



# AIA Dallas

A Chapter of The American Institute of Architects

August 4, 2017

Rep. Paul Workman  
Texas House of Representatives  
PO Box 2910  
Austin, Texas 78768

Re: House Bill 70/ Senate Bill 14

Dear Representative Workman and the House Committee on Urban Affairs,

On the basis of various cultural, environmental, and economic benefits, roughly fifty cities in Texas have some measure of tree preservation or urban forestry protection in place. Different studies have already quantified the public benefit of trees in terms of carbon storage, reduction in energy consumption, lessening of stormwater volume, decrease in air pollution, easing of urban heat island effect, improvement of wildlife habitat, and augmentation of property value. Recent state legislation discussion regarding removal of all tree preservation and mitigation ordinances would affect the design and development of communities in which AIA Dallas members live and practice.

In Dallas, we have two recent examples of what could happen without tree preservation ordinances for commercial property. The first occurred on Forest Lane in North Dallas, in which roughly one hundred live oaks were chopped to boost the visibility of a self-storage warehouse located along I-635. On a separate occasion, a developer in South Dallas clear-cut a 4 acre site in an attempt to make the property more attractive to potential buyers. Public outcry and discussion followed these violations.

Given the size and ecological diversity of Texas, with everything from pine savannah to hardwood forests to desert, each of the cities' tree preservation ordinances is responding not only to the cultural and economic decisions of their communities, but also to the ecological realities of their region. A tree with a diameter at breast height (DBH) of 24" carries a different meaning in Abilene than it does in San Antonio or Dallas. To legislate at a state level with this diversity of environments would create inefficiency at best, and produce illogical and counterproductive results at worst.

AIA Dallas recommends you to take action on the following:

1. Withdraw any state legislation that discusses removal of tree preservation ordinances.
2. Limit state legislation discussion to encouragement of residential exemptions in tree preservation ordinances.

We understand that the concerns of unduly burdening a homeowner with regulation to be a primary motivation behind the legislation. However, with the technical information we have outlined in this letter, we urge you to recognize that appropriate action can be taken without the removal of the nearly fifty tree preservation ordinances, which have been carefully conceived and crafted by engaged communities in our state.

Sincerely,

Nunzio DeSantis, FAIA  
2017 President,  
AIA Dallas

Jan Blackmon, FAIA  
Executive Director  
AIA Dallas

Cc: Sen. Bob Hall, Senate Committee on Business & Commerce, and Dallas delegation.