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# The Flynn factor

## Louisville company drives Shepherdsville's growth

By Brian Moore | bmoore@courier-journal.com | The Courier-Journal

Though few people knew it, leaders at Louisville-based Flynn Bros. Contracting started watching Bullitt County in 1985. They studied its residential growth and scouted development sites.

In 1999, Flynn began making its move. Over the

past six years, the company has become what many consider the driver for Shepherdsville's business growth. Some say the company is single-handedly reshaping the city of about 10,000 residents.

It built the Cedar Grove Business Park and the Paroquet Springs Conference Centre. It built a hotel and the Conestoga Parkway — a 2.3-mile divided highway that, when opened, will dramatically alter traffic flow west of Interstate 65.

"They make a ton of money off of Bullitt County, but they give a ton back," said Ted Korfhage, a lifelong resident who is a partner in the Heritage Hill golf course community. "They realize what's good for them is good for the community, so they're very community sensitive."

Flynn has become so involved that some have questioned if one company can have too much influence over a county's growth. Flynn has been the catalyst for or a major part of nearly every economic-development project, excluding residential growth, since 2000.

"It kind of sounds like they're doing the planning" for the county, said Kevin Costello, president of the Kentucky Chapter of the American Planning Association and Boone County's planning director.

Shepherdsville Mayor Joe Sohm said he's been at ease with Flynn's involvement because he already knew the Flynn brothers and Jim Rice, a part-owner and a Shepherdsville resident.

"It's not as if it's some place in Louisville that develops property, puts as many houses on it as possible, makes a quick dollar and then goes back to Louisville," Sohm said.

"If that were the case I would be concerned," he said. "But the Flynn brothers and Jim Rice have always had the best interest of Shepherdsville and Bullitt County at heart."



Jesse Flynn, left, and Jim Rice looked over Flynn Bros. plans in Bullitt County.

### New roads (2003-2006)

- Flynn Bros. builds the state funded Shepherd Parkway.
- Flynn Bros. pays for and builds the \$8 million Conestoga Parkway.

### Retail (2006)

- Flynn Bros. negotiates purchase of Shepherd's Crossing shopping center, where it wants to lure a movie theater.



### Industry (1999-2006)

- Company builds 420-acre Cedar Grove Business Park.

### Land swap (2005)

- Flynn Bros. takes Highway Department land on Shepherd Parkway for a restaurant and bank.
- Highway Department gets land and new buildings on Ky. 480.

### Lobbying (2005-2006)

- Company leads effort to request a state widening of Ky. 480

### Hotel and conference center

- Flynn Bros. builds Country Inn & Suites and Paroquet Springs Conference Centre.
- Tourism commission buys center in 2003.



Graphic by Steve Reed, photos by Arza Bennett and Michael Hayman, The Courier-Journal



### GEORGE JESSE FLYNN

Age: 56.

#### Primary residence:

Louisville's Highlands neighborhood; also owns 600-acre farm in Lebanon Junction.

**Education:** Business administration degree from Bellarmine College (1971).

**Career:** Started Flynn Bros. Paving with brother John in 1973. Formed real-estate firm Flynn Holdings Co. LLC in 1984. Company owns more than 20 commercial properties in Louisville area.

**Involvement:** Bullitt County Chamber of Commerce president; member of the Bullitt County Economic Development Authority board of directors, among other things.

### JAMES H. RICE

Age: 57.

#### Primary residence:

Cooper Run Road, southern Shepherdsville.

**Education:** Mathematics degree from Eastern Kentucky University (1971).

**Career:** Worked as a design engineer for residential, commercial and industrial sites from 1971 to 1975. Project engineer for Charles E. Cannell Construction from 1975 to 1982. Joined Flynn Bros. as part-owner in 1982 and established a heavy construction division.

**Involvement:** Former member of the Bullitt County Planning Commission and past president of the Engineers and Architects Club of Louisville.

### Government partnerships

Flynn Bros.' development in Bullitt County is led by Rice and Jesse Flynn, chairman of the company's board of directors. Flynn and brother John Flynn opened

the company in 1973, and its primary work was building roads. John Flynn and another brother, Ed Flynn, still work in the paving division.

Rice and Jesse Flynn said that they knew they'd have to

build much of the infrastructure themselves to support their Shepherdsville developments. In 1999, they built a water tower, later bought by the Louisville Water Co. for \$729,989, to support the Ce-

dar Grove Business Park and installed new water and sewer lines.

But the company couldn't build the park without widening Ky. 480 and raising a small bridge over Buffalo Run creek

out of the flood plain. So it appealed to city, county and state officials for help — and it succeeded in getting state money to raise and widen the

See FLYNN, Page 5, col. 1





By Arza Barnett, The Courier-Journal

A section of the \$8 million Conestoga Parkway offers a panoramic view of Interstate 65 and homes in Shepherdsville. The 2.3-mile highway, which should open soon, will alter traffic flow west of I-65.

