

Landscaping Land Use Debated

LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE CHANGE PROPOSED

By YVETTE C. HAMMETT
yhammett@tampatrib.com

THONOTOSASSA — Hillsborough County's landscape contractors have for years been growing, installing and maintaining plants using their agricultural property as a base of operations, but the county has never legally recognized landscaping as a legitimate agricultural use.

A proposed change to the land development code would legitimize what some 200 or more landscape contractors have been doing for decades, County Zoning Administrator Paula Harvey said.

Residents living around some of

those operations are not convinced the proposed change would protect their rural lifestyle.

Even businesses that started out years ago as landscape contractors have branched out into irrigation, maintenance and other commercial operations that are not compatible with agricultural zoning, some neighbors say. They want to make sure the county does not legitimize commercial businesses in their neighborhoods, and enforces existing rules that prohibit such uses.

But industry officials say the proposed restrictions, which include set hours of operation and number of vehicles, are too tight.

The county commission held its first public hearing on the proposed code change last week, but instead of voting, commissioners sent it back to

staff for review. They directed Harvey to meet again with industry representatives and neighbors before June 3 to try to hash out a solution.

The second public hearing is scheduled for 6 p.m. June 3 in the commission chambers at the County Center, 601 E. Kennedy Blvd. in downtown Tampa.

When Karin Arden moved to her home off Knights-Griffin Road in Thonotosassa five years ago, the property next to hers was an open pasture. She said she and her neighbors all bought their property from the same seller with the understanding that the entire area would be used for agriculture or rural homes.

Two years later, a huge metal warehouse was built behind her home.

See **LANDSCAPE ZONING**, Page 4 ▶
Retail sales would be banned.



Tribune photo by KATHY MOORE-LENGLEL

Neighbors Brian Pandorf and Karin Arden, and other Thonotosassa residents are opposed to changing the county code to allow retail use by nurseries, tree farms and landscapers. A hearing is set for June 3.

Troopers To Tighten Belt Checks

STATE CAMPAIGN AIMS AT RESTRAINT VIOLATIONS

By JILL KING GREENWOOD
jgreenwood@tampatrib.com

Travelers heading out to celebrate the official start of summer had better be diligent about making sure all their passengers are strapped in, especially babies and children, law enforcement officials said.

As the Memorial Day holiday weekend nears and traffic chokes Bay area roads, state troopers and Hillsborough County sheriff's deputies will be looking out for seat belt and child safety restraint violations.

Buckle Up Florida is sponsoring a statewide enforcement campaign called "Click It or Ticket" that started Monday and runs through June 6.

The campaign is one of several held throughout the year, usually around holiday weekends, Florida Highway Patrol Trooper Larry Coggins said.

Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office spokesman Lt. Rod Rieder said buckling a seat belt is a simple but lifesaving choice.

"It's stunning to me in this day and age, with all the traffic and all the accidents that we have in this area, that someone would even consider not buckling a seat belt," Rieder said.

Law enforcement officers cannot stop a motorist for not wearing a seat belt because it is considered a secondary violation. But officers can stop a car with an unrestrained child because that's a primary violation.

A seat belt violation carries a \$60 fine in Hillsborough County, and failing to buckle up a child can result in a \$90 fine, Coggins said.

In 2002, the most recent data available, 3,140 people were killed in motor vehicle accidents in Florida, and 560 were not wearing seat belts, Coggins said. In the same time period, 89 children killed in crashes were not in restraint seats or properly buckled.

Reporter Jill King Greenwood can be reached at (813) 657-4534.

Keep An Eye On Crime

Keep up with calls reported in your area to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office.

DETAILS, Page 8



Unfinished Business

For the second time since 2002, Bloomingdale's baseball team seeks a state title beginning Friday at Legends Field.

DETAILS, Sports, Page 11



Tribune photo by JIM REED

Architect Mike Calvino is building a waterfront home for a couple west of Ruskin. A lot of architects don't do the hands-on work, but he does.

From The Ground Up

The home Mike Calvino designed and is constructing hands-on is attracting architectural attention.

