

Bluegrass Tomorrow

PLANNING A
GREAT REGION
COLLECTED ESSAYS

1997-2006



2006 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Robert M. Hewett, Chairman
Don M. Robinson, Vice Chairman
Steven L. Beshear, Secretary
Molly Foree, Treasurer
Stephen D. Austin

Fifth Third Bank
Winter Quarter Farm
Stites & Harbison PLLC
Third Rock Consultants, LLC
Bluegrass Tomorrow, Inc.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AT-LARGE

Frank Bellafato
John Carr
Ben Fister
Joseph A. Graviss
William L. Hamilton
Cheryl Jones
Glenn D. Leveridge
Nelson Maynard
David Mohny
Louis Prichard
Mark S. Sievers
Lisa F. Smith
Job D. Turner, III

CMC/CLA
Wilbur Smith Associates
GRW Engineers, Inc.
Graviss McDonald's Restaurants
Kentucky League of Cities
Toyota Motor Manufacturing, KY, Inc.
Chase
Kentucky Utilities/LG & E
UK College of Design
Kentucky Bank
The Sievers Company, LLC
Columbia Gas of Kentucky
Greenebaum, Doll & McDonald PLLC

DIRECTORS

John W. Backer, II
Robert E. Bagby
Larry Brandstetter
Tom Brannock
Daniel W. Brewer
Patrick Brewer
Linda C. Bridwell
Greg W. Caudill
Robert N. Clay
Barbara Bailey Cowden
Luther Deaton, Jr.
Bill Dempsey
Lois Ann Disponett
Brady Dunnigan
Adam Edelen
Gary Ermers
Stan Galbraith
Mike Gobb
W. Henry Graddy, IV
Ellen D. Gregory
Stephen L. Grossman
Frank Hamilton, Jr.
Susan Harkins
James T. Hodge
Edward J. Holmes
Robert L. James, II
Bill Justice
Timothy M. Kelly
Dale Kihlman
Dan Logsdon
Jerry Morgan
Roy M. Palk
Ralph Quillin
George Nelson Ridings
James D. Rouse
Rob Rumpke
Benjamin G. Taylor
William W. Thomason
Ronald C. Tritschler
Palmer G. Vance, II
Ralph S. Watson, II
Sue D. Weant
Dave Weller

Pin Oak Stud
Retired, Eastern Kentucky University
Brandstetter Carroll, Inc.
Hinkle Contracting Corporation
Blue Grass Energy
Lexmark International, Inc.
Kentucky American Water
Farmers National Bank
Three Chimneys Farm
WKYT-TV 27
Central Bank
Sargent & Greenleaf, Inc.
Lois Ann Disponett Real Estate
Frost, Brown, Todd, LLC
Thomas & King
Saint Joseph HealthCare
Retired, Fifth Third Bank
Blue Grass Airport
W. H. Graddy & Associates
Preston-Osborne
Hilliard Lyons
Nally & Gibson
Duntreath Farm
Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs, LLP
EHI Consultants
Walnut Lawn Farm
Justice Real Estate
Lexington Herald-Leader
Trim Masters, Inc.
Windstream Communications
Retired
East Kentucky Power
Quillin Leather & Tack
Ridings Insurance
Rouse & Rouse
Richmond Chamber of Commerce
Taylor Made Farm
Mill Ridge Farm, Ltd.
The Webb Companies
Stoll Keenon Ogden PLLC
Dean, Dorton & Ford, PSC
Ridgewood, Ltd.
Bell South



PLANNING A GREAT REGION

COLLECTED ESSAYS

INTRODUCTION

As the ideas on the following pages show, **Bluegrass Tomorrow** is a vital leader in Central Kentucky. For over seventeen years the organization has pursued a vision of a great future for our region: a vision which is based on what folks here really want: protected greenspaces surrounding distinct and thriving communities which are linked to one another by scenic roadways.

No other organization in the Bluegrass has pursued this mission so completely, nor in so balanced a fashion. As the essays within this booklet demonstrate, it is only by collectively striving to find the right balance - and not embracing *division* - that we will succeed in achieving our shared **Vision**.

The work of **Bluegrass Tomorrow** is strengthening our region. Thanks for your support.

Steve Austin, President/CEO
Bluegrass Tomorrow

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PDR a Building Block for Economic Success	2
Variety of Projects Prove that Developers can Build Friendly, Inviting Neighborhoods	4
Regional Planning is Necessary for Good Growth	6
Turn Bluegrass into Nation's 'Green' Center	8
Southend Park	10
PDR Will Help Preserve Fayette's Rural Heritage	12
Turning Urban 'Brownfields' into Vibrant Streetscapes	14
Housing Boom Moves to the Country	16
Planning to Stay	18
The Paradox of Growth	20
Growing Wisely - Our Way	22
A Vision for Lexington	24
Are Cities Obsolete?	26
The Growth Dilemma	28
Planning is Essential for the Future of Cities	30
Growth by Design	32
Before It Was "Neo"	36
Postcard from the Future	38
Regions Must Work Together or Fall Apart	40



PDR A BUILDING BLOCK FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



*Lexington's Purchase of Development
Rights program is a model of 21st century
economic development.*



JULY 28, 2003

BY STEVE AUSTIN

Lexington's Purchase of Development Rights program is a model of 21st century economic development. Preserving agricultural land makes economic sense, especially in the Bluegrass with our wonderful, but limited, gift of prime soils. These soils make Fayette County the agricultural king of Kentucky, and when thoroughbred horses are counted, the world.

Our community has chosen to make a wise, inexpensive investment in our future. Actually, when compared to other types of economic development, at 0.6 percent of the entire Urban County Government budget, the PDR program is downright cheap.

And make no mistake: Investing in the PDR program is economic development in much the same way as building a new street in an industrial park, installing sewer lines to a new factory or giving tax breaks to an out-of-town corporation. We have done all that, routinely, in Lexington. Few suggested cutting these expensive activities to support pay raises or service increases.

These 20th-century, "instant coffee" approaches to economic development are fine, but we need a more well-rounded strategy if we are to develop a 21st-century economy. The PDR program is one component of such a strategy. By investing in an industry, agriculture, we will ensure that it can continue to thrive here. However, the benefits of the investment go much further than that. The investment in PDR:

- ♦ Ensures that we will continue to attract tourists from around the world.
- ♦ Helps us maintain a clean environment.
- ♦ Proves that we care about our heritage.
- ♦ Shows that we are fair: We could legally restrict land use by zoning but instead believe that we should compensate landowners for the restriction.
- ♦ Maintains our identity as the thoroughbred capital of the world.
- ♦ Demonstrates to the world that we are managing our limited assets well.

Most important, the investment in the PDR program proves that we are serious about the redevelopment of downtown. By committing funds to preserve productive agricultural land that might otherwise have been developed, the coalition of community leaders who crafted the PDR program also presented us with a challenge: Grow downtown.

We have already begun to see the results of that challenge. New loft space is being developed in the Nunn Building on Martin Luther King Boulevard and several other areas around town. A "restaurant row" has sprung up along Limestone that promises to turn the street into the place for evening action in Lexington. Plans are being drawn up for the Newtown Pike corridor, the College Town Master Plan has been completed and redevelopment activities are in full swing in South Hill near the University of Kentucky.

Each one of these projects has come about since the inception of the PDR program. Accident? Hardly. Businesses, developers, investors, community leaders and regular citizens have realized that our economic future resides not in the green fields surrounding Lexington, but in its very heart. This is the message that the PDR program has sent.

Each one of these downtown projects is, in itself, economic development. Local people have been hired to design plans, to create memorable meals, to supply all this activity. More people will choose to live downtown, increasing the tax base and creating more opportunities for business development.

We are creating a fabulous downtown buzz, which will help both the University of Kentucky and Transylvania University to compete for bright, energetic students. This buzz will also help us keep our own kids here at home.

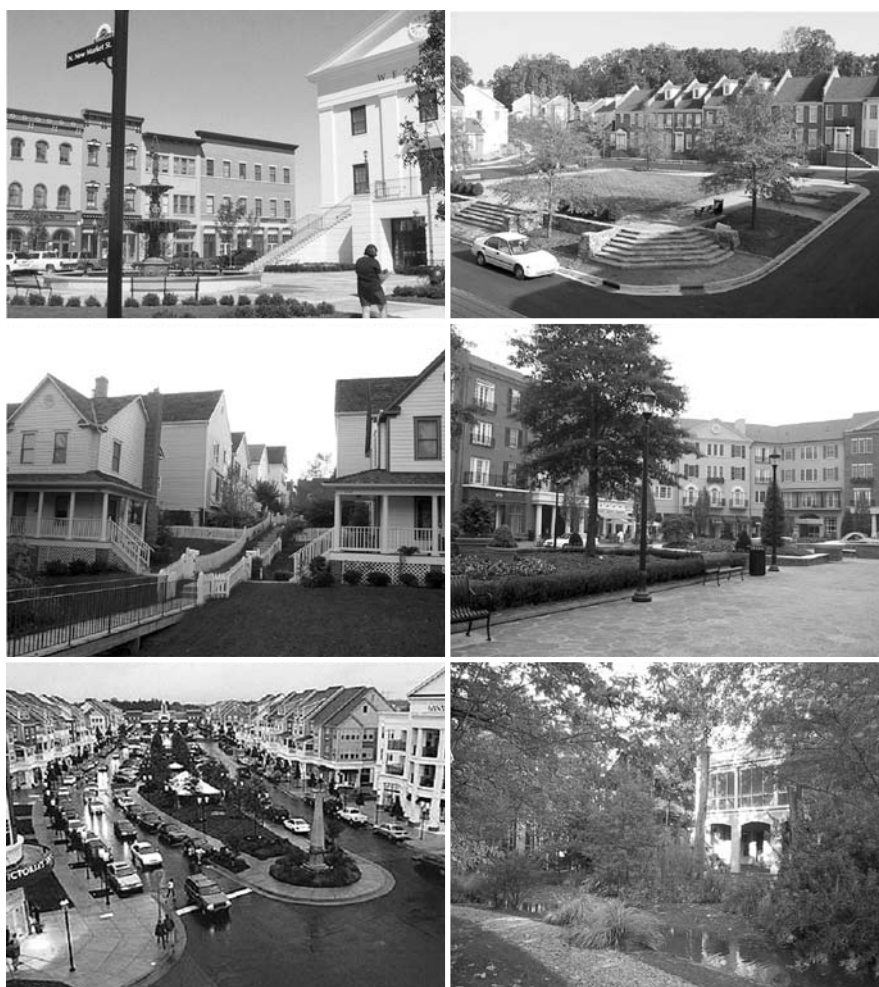
This is the genius of 21st-century economic planning: finding ways to make our limited investments go the furthest. The PDR program certainly fits this bill. In fact, in all the hoopla surrounding PDR, we appear to have forgotten to check the results from other economic development efforts to ensure that we are getting the highest return from all our investments.

In Lexington, we must get past the closely held pattern of thought that sees only winners and losers. This is holding us back economically and emotionally. We must also erase the dishonor felt by poorly paid, but proudly serving, public workers by paying them fairly. But doing so at the expense of investing in building the greatest Lexington possible is not the answer.

*Originally published in the Lexington Herald-Leader.
Reprinted with permission.*



VARIETY OF PROJECTS PROVE THAT DEVELOPERS CAN BUILD FRIENDLY, INVITING NEIGHBORHOODS



Traditional developments are pedestrian friendly, architecturally handsome, efficient with land and financial resources, and reflective of a community's heritage.



NOVEMBER 25, 2001

BY STEVE AUSTIN

A small group of developers, landowners and potential investors recently went with me on a two-day search for new neighborhood developments that possess timeless values.

In the six states we visited -- Indiana, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee -- we found neighborhoods where people, especially kids and older folks, come first. Neighborhoods that are handsome and inviting, rather than sterile and lifeless. Neighborhoods that incorporate greenspace into their fabric, including parks children can get to on their own. Neighborhoods where some of the residents' daily needs are within walking distance. These are traditional developments.

Traditional developments are pedestrian friendly, architecturally handsome, efficient with land and financial resources, and reflective of a community's heritage. The guiding principles of these developments have been endorsed by groups as varied as Bluegrass Tomorrow, the National Association of Home Builders, the Sierra Club and the National Association of Realtors.

These new neighborhoods are important to us in many ways. First and foremost, the Bluegrass is an attractive, growing region. To ensure that we continue to be so, we must offer more choices for people seeking to come here as well as for those who want to stay.

