

[back to article](#)

StarNewsOnline.com

Autumn Hall plans call for preserving trees

By [Wayne Faulkner](#)

Business Editor

Published: Thursday, January 31, 2008 at 3:30 a.m.

You wouldn't know it from the roar of speeding traffic on Eastwood Road, but just a few yards beyond the highway is a kind of sanctuary of native trees and plants as well as lakes and ponds - and the source of Bradley Creek.

It used to be a golf course, but now it's taking form as Autumn Hall, a 236-acre mixed-used development planned for retail, offices and homes.

The media got a tour of the site Wednesday, beginning at the head of a tree-lined natural lake with high bluffs, one of which is the future site of a hotel. From its banks, the vista was more forest-like than suburban.

That's what the development team headed by Raiford Trask III says it hopes to achieve, in the site design and in the architecture. The homes will take their design from traditional Wilmington homes, such as the colonial revival structures in Forest Park, said architect Christopher Boney of LS3P Associates Ltd.

The team says it has gone out of its way to save trees, even by moving sewer lines after installation and curving them rather than putting them in a straight line. The same "save tree mandate" applied to road paving, which was redirected at considerable expense, according to the development.

Thanks to a complete tree survey, trees are tagged throughout the development either for saving or for transplanting from roadways and home sites to street landscaping.

Trees at the center of homesites will be moved and replanted, so tree construction damage can be minimized, said Autumn Hall's arborist, Scott McGhee, of Scott's

TreeScape. About 200 mature trees will be spaded and replanted for community streetscaping in Phase 1 of the development.

The streets will be lined with trees actually from the development rather than from a nursery, McGhee said. Another self-sustaining feature is that water from retention ponds - themselves crafted into undulating, landscaped features - and stormwater will be used for the community's irrigation with a technology that turns on sprinklers only if the ground around them is sufficiently dry, said Josh Milhaly, landscape architect with Mihaly-Cirello.

The community's entrance - a tree-centered roundabout - offers sightlines that include open space and water. About 25 percent of the development will remain open space, Trask said.

Parks figure prominently in the development's plan. As you enter on Dungannon Boulevard, and to the right of the roundabout, are Arbor Park, which will feature a 22-foot-tall outdoor fireplace, and Chapel Park, which will be designed as a children's play area, Trask said.

"No house is more than 400 feet to a park," said Boney.

Both the streets and the parks in Autumn Hall are public, Trask said.

There will be a total of 11 parks comprising 51 acres when the development is complete.

When built out, Autumn Hall will include about 486,844 square feet of retail; 355,090 square feet of offices; 130,000 square feet of hotel; and 1.21 million square feet of residential - or 300 single-family units and 200 multifamily units.

The general contractor is Thomas Construction Group. Cape Fear Commercial is handing sales and leasing.