

Spurring Development

Louisville Equestrian Center to serve the region

Oldham County horse enthusiasts eager for facility to open

RoundAbout, February 2009

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(February 2009) – Betsy Webb has spent the past four years planning a state-of-the-art Louisville Equestrian Center that would serve the region. Finally, she is about to see her dream of operating such a facility come true.

The Louisville Equestrian Center, now under construction in eastern Jefferson County, will be “geared toward the rider,” said Webb. She first opened Betsy Webb Stables LLC in 1999 on 22 leased acres at 11950 Ellingsworth Lane, located off Blankenbaker Parkway near I-64. This property was sold in 2005, and Webb moved her stables to rental property at 4700 Routt Rd., near Fisherville. As a saddlebred trainer, she offers riding lessons, plays host to horse shows and organizes a large day camp every summer.

Her stables will become part of the new Louisville Equestrian Center, located at 2612 S. English Station Rd. The center will be adjacent to the 21st Century Parks project along the Floyd’s Fork Corridor. This center is being designed as a year-round facility able to accommodate 100 horses and 500 clients in the saddlebred community.

Webb said she believes the Louisville area is underserved with equestrian facilities for providing riding lessons and a space for people to enjoy horses. Many of the existing facilities are older, and this will be a brand new one with new amenities. She will be the president and CEO of the Louisville Equestrian Center.

The center will include two large indoor riding arenas, a viewing area, lounge, boarding facilities, storage areas and a barn with 100 climate-controlled stalls. It will have the capacity to play host to social and corporate events for large crowds, said Webb. Equestrian brokerage and national horse show management services will be available. In October, developers purchased the 28 acres of land on English Station Road for \$811,000 and began construction in December. Greenberg Development Corp. is



February 2009
Kentucky Edition Cover

managing the construction project, which is being financed by local investors. The center is expected to be completed by April 1, said Webb.

Estimated cost for the project is \$3.4 million. Capital has been provided through a combination of private financing, sponsorships, structured real estate leverage and SBA financing through Commonwealth Small Business Development Corp. and Farmers Bank & Capital Trust of Frankfort, Ky. Pallas Partners Inc. is the lead financial and strategic advisor for the project.



Renditions provided

These renditions show what the future Louisville Equestrian Center will look like when it is completed in eastern Jefferson County.

Matthew Saltzman, CEO and managing partner of Pallas Partners Inc., said his firm was “brought into the deal by the developer to help assist Betsy in developing a strategic plan, creating the financing package, and helping to execute the business plan after funding.”

Polo Fields Development Corp. is the architect for this project. “The area absolutely needs a top level equestrian center, and Betsy is well positioned to fulfill that need,” said Saltzman.

He said the project is unique in that “it is family oriented, open to riders and families of all ages and abilities, affordable and will sit in the center of a brand new park system with a state of the art facility.”

Webb said such amenities as paved walking paths and a lounge and viewing area with closed-circuit video, are family-friendly and perks that will set the center apart from other equestrian facilities. Mothers or siblings can relax in the lounge while children take lessons.

With everybody so busy in the world today and Louisville’s strong horse tradition, Webb said such an Equestrian Center was definitely needed in the area. By being right off of the Gene Snyder Freeway, its close proximity to Oldham County will benefit Oldham County residents, said Webb.

Others agree.

“I think the Equestrian Center is a great economic development and tourism opportunity for Oldham County,” said Deana Epperly Karem, executive director of the Oldham County Chamber of Commerce. “As a business, it adds jobs, and as an attraction, it brings in tourism.” It would also offer businesses and groups a venue to gather in and improve Oldham County’s quality of life, said Karem.

“I think this would attract Oldham Countians, particularly if the arena is large enough,” said Oldham County Judge-Executive Duane Murner. “If not, then I would still like to see an arena built in Oldham County.”

Murner is referring to an all-weather equestrian arena that he would like to see built in Oldham County because of the impact it would have on regional tourism. Many in the community back this plan, but the opportunity to build such a structure has not presented itself yet.

The potential for an Oldham County Equine Center remains valid, according to Doug Wampler, executive director for Oldham Ahead. “I hope that the county government, the Oldham County equine community, and the Fair Board can refocus on this initiative in 2009 and produce the financial details that will support the feasibility of an equine center as an economic stimulus for the county,” he said.

“The Equestrian Center on English Station Road looks wonderful, but it appears to be designed solely for saddlebreds,” said Murner, a horse farm owner himself. He pointed out that a saddlebred arena is long and narrow and would not be suitable for other breeds, especially for gaming purposes, such as barrel racing, stakes racing and other events.



In addition to saddlebreds, Oldham Countians raise Arabians, Quarter Horses, Appaloosas, Morgans, Miniatures and Paints. The variety of breeds calls for an equestrian center with a variety of amenities and uses, Murner believes.

Murner conceded that if Webb constructs a full arena, “it would work very well for all exhibiting and would be a great addition to the area.” Plans call for 100 stalls, which Murner believes is not enough to handle an extended three to four day show. “All of our pro-formas were done with a minimum of 400 stalls, and I think this is what it would take.”

Angela Ariatti of Ariatti Equestrian Services in Skylight, Ky., said any type of equestrian center “is only going to help the industry.” For eight years, Ariatti has operated her business at the 45-acre Alta Vista Farms, owned by Mary Lowry. Ariatti has more than 20 years of equestrian teaching experience.

She said an equestrian center in Oldham County would be a positive thing but not likely to happen any time soon. She cited the Lexington Horse Park as a large endeavor that is not supported by the state but rather by many private patrons. Many of these individuals are from Oldham County, Ariatti said, and she can’t see them investing more of their money in another facility in Oldham County.

But Lowry said things are “starting to move forward” for some type of equestrian center in Oldham County. Lowry believes the holdup has been the availability of land and a question of where exactly such a facility should be located.

Lowry said an equestrian facility in Oldham County would require more land than Webb's center. "Saddlebreds are just one discipline," said Lowry, with minimal impact. A facility in Oldham County needs to accommodate other breeds to be accessible to a wide range of people.

For now, Oldham Countians will have to travel into Jefferson County to the nearest equestrian center, once Webb's center is complete. But that isn't so bad, say those horse enthusiasts who are familiar with her work.

Webb often "brings people into the horse business," said Ariatti. "She is the best public relations person in our industry. The Louisville Equestrian Center will be a big benefit to the area."

- *Watch for more information on the Louisville Equestrian Center at:*
www.LouisvilleEquestrianCenter.com

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