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REAL-ESTATE

Groveland growth continues at rapid pace

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GROVELAND — This small town has been showered recently with environmental awards, including one celebrating its Dark Sky initiative, which is aimed at cutting back on lighting so citizens can better see the stars.

But “The City with Natural Charm” is also one of the fastest growing cities in Lake County, so how can it continue its balancing act?

“Besides living up to our logo ... we want to set an example for other cities,” Mayor Evelyn Wilson said in a press release announcing the League of Cities Environmental Stewardship Award. “We are looking to reduce light pollution and save the environment for our residents as well as our wildlife.”

So many new developments

The award comes at a time when new developments are flying off planners’ desks and heading toward fruition.

One of those planned developments is Peachtree Hills, a 343.5-acre, 455 single-family and townhouse development off Dewey Robbins Road.

Stanley Martin Homes recently paid \$7.9 million for the project, according to Daryl Carter, the president of Maury L. Carter and Associates.

His company has sold thousands of acres along Dewey Robbins in the past year or so.

Another development is the 486-acre, 673-home Cypress Reserve subdivision on the edge of the Green Swamp.

That subdivision has a long and storied history of controversy, since the state designated the Green Swamp as a “An Area of Critical Concern.” The swamp is a critical water recharge area for the Floridan Aquifer, which provides most of the drinking water for residents.

“Ten years ago or so there was a big dust up over development near the swamp,” said Andrew Landis, the division manager of the city’s Conservation and Strategic Initiatives.

City voters wanted strict environmental protection but the then-developer sued the state and the city joined the suit in support of the developer, Landis said.

Since then, the developer has worked with the city, dialing back the number of planned houses and has made other concessions, Landis said.

Cypress Ridge is the last development to be built right on the edge of the swamp, Landis said.

Still, there are other developments coming, or at least in the planning stage, according to the city’s website, including:

- + Brighthill, a mix of single-family, bungalows, townhouses and a village commercial core on State Road 19.
- + Rainwood, a 437-single family, townhouse and “live/work units” on 112 acres near the Wilson Lake Parkway.
- + A Days Inn conversion to 101 apartments on U.S. 27 near State Road 19.
- + The Grove@Groveland, a 320-multi-family and 10 townhouse development on 22 acres on State Road 50.
- + Groveland Square, a mixed-use development that includes commercial, multi- and single-family home development on U.S. 27 near State Road 19.
- + Vintner Estates, a single-family development with 44 homes on Libby Road No. 3 just off U.S. 27.
- + Waterside Pointe Townhouses, with 70 units on State Road 50.
- + Meadow Pointe & Hidden Ridge, 361 lots on 152 acres on Cherry Lake Road.
- + The Preserve on Lake David, 76 units on 37 acres on Mount Pleasant Road.

Industrial parks usher in residential growth

“The industrial park is what’s driving residential growth,” Landis said.

Kroger built a first-of-its kind robotics distribution center, he said. Amazon also has a distribution center.

There is also a million-square foot building, “built on spec,” he said, meaning that it was not built for a specific company, but built to be sold to a future owner unknown.

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That’s on State Road 19.

Groveland is the hub for U.S. 27, State Road 50, Florida’s Turnpike and County Road 33.

“We get a lot of truck traffic,” Landis said.

Still, not everything is a big box with a huge paved parking lot. One of the newcomers on the industrial side is Behr’s Chocolate Factory on 30 acres on O’Brien Road.

Plans call for some cows to graze on the property to test different kinds of grass feed. “This goes with our eco-agrarian vibe,” Landis said.

The goal, he said, is to leave about half of the town undeveloped. That could be helped with the annexation of adjacent undeveloped property.