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highway to three lanes.

That project was the beginning of what one urban planning expert called "a public-private partnership." Since 1999 Flynn Bros. has worked out several deals with state and local governments.

► In 1999 the company built and paid for the Paroquet Springs Conference Centre. A study funded by the Shepherdsville-Bullitt County Tourist and Convention Commission showed that there was a significant demand for a conference center in the county.

Flynn decided to build the 37,500-square-foot facility and lease it to the commission for \$28,000 a month. After seeing the building's success, the commission bought it in 2003 for \$3.4 million.

► In 2003 Flynn Bros. was awarded the contract to build the Adam Shepherd Parkway. But the project stalled over issues surrounding a CSX railroad crossing, and last fall CSX demanded that the city pay for installation up front. To expedite the process, Flynn loaned the city \$400,000 to pay CSX.

► As retail businesses opened on the west side of Shepherd Parkway in 2004 and 2005, Flynn noticed that motorists turning onto the parkway would first see metal garages and a lot full of machinery owned by the state Highway Department.

Wanting a more consumer-friendly entrance, Flynn worked out a land swap. In return for eight acres along the parkway, Flynn gave the highway department nine acres across town on Ky. 480 and built offices, maintenance facilities and a salt-storage dome for it. Now the company is negotiating a deal to land a restaurant and bank on the Shepherd Parkway site.

► Last week Shepherdsville announced that Flynn Bros. is building and paying for a municipal building that will include fire and police stations, city offices, a fitness center, gymnasium and a City Council meeting room.

The city will lease the building on Conestoga Parkway with monthly payments going toward the purchase price. Though details haven't been finalized, Sohm figures the city eventually will own the build-

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**TED KORFHAGE,**  
Heritage Hill developer

ing for half of what it would have cost the city to build it.

### Business vs. philanthropy

Flynn Bros. has been praised repeatedly for helping boost the city's economy and infrastructure. Ten new companies have brought some 2,000 jobs to the Cedar Grove Business Park, and the Conestoga Parkway will provide access to undeveloped land between the railroad tracks and I-65.

Jesse Flynn said the company has spent \$8 million to build the Conestoga — a steep price because an estimated 100,000 truckloads of rock had to be removed from a hill. But Flynn and Rice acknowledge that they didn't build the road just to help relieve traffic on Ky. 44.

They plan to turn a sizable profit by selling more than 200 acres surrounding the Conestoga to commercial and industrial businesses. They've named this area the Settlers Point Business Park, and the tracts on the east side of the parkway are in clear view of I-65.

Building the municipal building wasn't simply charity, either. Flynn said that having a fire department and police station within the business park will help entice companies to locate there. He, Rice and Sohm agreed that the city's growth is taking a dramatic turn north of downtown, while it's also growing quickly in the east along Cedar Grove Road.

"We've followed the development since '85, and it's been a progression," Flynn said. "The residential development has followed suit in Cedar Grove and across the city, so we just feel like we're part of the development."

"I don't see anybody doing the infrastructure work that we've done on 480 with the water tower and the sewer lines," he said. "We really took some chances out there. We gambled that the water company would

buy the water tower. They did. We gambled that the tourism commission would want the Paroquet facility. They did."

Added Rice, "There's a lot of potential for the city of Shepherdsville, and we're trying to fulfill those needs."

### Role seen elsewhere

Bob Fouts, director of the Bullitt County Economic Development Authority, has seen companies that have shaped cities across the state.

Before he took the Bullitt job, he retired after 26 years from the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development. He compares Bullitt County's growth to Boone, Kenton and Campbell counties in Northern Kentucky. Like Bullitt, those are suburban counties just south of a major city, Cincinnati.

Costello, Boone's planning director, said he has seen instances where a single company has shaped small communities. Two Kenton companies — Paul Hemmer Construction and the Drees Co. — have had impacts on Northern Kentucky similar to Flynn Bros.' in Bullitt.

But Flynn's practice of constructing buildings to lease to the government is unique, Costello said. Flynn also owns a building on Buffalo Run Road that is being leased for the Bullitt County Judicial Center until a new center is finished in downtown Shepherdsville.

Since 1998, Flynn Bros. employees or their spouses have contributed a total of \$8,150 to Bullitt politicians running for state and local offices.

If Flynn Bros.' projects continue to be a success, Costello said, other development firms will notice and launch their own projects.

There's been one example of that. Last year Indianapolis-based Lauth Property Group bought a farm across the street from the Cedar Grove Business Park and has begun developing the Salt River Business Park.

"Flynn Bros. has a vision for the community," said Korfhage, the Heritage Hill developer. "They realize that you have to improve infrastructure. You can't just come in and put a business in, make all your money off that and cut and run."

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