

Marks family brings horsepower to Williamson's Leipers Fork

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by [Linda Bryant](#)

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A ranching family with deep roots in the cattle country of Central California is becoming influential in Middle Tennessee.

Not only is the Marks family a major player in the high-density, rapid-growth Monopoly board of downtown Nashville development, it's wielding an impact in the idyllic community of Leipers Fork in Williamson County.

The Marks, via their development company Tower Investments, are building three sprawling equestrian-themed subdivisions in the rustic unincorporated area - a spot beloved by residents, preservationists, horse lovers, artists, farmers and old-timers.

Leipers Fork residents are known for being fiercely protective of the natural beauty of the area and area Realtor Ray Helmsworth says the family is getting a warm reception.

"They are really passionate about maintaining the natural beauty of the area," Helmsworth says.

Beechwood Plantation, the second of three horse-friendly communities planned in Leipers Fork, has entered its second phase. Beechwood is likely the family's most ambitious residential undertaking and includes 6 miles of collectively owned horse trails.

The 500-acre Beechwood site, which was formerly owned by well-known businessman Cal Turner Jr., has home sites from 6 to 42 acres. Lots are priced from about \$320,000 to \$689,000.

"We like purchasing raw land and we are horse enthusiasts," says Alex Marks, who is one of six Marks siblings. "It's in our blood. We were ranchers before we were developers."

The family business is led by father Steven Marks and five of the six Marks children work for Tower. Alex works primarily with the family's Tennessee residential investments and he lives here part time. The family also has horse-friendly developments planned in Maury and Fentress counties.

"The Music City brand is phenomenal," he says. "It attracts people who want a better quality of life and eventually want to plant their own roots. Leipers Fork is a special place. What we want to do is help preserve its character."

Russell Looney is building a home at Beechwood Plantation.

"It's hands down the best-planned, large-tract estate neighborhood we've seen," Looney says, adding he watched the area for several years looking for a spot for to build a dream home.

"We looked at larger tracts of undeveloped land as well as other large acreage subdivisions," Looney adds.

Looney is building a craftsman-style house accented with stone work inside and out. Architectural standards for the development are strict and require that homes are built to blend in with historic farm homes in the area.

Helmsworth, who heads up sales for Beechwood Plantation, says he thinks the Marks family has been wise to spread business around locally by working with an array of mid-state businesses on various projects.

"They are kind and considerate businessmen," Helmsworth says.

Marks says the family's ranching heritage gives them a long-range view of their developments and a commitment to old-fashioned values in their business dealings.

"In the cattle industry, if you don't stand by your word you are out of business," he says.

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