Second, our beautiful landscape is finite. We must find patterns of development that allow us to use this limited resource more efficiently. Finally, seeking such patterns will prove that we are sincere about finding a balance between growth and preservation.

Current growth trends demonstrate the need for development alternatives. Over the last ten years, land in our region has been developed at a rate of five acres a day. In Lexington, between 1995 and 2000, growth claimed more than 700 acres a year while park land was created at a rate of less than 50 acres a year.

Traffic is increasing at an alarming rate; few new developments have walkable destinations such as offices, shops, churches or schools. Because of these trends, an increasing number of people believe that growth is negative and, therefore, should be opposed.

Yet the new neighborhoods we visited prove that not all growth must be negative. These places have become welcome additions to their communities. Perhaps we can learn lessons for our Bluegrass.

On our trip, we talked to developers, real estate agents and residents. We learned what worked as well as what didn't. One of the main themes we found is that these types of developments require partnerships at all levels. Trusting relationships are needed between developers, planning commissions and neighbors; between city service departments, utility providers, engineers and designers. Lenders and investors, too, need to become part of the process.

We learned other lessons about the planning of these neighborhoods. For example, houses on small lots need

not be dominated by a garage door. We saw many varieties of friendly houses on very small lots. We saw narrow, simple yet safe rear alleys for service and access to garages. Streets in these neighborhoods are skinny to slow traffic and reduce costs.

We visited neighborhoods where greenspace was a central element. We saw two basic types of greenspaces: formal village greens and natural greenways for strolling. Trees are planted along every street. We visited one neighborhood that was surrounded by a large park.

Most neighborhoods had a mix of uses, giving residents something to walk to. Most often these are small shops, offices or schools. Sometimes it is something as simple as a bench in a shady park.

Although these neighborhoods look different, they are built to accommodate the needs of people's daily lives. Parking is plentiful and privacy is ensured, no matter what size home one lives in.

Some critics complain that these neighborhoods are not affordable for average folks. While it is true that values in these developments have risen fast, this is the result of their desirability. They provide such a great alternative that the law of supply and demand has driven prices up.

Critics also complain that these developments are too expensive to build. And while it is true that the initial planning is sometimes more costly, they offer a higher return on investment because the development regulations are less demanding and developers generally gain a slightly higher density than they would in a conventional development.

Finally, many critics say that developers here are only building what people want. However, in other cities, people seeking housing have a greater range of choices. We can foster that range of choices here. What would be wrong with trying?

*Originally published in the Lexington Herald-Leader.
Reprinted with permission.*



REGIONAL PLANNING IS NECESSARY FOR GOOD GROWTH



Our reliance on payroll taxes to fund local governments creates winners, those communities that have many good jobs, and losers, those who are sending workers out each morning. The result is a competition for jobs that is unhealthy for our region.



SEPTEMBER 25, 2003

BY STEVE AUSTIN

As Nicholasville and Jessamine County move into the 21st century, you must become truly regional citizens. The communities surrounding Lexington that make up our region are making decisions that will affect your quality of life and economy. To avoid suffering while others prosper, or prospering at the expense of others, your community must advocate regional cooperation on four vital issues.

These issues are: transportation, environment, taxation, and economic development. Without a united front to address these issues, our region, as well as Nicholasville and Jessamine County, may not succeed economically in the 21st century.

The first vital issue is transportation. Traffic congestion is increasing around the region. While personally frustrating, it threatens our regional economy that is based on "just in time" production. This method relies on having an unclogged network of regional roads on which to move supplies and products. Yet, despite the projections of an additional 200,000 residents by 2020, no significant new roads are planned anywhere in our region. If traffic is bad today, what will we be facing in 17 years?

Our environment is also a vital issue requiring regional cooperation. Our water, air, and greenspace are at risk from current development patterns.

Ground water, important because it is the source of, or contributes to, much of our drinking water, is threatened. One reason is related to septic systems, used by nearly 50 percent of our region's homeowners. With projected population increases and current development patterns, thousands more homes could utilize them by 2020. There is no strong regional system to ensure proper functioning of septic systems. This could be a time bomb requiring millions of taxpayer dollars to fix. Alternatively, we must also be aware of the unintended consequences of running sewer lines around the region.

Our region is losing greenspace to new houses at the rate of five acres a day. Most of this is productive farmland that adds more to the local tax base than it demands in tax-funded services. New houses rarely pay for themselves; their residents require more in services than they pay in taxes. To make up the difference, communities in our region may be forced to chase more development or to let existing residents pay the shortfall. Many communities don't understand that their neighboring counties who have more conservative development policies may be causing their problems. There must be a more efficient and fair way to house the new residents our region needs.

The third issue is the regional financial imbalance created by our reliance on payroll taxes to fund local governments. This system creates winners, those communities that have many good jobs, and losers, those who are sending workers out each morning. The result is a competition for jobs that is unhealthy for our region. The only beneficiaries are corporations who gain tax incentives and a poorly paid workforce.

To stop this destructive race to the bottom, our region's leaders must come together to create fairer taxation policies. This will require changing the state constitution. It is possible, but only a united front will create the clout we will need in Frankfort.

Regional economic development is the fourth, and perhaps most critical, issue we face. Today, economic development is focused mostly on luring companies that will bring jobs. When we do this, we are not only competing with our neighbors, but also with Brazil, India and China. Even if we succeed at luring these businesses, it is unlikely that they will stay. It is simple economics: people in those countries will do the same work for less pay. We cannot stop this. We must not ignore it.

Instead, our strategy must be focused on growing business here. This requires keeping, and attracting, creative, intelligent, and hardworking people. They will require a high quality of life. These are people who desire walkable neighborhoods, manageable traffic, thriving downtowns, diverse entertainment, ample greenspace and a clean environment. Are our community leaders doing all they can to enhance our quality of life so that we can prosper?

We face these issues and many more. We will grow. We must grow. There are better ways, however. Bluegrass Tomorrow has studied these issues for nearly 15 years and can help our region move forward. By working together we can all succeed.

Originally published in the The Jessamine Journal.



TURN BLUEGRASS INTO NATION'S 'GREEN' CENTER



*Environmentalism is the revolution of the 21st century.
Cities and regions that are truly environmentally
friendly will be extremely attractive to business and
investment as well as the creative, industrious people who
will power the 21st century economy.*



MAY 29, 2005

BY STEVE AUSTIN

The announcement that Toyota will make its first hybrid vehicles in Georgetown is one of the most momentous in Central Kentucky's recent history.

Beyond the recognition of the quality of the workers in this region and the payoff for the hard and creative work of our local and state officials, this announcement gives us a glimpse of where our regional future could lie. With our other attributes, and now with hybrids, we have an opportunity during the next few years to brand ourselves as an environmentally friendly region, the "greenest region on Earth."

Environmentalism is the revolution of the 21st century. Cities and regions that are truly environmentally friendly will be extremely attractive to business and investment as well as the creative, industrious people who will power the 21st century economy.

The world's largest economy, the European Union's, has made environmentalism one of its core causes. The rules made by the EU will affect every city and every industry in the world. We need to begin understanding and preparing for this reality.

There are many ways that we can demonstrate that we get it. One is through Toyota's hybrid production here. This can help us send a message to Europe and the world that we are ready to begin moving away from a complete dependence on the fossil fuels that degrade our environment.

We have another handy attribute to help us brand ourselves as the "greenest region on Earth." Most people who have ever visited here, even for a short period of time, remark, "It's so green here!"

They are, of course, referring to the landscape that surrounds us. The primary source of that lush greenness is the land devoted to the thoroughbred industry. Other regions in the world would love to have such a ready-made branding image.

It is hugely significant that Gov. Ernie Fletcher, in making the hybrid announcement, said that "Kentucky is first in thoroughbreds and will now be first in hybrids."

How we accommodate growth relative to the thoroughbred industry here in the next few years will help determine if this will remain true. It would be a shame to gain one industry while sacrificing another.

If we are to become the "greenest region on Earth," other challenges await:

- ♦ We must plan our cities, and our region, so that we can drive less and walk and bike more.
- ♦ We need to take the "Reforest the Bluegrass" program to another level by setting a goal of one million trees planted by the year 2020.
- ♦ Our civic and business leaders must get serious about restoring and protecting our green infrastructure, the region's life-support system.
- ♦ Local architects and developers must find ways to incorporate green building techniques into the new

frontier of growth -- redevelopment and infill within the cores of our cities.

- ♦ Citizens must demand, and leaders respond with, a commitment that parks and greenspaces be the centerpieces of our communities.

We can, of course, continue down our current path and hope that our economy will prosper. We can continue to rely on the 20th century as our model for growth.

We can continue to market ourselves as a great place to live without doing anything constructive to ensure that it remains so.

Or, we can choose to accept and undertake this challenge. By doing so, we will really be opening a new world of opportunities for our region.

With hope for a different, brighter future, our citizens will become re-energized and re-engaged in community life. Young people, inspired by our actions, will want to stay here.

Our economy will prosper and our quality of life will be ever improving. And we can have fun by giving our short lives here true meaning and impact.

For in the coming years we can proudly proclaim that we have made our home into the "greenest region on Earth."

*Originally published in the Lexington Herald-Leader.
Reprinted with permission.*



SOUTHEND PARK

SOCIAL JUSTICE BUILT INTO URBAN PROJECT



The resulting goal was for this development to become a diversified, vibrant and vital community, where people of all races and social strata could live together.



FEBRUARY 15, 2004

BY STEVE AUSTIN & ED HOLMES

Lexington is on the verge of beginning one of the largest urban development projects in its history.

The Newtown Pike project, which will create a connector from West Main Street to South Broadway near the University of Kentucky will open up dozens of acres on the southwest side of downtown Lexington for rehabilitation and redevelopment.

Most significantly, the project will usher in a plan for the complete transformation of one of the city's poorest, most needy areas: Southend Park.

Unlike failed urban projects of the past, this transformation will not come about at the expense of residents in this area.

The plan for the extended Newtown Pike, which will affect this neighborhood, includes a unique component: a concern for social justice.

Without this part of the plan, there would be no funds to build the new road. This relationship between road building and civic responsibility is unique in Lexington's history, if not Kentucky's.

Our team, which also includes Sherman Carter Barnhart Architects, was chosen to develop the plan that would accommodate the road, protect existing residents and prepare for new development.

To set a defining goal for the project, the team met extensively with local residents, developers and city officials.

The resulting goal was for this development to become a diversified, vibrant and vital community, where people of all races and social strata could live together.

To achieve this goal, the design team set about creating plans for an urban village. Successful urban villages, new and old, are based on timeless principles such as human scale, handsome architecture, interconnected streets and lively pedestrian activity. Parks, squares and public buildings are used to link a development's various elements into a cohesive whole.

The designers of the Southend Park plan have laid the foundations for a great urban village, one that will be a model not only for Lexington, but also for the rest of the state.

In the plan for Southend Park, buildings are close to the street, wide sidewalks line the street grid and there are many mixed uses, such as offices, small shops and restaurants.

A central plaza will serve as the community gathering space. Prominent public buildings will give the neighborhood a strong character. Buildings will screen parking lots. The existing ballfields will be incorporated into the plan along with new community vegetable gardens.

To ensure that the area does not become gentrified at the expense of existing residents and that it does not remain disadvantaged, the project designers have created a delicate balance of residential uses.

Housing units here will be the most varied in the city. Not only will the existing residents be accommodated in new units at or near the same housing costs they are paying now, but also they will have an opportunity to buy new single-family homes if they desire.

Other types of units -- such as apartments, loft condominiums and townhouses -- will be reserved at affordable market rates. This mix will create a diverse yet stable neighborhood.

The success of the Southend Park plan bodes well for the future of Lexington and the Bluegrass region. Downtown developers will strive to match this plan's socially fair and physically beautiful principles.

The University of Kentucky will have a new front door worthy of a world-class institution.

Preservation advocates will gain new confidence that the tide of development is truly turning inward, away from the region's greenfields.

The city will gain not only vital new tax resources but also a model of sustainable economic development.

This is an exciting time for Lexington. We are overcoming our late-20th-century lethargy. The plan for Southend Park proves that concern for people, fairness, and beauty are great principles on which to move a city forward.

*Originally published in the Lexington Herald-Leader.
Reprinted with permission.*



PDR WILL HELP PRESERVE FAYETTE'S RURAL HERITAGE



Those who come in the future

Who will they be?

Grieving in vain

for what others had before?

