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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Mayor Bill White and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department Invite Houstonians to Celebrate Arbor Day 2006**

Mayor Bill White, Mayor Pro-Tem Carol Alvarado and the Houston Parks and Recreation Department will celebrate **Arbor Day 2006** at Diez Park, located at 4700 Diez and 1800 Dumble, on Friday, January 20, 2006 at 11:30 A.M. Additional sponsors include: CenterPoint Energy, the Greater East End Management District, the Texas Forest Service, the Houston Area Urban Forestry Council, the Houston Parks Board, Inc., The Park People, Trees for Houston, Scenic Houston and Stephen F. Austin High School.

The celebration places Houston's historic and much lauded tree canopy center stage and encourages Houstonians to plant trees, maintain green space, and ensure Houston's parks and neighborhoods are kept clean, beautiful, and flourishing with growth.

"Arbor Day provides a great opportunity to contribute something special to our City," said Mayor Bill White in anticipation of the event. "By increasing the amount of trees in our area and teaching citizens how to plant and care for them, we are improving Houston's quality of life by making our City a very green and beautiful place to live."

The Texas Forest Service will provide a special highlight to the celebration by awarding a \$30,000 grant to the Houston Parks and Recreation Department as part of the Urban Forestry Partnership Grant Program. The grant will help fund the *Houston Tree Count* program, which provides funding for forestry personnel to inventory Houston's trees and develop a canopy management plan.

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“We are pleased to receive this generous grant,” said Joe Turner, Director of Parks and Recreation. “The funds will help us sustain our trees - trees that beautify our City, clean our air and provide places for children to play. I encourage everyone to celebrate with us by planting and maintaining a tree.”

Harrish Jajoo, Senior Assistant Director of Engineering Services with the Department of Public Works and Engineering, will also be recognized for his work to include trees and landscaping within the design and planning of the public infrastructure.

“Harrish Jajoo’s work has been instrumental in ensuring trees are preserved during major infrastructure projects by institutionalizing City engineering and construction procedures.” states Victor Cordova, City Forester with the Houston Parks and Recreation Department. “His work has helped preserve and improve Houston’s forestry landscape and he is very deserving of special recognition.”

For the past twenty years, the National Arbor Day foundation has honored Houston with the title “Tree City, U.S.A.” for its commitment to healthy forestry and the planting and maintenance of new trees. Thanks to established City ordinances and resolutions designed to protect and enhance Houston’s tree canopy, a total of over 14,000 tree planting events have occurred over the last three years with many more to come. The City of Houston encourages all citizens to join the **Arbor Day 2006** celebration and keep Houston beautiful by continuing this proud commitment to improving our area landscape.

For additional information on **Arbor Day 2006**, information on how to plant a tree in your neighborhood, or on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department call 713-845-1135 or visit our web site at [www.houstonparks.org](http://www.houstonparks.org)