



AUTUMN HALLSM

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Wilmington, North Carolina Welcomes Its First True New Urbanism Community with Autumn Hall

236 acres near Wrightsville Beach to be developed for homes, offices, shopping, dining, public gardens and parks

Wilmington, North Carolina -- The sixth generation of a Wilmington North Carolina, family is developing a 236 acre site that their grandfather purchased in the 1950s for only \$27 an acre. Autumn Hall is located just 1.5 miles from Wrightsville Beach and includes an eight-acre lake, hundreds of mature hardwoods and is bordered by a tidal creek. Without Wilmington's high cost of land to consider, the developers have dedicated their resources to environmental stewardship, thoughtful land planning and contextual architecture. It's the city's first true new-urbanist or neo-traditional community and its developers are betting that buyers will appreciate their vision and welcome this departure from the clear cut, cul-de-sac communities that have dominated Wilmington's rapid growth. Already, Raiford Trask, lead developer, has won the state's "Citizen Planner Award," presented by the North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association, in acknowledgement of the Autumn Hall plan.

A "Save Tree Mandate"

"There's simply no land available in Wilmington that has the abundance of natural resources Autumn Hall has," said Mr. Trask who has championed environmental stewardship as he makes way for 500 families to move on the property. Trask's "Save Tree Mandate" has challenged his construction team, city officials and utility providers to reconsider typical development practices and apply more advanced tree-friendly techniques.

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In the first phase of the project alone, more than 200 mature trees have been saved, and another 200 or more will be saved over the life of the project. Some have been spaded and replanted for a more mature community streetscape. Others have driven the locations of parks, directions of roads, or simply rendered lots unbuildable. Those efforts recently won the project two of four awards presented by the Wilmington Tree Commission, one for tree preservation and the other for use of native trees.

Live, Work and Walk

A key focus of new-urbanism is on pedestrian traffic and Autumn Hall has adopted this tenet soundly. City of Wilmington planning authorities have credited the land plan for its innovative refocusing on vehicular traffic. "The city's technical standards required reconsideration to include a significant amount of green space, narrow carriageways, smaller turning radiuses and generous pedestrian ways," said Christine Hughes, AICP, senior planner with the city. In general, the plan seeks to enhance the importance of sidewalks and multi-use paths encouraging residents to leave their cars behind and walk for exercise, errands and enjoyment.

Nature trails and pedestrian paths crisscross the community, linking homes to parks, lakes, clubs and commercial areas. Importantly, every home at Autumn Hall will be no more than 400 feet from one of the community's 11 planned parks. "That's 400 feet as a person walks, not as a crow flies," says Mr. Trask. The community's 2.3 mile multi-use path also connects with the city's municipal path, which extends from Wilmington's historic downtown along the Cape Fear River to Wrightsville Beach, with one mile winding through the trees along the northern edge of Autumn Hall.

Green Space for the City

Wilmington residents will also be able to enjoy 51 new acres of public green space at Autumn Hall. Eleven parks are planned to serve as recreational fields, contemplative gardens and playgrounds, with one garden accommodating public art installations from local artists. Thought has been given to the green views throughout, even for passing motorists, while numerous stands of mature trees contribute to the sense that this new community has been long established.

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The community's most significant feature is its 8-acre lake, which serves as the terminus of Autumn Hall's main street. A lakeside amphitheater is planned, as well as a promenade to draw shoppers and diners, while a walking path leads to the high bluffs surrounding the lake and to a wooden walking bridge that connects to an island of oaks. "We'll be keeping the lake stocked with plenty of bass," adds Mr. Trask, who is indeed planning for residents who want to fish.

Cape Fear Heritage Architecture Lends Authenticity

The land plan calls for 273 single family homes, 200 condominiums and 33 townhomes. In keeping with the style, architecture and overall essence of the Cape Fear region, Mr. Trask and his development team created architectural guidelines that capture authentic elements of coastal North Carolina. Homes and details are based on the designs and styles of old Wilmington's antebellum manors, coastal plantation homes and casual summer cottages.

The area's architectural and recreational history further influenced the planning and design of the community's commercial and retail center. The hotels and clubs that made coastal North Carolina a leisure destination more than a century ago, combined with the streetscapes of historic downtown Wilmington serve as precedents for the retail village at Autumn Hall.

Phase I Underway

The first of three residential development phases is underway with 45 acres accommodating 94 homesites, six parks and walking trails throughout. Construction will also begin on the community's first commercial section, Dungannon Village, which includes several live/work units, a post office, restaurant and other small retail shops and businesses.

Construction has also begun on a 40,000 square foot medical office building that will house, among other medical practices, Novant Health. Novant plans to have two surgical suites, a medical imaging facility, a laboratory and doctors offices.

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The second residential phase includes approximately 21 acres for 78 homesites and two parks, in addition to continuing the community's systems of trails and walking paths. The third phase, of 56 acres, accommodates 97 homesites and 33 townhomes, as well as three parks, the Autumn Hall Club for swimming and the Autumn Hall Tennis Center, with six state-of-the-art clay courts.

Autumn Hall's remaining 105 acres will be devoted to commercial development, for both nationally-known stores and locally-owned sole proprietorships. The Village Center also includes lakeside promenades and streetscapes which will provide a selection of fine shopping and dining, outdoor plazas and gathering places.

Autumn Hall's Development Team

In addition to family members, the Autumn Hall development team includes Autumn Hall, Inc., Cape Fear Commercial, ColeJenest & Stone for land planning, and LS3P Boney for architecture. Thomas Construction Group is the general contractor; Mihaly-Cirello is the landscape architect and Scott's Treescape serves as the project's arborist.

Autumn Hall's Environmental Stewardship Mission Statement:

Autumn Hall inspires a commitment to land and water stewardship by elevating the importance of all aspects of our natural environment in our land use plan, our focus on the enjoyment of outdoor recreation and our integration of environmental awareness into our neighborhood fabric.

For more information visit www.autumnhall.com

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