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## **Connerton Transplants 3,000<sup>th</sup> Cypress Tree into Newly Created Wetland Areas**

**TAMPA, Fla.** (April 19, 2008) – Connerton, West Coast Florida’s only New Town, has announced the successful relocation of its 3,000<sup>th</sup> mature cypress tree from areas currently under construction to newly created wetlands, in what the community is calling an “environmental milestone.” Connerton has preserved much of the existing wetlands in the development area, but in places where ecosystem preservation is not possible, the community has created adjacent wetlands and relocated full-grown cypress trees there.

Florida law requires preservation or creation of new wetland areas as two of the ways to offset the areas affected by development. The wetland creation recent trend in the state, however, has been for developers to plant nursery-stock trees in the newly created wetlands because it is cheaper than transplanting full-grown trees. Connerton, instead, has successfully relocated more than 3,000 mature cypress trees, some of which are as tall as 60 feet, in a plan that was endorsed by the Southwest Florida Water Management District and the Army Corps of Engineers.

“This type of environmentally sensitive development is still rather uncommon,” said Tim Neldner, vice president and senior consultant of Biological Research Associates, the environmental and natural resource management company which has worked with Connerton since its inception. “The costs associated with the transplantation of mature cypress trees are higher than installing nursery-stock, which is why many developers find this process unattractive. But the end result for the environment makes this process ultimately more beneficial. This is because the “instant” wetland created through the transplantation process functions as a real wetland much more quickly than your typical nursery-stock wetland creation.”

“Since Connerton was founded, we have made environmental sustainability one of our main priorities,” said Connerton president Stew Gibbons. “The tree transplantation process is a way for us to ensure that the future generations of Connerton can enjoy the benefits of our expansive wetland systems.”

Connerton began relocating the trees in 2004, during the construction of its first village, the Arbors. During this first phase, Connerton relocated a total of 1,092 trees. Construction is currently moving forward on the community’s second village, the Gardens, as well as Connerton Commerce Park project, a 175-acre office park that will include space for government, industrial

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and medical use. As of March 11, 1,835 trees have been transplanted within the future site of Connerton Commerce Park. By the end of construction, more than 2,690 trees in the area will be given a new home.

The transplanting process begins with the construction of a brand-new wetland area. The new wetland is typically an upland area adjacent to an existing wetland that is excavated to wetland grade and connected to the existing ecosystem. Once this new mitigation area is constructed and ready to receive trees, ramps (small temporary access trails) are built into both the donor site as well as the new wetland. A 90-inch tree spade creates holes in the new wetland area that are over 5 feet deep. At the donor site, the tree spade removes a cypress tree (root and all), and carries it to the new site and places it in one of the holes. The roots and the tree can together weigh over 4 tons. Depending on location and distance, a single tree can take anywhere from 20 minutes to 2 hours to install, start to finish. To further enhance the new wetland area, the spade can also transplant old tree stumps and hummocks (on which a diversity of plants grow), essentially allowing the “complete” swamp to be relocated.

The wetland mitigation process is just one of Connerton’s many environmental initiatives, which began in 2004 with the establishment of a 3,300-acre natural conservation area, now known as the Conner Preserve. The community also created its own system of reservoirs for reclaimed water to irrigate its expansive trails and other common areas, a boon to water-strapped Pasco County. And more recently, Connerton has developed an extensive system of “wildlife corridors” that allows local wildlife to move safely between the community and the adjacent conservation areas.

“We’re proud of the community we’re building here,” said Gibbons. “Connerton is certainly unique in its commitment to the environment. We’re hoping other developments follow suit.”

### **About Connerton**

Connerton is a 4,800-acre mixed-use master planned community in central Pasco County and the only “New Town” currently under construction in the greater Tampa Bay area. In total, approximately 8,500 residential units are planned with more than 3 million square feet of commercial space for office, retail and industrial uses. The Arbors, the first village in Connerton, is nearly sold out. Village Two, The Gardens, is now selling.

The community currently features amenities including a Village Center with a Publix Super Market, banks and other convenient shops and services; and walking trails, boardwalks, neighborhood parks and conservation areas. A fitness and aquatics complex, an amphitheatre and parks are under development; and a hospital, medical offices, a regional park and three schools and a town center are also planned.

For more information on Connerton, call (813) 995-2460 or visit [www.connerton.com](http://www.connerton.com).

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