



**CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST**

TO:	Mayor and City Council
FROM:	Councilwoman Marina Alderete Gavito – Council District 7
COPIES TO:	Erik Walsh, City Manager; Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk; Andrew Segovia, City Attorney; John Peterek, Assistant to the City Manager; Emily McGinn, Assistant to City Council
SUBJECT:	Oak Wilt Tree Replacement Program
DATE:	January 30, 2024

Issue Proposed for Consideration

I ask for your support for the inclusion of the following item on the agenda of the earliest available meeting of the City Council:

Requesting City staff to address the issue of oak wilt by means of using funds from the Tree Mitigation Fund to assist homeowners and neighborhoods in replacing oak trees lost by the disease with native non-oak trees.

Brief Background

Oak wilt, a lethal fungal infection, targets and impairs the water transport system in oak trees. Over the past ten years, the disease has claimed the lives of over one million trees across 76 counties in Central Texas. While all oak varieties are susceptible, certain species face a higher risk. Unfortunately, there is currently no cure for oak wilt, and available methods to manage and address the disease are restricted and offer no guaranteed success.ⁱ

In Central Texas, oak wilt is pervasive, spreading through both above-ground and below-ground mechanisms. Fungal mats develop beneath the bark of infected oak trees, primarily on trunks and major branches. As these mats grow and induce bark cracking, they release an odor that entices sap-feeding beetles. The fungus is transmitted when these beetles feed on the fungal mats and transport fungal spores to fresh wounds or cuts on healthy oak trees. The interconnected root systems of oak trees facilitate below-ground propagation of the disease through grafted roots, leading to the extensive decline of oak trees in the area.ⁱ

Request

It is my request that the City of San Antonio consider the creation of a program to assist in preventing the spread of this devastating disease by helping residents and neighborhoods in San



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Antonio to replace infected oak trees with native non-oak trees after they have been removed. Oak wilt is a public nuisance, even when it occurs on private property. The destruction of oak trees by oak wilt can contribute to the loss of our urban tree canopy, increase the heat island effect in our city, and intensify the burden on homes and buildings that depend on tree canopies for energy efficiency. Funding for this program should come from the Tree Mitigation Fund.

The Tree Mitigation Fund is primarily funded by stakeholders who pay into it after having removed trees in excess of the preservation requirement, and as an alternative to replanting, as required by the Code of Ordinances.ⁱⁱ According to the City of San Antonio Parks and Recreation Department, the Tree Mitigation Fund has a 2024 FY Operating Budget of \$11.9 million. Any funds not used in the fiscal year roll over into the Tree Mitigation Fund for the following fiscal year.ⁱⁱⁱ Per the Code of Ordinances, "Generated funds may be used by Parks and Recreation Director or its designee to plant trees on public or private properties..."ⁱⁱⁱ

Oak wilt can quickly become a problem for our entire community if not addressed properly. Assisting individuals and neighborhoods in replacing trees lost to oak wilt can serve to incentivize the prompt and effective removal of trees affected by oak wilt while minimizing the loss of our urban tree canopy and the negative effects of urban deforestation.

Submitted for Council consideration by:

Councilwoman Marina Alderete Gavito

Supporting Councilmembers' Signatures (4 only)

District

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3.

4.

