

SPECIAL EDITION

SAVE



THE RED 9

*By highlighting the intense development happening right outside our gates, MPCA can frame the purchase of the Red 9 **and** the club not merely as a golf course acquisition, but as an urgent, grant-worthy effort to save one of the last major green corridors and water management systems in a rapidly growing city. There is no more compelling symbol of this than the 'Red 9'.*

Pick Your Place

Are you in search of a new home in the Green Cove Springs area? You're in luck! Let me introduce you to many of your choices.

Let's start with Saratoga Springs located just across the street from the back entrance of Magnolia Point. This new construction neighborhood offers 4489 homes encompassing 2,240 acres. It offers an on-site farm, a social garden, a farm store, resort style pools, fitness, trails and social events.

Next, let's take a look at the Agricola neighborhood. This massive proposed community will provide 4000 residential units (single family homes, townhomes, and multi-family units) and covers 3145 acres. This community boasts community gardens and extensive green spaces. It is designed to be walkable and include mixed-use commercial centers, new schools and retail spaces to minimize car dependency. Instead of traditional lawns and standard amenities, residents will engage in and support local agriculture.

If neither appeals to you, there's always The Rookery. They boast spacious single family living meeting natural beauty and everyday convenience. The plan is approved for up to 2,100 homes. If you're looking for a state of the art amenity center featuring a resort-style pool with splash pad, fitness center, playground and dog park, this is the place for you. And don't forget, phase two amenities are set to include pickleball courts, a pitch and putt golf area and a new shopping center!

If these communities totalling 8,340 homes don't appeal to you, then take a look at :

Hyland Trail • Edgewater Landing • Asbury Creek • Rolling Hills • Lakes at Bella Lago •
Sandridge Hills • Annabelle Island • Granary Park • Willow Springs • Magnolia West

The best part is all of these communities will have access to the First Coast Expressway.

What It Costs (Really)

Unfortunately, all this housing and road construction is taking a toll on our wildlife. Thousands of displaced animals face immediate danger of disorientation, fatal territorial conflicts, roadway death. The rapid destruction of their homes sets off a cascading effect on local ecosystems. Did you see the recent photo of a large bear wandering along the Cathedral Oak Parkway? It's sad to consider that will be a sight that will become more familiar. Until it isn't.

Some assume animals can just be trapped and moved to new areas. Wildlife experts strongly advise against relocation. Animals forced into unfamiliar territory struggle to find food, water and shelter. They don't know the landscape and are highly vulnerable to predators.

Their natural food sources vanish and animals are pushed into residential neighborhoods in search of food. New roads and housing developments push wildlife into isolated pockets, cutting off migratory paths, preventing safe breeding and lowering genetic diversity. Ultimately, animals are injured or killed by vehicles or deemed to be nuisances and destroyed.

The process of construction is a death sentence to wildlife. Loss of habitat like woodlands, grasslands or natural ponds happens when the bulldozers arrive. Wildlife will use different habitats for feeding, breeding or rest and will use different habitats at different times of the year. Just because they don't use a specific area all the time doesn't mean it isn't important to them.

When the bulldozers move in, their habitat can be destroyed in a day. Burrowing animals' homes are destroyed. Tortoises, foxes and rabbits can be buried alive. Animals nesting in trees end up in burn piles. The land is clear cut, homes are built with just a few feet in between. Everyone gets one front yard tree. And for that, hundreds of years of woodlands are leveled.

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Construction noise and light from machinery, people and traffic during and after construction is harmful. Animals will avoid the area or move away in search of food and shelter. Construction releases pollutants into the air, soil and water affecting wildlife on site and even distances away.



Do We Have Any Choice? Do They?

Why should this be a concern to you? Magnolia Point has been a haven for wildlife for decades. We're a small community that was surrounded by woodlands and grazing fields until recently. As the wildlife habitat has been destroyed around us animals have relocated into our community. Have you noticed more coyotes on the trail cam? Do you take the time to watch hawks, kestrels, eagles and osprey hunting on the Red 9 and in our ponds? Gopher tortoises burrow in our yards. Have you seen a rabbit nest in your grass? We even have protected birds nesting and wading on the banks of our ponds.

Our neighborhood offers what the others lack. Magnolia's gated homes sit on lots from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre, many backing up to beautiful live oak forests. Trees in our community have been here for decades and are home to thousands of birds and animals. Our wetlands are vital to the ecosystem and help to provide drainage to our many streets and ponds.

We may not have the fancy amenities offered by the neighborhoods listed above but we have something better. Magnolia offers a more laid back country vibe with lots of green space to accommodate wildlife. Our neighborhood offers peace and quiet. Deer have called this home for decades. Each year I watch a new family raise their young. If you're lucky a mom will entrust your yard to their sleeping fawn to protect them from predators during the day.

