



*Garvin Brown Preserve, a River Fields property open to the public for 25 years, photo by Val Smith*

## Winter 2020/2021 Newsletter

### Message from a River Fields Trustee

I have been on the board of River Fields, Inc. for almost six years now. The work we do at River Fields helps advocate for and protect clean air, land and water - all things that we take for granted. One of the most important ideals of River Fields as a conservation group is to leave this vital legacy of preserving our natural resources for our children and grandchildren.



*Von Purdy visiting Wolf Pen Branch Mill Farm, a River Fields easement, with her son*

This work is important and I'm honored to help bring new ideas to the organization - ideas of inclusiveness that help River Fields connect to new and younger audiences and leave a mark across the state.

*Von Purdy*

### Dangerous Multi-Family Proposal for River Road

#### **48 condominiums and 100 hundred parking spaces proposed**

Developers have filed a preapplication to rezone 3.5 acres on the corner of River Road and Mayfair Avenue to dense multi-family housing so they can construct a 48-condo development.



*This grove of mature trees could become this 48 condo development with 100 parking spaces*      *Continued on page 5*

## Welcoming New Trustees

The Board of River Fields is pleased to announce the election of two new Board Members, Rebecca Brown and Suzanne Wallace Whyne.



Becky Brown is the Managing Partner of the Commercial Division of Brown Capital, a company owned by Becky and her sister, Katy Brown. Becky is also the president of Kingfish Restaurants which are, of course, important businesses right overlooking the Ohio River. Becky is a University of Louisville graduate and now the second realtor serving on the River Fields Board. (Her license is currently in escrow.) Becky and her spouse, Janine Horner, have been active supporters of River Fields for years. "Growing up in Louisville and on the river I have fond memories of the serenity it provides all of us and am proud to be part of the preservation of such a wonderful asset to the community and the city," says Becky.



Suzanne Wallace Whyne is the owner of Suzanne Wallace Whyne Interiors/ T & W interiors located at 2424 Frankfort Avenue. She also serves on the Association of the Louisville Orchestra Board and has served on the Louisville Ballet Board. Suzanne has chaired and co-chaired numerous events over the years in the community including the Kentucky College of Art+Design, the Louisville Orchestra and the Louisville Ballet. She has also been involved with the Waterfront Botanical Gardens, the Filson Historical Society and Gilda's Club of Louisville. Suzanne is a member of the National Society of the Colonial

Dames of America (Kentucky), a preservation and historical group, and with her husband, Robert, has been a long-time supporter of River Fields.

The River Fields team is so happy to welcome these wonderful new Trustees as we enter 2021 and beyond! Thank you, Suzanne and Becky for caring about the land, history and the places we love in the Ohio River Corridor and surrounding region.

## Update on Fairview Scenic Overlook Project

River Fields continues to transform a high-profile property along River Road for the benefit of the public. The site had been neglected for years, but the support of our community is moving it closer to becoming an amenity that benefits thousands of people every day. River Fields is leveraging local donations, local companies, and the efforts of your friends and neighbors to create a scenic resource that will contribute to the River Road Scenic Byway. Local donors and communities have contributed financial support to our effort, and volunteers recently worked hard to improve the land and public view. As this project shows, we make progress when we all join together.

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Next steps include installing a new Coreten guardrail to make this an accessible pull off along the River Road Scenic Byway. Further work includes dock cleanup and the installation of benches and interpretive signs.

The location offers a stunning view of the city skyline and we are thrilled that this generously donated land will become a beautiful public scenic overlook.

*Tom and Tommy Halbleib, Paul Bickel, and Hunter Louis finished a heavy clearing job to open up the view for the public*



*Conceptual design for the overlook project*

## Why I Work for River Fields

*By Vanessa Castle, River Fields Development Consultant*

When I first started working for River Fields in 2015, my knowledge of land use, conservation and preservation was little to none. Even though I have always loved the outdoors, I had no idea how much our land needs to be protected, how much it needs to be advocated for, as it cannot do so for itself. Much like my young children, land is precious and must be cared for by others to keep it safe. Land, like children, can reach its full potential when it is fostered and protected. They say it takes a village to raise a child and it also takes a committed village of advocates, donors and volunteers to do the hard work of advocacy and conservation.

