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City barking up wrong tree with proposed ordinance

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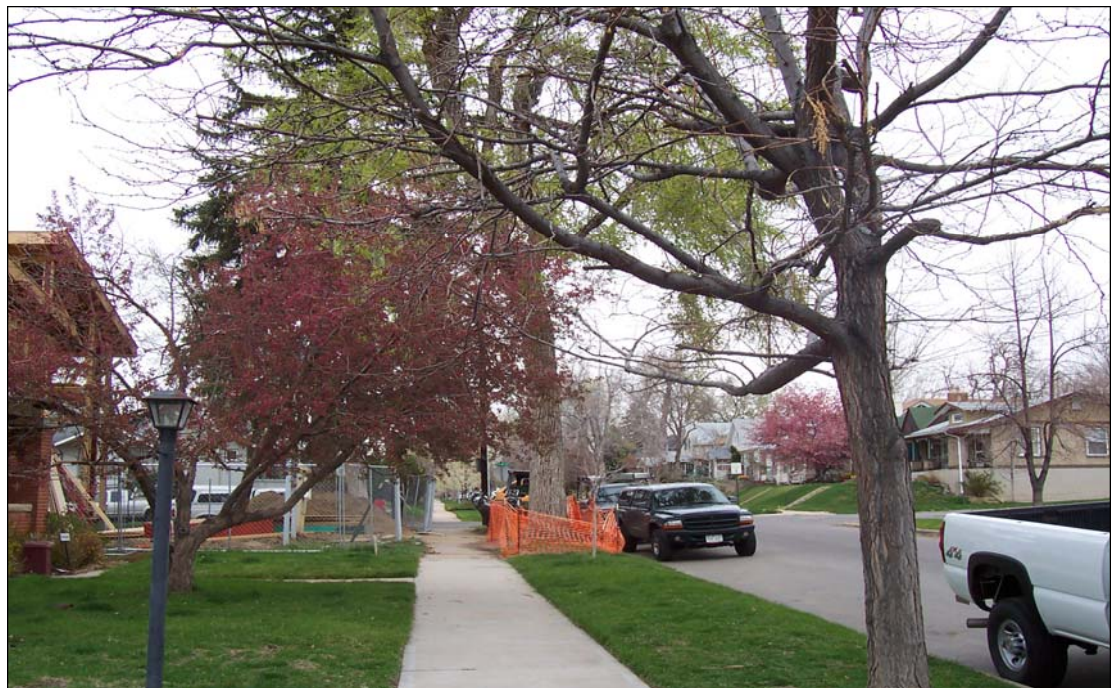
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Denver's neighborhoods are green, cool and inviting thanks to the thousands of trees that grace our streets and front yards. Although the city should try to preserve trees, an ordinance that the city administration proposed, then withdrew after fierce public and editorial criticism, went too far. Councilman Brown hopes that the city administration will come back with a new plan that closes existing loopholes without trampling on property rights.

Trees are wonderful and cherished amenities in our city, especially because they can be hard to replace in our arid climate. However, an ordinance proposed by Mayor John Hickenlooper's staff on March 30 went too far in telling private property owners that they could not remove trees even on their own land. The city administration withdrew the proposal April 10 in the face of widespread criticism but may re-file a proposed ordinance later.

Even Mayor Hickenlooper said he was surprised at how far the bill went. "I like trees, too. But if this bill had passed, a person could have torn down their house but not their trees," he said.

The stated goal of the proposal was to better protect Denver's trees, helping to maintain and enhance the urban canopy and the environmental and aesthetic *cont. page 2*

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Preserve trees, but protect property rights

benefits that big, leafy trees provide. But the proposal would have prohibited Denver homeowners from cutting down healthy trees in their front yards even if they needed space to build an addition or for any other reasonable purpose. Homeowners could have faced thousands of dollars in fines for taking down a tree and triple fines if they defied city orders not to chop down a tree. The timing was especially bad coming on the heels of the DeBoer debacle, in which the city strong-armed property owners into accepting an intrusive historic district.

The Parks and Recreation Department (which includes the Forester's office) backpedaled on April 10, saying that "we appreciate the public feedback we have received thus far and have decided not to file a bill at this time."

Brown supports protecting trees but says that the administration should come up with a plan that doesn't trample private property rights in the process. City ordinances need to recognize that cities aren't static but vibrant places that change. Trees also are living things that have a natural lifespan and sometimes need to be removed.

Instead of imposing an overly restrictive ordinance on a surprised public, the administration should seek input on a new plan for preserving trees, by talking with neighborhood groups, Realtors, developers, homeowners and city council. The administration has said it will do it. "I hope that they do," Brown said.

On Sunday April 8, Denver Post and Rocky Mountain News editorials blasted the plan:


 The logo for Rocky Mountain News, featuring the word "Rocky" in white serif font on a red rectangular background, followed by "Mountain News" in a grey serif font on a dark, textured background.

"If they're your trees, and you'd rather have evergreens than deciduous trees, or a tree's roots are damaging your water and sewer lines, or you'd like more sunshine on your roses or solar panels, that's your business, not the city's. Uniformity along city rights-of-way is an attribute of a whole neighborhood, and therefore can be reasonably subject to greater restrictions, but imposing it on individual lots is an unreasonable infringement on property rights."