The woods and wetlands behind the Red 9 are full of nesting owls. Step outside tonight and listen to their calls. Have your morning coffee on the porch, watch the sunrise and listen to the song birds that thrive in our woods. If you're lucky, you might just see a fox dart across the closed course. There are lots of manufactured "natural" neighborhoods going in around us. Let's keep Magnolia what it is, a

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peaceful, quiet haven for us and our wildlife. Don't allow a developer to come in and destroy what we love.

It's easy for a developer to make promises to limit the number or size or style of homes when they're courting you. Make no mistake about it, their goal is to make as much profit as possible. Plans change as evidenced by a recent Planning and Zoning meeting I recently attended. The attorney and building representative spoke for The Rookery, seeking to change the zoning in their neighborhood.



Initially, the plans called for attached townhomes. However, as they explained, people are interested in single family homes over townhomes. The new plan will provide unattached townhomes **on lots 30 feet wide**, down from the originally approved 50. Their plans started at 1100 square feet and went up to 1700 feet. The minimum requirement in Magnolia is 1800 square feet. Is that a possibility here? Maybe, but we won't know until they show up at Planning and Zoning to request a change. BTW, The Rookery's change was approved on the spot.

There are plenty of neighborhoods for new buyers to choose from with any amenity they want. Let's keep the Red green. Buyers will jump at the chance for the laid back lifestyle of Magnolia. If you're looking to sell, market your home as the only gated neighborhood in the Green Cove Springs that offers established custom homes with quiet living on large wooded lots. We have a lot to offer. It's time for us to control our own destiny. Don't take a chance on the word of a developer. Talk to your neighbors and get them to vote. We need 75 per cent to stop the destruction of our peace and the homes of thousands of birds and animals.

- STORY, PHOTOS: BECKY HINSON

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A New Vision. Or, Do We Have Any Choice?

Yes, it is, And no, we don't.

Our beautiful community is built around a golf course designed by Mark McCumber in 1986, which was a while ago, but not that long in 'golf course years'. However, the greens have never been rebuilt, and the fairways, cart paths, and irrigation systems are all in desperate need of overhaul or update. There's a cool several million right there.

Across the country, an historic trend is underway at master-planned communities just like ours. Faced with shifting demographics and a decline in traditional golf participation, many residential communities are shutting down golf operations, if not entirely then at least with an eye to creating new, diverse amenities. Today's owners *and* buyers are increasingly looking for access to nature, hiking, biking, and multi-generational recreation. By stepping back from the massive financial burden of maintaining a golf course, fighting to keep pace in a competitive regional marketplace, we can transform Magnolia Point into a world-class community oasis with a focus on responsible land use and habitat preservation. Here is a proposal for how we can manage this purchase, repurpose our landscape, and fund the transition using state and federal conservation programs.

Reimagining Our Landscape: Trails, Gardens, and Nature

If we discontinue the golf operations, we instantly gain hundreds of acres of fertile, irrigated land. Because our course was designed with no parallel fairways, it naturally winds through our neighborhoods rather than sitting in a massive grid. This unique layout presents incredible opportunities:

- 1. 'Forever Wild' or 'Nature Preserve' Thinking** - Instead of spending tens of thousands of dollars regularly fertilizing and mowing the 'rough', for instance, we can allow the most ecologically sensitive areas of the course, especially the wetlands and marsh hazards to revert to a "forever wild" state. Restoring wetlands diversifies wildlife habitats, treats stormwater, and provides beautiful interpretive learning opportunities for our families.
- 2. A Network of Walking and Biking Trails** - Our existing miles of paved golf cart paths are absolutely perfect for conversion into linear parks and open space. These paths can become a safe, scenic destination for walking, jogging, and biking in a natural setting, seamlessly connecting our 970 homes. We can also add pedestrian and bicycle bridges over the existing lakes and water features. You couldn't design, or fund, this layout for a modern residential neighborhood even if you tried.
- 3. Community Gardens and Recreation** - We can repurpose our central practice facilities, such as the driving range and chipping areas, into community farms and gardens. This would offer all residents the opportunity to connect, socialize, and grow healthy food locally. Furthermore, we can keep and expand our current "Activity Zone," which already features a pickleball court, sand volleyball, and a playground. These spaces, alongside our Junior Olympic-sized pool and splash pad, provide the multi-generational recreation that modern homeowners desire.

Funding the Vision: Grants and Set-Asides

You're asking, "How do we afford to buy the land and build these new amenities without raising our dues?" The good news is that by transitioning from a private golf course to a protected environmental and recreational space, we unlock access to millions of dollars in government grants and conservation programs.

From 'Buy the Club'

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