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Resident pushes notion of buying Turner farm

By Karen Loew, staff writer

Brentwood- Troubled by the looming development of Cal Turner's farm, a city resident is laying the groundwork for a citizens' campaign to buy the property, keep it green and open it to public use.

Businessman Stephen Prince is talking to people in government and the Brentwood Chamber of Commerce about the possibility of public purchase of Turner's 555-acre farm. Last week he began researching the viability of city issuance of bonds to fund land purchase, to be paid back with a tax hike Prince estimates at \$179 per year per household.

He calls that "chump change" for this affluent, aesthetics-minded city.

"Personally, I would pay 10 times that annually over the next 20 years," said Prince, owner of National Business Products printing company in Cool Springs and a Brentwood resident since 1985.

"I'll admit right up front that politically, logistically, developmentally, I don't have the answers" how exactly to make this work, he said. "But I contend that it's worth it. The experience we have here is worth it. And some of us have to get involved. I just hate to see that piece of property go to becoming what we already have a lot of."

Prince was part of a Leadership Brentwood 2000 group that studied green space preservation.

The farm's destiny took a turn last Monday when City Commissioners told Turner they didn't support the long-term plan his professional planners created. Turner said in that case he would sell a portion of the property. He plans to keep the lion's share for his own estate, but sell Franklin Road frontage for deep estate lots, and Concord Road frontage for a subdivision.

At the meeting, Commissioner Regina Smithson said the city might like to try to buy some of the land. Of Prince's idea, City Manager Mike Walker said, "I'm just real cautious about an under-taking of that magnitude because of the financial impact."

Turner spokeswoman Jane Cleveland said since last week the phone's been ringing and the e-mails flying, with interest from five qualified developers and regrets about the outcome from citizens. She doesn't know what the land is worth, but is working on an appraisal.

"We've told [Prince] at some point the land will be for sale, and I think it will probably go to the highest bidder," Cleveland said.

Turner is not going to choose his buyer based on the land use plan.

"I think we're out of the planning business," she said.