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Farm may sprout buildings

36 acres are near U.S. 42, Watterson

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A developer who wants to transform a 36-acre farm at the Watterson Expressway and U.S. 42 into a mixed-use development intends to file for a rezoning in the next month.

Stephen Fenley of Fenley Real Estate said construction of The **Midlands** - which would include a six-story hotel, offices, single-family homes, multifamily housing and a number of shops and restaurants - could begin in 2007. It could be finished by 2009, he added .

One of the project's key features is a roundabout, or traffic circle, at the development's proposed main entrance off Ky. 22. Fenley said it was included because it's safer than a traditional intersection, which could cause a backup of Ky. 22 traffic to U.S. 42.

Some neighbors at a recent meeting at Thomas Jefferson Unitarian Church said they liked Fenley's proposal because it was upscale and well done, and because neighbors were allowed to offer suggestions .

"My husband and I are thrilled about what you're doing," Mary Lou Fitzer told Fenley. She lives on Carlimar Drive, a street that would connect with the development.

Other residents opposed the idea of connecting existing streets to the development. They also expressed concern about the height of the proposed hotel and about potential drainage problems.

Residents of the neighboring cities of Graymoor-Devondale and Crossgate said they're against connecting Carlimar Drive and Warrington Way to the **Midlands**. They said that people would use the streets as a cut-through between Westport Road and Ky. 22, adding speeders to Carlimar, which already has a problem with them.

Harold Culver suggested gathering a petition from people who would be against connecting the street.

"Carlimar has really become a drag strip," he said.

Fenley said his company hasn't estimated how much traffic would increase if Carlimar and Warrington are connected to the **Midlands**, and he wouldn't mind leaving them unconnected. But his attorney, Glenn Price, said the Louisville Metro Planning Commission could require some surrounding streets to be connected to the property because its policy is to connect adjacent developments.

Answering neighbors' concerns about the hotel's height, Fenley said the design is an industry standard necessary to attract a high-end hotel operator, and the facility is important to draw people into the complex.

He also said water on the lot would drain toward the Watterson Expressway, away from homes.

Fenley stressed that he has held at least eight meetings over the past two years with neighbors, and he said their ideas were incorporated into the project.

Fenley's proposed development follows the "new urbanism" style used by Norton Commons, which is farther out Ky. 22. Such developments have complexes that are pedestrian-friendly and have shops that include apartments or condominiums over them.

Fenley said the development would form a town center for the surrounding area and raise property values. To improve access to the site, Fenley also has suggested the state highway department add a fork off the northbound exit ramp from the Watterson Expressway, which would connect directly with the roundabout and Ky. 22.

Andrea Clifford, a spokeswoman for the department, said the state submitted Fenley's proposal to the Federal Highway Administration, which must approve such ramps. The U.S. agency didn't reject the proposal, but it said the plan would have to be redesigned so that drivers wouldn't be forced to slow down too quickly.

Clifford said that rebuilding the Watterson Expressway interchange with U.S. 42 is the local highway district's No. 1 recommendation for inclusion in the state's six-year highway plan. But no final configuration for the interchange has been determined.

Fenley said he plans to open the development around the time the new Watterson Expressway interchange with Westport Road is scheduled to open, which could lessen traffic on Ky. 22.

Courtesy of Wakefield Beasley & Associates

The **Midlands** would include a six-story hotel, offices, homes, multifamily housing and a number of shops and restaurants.

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