- Wang Wei



JULY 21, 2000

BY STEVE AUSTIN

In these lines, with deep understanding, the 8th-century Chinese poet Wang Wei lays before us questions of massive significance for Fayette County and our region. Will those who follow us know the place we know? Will they see what we see? Will they cherish what we cherish? For questions so profound, the answer is startlingly simple: only if we ensure that they can.

Lexington's Purchase of Development Rights program is one such way. By striving to keep soil productive and by doing justice to our landowners in the process, we are giving to the future. This is precisely the role of our elected government: providing for a future that's at least as good as the present.

The PDR program will have great benefits not only locally and regionally but also across Kentucky. Most importantly, this program will enable farmers to stay attached to the land. This means that more than 200 years of agricultural heritage in Fayette County will continue. We also will be ensuring that our state's prime agricultural resource, the Bluegrass landscape, will remain intact.

Regionally, Lexington will again provide leadership on a very difficult issue, one that faces all our Bluegrass counties. This program also will demonstrate that state and local governments can work together on a common concern.

Now, though, some folks are demanding that a referendum be held wherein local citizens would vote on whether we should pursue the PDR program. These folks are confident (perhaps too glibly confident) that given the chance, Lexington's voters would not approve it.

A vote is unnecessary for several reasons, however. First, the Urban County Council is elected to serve us and provide for our future. Its members are responsible to us for making sound decisions based on all the available facts. They have done this with the PDR program.

Second, no state or local law requires a referendum in this matter. Thus, there is no legal basis for demanding one now.

Third, a referendum about the PDR program, should one occur, would have no binding effect on our government. Therefore, it would be a pointless exercise.

Fourth, Lexington's leaders wisely decided not to open the way for a tit-for-tat battle of referendums on all the issues that we are facing. They know that once done, other groups would demand public votes on a myriad of issues. Do we want referendums on other growth issues, for example, such as whether to expand the urban services boundary or to continue to subsidize sprawling development?

Finally, our system worked as it was intended. All sides in the PDR debate had ample opportunity to become involved, to voice opinions. Consensus was forged, a democratic vote taken. It is irresponsible to imply, by demanding a referendum, that something was done under the table or in contravention of the public's best interest.

Lexington has made a bold decision about its future. A fair, justifiable, practical decision. Lexington's leaders have made a commitment to maintaining our heritage, our agricultural industry, our quality of life and our comparative advantage in the global marketplace. They are working to ensure that those who come after us will not grieve, jealously and in vain, for what we had.

We couldn't ask more from local government or from the people we have elected to lead us.

*Originally published in the Lexington Herald-Leader.
Reprinted with permission.*



TURNING URBAN 'BROWNFIELDS' INTO VIBRANT STREETSAPES



New development will increase tax revenues on these forgotten, neglected or underused properties, and will eliminate much of the blight that affects some parts of Lexington.

MAY 27, 2001

BY STEVE AUSTIN

One good thing that came out of Frankfort this year was legislation that will help Lexington reclaim lost space. These lost spaces are "brownfields:" old places that have outlived their current economic usefulness and are in some way environmentally impaired (tobacco warehouses, for example).

Reclaiming this lost space is good for growth. It's good for preservation. It's good for the environment. It's good for diversity and choice. It's good for our future.

Brownfields, simply, are lands with some form of environmental degradation. They were used in an industrial way, and some dirty residue has been left



behind. They are not toxic waste dumps. They do not pose risks of horrible infection. They are not "Love Canals."

They do need cleaning. They contain chemicals that could harm the environment. They contain materials that need to be disposed of properly. They occupy land that is needed for other uses.

Our lawmakers used common sense when shaping the brownfields legislation. In the past, developers and cities were reluctant to attempt to reform these lands for fear of potentially unlimited liability. The legislation offers protection from liability to developers and cities that clean up and develop the sites if they do it right.

We can do it right. We can eliminate existing or potential environmental problems. New development will increase tax revenues on these forgotten, neglected or underused properties, and will eliminate much of the blight that affects some parts of Lexington.

Development of these areas also will prove that growth can be positive and will help us preserve land. Recent census figures show the importance of this.

More people moved into Fayette County in the last ten years than any other county in the state. Our metropolitan area is growing nearly twice as fast as the state's second-ranked metropolitan area.

If current development trends continue, Lexington's metropolitan area will lose five acres of open land every day for the next twenty years. Development of brownfields can help reverse this.

Further, Lexington's Purchase of Development Rights program needs a twin. If we are going to limit development in some parts of the community, we must encourage it in others. By directing growth to the brownfields, we will provide an outlet for development.

Brownfield development will demonstrate positive growth by creating a range of living choices. Most Lexington development is created from the same pattern. Only the fancy subdivision names differ. There is little choice.

Yet many people - gasp - don't want a house in the 'burbs. They prefer the activity, density and diversity of urban life. They seek places that encourage walking, which reduces traffic and advances friendliness and good health.

Finally, this development will be vital in helping the University of Kentucky reach its Top 20 goal.

To reach such exalted ranks, we must provide, among other things, a range of living environments that are attractive to the variety of people who will help take UK there.

This means more than providing the monochrome developments of today. UK is not just competing against other institutions; it is competing against other cities around the country and the world.

Excitement and life are the goals for developing these dim places.

First, we must build homes where there are none. The homesteaders on this new frontier will create personal

attachments, with all the good that brings. These people will stake out undefined territories, and they will shape the areas' character.

These places must also become destinations. Bluegrass residents should eagerly anticipate an afternoon or evening stroll on the streets of these districts. Tourists, too, will seek these places, to be fondly remembered. Our advantage in attracting conventions and events will increase; there will be more than ever to see.

To achieve that, the developments must have mixed uses, which will allow the districts to be self-contained.

This means that residents could find most, if not all, the needs of daily life in one place. They could work, go to school and buy food, shoes and medicine simply by walking down the street. This activity creates street life, which is what the rest of us will enjoy.

An important point must be made: Mixed uses succeed only in areas of high density. Unfortunately, many people recoil from the thought of high density, picturing slums, crime, and squalor. Yet many places we like to visit on our vacations are densely developed.

Consider Charleston, S.C., or New Orleans. Closer to home we like to visit many older parts of our town because of their density and their design.

And that raises another important point. These areas need the kind of design that is found in cities, not the suburbs.

We can see the difference. Suburbia gives us huge parking lots that sit empty after 5 p.m., surrounding one-story, single-use, faceless buildings.

Sadly, downtown Lexington is rapidly becoming suburbanized. Are we following the traditions of hundreds of years of town building or the last 30 years of sprawling growth?

Cities need solidarity. They need architectural gravity. We need multistory, multi-use buildings with character.

We need wide sidewalks and plazas for people. We need a warren of connections, linking part to part. We need the space created by buildings to inspire us. We need a new urbanity.

We are on the cusp of a great period in Lexington. We are preserving our best land for future generations. We are learning how to shape new developments in human, friendly, attractive and efficient ways.

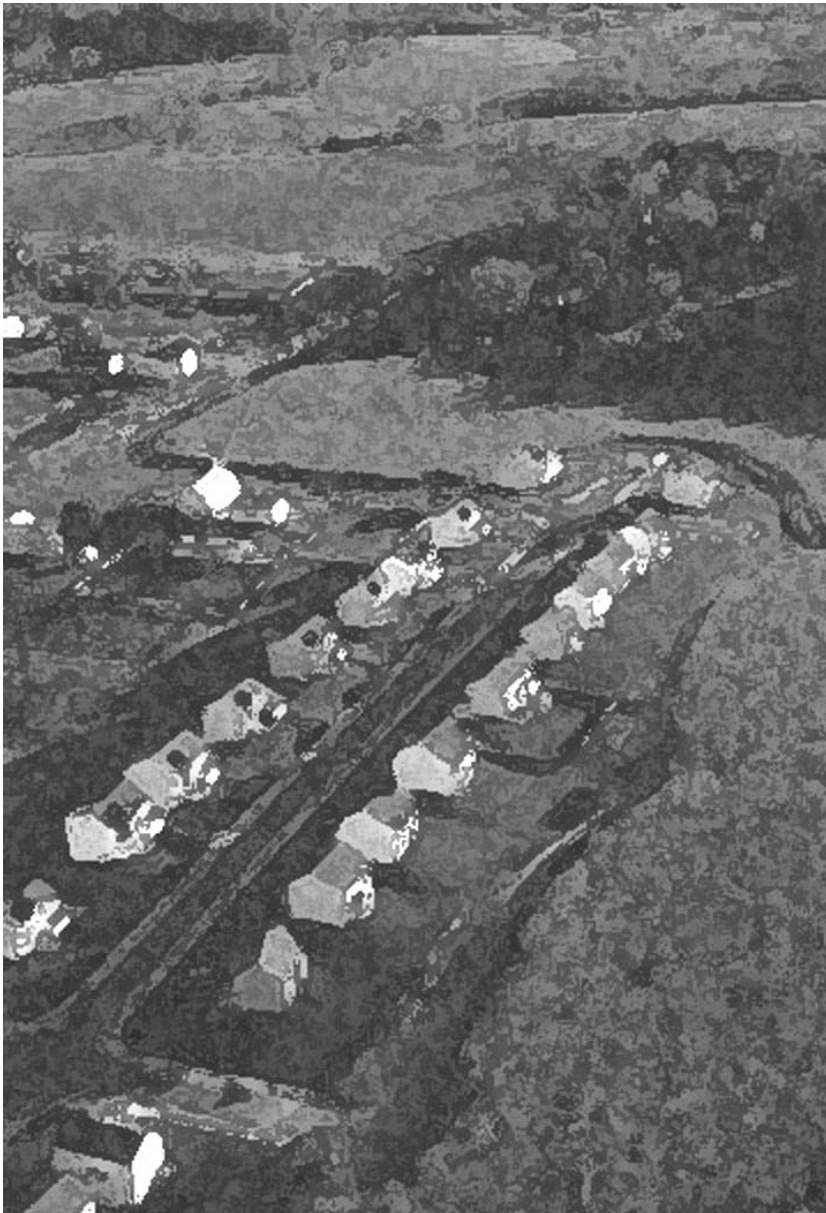
And we are about to open a new frontier in our community's heart.

*Originally published in the Lexington Herald-Leader.
Reprinted with permission.*



HOUSING BOOM MOVES TO THE COUNTRY

RURAL BLUEGRASS AREAS LACK
PROPER INFRASTRUCTURE



*For perhaps the first time ever, the rural areas of
our region are growing houses at a faster rate than
cities and towns.*



MAY 18, 2003

BY STEVE AUSTIN

A new phenomenon is occurring across Central Kentucky. For perhaps the first time ever, the rural areas of our region are growing houses at a faster rate than cities and towns. Since this is a new occurrence, few communities have taken time to understand the effects of this rapid growth.

The urban-style growth is occurring on potentially inadequate rural infrastructure -- those things that ensure a high standard of living, protect the environment (sewage treatment plants), protect life and property (police, ambulance and fire services), and promote economic growth (roads and schools).

This rapid growth may create serious fiscal consequences for local governments. It may also impede our ability to grow our region's economy. In a sense, we are trying to build a 21st century economy on an 18th century base. This may be unique in our country and is very similar to conditions in many Third World nations. Thus, rapid rural development is threatening more than just our farmland, scenic beauty and rural values: It is threatening our economy and standard of living.

Improving inadequate infrastructure to urban standards and then maintaining it is very expensive. Cities have known this for years. For most counties, however, the need for urban infrastructure was unrecognized, and the pace of infrastructure improvement has been slow enough to be absorbed in yearly county budgets.

Rapid rural growth is changing this. Today, questions of who pays and what gets done at the expense of what doesn't are paramount questions. These are questions few counties have had to face -- until now.

Bluegrass Tomorrow's study of 2000 Census data reveals that nearly every census tract in the region added houses at a faster percentage rate than the region as a whole. For example, our region's housing stock as a whole grew by about 18 percent over the last 10 years. Yet, many of the rural census tract's housing growth rates were well above 40 percent. Projecting these trends out 20 years reveals that nearly half our region's population could be living in a rural area.

A majority of this growth is occurring on land not served by sanitary sewers. This means more septic tanks are used as housing expands into the countryside. No county has studied the effects that these new septic tanks will have on ground water or overall health. No county has any system of ensuring that septic systems function properly over the long term.

The suburbanites who are causing this growth naturally want clean, affordable drinking water. However, few counties have extensive "city" water systems. Most people are forced to rely on cisterns or wells.

Many well-meaning politicians proudly boast that, to solve this problem, they will run city water lines throughout their counties. No one has insisted that county officials examine the unintended consequences of running more water lines into rural areas.

