

by Janina Birtolo

# Planting a Sense of Civic Duty

ELLIN GOETZ



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As a young girl growing up on Staten Island, Ellin Goetz witnessed firsthand the results of unchecked and unplanned growth on her environment. What she saw inspired her to find a way to guide environmental change in a positive manner. In short, she became a landscape architect. But Goetz uses her talents for much more than creating beautiful residential landscapes.

Fortunate enough to have found a like-minded landscape firm, she works with the other landscape architects at J. Roland Lieber in Naples on numerous civic projects, all intended to keep areas green and welcoming even as they grow. "You know growth is going

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—Ellin Goetz, J.R. Lieber Landscape Architects, Naples

to happen," Goetz explains, "but you can channel that change in a positive way."

Evidence of the firm's and Goetz's contributions can be seen in the Third Street South area, where they were instrumental in replacing smaller palms with majestic queen palms, which provide a sense of scale and welcome shade, and on Fifth Avenue South, where their efforts resulted in attractive plantings and hardscape that add to, rather than detract from, the freshness and excitement of the street.

"It helps establish the street as a place," Goetz says of the latter. "It provides continuity and gives it structure. It also gave a signal to the property owners and merchants that the city cares about Fifth. It makes it look prosperous."

While those efforts reflect only two of many civic projects in which the Lieber firm has been involved, Goetz has also pursued her passion through the Conservancy of Southwest Florida. A board member for six years and chair since last April, she has helped renew the Conservancy's role in the region. "The region is changing at such a rapid pace that you need someone checking and helping achieve a balance," she says. "That's what the Conservancy has to focus on."

Goetz's green sense of civic duty is evident on large and small fronts. Her most recent project was heading up a volunteer effort to build a community playground at Cambier Park. All the efforts, she says, fulfill her sense of civic responsibility.

"It's sharing something with lots and lots of people," she notes. "That's what makes this profession worthwhile." ■