

Beechwood PLANTATION

Horse country's exclusive residential development springing

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Exclusive residential communities for horse lovers are emerging on the rural fringes of Middle Tennessee just beyond high-growth suburban areas.

Construction of several homes is underway at Beechwood Plantation in the unincorporated Leiper's Fork area of Williamson County. The second phase of the four-phased, 500-acre project was launched earlier this month.

Huge estate tracts with price tags from \$319,000 to \$750,000 – ranging from 5.9 acres to 41 acres – are features of the private development.

About 6 miles of riding trails are available and residents are encouraged to build their own barns, says Alex Marks, senior vice president of Tower Land Co., the developer.

Tower plans to build six private residential communities where horses are welcome on 2,200 acres in Williamson, Maury and Fentress counties, Marks says.

The sales office for another horse-friendly development, Milky Way Farms, opened earlier this month in Giles County 12 miles south of Columbia and 65 miles from Nashville.

The centerpiece of the 1,100-plus-acre, multi-million dollar equestrian and golf



Milky Way Farms' centerpiece is this 1930s-era manor house.

community is a 25,000-square-foot, 1930s-era manor house built by candy manufacturer Frank Mars, the man behind candy bars such as Milky Way, Snickers and Three Musketeers.

"We think we will bring jobs and positive attention to a beautiful county," says Ron Cook, sales and licensing agent for Milky Way Farms. "The biggest challenge is getting people out here to see it."

The Mars mansion has been refurbished and has 21 guest bedrooms, a new commercial kitchen and dining areas

that will seat 125. Residents can use the home for guests and private functions.

At completion, Milky Way Farms would create a small gated town with about 750 homes and condominiums, 10 miles of riding trails, an equestrian academy, and other upscale amenities including a commercial village, recording studio, playhouse, arts and crafts shops, an 18-hole golf course co-designed by professional golfer Jay Haas, a spa, junior Olympic swimming

See HORSE page 44

HORSE: 'Recreation exurbs' start to take shape

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

pool and polo field.

A racetrack where 1940 Kentucky Derby winner Gallahadion was trained is on the grounds of the estate

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Eileen George
Bob Parks Realty/Sumner County

and has been rebuilt.

The first phase of Milky Way has room for 39 homes on lots from 1 acre to 1.5 acres. The lots cost \$280,000 to \$585,000 and 350 acres of the development will be green space and other common space areas. Cook says it could take up to 15-20 years before the development is completely built out.

Some land planners call these types

of upscale rural projects "recreational exurbs." They aren't always centered around horses. The focus can be on other recreational draws such as golfing, boating or hiking.

So far, there aren't too many examples of these developments in Middle Tennessee, but a similar gated development in Sumner County, Fairvue Plantation, has been successful.

Eileen George, manager broker of Bob Parks Realty/Sumner County, says the project got off to a slow start about six years ago.

"It was considered a big failure at first until the marketing changed and really helped to create a desire to live there," George says.

Fairvue Plantation is centered around the natural beauty of Old Hickory Lake, two 18-hole golf courses and a historic mansion.

Home lots at Fairvue Plantation cost \$80,000 to \$750,000 and some homes can go well over \$1 million. As prices have risen, sales at Fairvue has slowed some, George says.

"I think the trick is to bring it all together and create a lifestyle that isn't there yet," she adds.

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