No county has examined the impact of rapid growth on

the rural road networks. Originally, these roads were for farmers. Now, commuters use them almost exclusively. Commuters are comfortable with urban speeds and safety designs. Who will pay to improve these roads? Or will we simply continue to put up with the potholes, the narrow shoulders, blind curves and flooding?

Rapid rural growth often overburdens volunteer fire departments, ambulance services and county law enforcement. How long will homeowners accept service delays, risking property and life?

Rapid growth affects rural school districts, causing overcrowding and added expense for longer bus routes.

Other potential costs of rapid growth may include dealing with the environmental effects of stormwater on farms and natural areas, a loss of tourism revenue and diminished agricultural production.

Dealing with these problems could be very expensive. Few ask who will foot the bill. The new residents? Or the long-term residents, many of whom live in a city or town but pay county taxes? Where will county governments find the funds to deal with these problems?

Property tax increases are limited by the state constitution and are unlikely to cover the growing expenses, even if they found political favor.

Madison County provides one example where rapid rural growth has outpaced the government's ability to keep up. Fixing septic tank problems alone may cost the county as much as \$8 million over the next few years. This is money that could have been spent on improving citizens' quality of life, not used to fix problems caused by a lack of planning.

Many people argue that rural growth helps the local community. They point to a larger property tax base as well as increases in payroll taxes associated with construction.

Yet many studies have shown that unless new housing exceeds a certain, usually very high, threshold, new residents demand more in services than they pay for in taxes. Other studies have shown that while payroll taxes do increase, they are generally used to offset service demands created by earlier development.

It is a part of the American dream for many people to seek a peaceful country life. Many landowners, too, seek to profit from what is theirs. Those choices should remain here. No one need fear growth moratoriums or prohibitive restrictions.

What we should be doing is planning for this rapid growth. Each county must have rational, thorough evaluations of the true impacts and costs of growth. Appropriate plans can then be made. Right now, almost every county in Central Kentucky is guessing about its future and hoping for the best.

Is that good enough?

*Originally published in the Lexington Herald-Leader.
Reprinted with permission.*



PLANNING TO STAY



It is up to us to decide if we are giving the highest economic value to ourselves, as well as to those who need it the most. It is up to us to decide if we value our history. It is up to us to decide if we value human beings. It is up to us to decide how the future shall judge us.



APRIL 2001

BY STEVE AUSTIN

When I visit towns, old ones, in Europe or Asia, or small ones here, the same thing always strikes me: they were built to last. And I am always amazed that ancient people, who had less wealth than we do, and who knew less than we do, actually believed that they were creating something of great importance.

This amazement is due to some occurrence or another that led me to think that only modern folk could conceive of great things. Yet these old towns confront me with an opposite reality: forgotten generations created great things, too. The manifestations of this reality are too strong to think otherwise. I can literally see that these people believed in their future. I, in the exalted year of 2001, can stand in places where they once stood. And I can only think one thing: these people built as if they were planning to stay.

And that's the depth of it. They themselves weren't going to stay - they would move on, as we all do. Rather, they were building as if their civilization was going to stay. And as such, it needed to be provided with the essentials. This process may be compared to ancient Egyptian burial rites, where the newly dead were laid to rest with the things they might need in the next life. Except, of course, our forebears provided us with the things we would need in this life.

They gave us human scale, in the size of the town and the necessary distances of daily life. This characteristic is first among equals. These old towns feel as if people live there, not machines. We fit into them. They compliment our stride, and what we can see from a few feet above the ground, and the stages of our lives.

We have inherited wonderful, sensual places from these good people. Old towns are full of textures, contrasts, excitement and mystery. Much like the best private lives we could imagine for ourselves. These are qualities that only get better with time.

Old towns also hold less tangible, but no less important, attractions. They, over years, have become living history. When we visit, we touch, more than bricks and plaster. We sense the past. We consume ancient air. Something inside our bones feels the gravity of time.

They hold our imagination as well. We dream, as Simon and Garfunkel once did, of narrow streets of cobblestone. We associate dash and glamour, sophistication and culture with old towns. We see future there.

These characteristics are not formed in air. They reside in three-dimensional forms. And thus the importance of architecture. Old towns are the seemingly simple assemblage of buildings and the spaces between them. Yet how was it done without planning commissions, without neighborhood meetings?

Since these places did get built, we must conclude that they were the result of a blending of vision and skillful art. The vision of what a town should be, which must have been shared by all, has just been described.

The art is one of creating town. This art is perhaps the highest of all. By creating town, by planning to stay, we

can equip ourselves, and our future, for life.

So, I ask: How are we doing? We, as in you and me. Are we leaving the evidence to our descendants that we are planning to stay? Let's consider.

On a recent trip through our town, I saw many things. I saw houses with no front doors. I saw plastic, not brick or stone. I saw pitiful strips of grass, advertised as gardens. I visited parks that children can't walk to. I passed schools the size of super discount marts, with larger parking lots. I visited "subdivisions" of many homes with but one price-range, ensuring a single economic stratum. I squinted away from glaring streets, where no trees lived. And when I looked up, I saw jumbled, begging signs.

I passed "shopping centers," whose words are in no way reflective of geography. "Centers" that only flank the "subdivisions" and hold no local allegiance. I saw unadorned castles of consumption surrounded by huge parking lots that seem only to be full one day a year. I visited an "office park," where no park for people exists and whose inhabitants seem only to be automobiles.

We live in a place where we are penalized to be old. In our town, our life choices narrow when we can no longer drive a car. It is of no use that we are still functional in every other way. Without being able to drive, we become dependent on others for nearly everything.

We live in a place where we are penalized by being young. Our schools are large enough that we are able to make a variety of friends, but most don't live within walking distance. The activities we want to pursue are dispersed, so that we are at the mercy of someone with a car. Hanging out means disappearing in front of a TV or computer. And we must work, so that we can buy a car, and thus our freedom.

We live in a place where we are penalized by being middle aged. Our lives are fragmented, compartmentalized. It seems that we spend most of our time in our cars. We have the burden of being the generation that has witnessed our air quality decline to the point that the government has begun warning us about it. And we also seem to spend much of our "free" time arguing about the direction in which we want our town to go.

Of course, the builders of our town tell us that this is what we really want: how else would it have gotten built? We've been told that these are the benefits that growth brings. We have been told that freedom has created this New Eden. So it must be us.

Should we not do better?

It is up to us to decide if we are giving the highest economic value to ourselves, as well as to those who need it the most. It is up to us to decide if we value our history. It is up to us to decide if we value human beings. It is up to us to decide how the future shall judge us.

It is up to us to decide if we are planning to stay.

Originally published in the Chevy Chaser Magazine, Lexington, Kentucky.



THE PARADOX OF GROWTH



We in the Bluegrass are at a threshold. How we handle growth in the next few years will determine both our quality of life and our economic competitiveness for the remainder of the 21st century.



MAY 2001

BY STEVE AUSTIN

We in the Bluegrass are at a threshold. How we handle growth in the next few years will determine both our quality of life and our economic competitiveness for the remainder of the 21st century. In this century these two things are inseparable. The most successful people and businesses desire a high quality of life. Quality of life determines which regions will attract and retain them. How a region grows is directly related to them both. Are we prepared?

Many people feel the answer is to not allow any more growth. They believe that every time a bulldozer's engine starts, when a farm disappears, when a new person moves to their community, that their quality of life will be diminished. They distrust the numerous local governments and planning commissions in our region to make coordinated decisions regarding growth. They are saddened by local disinterest in preserving a building or woodland important to everyone. They are alarmed at the prospect of losing five acres of Bluegrass land a day, everyday, for the next 20 years to suburban housing development. The thought of hundreds of thousands of new car trips every day on our region's roads brings them visions of gridlock. They watch with trepidation Lexington's daily air quality report and wonder about the quality of our region's water supply. They fear the hidden costs of development will soon come due for payment.

Many other folks believe that economic prosperity is completely dependent on continued growth. They know that a region which does not grow dies. They see growth as a conveyor of prosperity to every citizen in the region. They understand that increasing opportunities in both housing and business will help keep our young people here. Growth, to them, provides a brighter future.

An impasse? No. People on the one side should realize that growth will most likely continue. Thousands of acres are currently planned for suburban development. Rural zoning codes allow housing development throughout the countryside. Many landowners, developers, governments, and businesses desire continued growth.

Yet folks on that side need to realize that growth in its current forms will erode our quality of life and thus our ability to be economically competitive at the highest levels. Current forms of growth are inefficient in terms of money and land, traffic intensive, provide little choice in living areas, visually unappealing, environmentally insensitive, and not committed to creating community. These are the precise reasons why so many oppose anything even remotely encouraging to development.

So the paradox: growth will occur but will damage us if it does. How do we get around this? We must work together to grow better. We must ensure that growth is efficient, attractive, and fair.

We must be more efficient with our land and financial resources. We can use incentives to redevelop forgotten land in the hearts of our cities and towns. This will take pressure off easy-to-develop greenfields. We can support attractive and exciting mixed-use developments that provide a variety of living choices as well as alternative

means of transportation. We can stop building huge, single use parking lots that are never used around the clock and are only full the day after Thanksgiving. Traffic can move more efficiently, even though more slowly, through a system of interconnected, narrow streets. Narrower streets, and more efficient land use in general, means more land for yards and parks. Efficient growth along these lines can save money for developers, and thus consumers, as well as lower the costs of providing services by governments and utilities.

New development must be attractive. Consider Paris, France. Growth has occurred there over the last 400 years and the result is the most beautiful city in Europe. Closer to home, consider the growth which occurred in the Bluegrass until about 1950. These handsome, human scale towns, villages, and neighborhoods, were reflective of the people and the place in which they lived. The comparison to what we are building today is devastating.

Growth must also be fair. Fair to landowner's expectations, business interests, and as importantly, to existing residents and taxpayers. This may mean focusing on infrastructure in existing neighborhoods, for example, rather than subsidizing new infrastructure. We must be fair to our landscape, environment, and heritage. This would result in directing growth to less sensitive areas. Fairness also requires that we make decisions about our collective future in open and civil discussions.

If we value our quality of life and economic position in the Global Economy we must work together to grow better. Regions at war with themselves are not great places to do business. Regions at war with themselves are not great places to live. By only taking sides, we stand to lose what our side cares most about. Ironic, isn't it?

Originally published in the Chevy Chaser Magazine, Lexington Kentucky.



GROWING WISELY - OUR WAY

WOODLAND PARK IS TOWN'S MODEL



We are going to remain on this land: There are no more undiscovered continents or unsettled areas, and no leaving and sailing around the world. We should start building like we are planning to stay. ... We can find our way by re-discovering what works here in Lexington.

NOVEMBER 30, 1997

BY STEVE AUSTIN

I read with curiosity and nostalgia Bill Bishop's Oct. 24 column about the wonderful qualities of Spanish towns. As a professional town planner, I was excited to read a good discussion of urban planning issues. This was also of personal interest to me because my wife and I spent nearly a month in Spain last year. We visited many of the places described in the column. The charm and success of these towns are

accurately portrayed. But they are not the planning models for us.

They are certainly wonderful, though. I remember a small hill town, Arcos de la Frontera, stirring after siesta at sunset on a warm, spring afternoon. Shops were opening, chairs for sidewalk cafes were brought out and the citizens were beginning what I imagined to be a nightly walking tour of their town.



I also remember the lovely village of Tarifa, sitting gently next to the dark blue Mediterranean, the mountains of Africa in the distance. Children played in narrow cobbled streets among ancient white buildings while women watched from open apartment windows and men stood talking on corners. I have a multitude of other great memories from that trip. At the time, I was sorry to have come home.

But this is my point. I live here. You live here. This is our home. We, who will leave this place to our children, are in charge of its destiny. Spanish towns are amazing, but we are not going to live in Spanish towns. We have unique traditions and values. These are what should shape a town.

Growth is a fact in this region. Yet few of us are happy with the conventional ways in which our towns are being shaped. There is a growing awareness that the values we cherish are not reflected in these developments. What we build today will remain long after us. Are we creating the kind of environment and living conditions for which we want to be remembered?

I believe there is a desire to give our developments more meaning and sustainability (that is, the town will be as good a place to live in the future as it is now, if not better). We are going to remain on this land: There are no more undiscovered continents or unsettled areas, and no leaving and sailing around the world. We should start building like we are planning to stay.