By LIZ BLEAU
lbleau@tampatrib.com

RUSKIN — Any architect can design a house. But Mike Calvino hasn't merely designed the home taking shape on a tree-shaded waterfront lot on Canal Street overlooking Tampa Bay. He's also building it with his own hands — every wall, floor, fixture and door. He's building all the eucalyptus cabinets and latches, the floor inlays, the swimming pool and the 52-foot cypress laminate beams that will give the house much of its innovative character.

When completed in about a year, the house will have been five years in the making. But already, even without its signature roof, the home is drawing interest in architectural circles. A group of area architects toured the house Saturday, and others already had made their way out to see Calvino's work.

Steve Cooke, an associate professor at the University of Florida's School of Architecture and Design, said it's unusual for an architect to take such a hands-on approach for a client.

"It's not unusual for an architect to be the general contractor for a project. Some firms contract to do that, to deliver a whole package. But they have separate divisions for doing that. Very few architects are doing what Mike is doing."

The house is important for the region, Cooke said, not just because of the process.

"This is a piece of art," he said. "He is building the house like a sculptor would build. And it's hard to find a client willing to agree to the process."

Much of what is being built in the area today, Cooke said, are so-called "McMansions" that allow for little creative exploration.

"Most architecture today is like the food at McDonald's. It's comfortable. There is no risk. You know what you are going to get," he said.

The house Calvino is building "can educate the public on the deeper issues of architecture, of how a house flows and relates to the site," he said.

Calvino's clients are Stan Woodruff and his wife, Sharon Collier.



Exhibit photo by ROBERT JORRA

Sharon Collier and her husband, Stan Woodruff, center, go over the plans with architect Mike Calvino. When finished, the house will have been five years in the making.



Tribune photo by JIM REED

A model reveals the plans for the home on Canal Street.

THE DETAILS

- Stan Woodruff and Sharon Collier of Sun City plan on moving in next year. A five-year wait for the completion.
- There will be 1,000 square feet of air-conditioned space, but 10,000 square feet of interior space, decks and porches.
- 52-foot cypress laminate beams, which will create a distinctive roof, will arch over the front entry.
- The kitchen cabinets will be made from a sustainable tree in Tampa. The owner will be able to harvest the wood himself and give it to the local wood shop.



Tribune photo by ROBERT BURKE

Stan Woodruff and Sharon Collier admire the view from the top floor of their home under construction in Ruskin.

HANDS-ON HOUSE

Continued From Page 1

Sharon Collier, of Sun City. Woodruff said an artist they know recommended Calvino.

"Mike came out to the site, and I explained we wanted a simple house with split bedrooms and living space in the middle," he said. "He went to his studio and came up with this house out of 'Star Wars.' Until I saw the model I hadn't

realized how talented he was. There is nothing he can't do."

Woodruff said he and his wife were willing to wait, even though they knew the house would take years.

"Every time he does something he surprises me," Woodruff said, "and it's always a 'wow.' I've looked at a lot of homes and a lot of unique homes, but I have not seen one that compares to this one."

Calvino, 33, lives in south Tampa with his wife, Elaine, and daughter, Mary, 2.

He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from the

University of Florida and worked in architectural offices in New York City and Tampa while designing and building furniture on the side.

He grew up in Longwood, outside of Orlando. He said his mother noticed at an early age that he had a lot of patience.

"I guess that's why I can stay on one project for a long time," he said.

