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Cherry Lake Tree Farm Plans to Grow and Develop

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Lake County agricultural business Cherry Lake Tree Farm announces a major expansion of its nursery operations that will more than double its production by 2011. This is the same Cherry Lake Tree Farm that hosted a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) Pre-application Charrette at their site Friday, unveiling preliminary plans for development of parts of their 1,083 acres site near Groveland.

“The strong growth in the construction market is fueling the demand for ornamental trees” explains Michel Sallin President and CEO of Cherry Lake Tree Farm. “We realize that if we are to keep pace with our customers’ needs we must expand our operation and increase production.”

For Cherry Lake Tree Farm increasing production will mean relocating. “The same construction growth that is driving the market for trees is also putting a lot of pressure on us at this location,” says Sallin “This is why we are looking to develop new satellite farms in this general area.”

Cherry Lake Tree Farm already operates three satellite locations and has over 250 employees many of whom have been with the company over 15 years. “Our talented employees are the reason for our past success. Therefore it is imperative that our relocation allows us to remain in close proximity to here and retain our employees,” said Sallin.

The City of Groveland is expected to grow to 17,000 residents in the next five to seven years. Cherry Lake Tree Farm’s site is situated at the center of Groveland’s north overlay district – the area designated to accommodate future growth of the city. “We have always known that we would eventually have to relocate the farm as growth caught up to this area,” said Sallin “we just didn’t expect it to happen so quickly. We have made the decision to undertake the development permitting process ourselves so we can ensure that this land will be developed responsibly - in a way that we can be proud of. ” .

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The proposed plan for the future development at Cherry Lake Tree Farm includes 2,441 single family residential units, 462 multifamily units, 320 affordable housing units, a school, a town center and over 200 acres of parks and trails. "We believe in the magic of landscapes and the importance of green space," says Sallin "for years we have been educating developers about the value of trees and quality landscapes. We have built a partnership with the Epcot International Flower and Garden Festival and other key industry players to provide research on the social, environmental and economic benefits of landscapes. Now that we are planning on developing a community on our land, we have an opportunity to do something truly unique. My vision is that in twenty years people will look at this community as the standard for incorporating landscapes and green space into a mix-use development." The plan also includes a large distribution center to and office complex to be used by Cherry Lake Tree Farm.

The Sallin Family has own the land at Cherry Lake for 25 years. They purchased it when it was a productive citrus grove in 1981 and suffered through the devastating freezes of 1983, 1985 and 1989. Beginning in 1985 the Sallin Family began developing Cherry Lake Tree Farm on a small ten acre section of dead citrus trees. Today Cherry Lake Tree Farm is one of the largest tree farms in the United States. The Sallin Family also operates a citrus company that owns citrus groves and a packing house in Indian River County. "Agriculture is tough business," admits Sallin "We have lived through freezes, hail storms, hurricanes, canker and citrus greening. You have to be diversified and open to change if you want to succeed."

Cherry Lake Tree Farm is the recipient of the 2005 S. J. Blakely award for exemplifying landscape excellence at their place of business, the 2004 FNGLA (Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association) Grower of the Year award and the 1999 Ornamental Outlook Operation of the Year Award.

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Pictures available upon request

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