But how? When Bishop writes, "Dense populations are a city's salvation," he is entirely correct from an urban theory view-point. However, Americans have been deconstructing and leaving cities for the last 100 years; it is unlikely that we will return. Thus, we need something other than classic "urban theory" to guide us.

I believe that we can find our way by rediscovering what works here in Lexington. Much has been done badly, but that happens everywhere. More important, there has been much done well. By studying what works in our built environment, by studying ourselves, we can find the right ways to shape our towns. We can keep our regional identity. We can retain and enhance the unique values that distinguish us from other places. We need not become homogenized.

I can give numerous examples of good planning in Lexington. One that strongly has my attention now is the Woodland Park area. This area is a great example of the type of town planning that works to achieve many of the things Bishop describes about Spanish towns. This is especially true of the desegregated land uses in the area that allow people of many types to mingle. Here one can, as Bishop writes about Spanish towns, "live, work and play in the same place." It has just been built in a way that reflects us.

To me, this looks and functions as a village. It has mixed housing types, commercial uses, churches, schools, offices and a great park. It is accessible and attractive to walkers. It has a distinct sense of place. Most important, it has proven its sustainability.

Residential uses form the core of the village. There are apartments over stores, in old houses and in free-standing

buildings. Some are very nice and some seem quite dingy. Yet many fine and expensive restorations of old homes for single families have not been deterred. Various styles of upscale townhouses are also interwoven into the fabric. Further, the investment values of most properties seem to have benefited from this arrangement.

So while there is quite a mix of housing types, it does not seem dense. And that is the key. There is variety, but it was not achieved by creating a city in the traditional sense. Instead, the area is green and handsome, more park-like than urbanized. Though the area has a density of at least eight units per acre, which is twice as dense as most conventional subdivisions, there is a pervasive feeling of openness. This quality is essential to achieving even moderate densities in our towns.

Simply mixing housing densities and types does not make a true village. Shops, offices, churches and schools are needed to give the area a visible sense of identity. Woodland has that in its village center. While the area is certainly not self-sufficient, I imagine most of the people who live here walk, at least occasionally, to the village center to browse, buy a paper, get something to eat, go to church or work. Though small in size, most conventional subdivisions offer nothing comparable as a walking destination or neighborhood focus.

The village center does not look generally suburban even though it was built as a suburb of downtown. Rather it seems like a distinct place. The buildings abut the street directly, benches grace sidewalks and there are no large signs. The architecture is properly scaled to the area; no building rises more than three stories. There is parking, which services many uses, but not in huge, single-purpose lots that separate buildings from the street. Though the streets carry heavy volumes of traffic, this does not detract from the strolling experience or the village feel.

Finally, the area's true "downtown" is the park itself. This is where people walk, gather, rest and play. The park hosts festivals and concerts and is alive on summer evenings and autumn afternoons with the laughter of children. The village is connected and defined by this space. It is the heart; and it is green, not concrete, glass and metal.

We can grow badly, or we can grow wisely. We can gaze jealously at other cities or we can find our best answers here. I believe that Lexington and the region's other towns need not sprawl together in a bland carpet of low-density suburbs. We can create green villages with moderate densities and mixed uses, which respect and respond to the natural landscape, within a regional framework of farms and open spaces. Although this process may not be completed in our lifetime, and perhaps may only be truly appreciated by our grandchildren's children, won't the challenge and the purpose it will give to our lives be exciting?

*Originally published in the Lexington Herald-Leader.
Reprinted with permission.*



A VISION FOR LEXINGTON



*We can change the path we're on. The future we
want for our children's children will not happen by
accident.*



AUGUST 1, 2001

BY STEVE AUSTIN

Perhaps we've reached the pinnacle of civilization: we've created the "choices" lifestyle. We demand variety in everything. Where to live. Where to work. Where to shop. What to buy. What to eat. Yet has anyone thought lately of the choices we're leaving to the future?

Is this the best way to live? If, by answering this question we discover that it's not, then our lives are empty. If it is, then we must ask ourselves if we are preserving the ability to choose for future generations. Are we ensuring that our children can enjoy the range of choices we have now?

As we rush toward "progress," do we care that future generations have the choices we do? Or have we just assumed that the world is limitless and that we are just mining the surface?

But what if we, who can't imagine existence without choices, are creating a future without any? What if we, by our complaisance, greed, selfishness or ignorance, are leaving behind a choiceless world for our children?

Could this happen?

Consider this scenario in the year 2025: our grandchild decides to live in Lexington. We'd like that. Let's find her a place. We would want her to have a quality house, a safe street and good neighbors. We'd like it if she could walk to a park and her kids to their friends' houses. Perhaps they could walk to school, or even a store, so that she wouldn't spend all her time as a chauffeur.

We would like the school to be solid and respected and not ready to be replaced by a new one built farther out in five years. We'd like her to live in a neighborhood with mature trees so she could hear birds sing in the morning. We'd want her to have a front porch so she can wave to her neighbors in the evening. We'd like her house to hold its value, even if new developments were built around hers.

We would like for her to look forward to a Friday night spent with friends at a local restaurant, or perhaps a play or exhibit. We'd like her to be able to easily visit places of heritage and beauty.

We would like for the people who provide her with services to know her, and thus be able to really help her. We'd want her to be able to pick from the freshest foods without having to spend an hour in traffic. We'd like her to have the ability to choose where to shop for her everyday needs.

We would want her to have the best possible job, one that will take advantage of her unique talents. We'd like her to be well paid. We'd want her commute to be healthy and stress-free. Maybe she could ride her bike, or even walk.

These are some of the choices we would want for her.

But what if? What if her sunburned, garage-door-faced house loses value with each new development built farther out? What if she discovers the school is closing and will be replaced by a new one, miles away? What if

her kids spend hours alone each day, isolated from others? What if her streets aren't as safe because the city can't afford new police officers? What if she spends more time in her car than she does in her house? What if she takes the job she can, instead of the one she wants? What if basic shopping takes more than one day a week, and she finds the prices too expensive? What if, on Friday nights, her friends want her to meet them at the newest strip mall? What if, after all this, she feels like she must move farther out just to keep up?

Is this what we want for her? Don't think it can happen? How can it be otherwise? We are building this today.

There are alternatives. We can learn from other communities. We can challenge our community. We can admit that in the 21st. century the highest quality of life and the best jobs will be found in those places that provide the most lifestyle choices.

We can change the path we're on. The future we want for our children's children will not happen by accident. And if we wait, and hope, for them to change things for themselves, it will be too late. Change takes time. We should be living, not for ourselves, but for them. Are we?

Originally published in the Chevy Chaser Magazine, Lexington Kentucky.



ARE CITIES OBSOLETE?



FALL 2003

BY STEVE AUSTIN

Cities are the great places of human history. They have provided us with the drama and diversity that has become a part of us. They have always been our centers of learning, trade and fun. They have been our economic engines. And now they are obsolete.

Many people hold this view. But are cities really obsolete? If one only considers the immediate present, they appear to be. Cities, once vitally important to individual lives, now seem to have no connection to ours. Today, astonishingly, there may be as many as two or three generations of people who have never set foot in the dense, old parts of their communities: the city. It was not always this way.

Consider what cities used to be to people. 100 years ago, cities were where you shopped, traded, worshiped, socialized, learned, and practiced democracy. You went to the city to mail a letter or receive a telegram. You couldn't see the world without passing through the city. You may have stuffed some money into your mattress, but most of it went with you to the bank in the city. You heard the news of the world in the city. If you were sick or had legal issues, you went to the city. Personal milestones were marked in some way through a connection with a city. Everything revolved around your connection to the city. The city was where, in 21st century terms, you plugged in.

To plug in today, however, do you really need a city? You can drive your car whatever distance to see a doctor or a friend. You can receive news instantaneously from a myriad of sources. You can find a lawyer on TV, research pharmaceutical information on the web, and email your friends 24 hours a day. You can join any number of interest groups and never have to go to a meeting. You can do your banking from your dining room table. You can get almost everything you need at a super-center that is open day and night. And what you can't get there, you can have shipped to your front door with one telephone call.

This freedom to plug yourself in wherever you want has created a belief that cities are no longer necessary. The thought is: since we can care for ourselves wherever we

choose to live, why would we choose a city? Many people believe the best choice is to live anywhere but the city. These thoughts are rooted in the feeling that cities are somehow alien to our nature. What a change in 100 years.

We are seeing the results of these actions in our landscapes. The growth of houses, shops, and offices in the area outside cities is occurring at a rapid pace. Churches line once rural roads in what has become a spiritual representation of our flight away from cities. We are remaking our landscapes and our lives based on the belief that cities are bad.

Why should anybody care? Isn't this belief so widespread that many have stopped questioning it? Shouldn't we just accept that what we're creating must be for the best?

We should not accept this. We must care. Cities are our future. So, while it appears to many people that cities are obsolete, this view is nothing more than passing fashion. Cities will never be obsolete. Cities are our cultural foundation, our society's base, our connection to the past. Cities are the most practical, efficient, and time-tested forms of living ever devised. Cities are the economic engines of this nation. And given the new patterns of global business and our own changing demographics, cities in the 21st century will be more vital than ever to our society and our economy. Our challenge is to grow our cities in the face of a generation that wants to abandon them.

Cities represent our shared history. A city's buildings are a gift from the past. Previous generations build these buildings to last. They believed in our future enough to spend precious money proving it. Nowhere outside of cities is this occurring today. Buildings there are designed for a maximum life of 30 years, if that. What does that say about our generation?

Our artistic and cultural lives are rooted in cities. Only cities provide the gravity necessary to create a home for priceless artifacts and important discussions. For example, we know that cities are where museums belong



if for no other reason than they would look lost next to a strip mall.

Cities are the locations of valuable infrastructure such as water and sewer lines, streets, and telecommunications facilities. These are valuable because they already exist; we do not have to create them anew. Building and maintaining new infrastructure is expensive, as many areas are finding out. In coming years, these areas could face a choice between increased taxes or accepting a less modern infrastructure. This may lead to a stagnating economy, as quality businesses are too savvy to invest in an area with a 19th century infrastructure or high taxation. Cities are far ahead and much more ready to respond to new growth and so will reap the economic rewards.

Transportation choices abound in a city. Interconnected streets and short blocks make cities easy to get around. One can walk, bike, rollerblade, or take a bus - a car isn't a necessity in a city. Compare that to life in the outer fringes. The planning of these areas has ensured that no one can walk anywhere. Riding a bike can be downright deadly.

Housing choices increase in a city. From townhomes, to loft apartments, to single family detached houses, only in a city are these options found. Each appeals to people of varying incomes and backgrounds. This helps create a diverse resident population, an ideal of democracy. On the other hand, residents in most newly developing areas are highly segregated by housing price.

Cities are the perfect antidotes to the growing sense of isolation people feel in their lives. The design of cities creates a naturally occurring network of social contacts. For example, while walking along any city sidewalk you never know who you may run into. By comparison, consider the scheduling required for social interaction in nearly all other settings. This city-based social network also fills the role of an extended family. There are simply more people, in closer contact, who take an interest in your life.

Cities are safer than ever before. The FBI Uniform Crime Report shows that the crime index for most cities decreased by anywhere from 0.7% to 1.9%. This trend has been steady for the last decade. Meanwhile, the crime index in suburban areas jumped by 1.8% in 2002. Even rural areas saw an increase in the crime index of 0.4%.

Since we live in an "entertainment age," cities are becoming the hottest places to spend leisure time. Culinary and artistic adventures beckon. Cultural and sporting events draw more people than ever. Downtown movie theater and playhouse audiences are growing. People are rediscovering the pleasure of simply watching other people. Cities are also vital to the tourism industry, which is simply another form of entertainment. Over time, fewer and fewer people will want to visit sprawling strips of similar stores. Instead, ever more tourists will want the action, excitement, and beauty of a city.

Changing demographics will supply the people for resurgent cities. The long held notion of the "American Dream," a single-family house inhabited by a dad and

mom and kids, is fading fast. That dream now represents less than 25% of all households. Meanwhile, several large and formerly unnoticed demographic groups are emerging. There are more single people and active older people than ever. Single people, who can live anywhere, are increasingly seeking the social connections and action of city life. More folks over 50, whose children are grown, are searching for sophisticated urban living areas. They want to be close to museums, cafes, and music venues. And in the next ten years, the "echo" generation, children of baby boomer parents, will reach adulthood. This is one of the largest generations yet seen in this country and they will grow up desiring cities. Through movies, television, and advertising, all of which are incorporating more "cool" urban images that ever, these children will see the best side of cities.

