

A WEEKLY REPORT ON OUR GROWING REGION

LOCAL IN-DEPTH

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MIDDAY WEBCAST

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LOCAL & STATE NEWS, PAGE B3

Casselberry leaders tonight will try to reach a compromise between 2 sides fighting about what kinds of vehicles can be parked in neighborhoods.

NIMBY (nim'bē):

Function: noun
Etymology: not in my backyard
Opposition to the locating of something considered undesirable in one's neighborhood.

WHO'S A NIMBY?

According to Patrick Slevin, a Tallahassee consultant, these are the traits of a typical NIMBYist:

- White
- Middle-class
- College-educated
- Female
- Suburban
- Homeowner

NIMBYists have become increasingly savvy at turning their causes into compelling political issues. Or, in many cases, into a public-relations nightmare for a builder or a corporation.

"Billions of dollars a year are getting lost to a grass-roots organization led by homeowners," said Patrick Slevin, a Tallahassee consultant who publishes *NIMBY Nation*, a monthly newsletter on the phenomenon.

The most successful NIMBYists also have taken the time to learn about government and due process.

"They have to understand the legal parameters that we work with," said Orange County Commissioner Teresa Jacobs, a former NIMBY activist as president of the county-wide homeowners association. "If they have taken the time

to understand where the development is in the process, and if they can come up with a strong, justifiable reason [for their opposition], I bend over backward to help."

Elected officials listen, Slevin thinks, because NIMBYists are also mostly homeowners.

"And homeowners are more likely to vote than people who rent," he said.

Slevin advises his developer clients to talk with NIMBYists before they become adversaries by having meetings "over coffee" with neighbors and involving them in the project's early planning.

Without such preparation, he said: "By the first public hearing, it is usually too late. . . . They turn into *Jerry Springer [Show] episodes.*"

Not in their backyards

They operate from dining-room tables and garages with little or no budget. Often, their only resources are a cell phone and a personal computer. They rarely have experts or strategists at their disposal, just their gut instincts. Still, NIMBY activists — or NIMBYists — have turned into a successful underground force, crippling dozens of construction projects across the nation. Their "not in my backyard" battle cry is feared by developers and a source of distress for the industry.

Stories by JEANNETTE RIVERA-LYLES SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Influence

'I talk to the commissioner 3 to 4 times a week.'

Brenda Rogers of Bithlo is a woman of influence, not achieved in the traditional way. She is not rich, she is not much of a politician, and she laughs when asked whether she is socially connected.

But Rogers, 41, has scared off a proposed Wal-Mart store and rained on plans for residential developments. For as long as she can help it, she will keep Bithlo rural, she vows.

"I grew up in Orange County," she said. "I have watched it grow a lot in the last 10 years, and it hasn't all been for the better."

Rogers knows people with power. Through the years as a NIMBY activist, she has amassed an impressive contact roster that includes Orange County government officials, the Legislature, developers and land-use attorneys.

She tells them that most of the rural settlement's 5,000 residents are committed to fending off growth. She drops the figure subtly, but she knows politicians quickly translate that into potential votes.

And she reminds them of that. Often.

"I talk to the commissioner three to four times a week," she said of Bill Segal, who represents the area that includes Bithlo. "We're joined at the hip."

PLEASE SEE BITHLO, B2



Passion

'I care about the place where I live.'

It never occurred to Sharon Anderson that her passion for protecting an open space in her Sanford neighborhood would cause her to lose friends and a boyfriend.

But more puzzling is that she would become estranged even from people on the same side of the issue.

On a recent morning, she sat under a tree in her cherished green space surveying the surrounding houses.

"The lady in that house," she said, pointing at a white cottage across the street, ". . . I lost her as a friend."

And there is the neighbor who yelled at her about her choice of words while she addressed city officials at a hearing. Another man sent a nasty e-mail when she asked someone else for a favor.

"There are a lot of ego issues," she said, her voice strained with frustration.

PLEASE SEE SANFORD, B2



Inquisitiveness

'I ask the questions that sometimes public officials won't.'

Jean Reed is soft-spoken, mild-mannered, elegant and well-educated.

A sizable diamond on her left hand attests to her upper-middle-class status with a podiatrist husband, two kids and a home in a posh community.

She does not fit the stereotype of a troublemaker.

But when she starts asking questions, developers sigh in exasperation. More than one has withdrawn a project rather than face her down.

"I ask the questions that sometimes public officials won't," said Reed, 58.

It was her inquisitiveness that transformed her five years ago into probably the best-known NIMBY activist in Polk County.

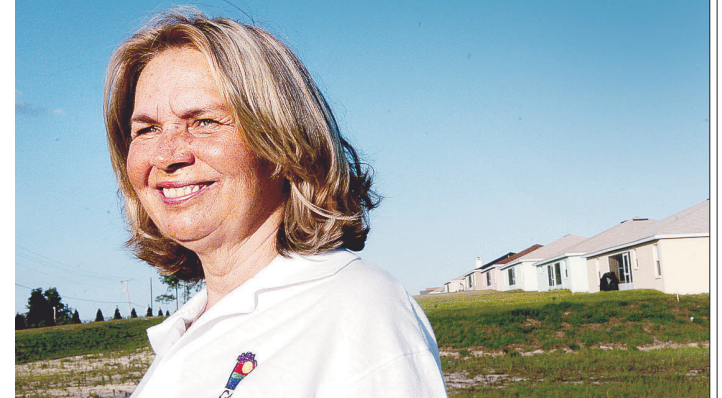
It all started when she came across a three-paragraph news brief about a sludge plant. It said the operation would be up and running in less than a year at a spot a scant mile from her Harbour Estates home.

"I thought, 'Hmm, I wonder what this is,'" Reed recalls. "I had no idea what sludge was."

She hit the Internet that night. The next morning, she was a NIMBY activist with a phone glued to her ear, dialing public officials, friends and neighbors.

Sludge is the solids that remain after wastewater has been treated. The material is separated from cleaned water in processing plants and

PLEASE SEE POLK, B2



PHOTOS BY SARA A. FAJARDO/ORLANDO SENTINEL

Area road warriors battle wide left turns, tag games, I-4 construction



Jay HAMBURG
ROAD WISE

If commuter rail seems like an exotic way to ride to work in Central Florida, consider another area where high home prices are forcing people to move farther from the office.

That place is London. And the new outer ring for commuter travel is not another city or county. It's another country — often Spain or France, according to the British Broadcasting Corp. News service.

A research group predicts that 10 years from now, 1.5 million people will work in the United Kingdom and live on the other side of the ocean. They're called "eurocommuters."

Those commuting from Barcelona, Spain, say that housing, clothes and food are cheaper there. Low-cost airfare makes it feasible to make the four-hour commute a couple of times a week.

Next year, however, high-speed train routes between the U.K., France and Belgium will be fully open. That will put the French city of Lille just 80 minutes from London.

A lot of Central Floridians commute that much every day on Interstate 4.

Now back to our land-only local commuters.

Dear Road Wise: When you

approach most intersections around Orlando and want to turn left, you have to swerve around a painted median that looks like a large oval bubble. This not only seems unnatural, but it causes some drivers to have to swing out and around these painted lines. I have asked police officers and even crews repainting these lines, but no one seems to know why we have them. I have raced

Porsche cars before and attended many driving schools where these painted medians would be deemed dangerous.

— JIM HANSON
WINTER PARK

Dear Jim: I have an answer for you, although you may not like it. Tom Allen, Orlando traffic-operations engineer, said the rounded, painted traffic di-

PLEASE SEE ROAD WISE, B2