

Large parcel preserved for agricultural uses

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Brentwood has moved to preserve one of the largest parcels in the county's agricultural core area just outside the city limits.

Last week, the Brentwood City Council authorized the easement purchase for \$2.7 million from the city's agricultural land trust fund, and the money has been placed into escrow.

The 206-acre Vierra property is bordered by Balfour Road, Chestnut Road and Byron Highway. Through this transaction, the parcel will be protected as agricultural land in perpetuity. The property can be split into two 100 acre-parcels.

This is the third agricultural conservation easement that the city and the Brentwood Agricultural Land Trust have secured through the Brentwood Agricultural Enterprise Program.

"We are starting to develop a core in the ag core of preservation. It begins a meaningful direction," BALT Treasurer Tom Powers said. "It not only preserves a big piece of land but it encourages fellow and adjacent farmers to also do it."

"This is a great step in using these funds to continue to try to preserve the agricultural industry in this area," Councilman and farmer Erick Stonebarger said.

Brentwood Economic Development Manager Linda Maurer said the site is prime agricultural land with great water access. With the city's recent conservation easement transaction of the neighboring 80-acre Hannah Nicole Vineyards, this area is becoming concentrated with protected lands.

"It is creating a cluster of protected land along Balfour and Chestnut. The city has always tried to look for properties that were closest to the city," Maurer said. "Creating that protected feeling closer to the city would be a priority."

The easement documents allow for the site to include a home for the owner and an agricultural enterprise building envelope for a commercial kitchen, winery, olive press or produce-processing area.

"It allows the farmer to use the land for things that enhances his product," Powers said.

Powers added that this process also helps promote the local food movement of "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" because the land owner makes money from the easement deal and the farmer gets the land for less, which leads to lower food prices for consumers.

"The people who live in the city begin to also get the visual and country appeal that they thought they would get when they bought their houses," Powers said.

The property currently grows high-quality alfalfa, said land owner Manny Vierra. He purchased the piece seven years ago and now leases it to a local farmer.

"It is great that the city wants to preserve some of that good ag land out there," Vierra said. "It says a lot for the vision of the city of Brentwood."

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