

South Tampa: Farmyard faces take on urban spaces

A battalion from the barn invades the area, ruffling residents' feathers in Hyde Park North and Sunset Park.

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Published April 2, 2004

Cue the fiddle music: Suddenly, South Tampa is more farm than froufrou.

In Hyde Park North, Wheezy the rooster has sired 16 chicks.

In Sunset Park, a pig is on the loose.

There goes the neighborhood.

But don't fret over property values just yet.

Wheezy's crowing, which has charmed and enraged Hyde Park residents for more than a year, may finally be silenced.

Last week, his young'uns and their momma were whisked away to a Hernando County farm after residents decided they were no match for alley cats. Wheezy is slated for nabbing too, but as of Monday, remained free.

The "Sunset Park Porker" is a new menace.

Since residents spotted it a few weeks ago, the pig has rampaged through lawns and flower beds in a search for tender roots and earth worms. The result: Patches of Sunset Park look plowed under.

"You wouldn't believe a little pig could do that," resident Ellie Montague said.

The suspect is described as white with a black band across its midsection, weighing about 50 pounds. It seeks refuge in a line of mangroves abutting Old Tampa Bay at the end of San Jose Street.

So far, nobody has snagged the pig, but it's not for lack of trying.

Two men from Town 'N Country ventured into the mangroves with a lasso. Marlin Anderson has a trap in his front yard on San Jose.

Every night, Anderson, a 52-year-old accountant, baits the device with a snack he prepares himself: dried corn kernels and molasses.

Several times, Anderson watched in awe as the pig chowed down without getting caught.

"It's almost like paying tribute to a pirate," he said.

The pig either avoids the trigger plate, or blazes through the trap door before it closes, Anderson said.

The trap hasn't been a total loss, though. Two weeks ago, it snared a raccoon.

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