

Exclusive to the La Voz: Update on PGA Village

By Maria Antonietta Berriozábal



en la orilla de las nueve aguas;
chicunáui=nueve, atl=agua, téntli=orilla o
labio, co=lugar.
(representado por: chicunáui=nueve,
atl=agua, téntli=labio)
Antiguo nombre de la región del municipio,
LA BARCA

chicunahuatenco

The vote on the PGA Village issue is a critical one for our community. As of this writing it still has not been decided. As I related in the La Voz article last month, the Lumberman's project involves the two critical issues - protection of San Antonio's sole water source and our economic and growth destiny. The taxing district that would make the Lumberman's proposal possible creates a sales tax. Sales taxes are regressive taxes affecting working class and poor people most negatively. In addition its 2,855 acres sit on top of the most sensitive recharge areas of our Edwards Aquifer.

Thanks to the quick organizing of a small group of citizens, the brakes were put on the PGA Village vote.

The following is an update and my analysis of what has transpired:

❖ On Sunday, January 13, 2002 the Coalition for Smart Growth was formed to work against this issue. This group of citizens is asking City Council to Vote No. If, however, the Council votes for the project, coalition members are preparing to go to the people. Petitions will be signed to put an item in the May 2002 or November 2002 ballot asking that the vote of the Council be rescinded.

❖ Council voted to hire an independent consultant to conduct a limited study of the sensitivity of the 2,855 acres being discussed for the PGA Village project. Unfortunately, the consultant reviewed only studies, which had already been commissioned by the developer and examined only a small area of the site personally. The consultant had at most three weeks to conduct his study. His report is very questionable.

❖ An effect of conducting a study, however, is that it has given opponents time to meet and plan further steps. Press conferences, meetings and testimony at Council meetings have taken place. Enrique Valdivia of the Esperanza's Environmental Project has voiced opposition at some of these gatherings as have many citizens from diverse groups. Concern has been voiced over the lack of credibility of the sensitive features study.

❖ At a recent council meeting Councilman John Sanders, an opponent of the project, voiced deep concern that council members had not been given information requested prior to the meeting. Mayor Garza joined him in expressing this concern. City staff is in negotiations with Lumberman's.

❖ Mayor Garza and three council members favor putting an extension of Proposition 3 in the November 2002 ballot. This would allow for purchase of more land over the recharge zone. A sensitive question is the timing for said election. There is concern this vote for an additional 1/8-cent sales tax would jeopardize the Better Jobs initiative planned

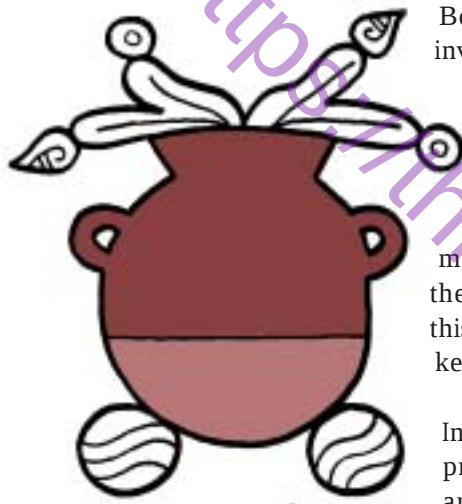
for the November 2002 election.

❖ In a courageous move, Councilman Julian Castro resigned from his lucrative job at the law firm of Akin & Gump. The Councilman has had to abstain on several major votes because of conflict of interest issues. The PGA Village is one such issue. He felt his constituents needed representation on this and other critical issues. However, at the moment of this writing, he still does not have an opinion from the city attorney on the legality of his voting on this issue.



cocóllan

junto al limo del agua;
cocóllin=planta acuática, llan=entre.
(representado por: cocólin=limo comestible
del lago)
COCULA



atotonilco

lugar del agua caliente;
atl=agua, totonilli=calentada, co=lugar.
ATOTONILCO EL ALTO

Because of the involvement of many citizens and the overwhelming public opposition to a major project over the recharge zone, this has become a key vote.

In looking at this project with analytical eyes developed over 30 years of community and political involvement, I

see the PGA Village as the next step in continued development to the north side of San Antonio and over our recharge zone. A pattern has been occurring since the late 60's. A major public action is taken and a growth generator is created. The following are examples of significant decisions, which have directed the growth of San Antonio.

- ❖ The creation of the Bexar County Hospital District in the late 1960's which had the effect of moving the Robert B. Green Hospital from the inner city to the current site of the medical complex.
- ❖ The establishment of the University of Texas at San Antonio on Loop 1604 in early 1970's San Antonio.
- ❖ The huge tax abatement to USAA who was the developer for Fiesta Texas across from Loop 1604 (which now includes the La Cantera development).

Each of these was a powerful development leap to the north. If the PGA Village is developed, land values will escalate and encourage still more development. The site is located east of Loop 1604 and Hwy. 281 in the most sensitive area over our recharge zone. In addition to the danger of pollution of the Aquifer, unsustainable growth produces pollution, traffic problems, over crowded schools, transportation and housing problems for low wage workers, as well as additional strain on already inadequate city services such as police, fire and neighborhood services. History has shown that policies that create suburban sprawl leave behind the older, poor and working class neighborhoods.

In every way that I view this proposal it is a very bad idea. It promotes unsustainable growth. It violates the

environment. It is an abusive way for government to influence growth. It is corporate welfare. It continues an economic development philosophy based on low wages. It is not good for our city. It is not good for our people.

The people of the Esperanza dream of a world where everyone has civil rights and economic justice, where the environment is cared for, where cultures are honored and communities are safe. (From Esperanza's mission statement)

Clearly the PGA Village is not in concurrence with our beliefs as people of Esperanza and those of like mind. I urge you to take a stand. Write, call or e mail your City Council representative and give your opinion. Write letters to the editor. Attend City Council meetings when the issue is up for review. If the Council indeed votes for this to go forward get involved in collecting signatures to put this item on a ballot before the people of San Antonio. Or call Enrique Valdivia and offer your help. Whichever way you decide to act will be your choice. But please let your voice be heard. This is one of those crucial times that citizens must take a stand.

María is a former San Antonio councilwoman and has been a consistent community advocate throughout her life serving on various local boards. In 1995 she attended the Beijing International Conference for Women as an official representative of the Organization of America States (OAS). As an elder statesperson María's insights and analysis of local issues is often sought by community based organizations and progressive media.

Condices antiguos borrowed from *Altepetócaitl* published by Tlahcuilco in Guadalajara, Mexico.



atitlan

junto al agua;
atl=agua, ti (eufónica), tlan=entre,
(representado por: atl=agua, tlántli=diente,
por el sonido tlan)

San Juanito Atitlan, antiguo nombre de la
cabecera municipal.
ANTONIO ESCOBEDO