

Farm Preservation - Steps of Success

The story of how the Farm was saved is extraordinary. The collaboration among the Whitemarsh Foundation, the McCausland and Dixon families, The Hill at Whitemarsh, community organizations, governmental bodies, and countless area residents succeeded in preserving the Farm from development, while maintaining the outstanding views and making possible the continuation of agricultural activities on this unique landscape at the very edge of the City of Philadelphia.



- In the late 1990s, supported by an influential group of area residents, Whitemarsh Retirement Partners was formed to develop a new Continuing Care Retirement Community – The Hill at Whitemarsh – in Whitemarsh Township. The developer acquired rights to purchase a 96-acre site consisting of the 42-acre Eugenia Hospital, a failing psychiatric facility, and an adjacent 54 acres of Erdenheim Farm. The proposed CCRC required zoning changes, and community groups were formed to mount a campaign to oppose the project, fearing that the CCRC would be the first step in the ultimate development of the entire Farm.



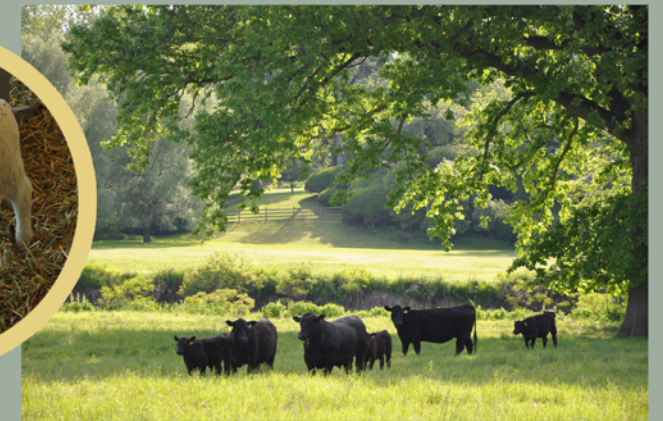
- Following extensive negotiations between the developer and community groups, in December 2001 the parties entered into a landmark "Community Agreement" under which the project was reduced in size and relocated away from area roads. In addition, steps were taken to make possible the potential preservation of adjacent portions of the Farm. In return, the groups agreed to drop their opposition and support the project.



- As contemplated by the Community Agreement, the Whitemarsh Foundation was formed in 2001 as an independent tax exempt public charity, with responsibility for raising funds and purchasing or preserving all or portions of Erdenheim Farm. Its governing board consists of representatives from the Hill at Whitemarsh, the community groups, the Whitemarsh Valley Country Club and Morris Arboretum.



- With an initial contribution of \$500,000 from The Hill at Whitemarsh, the Foundation began a campaign to develop financial support from public and private sources. Following the death of the Farm's owner, F. Eugene Dixon Jr. in August 2006, the Foundation worked closely with the Dixon family to find a way to preserve as much of the Farm as possible.



- A key to success was the willingness of the McCausland family to assume responsibility for the continued operation of the Farm and the willingness of the Natural Lands Trust, the owner of a key portion of Farm, to sell its interest subject to conservation restrictions.

- In December 2008, the Foundation purchased the 98-acre Angus Tract and in June 2009, the Foundation bought 90 acres of the Sheep Tract. On the same date all of the remaining portions of the Farm, with the exception of a 15-acre parcel retained by a member of the Dixon family, were purchased by Peter and Bonnie McCausland. All 450 acres of the Farm, with minor exceptions, are now protected from development in perpetuity by conservation easements.

Looking Forward →