

Oak Gate brings new development to NW 6th Street

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Ground has broken on one of the first new developments on NW 6th Street in many a year.

Oak Gate at 2900 NW 6th St. will bring 94 two-story attached townhomes filling in 8 acres of vacant land that stretches westward to behind Sam's Club, snaking through traditional homes built decades ago.

Mike Warren of AMJ Inc. of Gainesville is finally building on the land he has owned since 1994.

The recent decision by Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse to build on the former Gainesville Mall/Kmart site, the renovation of the Plaza Theater/Pic-N-Save shopping center into Verde Plaza and the interest by The Home Depot in the NW 13th Street corridor didn't really influence his decision to do the project, he said.

"We were working on this way before all of that was happening," he said. "There was no rush to develop it, but the time got right.

"I am happy to see revitalization of retail on NW 13th Street. The demographic shows there are lot of people living in this area who need this. The stores will do well; there is a pent-up demand for it."

Warren said Oak Gate is a "nice residential development that will augment the character of the surrounding neighborhood." Access will only be from NW 6th Street and from NW 8th Street via NW 26th Avenue.

All attached two-story townhomes have two or three bedrooms and a single-car garage. Some have porches, many have bay windows.

Oak Gate will be built in three phases, with about 30 homes in each phase. Sizes range from 1,242 to 1,450 square feet, and will cost from \$184,900 to \$210,900.

Exteriors are Hardiboard siding with traditional "Gainesville colors; this is not a 'South Beach' palette," Warren said.

Clearing began two weeks ago, with most of the usable lumber being harvested for other uses, Warren said.

What had first appeared to be a heavily wooded site turned out to be an infestation of camphor trees, which are considered invasive. "The city was anxious to take them out. We also lost a lot of trees during the hurricanes, so those were on the ground. In addition, many water oaks and laurel oaks were deemed to be on the decline, so

those were also removed," he said. Some large live oaks remain and are protected from construction.

Warren said the trees that were removed were recycled in "classic forestry" uses, including being reduced to wood chips or transformed into what are called "drag mats." - joined into mats dragged behind heavy machinery - or into rafts for machinery to roll onto when working in swampy areas. "Before now, I never heard of those," Warren said.

Trummell Construction is the general contractor. Osteen Brothers is doing the land-clearing and installing the infrastructure, including drainage pipes. Foundations are expected to be poured by the end of the month, Warren said, with completion later this year.

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