I care about the work of River Fields because I want my children to grow up in a community where open space is still available to them. They are their best selves when they are in nature and can be free. I want there to be cultural and historical resources left for them to learn about the unique place where they are growing up. I value land because I value the future, not just for my children, but also for those who will come after. The work River Fields does reaches far beyond what we can see today and will shape the future of our community for generations to come.



*My children, 6 & 4*

## Partners in Education and Restoration!

### *Thank you to the Mockingbird Valley Alliance*

Partnerships make so much work possible in our communities. We cherish our partnerships with government agencies, civic groups and neighborhoods. The Mockingbird Valley Preservation (MVP) Alliance and River Fields have coordinated on many advocacy proposals before the Planning Commission and now partnered on a lovely ecosystem restoration and public education project.

Thirty-two years ago, in 1988, River Fields purchased the small, wooded property on the southeast corner of Mockingbird Valley Road and River Road, to save it from development and preserve what the founder's wife, Polly Cochran, called the "Green Gateway" to Cox Park and entrance to the more scenic part of River Road. A proposed condo development for this land never happened because of the generous vision of a number of donors including a former River Fields President, Christy Brown, her late husband, Owsley, also a past River Fields Trustee; current Trustee, Bob Kulp and his late wife, Margaret Kulp. This was the third property River Fields acquired between 1986 and 1994 to make sure that area was not developed.

The preservation of this wooded area supported the nomination of River Road to successfully become a State Designated Scenic Byway.

A few years ago, the MVP Alliance bought two state historic markers to summarize the history of the historic neighborhood, now a Historic District listed on *The National Register of Historic Places*. They placed the first marker on open space at the corner of Brownsboro Road and Mockingbird Valley Road, but needed a spot on River Road also. River Fields was happy to allow the MVP Alliance historic marker prominent placement on this River Fields property. The marker enhances and promotes the special character of this historic Ohio River Corridor neighborhood.

To our surprise and delight, as a part of this shared project, the MVP Alliance offered to fund the removal of much of the invasive bush honeysuckle crowding out native trees and vegetation at the property. It was a big project and their contractors did a lovely job over several days. We are very grateful to the MVP Alliance for their generosity and vision. The corner is vastly improved from a scenic and ecosystems perspective.



*Before and after photos of the property*

The 48 condominium units would be contained within two, two-story structures along with around 100 parking spaces for condominium residents.

## What can you do?

A schedule of hearings has not been set as of this newsletter printing. We encourage you to send comments to Dante St. Germain, Planner II, at [Dante.St.Germain@louisvilleky.gov](mailto:Dante.St.Germain@louisvilleky.gov) or 502.574.4388. Now is the time for us to get our comments in to have them heard by Louisville-Metro's planning commission!

## Important Details You Should Know:

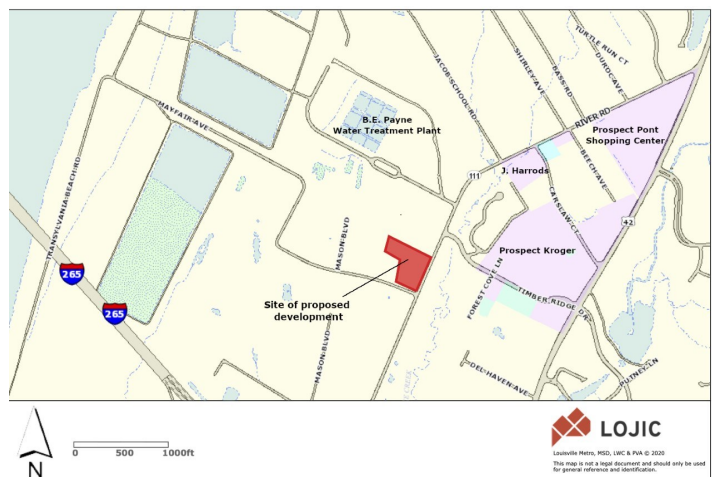
**This would be the first ever multi-family development directly on River Road. The rezoning of this property would set a dangerous precedent for the scenic, rural character of Jefferson County's sole Scenic Byway by opening the door for more challenges to the single-family zoning that has helped to preserve River Road's beloved character. If approved, the current zoning of R-4 would be changed to R-6.** For decades, the Planning Commission has rejected proposals for multi-family housing on River Road.