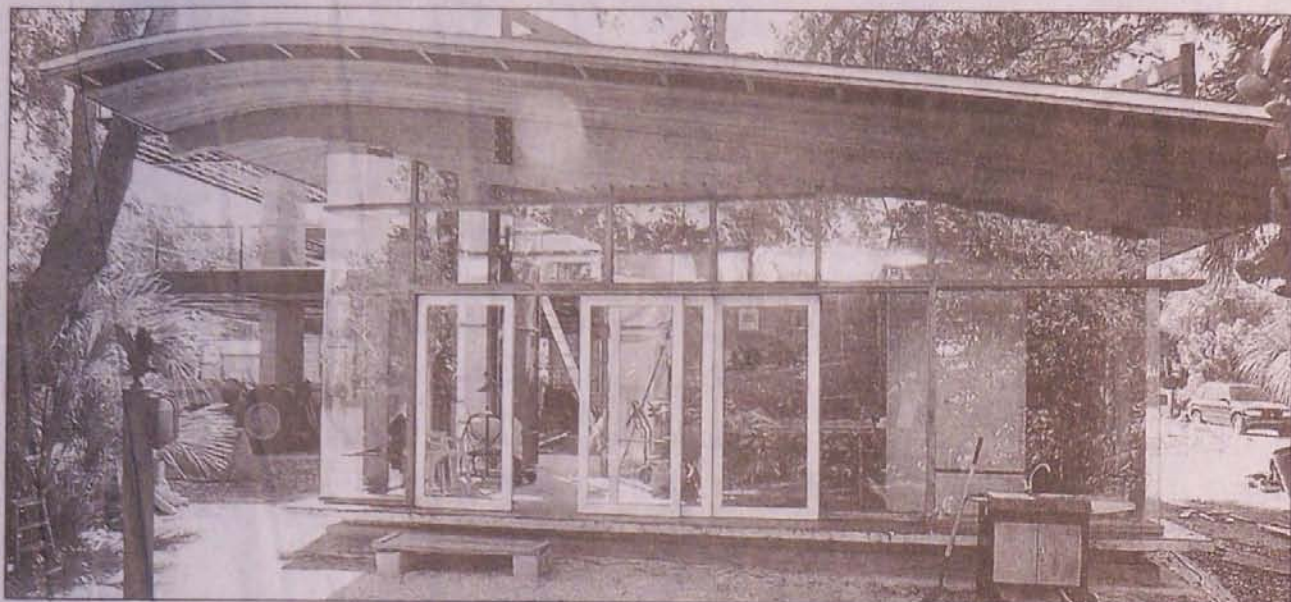
Calvino is preparing to build the laminate beams that will give the home much of its character. The beams will protrude 19 feet over the front entry, where an elevated circular

drive will bring people to a second-story entrance.

Much of the house is concrete and steel, which he said can give a home a cold feel. That's why he's adding important wooden touches.

"It's the wood and glass detail, especially the wood, that brings the human scale and tactile quality, the warmth," he said. "It's the wood, especially the exotic woods, that bring the grain, color, smell to a project. To me, that's the human interface."

See HANDS-ON HOUSE, Page 7 ►
Architect always liked to build.



Tribune photo by JIM REED

The guest house of a private residence being built by Mike Calvino has laminate wood beams supporting the roof. Larger versions of the roof beams will be used in the main house.

HANDS-ON HOUSE

Continued From Page 6

The house will have about 2,000 square feet of air-conditioned space and a total of 10,000 square feet of interior space, roof decks and porches.

The roof beams will be made from cypress, shaped and then glued and bolted together to form an arc similar to those seen in churches and other larger structures.

Calvino built a scaled-down version of the laminate beams on a small guest house alongside the main house.

That structure, Woodruff said, convinced him of Calvino's creativity.

An existing concrete slab on the property was not structurally sound enough to sup-

port a building, so Calvino built the guesthouse over the slab and supported it with steel trusses perched on top of concrete towers. The trusses hold the cypress laminate beams, which add color and character.

Calvino said he has always liked to build things. He learned the basics of construction, and in 2000 he earned his general contractor's license. He said some of the skills he uses in home building he learned working on cars.

He created the iron grillwork for the railings on the balcony himself, poured the concrete for the foundation and the pool and built the iron trusses for the roof.

He will build the kitchen cabinets out of eucalyptus wood milled from a tree a Tampa homeowner no longer wanted. The eucalyptus also will become part of the inlaid

flooring and handmade eucalyptus bed and shelves in the master bedroom.

Woodruff said he believes Calvino will be famous one day.

"My friends call him Mike Lloyd Wright," he said, referring to the famous early 20th-century American architect. "But Wright never did it all like Mike does. He keeps sending furniture he designs to someone in California who wants him to come out there someday and build a house for the furniture. I figure once that happens, we will lose him and he will really catch on."

Until then, Woodruff is happy to have Calvino creating a house of exceptional quality built by someone who loves what he does.

"I never saw anyone as happy doing what they are doing as Mike is," he said.

Reporter Liz Bleau can be reached at (813) 633-4323.