

By **Bill Parsons** Vice Chairman, Seven Oaks CDD

Oak Trees Become a Liability

CDD Board Working with Arborist to Prepare a Plan to Submit to County

In last February's CDD article in the *Seven Oaks News*, I provided background information about what the CDD Board is doing about the trees between the sidewalks and streets as well as what other communities are doing about oak trees pushing up their sidewalks. The article also provided details on our meeting with Commissioner Mulieri and members of the Pasco County staff at our CDD meeting on January 11, 2012. If you would like to review this article, it is posted on the Seven Oaks Website. Now, I will explain what the CDD Board has done since January 2012.

Three Evaluations

At the February 9, 2012 CDD meeting, the Board hired PHC Professionals, Inc to give a professional evaluation of what can be done to mitigate further damage being caused by the trees between the sidewalks and streets. They provided an 11 page report on March 1, 2012. The report stated that "Most of the oak trees planted between the sidewalks and streets throughout Seven Oaks are in poor health and exhibiting tip and branch dieback and death in some cases." The recommendation in the report stated, "The only viable option to prevent further damage to the sidewalks by actively-growing trees (the ones that still have green leaves) is to remove the trees."

At the January CDD meeting, Commission Mulieri recommended that we work with Chris Dewey, who works in the Pasco County Extension. This office offers educational services in Pasco

County through a three way cooperative arrangement between the Board of County Commissioners, the University of Florida, and the United States Department of Agriculture. When I talked with Chris Dewey, he said because of the size of Seven Oaks, he wanted to get the opinion of Bob Northrop, who is his counterpart in the Hillsborough County Extension Office. After both of them inspected Seven Oaks, Chris Dewey sent us a report on May 8, 2012 stating, "Without consideration of the cost of the two options, tree replacement is the only option that can provide street trees of high quality, proper structure, good rooting and minimal potential for sidewalk damage and lifting that can be a tripping hazard." His conclusion was based on observations by both of them that included the poor quality of the planted trees, trees planted at excessive depth, poor structure of trees, trees having circling roots due to the way grown, and poor soil conditions.

CDD Responsible for Sidewalk Repair

At the March 14, 2012 CDD Board meeting, the Board passed a resolution to change the repair of the sidewalk adjacent to homeowner lots from the homeowner to the CDD. This would include removal and replacement of damaged sidewalk. The homeowner will continue to be responsible for maintaining the sidewalk to include keeping the sidewalks clear of debris, removing any slipping hazards, and cleaning off any mold and dirt.



Stephanie Bledsoe, PHC Professionals Inc, inspects sidewalks with Bob Semple, CDD maintenance supervisor



Chris Dewey, Pasco County Extension Office





Repairs to Damaged Sidewalks

At the June 5, 2012 CDD meeting, the Board made the decision to begin repairing the sidewalks. We started with three sidewalks that were raised the highest. So the new sidewalks would not be damaged by the oak trees causing the problem, we voted to remove the oak trees. The CDD hired Joe's Tree Service for \$1,300 to cut down the three trees plus one additional oak tree, grind the stumps, and lay new sod.

At the September 12, 2012 CDD Board meeting, the Board made the decision to repair all the sidewalks at Seven Oaks that were uneven. There were now about 350 sidewalks that needed to be repaired with most of them being damaged by oak trees. All but 15 sections of sidewalk could be ground down with the equipment that Bob Semple had purchased months earlier for just over \$1,000. We also achieved an economy of scale by Driveway Maintenance, Inc replacing the 15 sections plus 3 sections at the same time. The cost of the 18 sections was \$10,485 where the cost for just 3 sections would have been \$3,750. This required that an additional 44 trees be removed for \$15,700 so the trees would not continue to raise the repaired sidewalks. Our maintenance staff has ground down about 50 sidewalks and are working on the remainder.

Developing a Plan to Resolve Issues with Remaining Trees

At the October 10, 2012 CDD meeting, each Board member felt the research that they had done indicated that the approximately 2,000 remaining oak trees in the areas between the sidewalks and streets needed to be removed. The next step would be to hire an arborist to look at each tree to determine if the research that we had done had led us to the correct conclusion. To insure all Board members wanted to proceed with this next step, we unanimously approved a motion to remove the street trees and replace them with another species in a location to be determined at a later date. In November, the CDD hired Ron Litts, who is an arborist that had worked with the county to write the new land development code that we will need to follow.

At the November 14, 2012 CDD meeting, the Board discussed options concerning replacement trees to start developing a plan to submit to Pasco County. The new Land Development Code requires that if more than 35 trees are removed at least 8 species have to be planted. One cost estimate for all 2,037 trees was \$90 to remove each tree and \$159 to plant a replacement tree. Therefore, it would cost approximately \$500,000. This cost will vary based on the type of tree chosen and how many are removed and replanted at the same time.

Workshops

A workshop was held November 10th at noon and 7:30 p.m. Extra booklets are at the clubhouse. More workshops will be held during the coming months. Each homeowner will receive a detailed letter. It will also be posted on the website and put on the marquee a few days prior to the workshop. ❖

OAK TREES IN NEIGHBORHOODS	
Neighborhood	Trees
Amberside	95
Brookforest	87
Copperleaf	109
Coventry	67
Crosswinds	62
Edenfield	144
Fairgate	98
Grassglen	64
Knollpoint	105
Lakeside	31
Palmetto Bend	74
Pinecrest/Forest Edge	199
Sabal Point	3
Shoregrass	121
Silverleaf	60
Springwood	91
Stillbrook	105
Stonecreek	27
The Laurels	50
Villas at Edenfield	42
Villas at Willow Creek	108
Villas of Deer Run	51
Watermark	110
Willowstone	134
Total	2,037

48 Oak Trees Removed Five Steps



1. Cut Down Tree Causing Problem



2. Grind Down Stump



3. Replace Sod



4. Take Out Raised Sidewalk



5. Pour New Sidewalk