Dog’s Head

What is going on?

Dog’s Head





Scope & Location: Covers **2,614 acres** along a pristine, biodiverse stretch of the Colorado River.
Controversy: A **45-year binding agreement** negotiated with limited public oversight or review by the Planning or Environmental Commissions.

Background

- In May 2026, the Austin City Council approved a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ), based in part, from statements made by the project's developer, Endeavor Real Estate Group who described the Dog’s Head as“bombed out” (blighted) to justify the need for public tax subsidies to finance infrastructure.
- This statement disagrees with descriptions by the residents.
- A lawsuit has been filed in September 2026 challenging the justification of the TIRZ which can be used for blighted areas. The suit alleges that the deal functions as an unconstitutional gift of public funds to a private entity. It also claims the city unconstitutionally signed away its legislative and regulatory powers by allowing the developer to veto municipal zoning, water quality, and land development regulations for the next 45 years.
- dogshead.com is a source of information about the development prepared by the ENDEVOR Real Estate Group

Key Concerns (1)

- **Development Standards**: The original agreement sets minimal regulations, allowing up to **100% impervious cover** on 2,614 acres. The current estimates are that 79% is allowed for impervious cover.. This leaves 384+ acres for Open Space but this includes the CWQZ (see below),
- **Water & Floodplain Impact**: Shrinks the Critical Water Quality Zone to **200 feet** (allowing roads, utilities, and golf cart trails within it) and permits unlimited floodplain modifications. The 200 ft CWQZ increases in some areas. The acreage in this Zone is unclear and estimates have been from 234-266 acres.
- This leaves at most 150 acres for Open Space – approximately 93% impervious cover of the area that can be developed outside of the CWQZ.
- What is means is loss of green space, urban heat island effects, and increased flooding risks if the allowed amount of impervious cover is implemented in the development.

Key Concerns (2)

- **Unrestricted Cut & Fill**: Exempts the entire property from normal city cut-and-fill limits (typically 4–8 ft), exacerbating erosion risks.

- **Bypassing Regulations**: Grants the Director of Development Services sole authority to approve variances to the Land Development Code without public hearings or City Council votes.

Key Concerns (3)

- **Water Quality Ponds**: Uses former mining ponds for water quality treatment without adequate oversight on legacy pollutants.

- **Surrendered Authority**: Requires landowner consent for the City to amend or terminate the agreement, while allowing the developer to terminate unilaterally if tax breaks are not granted.

Key Concerns (4)

- **Broad Permitted Uses**: Permits wide-ranging zoning uses, including car dealerships, manufacturing, marinas, and outdoor entertainment venues. Use for data centers is controversial and unclear. Are they restricted and/or can they be brought in by companies which use them but do not construct them?
- **Financial & Equity Issues**: Directs public property and sales tax revenues away from community services to fund developer infrastructure via a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ).
- **Future Parks, Trails, Jobs and Affordable Housing:** Interpretation is subjective at best.

Health Concern’s for Dog’s Head (1)

- **Ecological and Water Quality Risks:** Environmental advocates and the Austin Environmental Commission warn that provisions allowing high impervious cover, reductions in the river's critical water quality zones, and floodplain modifications risk causing **irreversible harm to the lower Colorado River ecosystem**.
- **Public Health and Equity Concerns:** Nearby East Austin residents and community leaders have raised alarms over potential environmental injustice, arguing the massive project threatens local environmental health and lacks sufficient long-term ecological safeguards.

Dog's Head Vulnerabilities

- Extreme heat, heat domes
- Vulnerable populations: humans, "pets", and wildlife
- Concerns over road development – impacts and safety on neighborhoods bordering the development
- Air quality/Ozone – current and future development
- Water quality of river and aquifer
- Soil quality as it relates to past industrial uses
- Flooding – impacts of impervious cover, land development, models for strategies – needs engagement with the city, county and independent assessors beyond assuming models from the developer are accurate. What defines a floodplain vs flooding? Has the proposed flood management been implemented successfully anywhere else?
- Baseline assessments needed; surveillance lacking currently
- Interviews with residents can be found on: https://vimeo.com/1204985989/044582bdde?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci









