

Heritage Trees Beautify Helen Highway

New shops recently built along the Helen Highway show that commercial development can be done in a way that preserves the beauty of the environment. When the Colonial Oaks Plaza was built at 545 Helen Highway, the owner made a special effort to preserve the beautiful old trees on the property. The result is an especially attractive shopping center that attracts customers and adds to the beauty of the community. Given the importance of tourism in White County, beautifying the environment makes good business sense.



Royal Jackson, owner of the Colonial Oaks Plaza, talks with Tom and Lark Hutto under the large Oaks bordering the Helen Highway.

Royal Jackson, who also owns the Helen Ace Hardware, bought the Colonial Oaks property about three years ago from the estate of the late Ross and Halle Mize. He recently talked about the challenges faced in protecting the roots of the trees while excavating and paving the parking area. For example, it's important not to cut the roots of the tree, which generally extend at least as far out as the area shaded by the branches.

According to the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, trees often survive construction activities only to die several years later. One of the chief causes of this "delayed death" of trees is compaction of the soil over the root area. Compaction is most often caused by running vehicles over the rooting area. This disrupts the ability of the roots to absorb nutrients and moisture.

The shopping center was completed about one year ago and now houses Swept Away Bridal Boutique, April's Catering, My Best Friend clothing store, and Page's Cabin Furniture. The Bridal Boutique is owned by Royal's daughter, Deticia Chambers.

The trees include three large Water Oaks, which stand in a row along the highway, and a huge old Red Oak. With a diameter of nearly 4 feet, the Red Oak is one of the largest in White County. It stands 85 feet tall, and shades an area 67 feet in diameter, and is estimated to be about 100 years old.

This article is provided by the Good Tree-Scaping Project of White County. The project is sponsored by the White County Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with the Environmental Concerns Committee of the Sautee-Nacoochee Community Association. The goal of the project is to encourage preservation and restoration of tree-cover and good landscaping by businesses and the public in White County and surrounding areas. If you know of an example of tree preservation or good landscaping that deserves recognition, please contact Ted Doll at 878-2526, Sam Barton at 865-0988, or Tom and Lark Hutto at 865-7017.