River Fields worked with the developers to find a common ground that would allow for reduced housing units while also protecting the rural and scenic nature of Upper River Road. The developers, however, have flatly refused to reduce the number of units, commit to providing sufficient buffering along River Road, or to commit protecting a single one of the 50+ mature, diverse trees presently on the property.

**They say they cannot afford a reduction in units but also insist they do not know the price of the condos!** How can

both be true? The developers have demonstrated no interest in preserving the viewshed of River Road or the development's neighborhood along Mayfair Avenue.

River Fields attended the Neighborhood Meeting held by the developers and their legal counsel in early October. We were impressed by the ferocity of the neighbors' opposition to the development plan and by their germane and technical questions. Neighborhood participants were not only concerned about the size and scope of the development, but also about the poor buffering proposed, the lack of pedestrian access, and how little effort was made to ensure that the aesthetics of the development fit in to its surroundings. **The developers marketed this development as a place where older residents could have pedestrian access to the shopping or outdoor recreation in the vicinity, however, they do not plan to provide any sidewalks!**



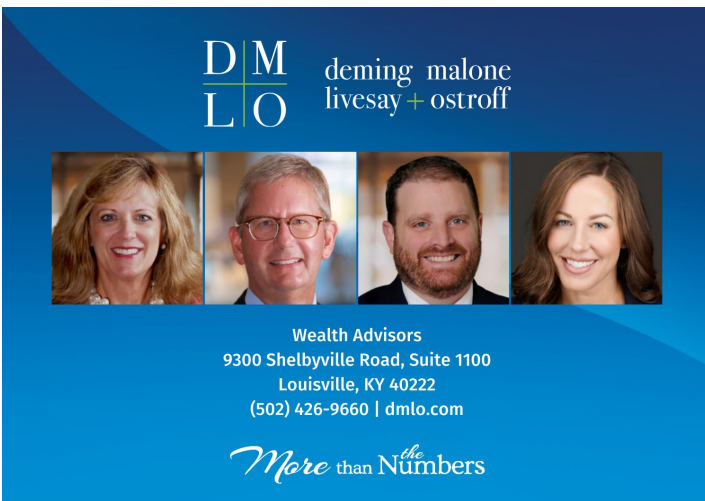
Map showing location of proposed development

Both the Mayor of Prospect and the Historic James Taylor/Jacobs School Neighborhoods are strongly opposed to this rezoning.

### What is ahead? What can you do?

Any commentary submitted by concerned parties will be entered into the record and reviewed by the planning commission. Currently, River Fields is drafting our formal comments to the planning commission. **So as long the developers refuse to mitigate this development's impacts to Jefferson County's sole scenic byway, River Fields plans to continue to work with the Mayfair Avenue and River Road neighbors in ardent opposition to the rezoning.** This is truly about saving the Scenic Byway from slowly morphing into a strip of multi-family housing. We will keep our members informed of upcoming meetings and encourage you all to make your voices heard at the Metro Planning Commission meetings and hearings which are currently held on WebEx.

### Special Thanks to our 2020 Corporate Partners



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### *You Make a Difference!*

Please consider a monthly recurring gift that is **automatically deducted -- this process is painless and really makes a difference for our project planning purposes!! You can do this by visiting <http://riverfields.org/donate> and choosing "Show my support by making this a recurring donation."**

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