ⁱ City of San Antonio Website, Development Services Division,

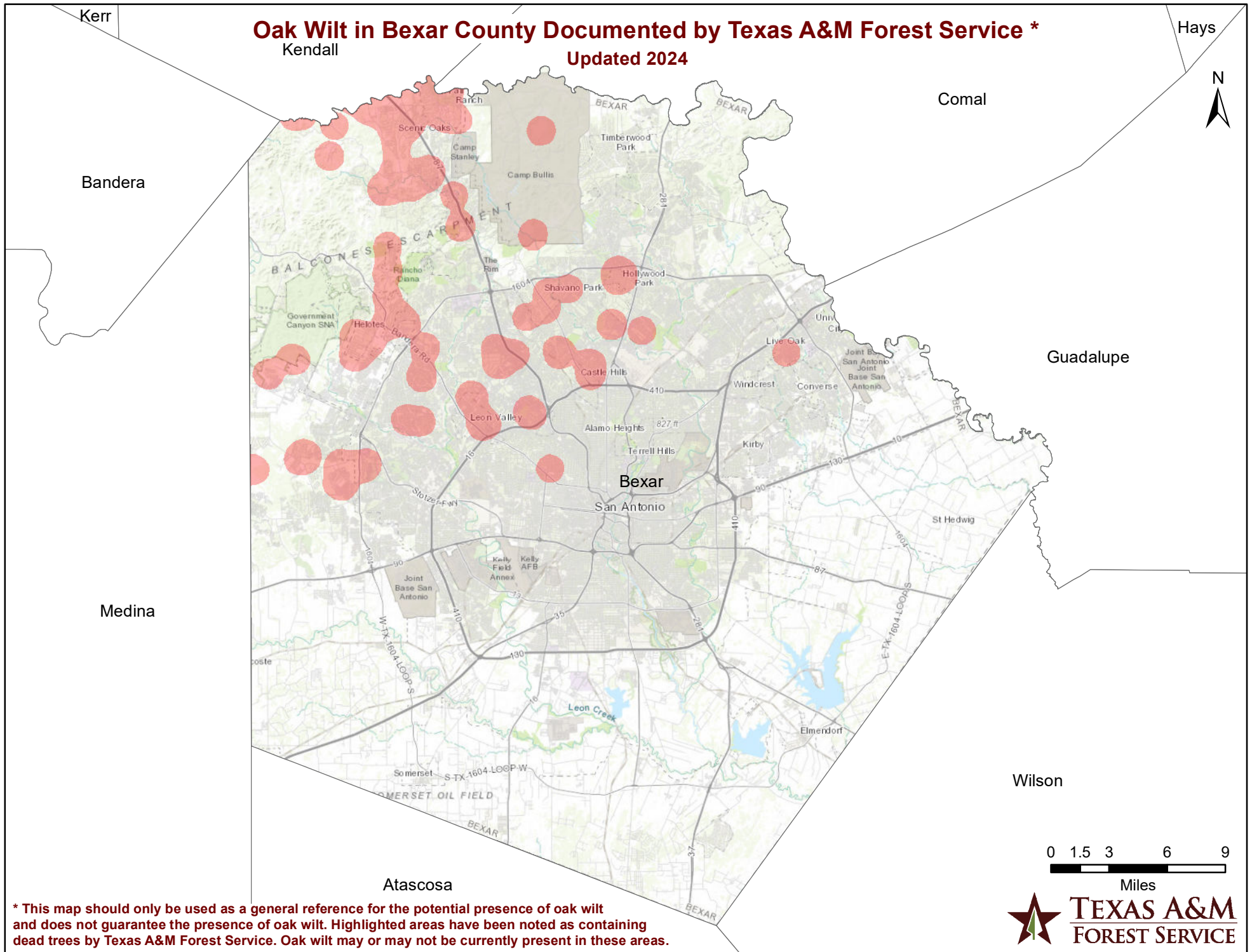
<https://www.sa.gov/Directory/Departments/DSD/Constructing/Preservation-Conservation/Tree-Preservation/Oak-Wilt>

ⁱⁱ Code of Ordinances City of San Antonio, Article V, Division 5, Section 35-523, Table 523-2

ⁱⁱⁱ Code of Ordinances City of San Antonio, Article V, Division 5, Section 35-523, Subsection o

Oak Wilt in Bexar County Documented by Texas A&M Forest Service *

Updated 2024



* This map should only be used as a general reference for the potential presence of oak wilt and does not guarantee the presence of oak wilt. Highlighted areas have been noted as containing dead trees by Texas A&M Forest Service. Oak wilt may or may not be currently present in these areas.