

Trees Migrating To School

By JOSE PATINO GIRONA The Tampa Tribune

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TAMPA HEIGHTS - Nearly 200 trees are set to be transferred to Blake High School and its surrounding area to clear the way for a massive redevelopment.

The developer of The Heights, A Better Place Group, will move 188 trees, most of them palms, from its 48-acre site across from the school.

A Better Place also will buy an additional 216 trees to plant along the Hillsborough River, including red maples, live oaks, magnolias, cypress trees and palms, development manager Darren Booth said.

He estimates the cost of the transfers and the new trees at \$500,000.

The transfers should begin next week and take four to six weeks, Booth said. He said the developer could have asked the city for a permit to cut down the trees and replace a percentage of them.

"We are going way above and beyond," Booth said.

Across the river from Blake, the \$500 million redevelopment project includes 1,900 town houses and condominiums priced from \$300,000 to \$1 million. The developer also will realign streets and add utilities.

The development site is bordered by the river, North Boulevard, Ross Avenue and Tampa Street.

The success rate for transferring palm trees is at least 95 percent, said Scott Andreasen, project manager for Heidt & Associates of Tampa.

Workers will cut fronds back to the bud and use a tree spade to accommodate the root ball, said Andreasen, whose company developed the transfer plan with arborist Arthur Costonis, who is based in Florida and South Carolina.

"This isn't a new procedure," Andreasen said.

The Heights will plant about 660 trees at its site, Booth said, including 427 live oaks, 143 palm trees, 24 bald cypress trees, 32 podocarpus trees and 34 yaupon holly trees.

It will cut down some healthy trees, including three oaks, because they might not transfer well or are in the path of planned utility lines. Booth couldn't say how many trees would be cut down. Construction is expected to start in 2008.

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