

No Means No: How Many Times Does Waller County Have to Say It?

By Citizens in Defense of Waller County

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While many residents first became aware of the proposed TexasLand USA theme park in May 2025, public records show the project had been seeking a foothold in Waller County well before that. Emails indicate it first surfaced in late 2023.

Since those early discussions, the same concerns have followed about water, infrastructure, and feasibility. And each time, the answer has effectively been the same.

No.

Early outreach efforts included multiple jurisdictions and community leaders across Waller County, including the City of Waller, the City of Hempstead, and county leadership. As publicly reported, the City of Waller raised concerns about water supply and infrastructure capacity. After that, the project's path shifted to the county level, where Waller County conducted a formal review of the project's financial assumptions, infrastructure demands, and reliance on public mechanisms. That review did not result in county participation or endorsement. In Austin in May 2025, House Bill 5685, legislation that would have created a special district to help finance the development, was ultimately withdrawn before a vote after significant community opposition.

Yet the proposal has not gone away. Instead, it has resurfaced again, this time through a petition to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality seeking approval of a special district with governmental powers.

That raises an important question: **how many times does a community have to say no?**

Another question deserves attention as well: **who decides when a project has community support?**

Public records obtained through the Texas Public Information Act, the state's open records law, show that these discussions involved a relatively small circle of local officials, economic development representatives, and project advocates, prior to broader public awareness. But conversations among a handful of decision-makers are not the same thing as meaningful community support.

The public response over the past year suggests something quite different.

Residents across Waller County have raised concerns about groundwater use, drainage patterns, traffic impacts, and emergency services. Adjacent landowners and local businesses have submitted detailed comments about how large-scale development could affect their farms, ranches, operations, water wells, and long-term viability.

In the current state review process alone, **more than 300 residents and landowners have submitted comments to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality** regarding the proposed district. A request for a contested case hearing has also been submitted, including by a state elected official, underscoring the level of concern surrounding the proposal.

That level of engagement reflects something important: this is not a quiet or settled issue.

Special districts are powerful governmental tools. They can issue debt, levy taxes, and finance major infrastructure projects that shape communities for decades. **In effect, they allow public financing mechanisms to be used to build infrastructure that supports a private development project.**

These powers are typically granted when a proposal demonstrates both clear public benefit and meaningful community support. But when a project repeatedly struggles to secure that support at the local level, it raises deeper concerns that cannot be ignored.

It becomes reasonable to ask whether the district itself is justified, or whether it is being used to advance a proposal that has not gained broad community acceptance. At the same time, if a project depends on the creation of a special district to finance fundamental infrastructure, it invites a broader look at feasibility, including whether the project can realistically stand on its own without those public mechanisms.

These are not abstract concerns. They go directly to the heart of what is being proposed and why it matters. Yet rather than being resolved, these same issues have continued to surface as the TexasLand proposal reappears through different pathways.

Major projects that reshape a rural community for generations should not move forward based on the assumption that silence equals support, or that a small group of insiders can speak for everyone else. Communities deserve a meaningful voice in decisions that affect their land, water, infrastructure, and future.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality now faces the decision of whether to advance this proposal further through the state's administrative process.

As the Commission reviews the record before it, including the hundreds of comments submitted by residents and landowners, it should take note of the pattern that has already unfolded. These are the very questions the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality must now consider.

When local governments raise concerns, when legislation is withdrawn, and when hundreds of citizens step forward to voice objections, it should signal that the community is asking to be heard.

Sometimes the clearest message a community can send is also the simplest.

No means no.