

The Farm at Ridgeway officially opened

By Amanda Wells
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RIDGEWAY - If you travel US 21 between Blythewood and Ridgeway on a regular basis, you've probably noticed the signage not far from the county line advertising The Farm at Ridgeway - as well as the heavy equipment busy clearing trees, moving dirt and building one of the fanciest barns that Ridgeway's ever seen.

With the town's water line extension projects well under way and the availability of town water to US 21 residents in the near future, Russell & Jeffcoat Realtors is gearing up its efforts to officially open the upscale equestrian development.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held last week at the half-million-dollar barn that eventually will be owned by residents of The Farm.

Residential lots include access to and ownership of the stables, a 12.6-acre common area and paddock, four ponds, and four miles of bridle trails that wind through the community.

The 44 lots range in size from 1.5 acres to 6.5 acres; but horses can be kept only on lots two acres and larger.

"I envision this building as the center of activity; you could even hold children's birthday parties out here," developer Tim Wahl said of the barn. "We're trying to make this place as family and animal-friendly as possible."

The barn, which is outfitted with beautiful wrought iron and interior woodwork, features ceiling fans and



Country Chronicle photo/AMANDA WELLS

From left: Jamie Pruitt of Dennis Corp.; Jim Minick & Darren Rhodes of Russell & Jeffcoat; Ridgeway Mayor Charlene Herring; Russell & Jeffcoat president Bob Russell; developer Tim Wahl; Martha McCoy of Russell & Jeffcoat; and Russell & Jeffcoat CEO Ron Roe cut the ribbon officially opening sales office at The Farm at Ridgeway.

lighting above each stall, an automatic watering system which continuously delivers fresh water to the horses, and rubberized floor mats that are gentle on tired hooves and feet.

The facility was designed and built by Mark Hopkins of Rustic Barns, a renowned specialty contractor best known for designing and building the barns that the famous Budweiser Clydesdales call home.

No lots have yet been sold, as many of potential buyers were waiting to be sure town water would be available.

But Russell & Jeffcoat official don't seem to be worried that the development will be difficult sell.

"In 2005, 2006, and 2007, there was so much money that was so easy to borrow, that folks who would have normally been saving for

down payments on their homes didn't have to," said Russell & Jeffcoat CEO Ron Roe. "South Carolina hasn't had nearly the housing bubble that many other parts of the country experienced, so we haven't had the dramatic fall in prices that has occurred elsewhere.

The market here is fairly stable," said Roe. "Back in those years, we were just really borrowing buyers from the future - and what happens when you borrow? You have to pay it back. And that's what we're doing now; we're just paying back. We've talked to a lot of people that are just waiting and saving their money for their down payment."

It's those homebuyers that Wahl hopes to reach. Wahl is so committed to a long-term sales project that he planned a portion of the

barn to be used specifically for a sales office.

"I think one day, after all the lots have homes on them, this could be converted to a guest house," Wahl said. "It could be shared by the homeowners, or even used as a home for a groundskeeper, if (the future homeowners) choose to hire someone to take care of the property."

The first big push to attract potential buyers will begin in about a month with a grand opening to showcase The Farm.

Russell & Jeffcoat have committed two Realtors to the property: Martha McCoy and Darren Rhodes.

"We're extremely happy to be here in Ridgeway," said Roe as the ribbon was cut. "It's such a beautiful place, and Ridgeway has such an opportunity to grow this place in the right way."