 The logo for The Denver Post, featuring the words "THE DENVER POST" in a large, bold, black serif font. Below the main title, there is a smaller line of text: "DENVERPOST.COM | THE DENVER POST | Voice of the Rocky Mountain Empire | 50 CENTS \$4.95 WEEKLY OUTSIDE METRO DENVER".

"The ordinance was designed to close a loophole created by a 2001 measure to reduce the number of healthy trees that could be cleared on scrape-off lots where new homes are built. . . . (The city) should go back to the drawing board and produce an ordinance that closes the scrape-off loophole without infringing on the private property rights of Denver homeowners. . . . Denver needs a healthy, thriving urban tree canopy, but there are better ways to achieve it."

Move that car — the street sweeper is coming!

Citywide street sweeping started this month, so be sure to move your vehicle when it's your neighborhood's turn because otherwise you might get a parking ticket.

Denver residential streets are swept once a month from April to November, but most Council District 6 neighborhoods have signs posted showing the scheduled street sweeping days for that area. However, not all the signs are the same. Some are stand-alone signs, like the one pictured here. Others are tacked to street light posts, so are harder to see. In these neighborhoods, the city will hand out parking tickets if cars are left by the curb on street-sweeping days.

In other neighborhoods, though, the city has not posted signs warning of when the streets will be swept. In these cases, the city won't hand out parking tickets. But if your car is in the way, the area around it won't get swept, meaning that you will be left with sand, leaves and other debris on the street. If the days aren't posted in your neighborhood, you can go to www.denvergov.org and click on the summer street sweeping link on the upper right-hand side of the page.

It's a big job: In 2006, the city removed an estimated 36,436 cubic yards of debris from some 93,848 miles of Denver streets. The 2007 budget for citywide street sweeping is just over \$3 million. The Public Works Department's street sweeping program consists of 26 sweepers, including ones like that shown below, as well as four backup units and 12 dump trucks. The sweepers simultaneously spray water while rotating brooms sweep debris and dust into the air. The sweeper itself weighs 14,290 pounds and the hopper holds an average of three cubic yards of debris. When the hopper is full, the contents are transferred to a dump truck to be taken to the landfill.



Residents can further help the work by trimming low-hanging tree branches to a height of 13.5 feet over the street, because the sweepers are 10.6 feet high and the trucks that accompany them are 12 feet high. In addition to moving their parked cars, residents also should remove other items from the curb.



Mail ballots due by May 1 for citywide elections

This year's city elections will be conducted by mail ballot. Denver voters have two choices: They can mail in the ballots or they can drop them off at certain locations. Either way, the ballots have to be into the City Election Commission by May 1 — and be sure to sign the back of the envelope. The ballots were mailed between April 10 and April 18. If you haven't gotten one, contact the Denver Election Commission at 720-913-8683 or call 311.

Voter will chose mayor, city council and clerk and recorder. They also will decide whether to let the Denver District Attorney have three terms instead of the two currently permitted. Other Denver officials are allowed three terms by charter.

To mail your ballot, affix 63 cents in postage and send it in the envelope provide to the Denver Election Commission. You can drop off your ballot at the Election Commission or at the District 3 police station at 1625 S. University Blvd., just north of Interstate 25.

City needs residents to volunteer for boards

The city needs people to serve on the Denver Board of Ethics and other commissions. The Board of Ethics helps elected officials and municipal employees comply with the City's Code of Ethics, which is designed to assure high standards of conduct among city employees. The position is one of two on the five-member board appointed by the City Council. Applicants for this important board must be fair-minded, familiar with legal concepts and willing to devote four to eight hours to monthly meetings and other board responsibilities. City employees are barred from applying for the ethics board.

Applicants should send a cover letter and resume by April 20 to Councilwoman Carol Boigon, Chair, General Government Committee, Denver City Council. Email her assistant at Shelley.Smith@ci.denver.co.us or fax the material to at 720-865-9341.

The city also needs volunteers for other boards and commissions. Applications can be obtained by visiting Denvergov.Org and searching the "go directly to a city agency" box for Boards and Commissions. Applications will be processed in May and June. The boards and commissions are unpaid. The boards and commissions are: Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Commission, Lower Downtown Design Review Board, Parking Commission, Community Corrections Board, Health & Hospital Authority Board of Directors, Metro Wastewater Reclamation District, Planning Board, Stapleton Development Corporation and Women's Commission.

New Munich flight benefits Denver's economy

After five years of negotiations, Denver International Airport has landed a daily flight to Munich. The deal not only underscores the "I" in DIA. It represents a total estimated economic \$108 million boost for the city's economy, including \$18.9 million in direct economic impact and an estimated \$43.2 million in indirect benefits. Moreover, it gives international travelers direct access to the heart of Europe, and equally important, allows European travelers (including skiers!) to come directly to Colorado.

The city developed a new marketing strategy to attract the airline, working with the state of Colorado, Visitors' Bureau, World Trade Center, DIA Partnership, Colorado Ski Country and the German-American Chamber of Commerce.



Denver City Councilman Charlie Brown and the Lufthansa cabin crew celebrate the March 31 inaugural flight of Lufthansa's daily flight between Munich, Germany, and Denver, after the first jet landed at Denver International Airport. The new international connection gives consumers more choices and will bring \$108 million in direct and indirect economic benefits to the city.