Even middle-age parents are choosing the city. They want to trade a monotonous life elsewhere for the pleasures of the city. They don't see the city as unsafe or unhealthy for their children. Rather, they view the city as an exciting playground in which their children can gain a greater awareness of the world. As one father said, "I want my daughter to understand how I related to the city and have her relate to the city. The whole city becomes a backyard."

These people will gravitate to cities because they are tired of the traffic, visual blight, loss of greenspace, and lack of social value elsewhere. They will search for cities that are vibrant, diverse, and satisfying. Cities will provide them with a quality of life higher than has ever been achieved. And because of this, the wealth of our cities, and their inhabitants, will continually rise.

City leaders must take steps now to ensure that their cities are not left out of this boom. They must address basic quality of life issues, from crime to litter, immediately. They must ensure that their city infrastructure is in good shape. City leaders must create a welcoming atmosphere for all kinds of people.

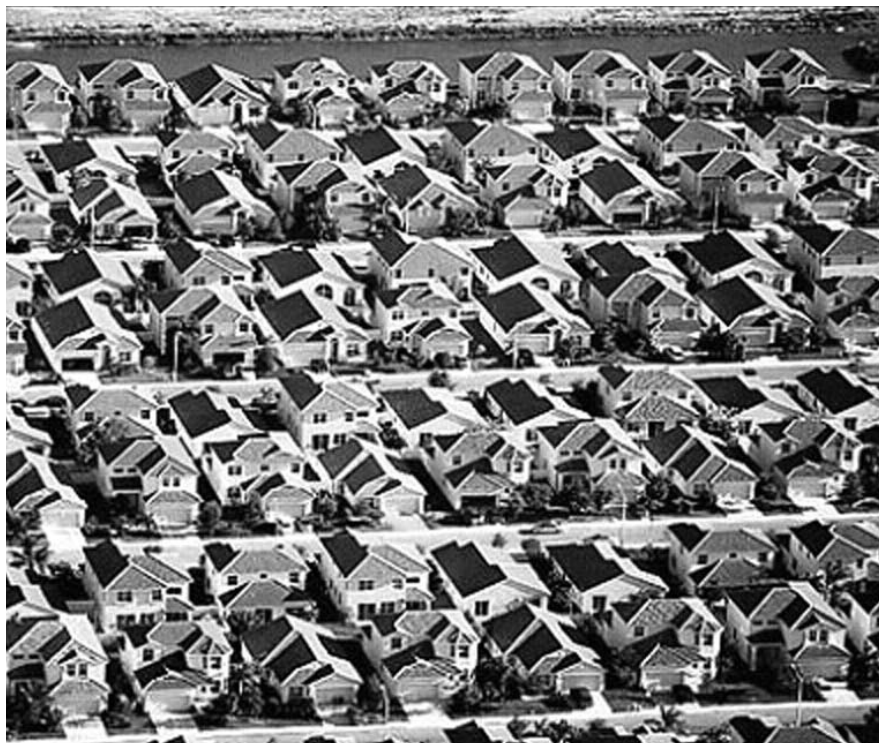
Beyond these, city leaders must plan for and implement those things that will be indispensable to a 21st century city. They must update their zoning ordinances to enable them to meet the varied demands of city development. Current zoning regulations require single uses and low densities; cities demand mixed uses and higher densities. Cities must vigorously pursue historic preservation. Adopting "smart" building codes will allow developers flexibility in renovating older buildings. City and business leaders must work on gaining broadband Internet access as soon as possible. Entertainment attractions such as sidewalk cafes and outdoor festivals must be encouraged.

City leaders must do these things and many more. Most importantly, they must continually guard against the mindset that cities are obsolete. This is a destructive force. Cities are not obsolete. They never will be. Cities are our brightest future.

Originally published in City Magazine, Kentucky League of Cities. Reprinted with permission.



THE GROWTH DILEMMA



*From out of my heart I carved this land of dreams,
Kentucky, land of all our joys and hopes,
But now I'm gone, forgotten so it seems...
The sorrow of this growth so burdens me,
Oh thoughtless generation, can't you see?*

- Jeanette Stone, 1981

WINTER 2001

BY STEVE AUSTIN

Kentucky's land is its core resource, and its relationship with Kentucky's people is complex: The land shapes the people who in turn reshape the land to reflect who they have become. Many times the results have been magnificent. Consider Shakertown, the Bluegrass, numerous small towns and farming communities, our state parks.

Consider, too, the dark side - strip mines, deforestation, pollution and litter. More recently and perhaps most threateningly, contemplate the damage to so many of our

towns, farms and unique landscapes from ill-conceived, opportunistic growth. We now have a landscape of strip malls, blighted roadsides, scattered housing subdivisions and decaying towns.

Unfortunately, demographic trends and government policies favor change over heritage, opportunity over landscape, product over people. This article will discuss these trends and policies affecting Kentucky's land and then analyze their impacts.



PEOPLE AND POLITICS

Kentucky's population is increasing - it grew an estimated 7.4% from 1990 to 1999 - but we have done a poor job of accommodating this increase in terms of land use.

One reason is the tendency, in Kentucky, to treat land only as a commodity with few guidelines on how it should be used. For 200 years this had little negative impact because most land was used for farming. Small towns and settlements were built in pleasing, human-scale forms. But the changing economy has changed the landscape: The American Planning Association recently found that Kentucky is developing its land - at 47,793 acres per year - at the third fastest rate in the nation, even faster than California and Florida.

This is of particular concern because only 39 of our 120 counties have land-use planning regulations. That's at least partly because of a historical tendency in Kentucky to view such planning as an assault on personal freedom. Said one county judge-executive, "I think zoning is needed in my county and when I am ready to end my career, I'll propose it."

Thus in many parts of the state it's still possible to put a junkyard, strip mall or a chemical storage facility in a scenic, historic or environmentally-sensitive location. Thus cumulative decisions of only a few small landholders in an area can permanently and dramatically alter the character of a community and the landscape.

THE FAMILY FARM

The agricultural economy in Kentucky is also affecting its landscape. Kentucky has approximately 89,000 family farms, among the most in the nation. Unfortunately, family farms, as relatively small players in the agribusiness world, are particularly susceptible to being converted to other commercial uses. For one thing, they often have a harder time coping with changes in the industry or climate. Also, the average farmer in Kentucky is aging, more dependent on off-farm income, and views the land as an investment for the future. And fewer young people are choosing farming as a career. All these factors combine to cast a dark shadow over our family farms' future.

TAX POLICY

Government tax policies - three in particular - have contributed to sprawl as well. First is the home mortgage tax credit, which offers an incentive for people to live in single-family homes and contributes, by default, to the sprawl that comes with them without good planning.

Second is our choice to tax gasoline lightly. We value mobility, car ownership and the sense of freedom which driving often brings. But our dependence on cheap gasoline also brings traffic congestion, air pollution and a feeling of disconnectedness from our neighbors and our communities. And land-use decisions based on the automobile tend to produce a landscape of blight, decay and isolation.

The third government policy is to tax on inheritances. So many farmers have their wealth tied up in land that when the government calls, the land must be sold to pay the bill.

STATE LAWS

Kentucky's own planning laws make matters worse. For one thing, there is no requirement for Kentucky communities to do any planning at all. Then if they do decide to write a plan, the state guidelines tend to be inflexible - requiring a rigid separation of land uses, for instance. The laws are also silent in many important areas: They tell us nothing of where to put development so that it is compatible with our landscape, when to allow development so that it respects private and public investment patterns or how new development should look.

Another problem is that the state's planning process is susceptible to political influence, partly because it is easy to assert different interpretations of the law. Thus many land-use decisions are based not on what is best for the community but on who is able to influence the process. This has left many people rightfully distrustful of planning.

IMPACT

No one has calculated the direct costs of inefficient land use to Kentucky taxpayers. But a sprawling, low-density pattern of growth require miles of new streets, sewer and water line extensions and other infrastructure. Obviously, this adds more up front costs for developers, homebuyers and business in general.

More ominously, the long-term costs for services have not been calculated either. Year after year after year, for as long as we live on this land, local governments will be required to maintain these sprawling developments. And several studies have shown that they will not pay for themselves.

Kentucky's environment is also at risk. If current development trends continue, the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center predicts that "the state will be faced with serious problems from increased pollution by 2025." A recent study by the Institute of Southern Studies ranked Kentucky the 9th worst in the country in environmental indicators.

The most obvious impact of these trends is the loss of Kentucky's visual character. The current patterns of growth are, simply, ugly. As a result, something special and irreplaceable is being lost: Kentucky is being changed from a predominantly rural, even wild, state into Anywhere, U.S.A. This is a great disservice to our predecessors who so valued this land, and to our future citizens who will not know the land as generations before them did.

And the fact that what is replacing our state's treasures is going to cost us all more to maintain is unforgivable.

Originally published in the Kentucky Journal.



PLANNING IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE FUTURE OF CITIES



*People realized long ago that cities offer the
best kind of life.*



FALL 2001

BY STEVE AUSTIN

Cities are the oldest human-made things on earth - older than any farm or wall or road or stone circle.

Why is this so? Why are cities the most lasting of our achievements? It is because people realized long ago that cities offer the best kind of life. Cities have the most choices for economic activity, intellectual growth, social interaction, entertainment and protection. It is impossible to describe human beings without describing the cities in which we live.

This should give us a sense of perspective. Not only have cities been around for a long time, they will also be around for a long time. Despite reports to the contrary, cities are our destiny. They always have been.

Knowing this helps us focus on the future of Kentucky's cities. Since untold generations will inhabit the cities we live in today, isn't it time we start planning as if we are going to stay?

What is involved in planning to stay? Is it more change along the lines we've seen over the last 30 years? No. We have turned a corner and have come to understand that following a more-of-the-same approach is not the best way to face our future.

We understand now that separating land uses - the strategy of zoning - forces everyone to drive everywhere to do anything. We've come to understand that this is not in the best interest of our youth, elderly folks or ourselves.

We've seen that more-of-the-same type growth is diminishing our cities' unique identities, and they are beginning to look like Anywhere, U.S.A. We know the importance of a healthy environment and realize that we haven't been as sensitive to it as we should have. We understand that it is really taxpayers - us - who pay for growth. And since no one wants to pay more than necessary, we want our cities to grow responsibly.

This understanding is important. If Kentucky's cities are to compete economically in the 21st century, they need to change in a way that creates a climate that will keep, and attract, the best companies and job opportunities. In the 21st century, the best jobs and economic opportunities will come to those cities that offer a high quality of life.

One way we measure quality of life is by the choices a city offers. To be successful, Kentucky's cities must provide the best variety of choices in where to live, work and play as any city in the world. A more-of-the-same future will not enable this to happen.

So, how does a city build a great quality of life?

The way to get started is by involving our citizens. The word citizen, in fact, originally meant an inhabitant of a city or town - not a farm or forest. With the title, however, came responsibilities with rights. And those responsibilities continue today - despite the fact that, far too often, citizens retreat to their air-conditioned TV parlors and leave the business of planning for their cities to "the ones we elected."

The task of the 21st century leader is to engage these

citizens. Failing to do so will mean that any planning that is done will last only until a protesting mob descends on city hall.

So what can we do?

We must chart a course. We must set goals for the future. Foremost among the many goals must be the answer to a fundamental question: What should our cities look like? This may seem like an intangible idea, yet the appearance of a city really does affect the way people perceive it.

For example, we love the older parts of our cities. We marvel at the architecture and are protective of the identity it creates. Too often, we do not care for the newer parts of our cities, and many times we are saddened by the way they look. We can legally, and should ethically, determine what appearance new development must take.

The goal of preserving our historic structures comes next. Without a link to the past, our cities become irrelevant to the future. No one wants to live in a place without a visible history. It also makes economic sense to efficiently use what we already have rather than build anew on the edge of the city. Why build, and pay for, two sets of infrastructure?

Financial responsibility is key. Our cities must resolve to determine the exact cost of all new development and how it will be financed. For too long, city budgets have relied on guesswork to allocate the costs of development among its citizens. This will not do in the 21st century.

We must commit ourselves to a clean environment. This means analyzing the impact of development on our air and water quality. It means, too, preserving trees where possible, and keeping some greenspaces green.

We must strive to keep the hearts of our cities - our downtowns - vibrant. We must resolve to choose local flavor over chain-store blandness. We must ensure that a trip downtown is really a trip we want to make, not one that we have to make - such as to the courthouse or a lawyer's office.

