

# **Editorial:**

## **City's Tree Policy Isn't Particularly Green**

City policy strips Dallas of some of its green

**12:00 AM CDT on Wednesday, April 2, 2008**

The city of Dallas will celebrate Arbor Day on Friday by planting 45 trees downtown.

The corporate-sponsored spruce-up will bring green to the center city. But in other neighborhoods across town, homeowners are wondering whether dusty fields will ever show signs of vegetative life.

Chainsaw-wielding developers have mowed down hundreds of trees, clearing the way for new homes. But the city has done relatively little to enforce its tree-mitigation ordinance.

Residents of the Mountain Vista development near Eagle Ford Drive say they've been waiting almost two years for any sign that the shade trees that disappeared would be replaced.

In most cases, new trees are supposed to be planted within 30 days. But now, the city's Board of Adjustment has extended the planting deadline for the Mountain Vista developer until October 2009.

Dallas is a city that employs its own arborist, sends out news releases detailing Arbor Day activities and touts its environmentally friendly image. So, this seemingly lax approach to replanting trees appears to be at odds with the city's go-green mantra.

At a minimum, the existing ordinance must be enforced. Developers can choose to plant new trees, contribute to a reforestation fund or preserve usable land. But replanting should begin weeks – not months or years – after trees are cut down.

City officials also should consider whether to expand efforts to preserve trees, rather than simply allow developers to replace mighty oaks with saplings.

Some of Dallas' older neighborhoods have been overrun with bulldozers making way for new, bigger abodes. But mature trees have been disappearing, along with aging homes, and once-shady neighborhoods suddenly are feeling exposed.

Understandably, city officials don't want to discourage development. But Dallas can strike a better balance between preserving greenery and facilitating new projects.

On Friday, downtown will gain a grove of trees. The city should ensure that other neighborhoods soon will see green, too.