

SEP 29 1983

Our Dirty, Tacky Town

MAYBE it's because we're so used to it that we don't see it. Or maybe it's because enough of us simply don't care.

Whatever the reason, the unpleasant truth is that Oklahoma City, for all its many other attributes, is a trashy, dirty city.

The dedicated folks at Oklahoma City Beautiful keep chipping away at the problem, which is primarily one of focusing public attention and promoting continuing cleanup efforts. But it's never been enough, and the effort keeps slipping farther behind as our population grows.

The Oklahoma City Council's latest attempt at regulation of the outdoor sign industry, encompassed in five new ordinances, is a case in point that illustrates an ambivalent attitude toward the total physical environment of our community.

Whatever the merits of the new ordinances, designed to reduce the clutter and safety hazards resulting from proliferation of billboards and portable signs, the fact remains that citizens will see virtually no improvement for a long time, if ever.

That is because the deadline for compliance with the new laws was advanced nearly 10 years into the future. The sign industry won't have to get serious about compliance until July 1, 1993, which appears to be an unreasonably long time.

This lengthy extension is espe-

cially significant in view of the fact that the compliance deadline falls four years past the centennial of the Oklahoma land rush and the founding of Oklahoma City. Sprucing up the city in keeping with plans for a world-class exhibition in 1989 is rendered all the more difficult.

But outdoor advertising signs, of course, are only one component of the overall impression that registers on visitors and residents alike. Trash, garbage and the unsightly detritus of a seemingly endless accumulation of litter combine with our prairie winds to present what — in comparison with many other cities — can only be described as an ugly picture.

Construction sites afford another example. In many cases, wrappings and building material containers are not disposed of properly by workers and left to be blown away or pile up against fences.

But the general public is primarily responsible for the mess, both in terms of helping to create it and lacking any apparent desire to live in a tidier, more attractive urban environment.

Let's face it. Today, we're a very tacky place. And it will get worse, with more of us generating more trash and litter, until citizens become concerned enough to assume personal responsibility for a clean-city ethic and insist on really tough enforcement.