

Open Areas at Seven Oaks

Owned by the CDD, Regulated by SWFWMD



In the previous issue of the Seven Oaks News (August 2015), the CDD article was about how walking, jogging, or biking on the sidewalks and 2 1/2 mile nature trail was a great way to enjoy the Seven Oaks Community. One of the areas that makes this so enjoyable is the open areas. This article will provide a better understanding of the open areas at Seven Oaks.

Seven Oaks consists of approximately 2,000 acres with lots for 2,641 residential units, 4 shopping plazas, 5 professional centers, and common areas (clubhouse located on 13 acres, four main roads, neighborhood streets, parks, etc.). The remaining portions of Seven Oaks, according to the bonds and other documents, are called open areas.

Within these open areas, there are retention ponds, uplands, and wetlands. As part of the water management system at Seven Oaks, there are over 100 retention ponds. Most of these ponds are visible from the sidewalks and nature trail. The remainder of the open areas contain uplands and wetlands.

For wetlands, a very simple definition would be it is “an area that is neither dry land nor open water.” The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has a more technical definition. It defines wetlands as “those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or ground water at a frequency and a duration sufficient to support, and under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of

vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soils.” For Seven Oaks, the open areas that are not retention ponds or wetlands would be uplands.

As the subtitle of the article indicates, the open areas at Seven Oaks are owned by the CDD but regulated by the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). This district known as “Swiftmud” is responsible for flood protection, water supply, water quality, and protecting the environment. To ensure they meet these responsibilities, they required the CDD to obtain construction and operation permits for these open areas. If the requirements in the permits are violated, Swiftmud has the authority to fine or sue the CDD and/or an individual

such as a homeowner for violating a permit.

At Seven Oaks, there have been numerous violations that have had to be resolved. These have included homeowners and contractors working for homeowners. Some examples would be the following:

- Homeowners/contractors trimming trees and putting the fronds from palm trees or branches from other trees in the open areas.

- Contractors removing trees and other vegetation to gain access to the back of houses for construction such as enlarging the house or installing a pool.

- Homeowners removing vegetation in the open areas behind their houses to change the appearance.



-- Homeowners extending the sod in their yards into the open areas behind their houses to obtain a larger yard.

-- Homeowners taking out trees and vegetation in open areas to construct such items as a batting cage.

Since the CDD can be fined or taken to court by Swiftmud for violations, the CDD immediately takes action when they discover one. Most violations are found by the CDD maintenance staff who go into these areas for various reasons. The other main source is from homeowners.

When the CDD can identify the homeowner or contractor who has made any changes to the open areas, they contact them immediately. The person or company is required to restore the open area back to its original state or the CDD will restore it and bill the homeowner or company.

Changes to the open areas is very costly to the homeowners. They make Seven Oaks less attractive, costly to clean up, and reduce the property value of the homes. If anyone sees a violation, report it to the our District Manager (813-933-5571).

Wetland at Seven Oaks



This portion of the open area is definitely a wetland. It is located at the bridge on the nature trail that goes from Edenfield to Grassglen.

Examples of Violations in Open Areas at Seven Oaks



In Copperleaf, tree trimmings had been dumped in four places in an open area



Along the nature trail near Edenfield, landscape trimmings were dumped in the open area.



In Shoregrass, tree trimmings were dumped visible to pedestrian and vehicle traffic.



In The Laurels, a path was made into the open area so debris could be dumped.



A homeowner in Shoregrass removed trees in the open area behind his house and started construction of a baseball batting cage.