We must commit to creating neighborhoods for people, not for the car. New neighborhoods should have a mix of uses so people can walk to the store and children can walk to school or to a park. New neighborhoods should contain a blend of housing options to let us take life's journey without having to uproot our families every few years. We must bring back the old-fashioned village green so that we can celebrate, as a community, Christmas and the Fourth of July. Other cities are doing this. Why shouldn't we?

Kentucky will have a great advantage if we do these things. We will have something that few other places in the world have. We will have choice instead of sameness. We will have the livable cities that our kids will want to call home. We will prove that growth and quality of life are not incompatible. We will ensure that the sun will long shine on our old Kentucky homes.

Originally published in City Magazine, Kentucky League of Cities. Reprinted with permission.



GROWTH BY DESIGN

MAY 28, 2000

BY STEVE AUSTIN

We are at a unique point in the history of the Bluegrass. We not only are at the symbolic threshold of the new century but a real threshold in the future of our landscape. This landscape is what defines us as a community, a region and a state. At this threshold the critical question becomes: Will we spread more monotonous, sterile suburbs across this irreplaceable landscape, or will we create places with enduring character?

The argument should not be whether to grow. Growth is likely for the foreseeable future. Not only are substantial areas of the region already planned for growth, but also our economic and educational opportunities and high quality of life attract many people from other places. But growth in its current forms will erode the very quality of life that so many people cherish and desire. This growth will steal our identity and replace it with a sprawling version of Anywhere.

It does not have to be this way; our landscape does not have to be sacrificed by a failure of imagination. To ensure that it does not, we must become planners. Using basic principles as our guide, local tradition will be our teacher. Our region has numerous examples of good planning. As we learn more, we can demand more.

To be sure, there are other important regional planning issues beyond the creation of true towns and neighborhoods: environmental quality, farmland preservation and economic development, among others. However, these principles will allow us to accommodate growth in a form that will do justice to our landscape, our heritage and our communal and economic future. We cannot continue as we have without doing these an injustice. Now is the time to change.

1. Precedent and time

Any discussion of town and neighborhood planning principles must begin with two that dominate the rest: precedent and time. These two concepts are central to describing other fundamental planning principals. Each of these is so interwoven with others that to repeat their value would become redundant. Therefore, these two principles must be remembered as the threads that bind the subsequent principles.

Precedent simply means that we should learn from ourselves. Town and neighborhood planning is not quantum science- we need not generate new theories every few months. Rather, we can study the ways in which we have lived in the Bluegrass over the past 200 years. We can view with common sense the built areas that appeal to us and those that don't. This is the value of precedent.

The Bluegrass has many fine traditional development patterns that can serve as models for study. The region's

downtown blocks offer handsome examples of community building from the late 19th century. The residential areas that immediately surround them are also great for study. We can look to wonderful little villages in the rural landscape. The very existence of these development types and patterns in 2000 proves their sustainability.



The principle of time reminds us that barring the end of the world, our descendants will live in the Bluegrass for a long time. Further, time allows towns and neighborhoods to become places with character of their own. Trees grow, business and churches are established, houses express individuality. If we truly realize the scope of our future on this land, we can begin to lay the foundation for a lasting and sustainable region. We should be planning as if we are going to stay.

In time, if we use other planning principles in the right manner- by learning from ourselves- we can have the best of both worlds: true communities set in an incomparable landscape.

2. Edges

Suburbia sprawls precisely because there is no end to it. Sprawl has been the fate of most cities and towns in this country. Consider Atlanta, Nashville or Northern Kentucky. While all landscape is important, these areas have not threatened a world-class resource. Bluegrass land is irreplaceable. Without edges, firm and forever, we will lose the sense of living in a place unique in the world.

The value of edges is easily demonstrated. Think of the charm and individuality of Midway, Wilmore or Paris. They are distinct because there is an edge between them and "everywhere else." Drive out Clays Mill Road to the Fayette County line to see a sharp edge between town and country. Consider, unfortunately, the examples where there is no clear edge between towns. A trip from Nicholasville to Lexington would be enough. Compare that trip to Midway. Which is better?



Neighborhoods need edges, too. Endless suburban streets bring a dulling monotony and sameness to our living areas. Each neighborhood should be able to feel the distinctness of place. This must be more than entry gates and fancy subdivision names.

We must plan permanent edges around our towns. We cannot keep drawing lines and then erasing them every few years. These lines must be large enough to contain many, many years of growth within them. And this growth must not be in low-density forms that will fill up the space in just a few years, as currently happens. If it is, this sprawling will eventually engulf our countryside: One or the other must prevail.

3. Mixed uses

Mixed land uses means that certain compatible and complementary uses should be allowed to mingle with one another rather than being rigidly separated.

Suburban environments separate things: only houses, only apartments, only shops, only offices. This creates a complete dependence on cars, separates us socially and economically, and is the chief cause of sprawl. Traditional towns and neighborhoods mix these up. Houses, apartments, shops, offices and parks are in close proximity to one another. This encourages walking, social interaction and real community feeling.

Bluegrass planning has been based on a segregated land-use theory for 40 years. This is why our roads get more clogged every year. This requires thousands of acres of asphalt. This is bad for the environment in terms of air and water pollution. And, by requiring a car to get anywhere, we thrust dependency on children, the elderly and the poor. Finally, we are spending our lives driving back and forth to work, school, shopping, parks and entertainment. We are alone in our cars on crowded streets in the middle of the Bluegrass.

Our region offers many great examples of mixed uses. The Woodland Park area has offices, shops, churches, a school, and small and large single-family houses. Around Romany Road in Chevy Chase, businesses, apartments and churches are in the middle of a very desirable single-family living area. The houses along Georgetown's

Main Street are among the finest in the region despite the fact that the street is heavily traveled.

Mixed land uses cannot solve all our social and environmental problems. Obviously, too, there are some uses that do not belong in our neighborhoods. But mixed uses can, with good planning and design- and using local precedent- make our towns exciting and desirable. These are the qualities that will make them sustainable- and this is the goal of planning to stay.

4. Centers

Centers are the focal points of town and neighborhood; they provide for shopping, work, and services in addition to being visible symbols of a community. Traditional towns and neighborhoods are identified by their pedestrian-friendly and charming centers. New development rarely provides anything that functions as a center. Strip malls and office parks do not. These are simply destinations, accessible only by car. Without centers our developments seem less than whole.



Centers provide wide range of activities. Depending on their location such things as schools, churches, restaurants, apartments, businesses, offices, parks and community buildings are centers. Centers have multistory buildings with upper-floor balconies, wide sidewalks, convenient but screened parking, plazas and other elements. They are wonderful to stroll to and around. They range from true downtowns to a small neighborhood corner with a few shops and offices.

Examples include our downtowns. As almost everyone agrees, they represent the hearts of our communities. Visit the town green in Millersburg during a gathering, Wilmore, Winchester or College Square in Berea. Suburban strips offer no comparison to the charm and attractiveness of these places.

Centers provide community focus and social interaction and reduce traffic. Development that does not provide town and neighborhood centers, which caters only to the driver in his or her car with huge signs and parking lots, does not build a true community. And true community is essential to ensure that the Bluegrass is as good a place to live 100 years from now as it was yesterday.



5. Interconnection

Interconnection, which is important to the region's future, operates on two levels. First it describes the relationship of the region's towns and countryside- we are all interconnected. Second, in Lexington, new developments must be interconnected to reduce traffic and improve social and environmental quality.

One key to the region's beauty is the distinct identity of each community. The Bluegrass landscape and the roads that flow through it provide this. However, many communities think that if they can isolate themselves from other events in the region their identity will remain intact. This is not so. Poor planning by individual communities along the region's roads will result in the loss of Bluegrass character and community identity for everyone. Thus, the importance of understanding our interconnectedness. We must plan together, using common principals and techniques, to keep that which is special to each of us individually.

In Lexington, suburban planning isolates us from the basic necessities of life: groceries, schools, jobs. Our living areas are not connected to anything. They are dead ends with one or two ways out. We must travel main roads to get anywhere. That everyone is forced to do this is the reason for our increasing gridlock, even in the region's smaller towns.

Traditional planning creates a grid street network. This allows options for travel, ensuring that no point gets too crowded. Think of how quickly traffic disperses through the downtown grid after a University of Kentucky basketball game at Rupp Arena. Compare that with leaving a UK football game. Creative planning is all that is needed to keep the function of the grid system without sacrificing attractiveness.

Recognizing the value of and planning for interconnection is critical. With less time spent in traffic, our quality of life and environment improve. Regional cooperation will ensure that the Bluegrass remains a safe place. We share the same values. We are in this together.

6. Green space

Although we live in one of the greenest regions in the country, most of us rarely come in contact with any green

space beyond our yards. The lack of contact with green space leads to something akin to seasonal affective disorder; we simply do not have enough green space in our lives.

Green space planning, as currently practiced, is mainly reserved for the countryside, large multipurpose parks and smaller neighborhood parks tucked off the beaten path. The remainder of our developed environment is suburban strips and malls, subdivisions and office parks. Certainly landscaping is abundant in many developments, but does anyone really feel that they are more connected to the environment or to our Bluegrass landscape? Rather, these expensive, private decorations.

Traditional planning incorporates substantial green spaces into our communities through the use of generous street medians, town greens and "front door" parks that can be seen by every member of the community. Ecologically sensitive planning advocates keeping stream courses, sinkholes and other sensitive areas as open spaces. Although required by most towns now, the effect this green space can have on a community is lost because it is generally planned to be out of sight in most developments.



We should be seeing green as we drive through our towns. (Not just the green that the commercial speculator sees.) This type of planning does not have to add to costs; most new development is required to preserve some open space. It is simply a matter of creativity on the part of the planners and developers in where to place it. If done right, more people will come into contact with substantial areas of green space on a daily basis and feel better.

7. Formal design

Quality of design is critical to town and neighborhood planning. Unfortunately, there is little attention paid to this need. Instead, housing subdivisions are lotted out in mindless patterns, commercial development follows lending standards and too often the whim of a developer or city official decides important issues. The dismal result is plainly visible. How many postcards for new developments do you find for sale?

Suburban planning began in response to the sometimes horrid conditions that existed in cities at the



beginning of this century. In theory, suburban planning is supposed to reconnect us with nature through low density development, big front yards and curving streets. Has it? Instead, not only has suburban development pushed us further from nature, but we also have lost many qualities that made small towns and neighborhoods so desirable.

Traditional planning and neighborhood development follow different design rules. These rules are intended to bring dignity to our communities. By planning and



designing great streetscapes, skylines, plazas, parks and vistas of green spaces into the very fabric of our towns, we can achieve this. Further, traditional planning eliminates many wasteful, oversized requirements that hinder high-quality design. Too often we design as if several worst-case scenarios will happen at once. Enough time has elapsed for us to realize this is overkill.

Suburban development is not reaction against conformity—it is itself conformity to the extreme. There is an alternative. Our towns and neighborhoods offer us examples of places that work because of high-quality design. Often, these are also the places with the highest property values for a given type of land use.

This alone should make us realize that we are not getting the most from our economic investments in land. Better design will help us create better places.

8. Scale

An important principle, which has been neglected, even forgotten, is human scale. Compare recent suburban sprawl with traditional development patterns. Sprawl is created by and for the automobile. Traditional development was created for people. In town and neighborhood planning, this makes all the difference.

The lack of scale in our ever-expanding suburbs has disconnected us from our neighbors, our communities and our environment. This is because our living areas are so large and poorly designed that we are almost completely dependent on our cars. Because of this, we see the world from the heights of our seats, shielded from other people and the environment by an enclosure of steel, plastic and glass.

Traditional towns and neighborhoods are quite the opposite. Go see for yourself the value of the human scale.

Walk around Gratz Park. Amble down the side streets of Nicholasville. Visit the town square in Carlisle. Stroll around the Woodland Park neighborhood. Tour the historic district near downtown Versailles. Take the kids for ice cream on Romany Road. Visit any small town for the day. If you like what you see, it is in part because you like the sense of scale, the smallness of the town. Compare this with any commercial strip whose only scale is that of thousands of cars.

A proper sense of scale is in large part dependent on other elements. For example, proper scale is dependent on mixed uses, centers, quality design, and edges.

Designing scale into our new neighborhoods will not mean the end of cars nor threaten any fundamental value of American life. Rather, scale can add some things missing from our lives, such as society, community-focused architecture and a connection with the environment.

9. Elements

Our new towns and neighborhoods should demonstrate that human beings actually live there. The plainest of elements can do this. For too long, new development has only provided the barest of essentials for supporting a population that would, to an alien visitor, only seem to sleep or drive. The signs of life in many new developments are disappointing. And, over time, these places will bear a grim prophecy as people are repelled by the barrenness.

