

Urban Reserve — Cool people live here

Urban Reserve, within sight of typical ranch-style homes, is anything but typical. This modernist, environmentally friendly residential development of 50 homes is the dream come true of developer Diane Cheatham.

"I go to sleep at night envisioning what this place is going to look like," the not-so-typical builder says. "We're focusing on creating a neighborhood. People here are connected by their love of nature, sustainability and modernist architecture."

The first completed home bears a small sign proclaiming, "Cool People Live Here."

A veritable Who's Who of nationally known residential architects has signed on to build homes tucked away on an undeveloped sliver of 11 acres on the western bank of White Rock Creek between Forest Lane on the north and Greenville Avenue on the east.

Half of the lots are under contract and in various stages of construction. Most of the homes are priced from \$400,000 to more than \$2 million. Ms. Cheatham predicts the neighborhood will be fully completed in 2009.

Of that atypically wide price range, Ms. Cheatham says, "That makes a fun neighborhood. Our demographics are wide open, with the youngest person 29 and the oldest 76. We have empty-nesters, new babies and 10-year-olds. We have a natural diversity that's connected by what they love in life."

Urban Reserve is Ms. Cheatham's dream since childhood. "I've wanted to build houses since I was 5 years old," she says.

That goal was temporarily derailed as she embarked on a successful career as an accountant with a large national accounting firm. "At 40, I realized I was unhappy, so I quit. It was a great job, but I realized it was not what I wanted to do. I wanted to be in the construction business," she says.

Her career shift didn't start with Urban

Reserve, but with a wide variety of residential and commercial projects, both remodels and build jobs beginning in the mid-1980s. Along the way, Ms. Cheatham amassed a long list of awards and industry recognition.

Urban Reserve combines Ms. Cheatham's desire to "work with the land as it was," and her love of modernist architecture.

"I wanted to build what works here today," she says.

With Urban Reserve, Ms. Cheatham has come under a national spotlight.



Diane Cheatham, builder of Urban Reserve in northeast Dallas, is building 50 modern, environmentally sensitive homes on the banks of White Rock Creek. Shown is the first completed home.

Regular magazine features have put Urban Reserve on the map, and Ms. Cheatham enthusiastically shares her vision — and her comprehensive specifications — for the modern, environmentally sensitive residential development.

Because she isn't secretive about the specifications for Urban Reserve, Ms. Cheatham says she believes the future of responsible development will expand quickly in Dallas and across the country. "I have a call scheduled with developers in California to discuss our development, and I'm always delighted to spend 20 or 30 minutes giving tours," she says.

Those tours become a master class in

environmentally sound development practices and allow Ms. Cheatham to point out the intelligent design at work in Urban Reserve. No detail of infrastructure or architecture is too insignificant to escape her notice, and attention to those details contributes to the "net positive" effect the development has on its environment, Ms. Cheatham says.

Urban Reserve is as different from a typical suburban development as a Smart Car is from a Hummer. The neighborhood stretches the length of the aptly named Vanguard Way, just 22-feet wide, rather than Dallas' standard 36 feet. The width is designed "to reduce the

amount of impervious surface," Ms. Cheatham says.

Vanguard Way is sloped rather than built with the usual

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—DIANE CHEATHAM

crowned center. That slope contributes to the development's elaborate drainage system, which coordinates two rainwater collection ponds on the street's "wet side" and the natural plantings on the "dry side."

The development includes other environmentally conscious specifications.

"Homes must be at least 20 percent more energy efficient than (the building) code requires; native and adaptive plants must be used in landscaping; and landscaping irrigation will be accomplished using the rainwater stored in the two ponds," Ms. Cheatham says.

Additionally, homes are set just 10 feet back from the street.

"It's a more human scale, and it's friendlier," Ms. Cheatham says. "Our lots are about 5,000 square feet, and in terms of use, they're as good as typical lots sized about 7,500 square feet. A home typically has a front yard and two side yards. We've choked that down into more usable space. Our homes are still about 20 feet apart, but our lots are long so every room can engage nature and make use of natural light."

As Urban Reserve sells out to more "cool people," Ms. Cheatham believes other developers will follow like a herd.

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