies the sole source of drinking water to 50,000 Austin area residents and a portion of our municipal water supply.

Besides the sheer size and intensity of the planned development, products sold and stored in a Lowe's store have also raised environmental alarms. Many of these products contain the same chemicals that have been found in alarming levels in Barton Springs, Barton Creek, and urban creeks across Austin. While we understand that Lowe's has agreed not to sell coal-tar based pavement sealers (considered a possible culprit in the recent Austin American Statesman expose/controversy on pollution levels in Barton Springs and Barton Creek) in this particular store, other products, such as pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers and those containing arsenic and heavy metals, will still be sold and stored on-site. Accidents, spills, fires or even illegal dumping could lead to these chemicals further polluting our water supply.

Residential neighbors of this site have also raised concerns about the noise, lighting, flooding and traffic problems that this development would bring to their neighborhood. In addition, neighborhoods farther south along Brodie Lane are concerned about the traffic impact along what is considered one of Austin's most congested roadways, and neighborhoods along Williamson Creek share concerns about flooding.

Clearly this site is not appropriate for your planned “big box” Home Improvement Center. We ask that you do the right thing: follow the lead of Endeavor and Wal-Mart, and abandon your plans for this development.

The citizens of Austin have made very clear that protecting the Edwards Aquifer, Barton Springs and the drinking water supply for tens of thousands is a community-wide priority. City voters in 1992 overwhelmingly approved the citizen-initiated Save Our Springs (SOS) Ordinance that limits the amount of impervious cover over the aquifer recharge zone to 15%. In 1998 and 2000 bond elections, voters approve a total of \$78 million in bonds to permanently preserve land over the aquifer. Just this year nearly twenty community organizations and thousands of citizens banded together to defeat the proposed Endeavor/Wal-Mart Supercenter over the aquifer. These community actions clearly demonstrate a preference for limiting development in the exact area where you plan to develop your new “big box” Home Improvement Center.

You have lobbied the legislature and filed suit against the City in an attempt to build this project against the will of the community and without complying with our environmental regulations, but so far to no avail. We now ask again that you please do the right thing: follow the lead of Endeavor and Wal-Mart, and abandon your plans for this project.

Thank you for your consideration and we await your response,

**Mary Arnold & Shudde Fath**  
**Austin Action**  
**Austin Neighborhoods Council**  
**Austin Sierra Club**  
**Clean Water Action**  
**Lee Leffingwell, Chair, City of Austin Environmental Board**  
**Janet McNutt, Kincheonville Neighborhood Association\***  
**Robin Rather & Brigid Shea**  
**Save Barton Creek Association**  
**Save Our Springs Alliance**  
**Sendra Estates Homeowners' Association**  
**Stephani Stone, New Village at Western Oaks\***  
**Texas Community Project**  
**Tom Wiggins, Deer Park at Maple Run Homeowners' Association\***

P.S. Many of us are also very concerned about recent news reports that you are negotiating with local developer Chris Milam to locate another “big box” Home Improvement Center in the Village of Bee Cave, over the aquifer contributing zone. This site is just 200 ft. from Little Barton Creek, a tributary to Barton Creek, which is one of our treasured natural resources. If these reports are correct, you can be assured that this project will also engender significant community opposition.

\*Organization name used for identification purposes and has not yet taken an official position on this project.