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Easements to Limit Development on 97 Acres

Donated easements limit development

By Marcus Green

magreen@courier-journal.com

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Future development will be limited on nearly 100 acres in Louisville after three property owners donated conservation easements to the Louisville and Jefferson County Environmental Trust last year.

The parcels include a Shetland sheep breeding farm in the Floyds Fork corridor in eastern Jefferson County, woods and meadows in Prospect and wetlands in the Renaissance Zone industrial park south of Louisville International Airport.

The addition of 97 acres under easements makes 2007 the best year on record for the 10-year-old environmental trust, which now controls 343 acres in Louisville, said Lisa Hite, a planner for Metro Parks, which helps administer the trust.

The landowners still own the property and can sell it or pass it down to their heirs, but they and future owners must use the land in accordance with terms of the easements -- mainly to restrict development such as subdivisions.

Also last year, developer Bill Weyland donated an easement that will prevent alterations to the façade of the Glassworks building at Ninth and Market streets. Weyland said he's concerned that additional construction could change the structure's character.

"I want to make sure the building is preserved long term," he said.

In the case of Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson's Dogwood Hill in Prospect, the easement prevents future development on nearly 40 acres of rolling land with steep woods and two branches of Goose Creek.

"It's a little jewel in the middle of the outskirts of Louisville," said Brown, an heiress to the Brown-Forman liquor empire.

The land would be a logical place for a subdivision, she said, but she's preparing to sell the property and wants to ensure that the land won't be carved up and developed.

Frances Aprile, who raises sheep and horses on about 37 acres in Fisherville, said she was urged to seek a conservation easement by her daughter, Emma. Under the terms of

the deal, the property owner can build an additional house, a chicken coop and a horse training ring.

"We've very, very carefully preserved the habitat area and the agricultural area," Frances Aprile said.

She plans to pass her Little dove Farm on to her daughter and, without the possibility of developers eying the land, hopes to reap lower inheritance and property taxes.

The environmental trust is a semi-public agency whose board includes private citizens, with administration from Metro Parks, the Metropolitan Sewer District and the city's planning and design services and public works agencies, Hite said.

The Metro Council has approved the easements.

Trust chairman Kurt Mason said the easements donated in 2007 are significant because they "fill some niches in terms of protecting green space and open space."

Reporter Marcus Green can be reached at (502) 582-4675.