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Eco-friendly neighborhood could be in town's future

By Chris Roark, Staff Writer

(Created: Friday, September 12, 2008 5:44 PM CDT)

Eco-friendly, or green, buildings continue to be a popular trend in North Texas development, but some local developers are looking to make an entire neighborhood of it.

Mark Glover, of iMark Realty Advisors, and Don Ferrier of Ferrier Custom Homes, met with the Environmental Conservation Commission on Tuesday to discuss a plan of developing a neighborhood in which all of the homes, as well as the park that introduces it, would be environmentally friendly.

Perhaps fitting, the development would be called Rheudasil Farms, named after Bob Rheudasil, the town's founding father and first mayor. It would be located south of FM 3040, along the west side of Lexington Avenue.

Rheudasil's property was filled with his prize bluebonnets, which still bloom, and majestic oak trees, which he planted from acorns.

Glover said this project would be a perfect way to mix environmentally-friendly development and the town's history.

"The history component has always been there," Glover said, adding that town council members had been vocal about the importance of having a historical component. "We've always wanted to honor the land and call out the history. We felt like we had an obligation to do that."

Glover and Ferrier each have a history in green development. Ferrier was named the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) 2007 Green "Builder of the Year".

"The only responsible way to develop the land was with ecology and the environment in mind," Glover said.

Preliminary plans for the site include eight restricted/exclusive lots. There would be 10,000- to 15,000-square foot lots that feature homes that all meet Leadership Energy Environmental Design (LEED) and NAHB certification. Glover said this would be the first neighborhood in which both standards are required.

All homes would be required to be constructed with sustainable materials. For example, Glover said ways that water is caught and redirected would be taken into consideration. Also, a standing seam metal roof is an option because of its better reflecting ability and its low maintenance requirements.

There would also be three acres of common, natural areas in the development. Founder's Park, honoring the history of the town, would highlight the open space.

Trees will be another feature, as will the lack of tree destruction to develop the neighborhood. Glover said early plans show that six out of several hundred trees will be taken down.

"We spent countless hours designing this to where we minimize the trees that come down," Glover said. "There were trees that we considered priceless and that we couldn't sacrifice, so we ended up with a cul-de-sac design that goes around the trees."

Glover said the development team hopes to have everything in place by the end of the year to re-submit an application to the town by December or January.

Also at the meeting, Jared Martin, environmental review analyst for the town, presented town staff's findings regarding Dutch Elm Disease, which is affecting some elm trees in Flower Mound.

The disease causes blockage of the water-conducting tissue inside the tree and originates from the fungus *Ophiostoma ulmi*.

Martin said there are four known sites in Flower Mound with trees that suffer from Dutch Elm Disease and a few suspected sites. The known sites are two locations off Rocky Point Road near Rocky Point Park, one off Old Settlers Road near Flower Mound High School and one south of the Haynes Road dead-end on the far west side of town. Martin said there are five trees confirmed to have Dutch Elm Disease at the Rocky Point location. There is a suspected site near the Corps of Engineers area.

"Trees that get (Dutch Elm Disease), it kills them faster than others," Martin said. "Some trees, it will take between six to eight weeks. Others, it might take into the next growing season before it kills them."

Martin said Native elms, especially American elm, are the most susceptible. He said Slippery Elm, Winged Elm and Cedar Elm are vulnerable to the disease, too.

Signs of the disease include vascular streaking, presence of elm bark beetle galleries and flagging, which is when leaves and branches on a tree that should be healthy begin dying.

The disease is spread by elm bark beetles and root grafts. Martin said the grafts enable the disease to be spread from infected trees to healthy trees and that digging trenches between 2 and 5 feet deep can disconnect the grafts.

Martin said other efforts in eliminating the problem will include removal of diseased trees, removal of potential breeding sites and treatment with insecticides and herbicides. He said burning, chipping and burying are effective ways of disposing the trees.

Martin said another important step is continued monitoring, which includes known sites that contain Dutch Elm Disease cases and locations with a high volume of elm trees. Keeping watch for areas of town with dead, dying or stressed trees is also key, Martin said.

Martin said not all infected trees would be replanted, but when replanting does occur, planting a variety of species is key.

Working with HOAs, the ECC and various other groups will be important, he said.

"We want residents just to keep an eye on it and report any issues they're having with their elm trees so we can investigate it and track it," Martin said.

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