

# Saving Large Oaks, Removing Planted Pine at Longleaf

## Longleaf Site



*Longleaf by Pulte Homes*

In the immediate future the Longleaf development by Pulte Homes will commence clearing and grading. The site is located between Colonial Drive, Oakland Avenue and the Florida Turnpike. The site is formerly Florida Turnpike property that was rezoned from shopping center/commercial to residential. While bulldozers will clear most of the planted pine trees for future homes and streets, Town staff's approval of the site grading and tree saving strategy came after much back-and-forth with Pulte Homes. Pulte will build 184 homes at Longleaf, 84 single family detached homes and 100 townhomes on 41 acres.. Senior Project Engineer Ben Ellis described future improvements primarily aimed at saving existing oak trees as well as an enhanced landscape buffer around the entire site.

“Since the early stages of design, the applicant has been especially conscious of the beauty and value of the existing tree canopy on the subject property. That awareness has translated into multiple iterations and design changes to try to maximize tree preservation. The applicant has significantly altered the site layout to create natural mews and open space areas. The entrance off Oakland Avenue meanders through large, existing oaks to maintain the rural charm of Oakland Avenue. In addition, a 20 foot landscape buffer will be retained which contains a large number of pine trees that will remain on the site in order to maintain a wooded edge along the development. A trail system has been incorporated into the protected trees to keep the feeling of a nature trail. A crossing on Oakland Avenue will connect to the West Orange Trail.

The tree survey and tree mitigation calculations were performed prior to the effects of Hurricane Irma, thus giving credit to more trees than currently stand. A significant number of trees ranging in size were unfortunately damaged and will need to be removed from the site. The result of removing these dead and damaged trees will be a noticeable difference in the landscape in relationship to the existing look of the site. In addition, the site was previously used as an agriculture operation with planted timber. Thus the rows of pine trees were temporary in nature. The removal of most of these temporary pines will have a visual impact on the site. However, where feasible, the design attempts to preserve pine trees in the created open spaces and mews.

The original tree clearing permit included the preservation of approximately 190 oak trees. A later revision involving grading modifications and layout adjustments saved additional oak trees, bringing the current total to 265 oak trees. The total number of oaks to be removed is 397. Therefore, approximately 40% of the existing oak trees will be saved. The applicant is proud of the fact that approximately 33 specimen oak trees larger than 36-inches diameter at breast height will be preserved.

To be put in perspective with Orange County standards, the county requires a maximum of 90 inches of replacement per acre. The project will be preserving roughly 123 inches of trees per acre. Plus, another 50 inches of trees per acre will be planted. Thus, far exceeding the County standards for tree mitigation and planting.

Pulte Homes will continue to coordinate with Town staff and use best management practices to install tree protection and silt fence measures and limit earthwork activities to protect the remaining vegetation. An additional 700 trees will then be added to the site plan as part of the final engineering plan. The proposed trees will be a diversity of street trees, coniferous trees, and canopy trees, including live oaks. The variety of species should further enhance the landscape while protecting against exposure to disease.”

### Example of Tree Protection at the Oakland Avenue Entrance to Longleaf Directly across from the Amon Pavilion entry into Oakland Nature Preserve