Suburban development is viewed solely as the business of selling a commodity, not the business of creating a community. Does anyone doubt this? The results are plainly visible. There are so many overwide streets without wide enough sidewalks or trees or a corner mailbox. Too many towns have shopping centers that cannot be walked to and that do not provide a place to gather. Visit faceless boxes in office parks. This, in the middle of one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world.

Traditional development patterns are for people. When people are the focus of development, true community emerges. And to prove people do, indeed, come first, development should provide people things. Benches along the street, convenient newspaper racks, mailboxes, shady trees, water fountains, a clock on a steeple, wide sidewalks, an outdoor place to drink coffee or gather with friends - these are people things.

How many more subdivisions can be developed that provide none of these things? How many more shopping centers with ample parking can a place stand before the real community of people is put asunder? If we are going to develop more of the Bluegrass shouldn't we at least do it for the people?

*Originally published in the Lexington Herald-Leader.
Reprinted with permission.*



BEFORE IT WAS "NEO"

OLDER CITY NEIGHBORHOOD IS A MODEL FOR NEW LOOK



Communities need time to evolve.

JUNE 8, 1997

BY STEVE AUSTIN

I recently read with great interest the story in the Herald-Leader which detailed the new development planned for Mount Sterling. That article outlined the land-use planning concepts associated with a new trend in planning called "neo-traditional." The advocates of such planning hope to bring livability and sustainability into new developments as opposed to simply creating lifeless, bedroom suburbs. As a professional planner interested in such things, I was naturally excited by the prospect of a small, rural

community adopting such progressive planning measures.

I then began to wonder about the future of Lexington. While I was walking through my neighborhood, talking to my wife about the subject, a realization came to me. That kind of development has occurred here in Lexington. Several neighborhoods exist with the characteristics described for the new development in Mount Sterling. And I live in the middle of one such neighborhood.



When I re-read the story about the planning concepts being incorporated in Mount Sterling, I noted a direct resemblance to the Southland neighborhood. It seems strange that new developments are striving to re-create exactly the kind of environment that supposedly horrid suburban development created here in Lexington over the last 30 years. The kind of livable, sustainable community that people are searching for in neo-traditional planning has evolved right here. And this is an area that some may have once considered mindless suburban sprawl.

For example, neo-traditional development emphasizes more community friendly housing areas. Front porches, shallow front-yard setbacks, and less visible garages are hallmarks of this new planning. So too are variety in housing sizes, pricing and density. This allows for opportunity for many types of residents, which creates diversity and interest. Streets in these new housing areas are designed to be narrow, which reduces speed and doesn't create a vast sea of asphalt. Trees and sidewalks line these residential streets; the sidewalks are even planned to lead to somewhere!

The neighborhoods in the Southland area all have these characteristics. House styles are varied and interesting. Prices are within reach of many economic situations even as values continue to rise. Small apartment buildings are integrated unobtrusively within a solid single-family residential framework and thus do not destroy unity. People are frequently seen on front porches and walking tree-shaded sidewalks. Cars are not given dominant priority and yet the area works in a transportation sense and has for many years. All this combines to create a socially diverse yet harmonious living area within the confines of greater Lexington.

These living areas are within easy reach of the area's main street, Southland Drive. Neo-traditional development makes its keystone the availability of plentiful shopping areas close to residential districts. And that is exactly the situation here. A mile-long stretch of thriving activities serves as the focus for the community. This main street can be reached by thousands without the use of an automobile through a pleasant walking or biking experience. Even if a car is used, the commercial area can be reached by a very short trip on a non-major road.

Businesses include restaurants, grocery and drug stores, as well as clothing and hobby shops. Numerous personal services are available, including insurance and tax help, veterinarians, doctors and dentists. Several unique specialty stores make it one of the most interesting and friendly shopping areas in Lexington, and it is here where the people of the neighborhood interact on a personal level perhaps unmatched anywhere else. This is what the planners of neo-traditional developments strive to achieve. Southland Drive truly serves as a main street for the community. Perhaps the only thing the neighborhood lacks is a yearly "Main Street" community celebration.

There are several reasons for its success. One is the traffic patterns that were created by development. Although the street functions as a major cross town

collector, it does not have the feel of a Lane Allen Road or Waller Avenue. Southland Drive is narrow, which slows traffic, and which accounts for the fact that traffic congestion is never unbearable.

The design of the shopping areas also contributes to the street's success. Parking lots are small and the buildings are not set back hundreds of feet from the street. There are no mega-auto-destination facilities on the street. Finally, most of the shopping area's parking lots are interconnected, which helps relieve congestion on Southland Drive as well as promotes economic integration throughout the area. It may not be the most beautiful urban street in the world, but it works.

Neo-traditional planners also strive to mix schools, churches and parks in their new developments. These round out the effort to make each new development area self-contained, which increases community feeling and decreases the need for traffic congestion and sprawl. In the Southland area, within one mile of the center of Southland Drive, there are no fewer than five schools, six churches, and five parks. Each of these is within walking distance of the other and needless to say, within close proximity to hundreds of homes.

All these planning concepts have not destroyed a neighborhood, but rather have helped one thrive. This leads to a question: Given the current climate in Lexington, could such a neighborhood be created again? Today, many would rally against such houses and small lots as somehow being unreflective of what Lexington is about. The mix of densities and prices might arouse heated passions as well. Many would cry out about "strip" development, such as occurs along the Southland Drive "main street," the traffic it would create, and its proximity to residential areas. Some would talk about the loss of precious open space and farmland. Others would deride the lack of extra sensitive environmental considerations in the area. Some would chastise the simple grid system of streets as deadening and lacking in creativity. And perhaps some would criticize the plans as not up-scale enough, or even ugly.

Yet this is a place where people live. In fact, many people have bought one home in their entire lives, and it was here. Business and employment opportunities abound. This is a real, thriving place. New development around Lexington for decades has only allowed this area to evolve, not decay. A true community has grown from within; a small town seems to have been created where one did not exist before. Nothing has been swallowed. As Lexington changes, would we throw out what works along with what doesn't?

Communities need time to evolve. Like a child, no one can quite judge what any place will grow up to be. We do know, however, what the right ingredients are for success. Let us look at our environment from a different perspective, and perhaps we can learn from ourselves.

*Originally published in the Lexington Herald-Leader.
Reprinted with permission.*



POSTCARD FROM THE FUTURE



For many years, I have heard about something magical in Lexington—how a truly world-class city was made from endless parking lots and a dead downtown. How one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world was complemented by one of the most beautiful cityscapes in the world.

SEPTEMBER 23, 2005

BY STEVE AUSTIN

"The following commentary offers a look at a fully realized progressive vision for Lexington's future from the eyes of a visitor to the city in the year 2025."

For many years, since my early teens, I have heard about something magical in Lexington—how a truly world-class city was made from endless parking lots and a dead downtown. How one of the most beautiful landscapes in the world was complemented by one of the most beautiful cityscapes in the world.

I had to see for myself, so I booked a ticket to Blue Grass International Airport.

Once on the ground I found myself lingering in the gorgeous art gallery that also serves as the airport's terminal. Two hundred and fifty years of Lexington's art hangs, stands and floats around you. This place alone is worth the trip.

Then, a guardian angel posted near the ticket machine helped me board the spotless, fast, and cheap light rail that runs from the airport to the heart of the city. Fifteen minutes later, I was on the tree lined, cobblestone streets downtown. A policeman on a segway directed me to the Town Branch Guesthouse, where the staff offered me a shot of straight Kentucky Bourbon and plied me with maps and restaurant recommendations.

There's an admirable, almost intimidating earnestness to the way people live in Lexington. Wandering around I noticed interactive digital kiosks where I could learn about the city, make reservations, and even check my personal web site. I passed cheerful sidewalk ambassadors, armed with pocket PCs and posted specifically to answer visitors' questions.

I saw monitors in the bus shelters that updated commuters on the buses ETA every 30 seconds. As I



walked, I noticed the streets, though busy, were very quiet. I learned that there is no auditory assault because Lexington has severely limited the use of combustion engines. In their place, electric vehicles, and people-powered ones, hum along, moving residents and goods around the city. My ears and lungs were most grateful.

I eventually made my way to the city's Central Park. In the early part of the century, creative city leaders turned the city's largest parking lot into an oasis of green. Today this park offers, under mature trees, one of the best places to exercise I have ever found. I heard that witnessing a performance of Shakespeare in this park approaches the sublime.

This all started, as these things always do, with smart planning. Sixty-five years ago, Lexington's government created an urban growth boundary, confining new development to established neighborhoods in order to minimize sprawl.

Then, 20 years ago, the city got serious about ensuring that its future would include vibrant and dense urban areas that didn't encroach on the rolling hills and green fields surrounding the city. This was encouraged, and the result is that Lexington has grown beyond its wildest dreams. Residential construction alone has increased 500 percent above levels in the year 2000. The overall economy has benefited as well, making Lexington's one of the strongest in the world.

The result is a city unfettered by strip malls and prefab developments. Instead, Lexington is a patchwork of neighborhoods, each a sort of self-contained, distinctive ecosystem. Everything their inhabitants need is within short walking distance. Since people can walk everywhere, it is perhaps no surprise that Lexington is one of America's healthiest cities.

At lunch hour, Vine Street Park - another urban oasis smack in the city's center- is filled with professionals eating delicious vegetable burritos or Ethiopian food sold from hand-painted carts. But unlike so many American cities, downtown Lexington continues to live and breathe at night and on weekends. Every other evening in Vine Street Park, there's a quartet or a youth choir or a Spanish cultural festival- or at the very least, a street musician strumming softly on a guitar.

Most of downtown Lexington is shiny and new-even if the city's most recognizable building is made almost entirely from recycled materials. But many vestiges of the 19th century farming town remain. These buildings add certain texture that is lacking in many modern cities made entirely of steel, concrete, and glass. A number of these older buildings shelter some of the city's most interesting and locally owned shops.

On the shaded streets leading into the residential areas from Vine Street Park, known as the park district, young couples wander past organic strawberries and fresh baked bread at the year-round Lexington Farmer's Market. This serves as an urban "superstore," except that rather than a part of large corporate chain enterprises, each vendor is a small business person and all profits stay in town. Folks by wholesome picnic lunches, often

supplemented with a local white wine, then wander to Vine Street Park to be serenaded by a musician or four.

Every week at the Farmer's Market, there's a cooking demonstration by chefs from some of the city's best restaurants. Lexingtonians take the politics of food very seriously. They want to know the origin of their tomatoes, radishes and asparagus.

This demanding culture is really just a reflection of citizens' overarching concern for the health of their physical and social environment. The result is that not only does the owner of local Sizzling Pans Pizza buy his organic vegetables from local farmers, but he can also explain in great detail the method used to grow the wheat in his crust.

The finer quirks of Lexington's character are evident as you walk south toward the University of Kentucky. The university has been "discovered," as they say, by hip but passionate and socially conscious young people along with those who want to teach them.

This area swarms on the weekend evenings as people flock to see, be seen, and simply enjoy city life. On the street corner, you may hear an old man with a mandolin playing Nirvana songs in a Bluegrass style, or see purple-haired, fifth generation punk rockers slamming happily away.

After a long day, I was ready to relax with a glass of something. Fortunately, there are sidewalk cafes everywhere. Unfortunately, they all appeared to be filled. I figured that I would have to either stay thirsty or drink on my feet. Not so. A warm smile and a kind voice beckoned to me from one of the tables.

"Are you lost?" he asked. I replied that since I didn't know where I was going, I couldn't be lost. I did say I was thirsty. He laughed and offered me a seat at his table. I sat down and briefly explained what I was doing in Lexington.

"We get that all the time," he said. "People come from around the world to see what we have done and the way that we live." He was evidently pleased and proud that people would come to this town in Kentucky. It was also good business, he said. He told me that he was an actor who performs on the stage at Central Park.

My visit has convinced me that Lexington is indeed one of the richest cities in the world. This applies to more than just material wealth. The population is one of the best educated. There are first-rate architecture and medical schools here. Humanity's diversity is represented in the art and experimental musical schools. Young people abound, but older residents will tell you that life gets more enchanting here with each passing year.

The city's solar-charged lamps twinkled on and the nightly promenade was in full swing as I made my way back to my hotel. Given the ambience that you find at almost every turn, I was more than willing to make it a very slow stroll, soaking in every little detail.

Originally published in Business Lexington.



REGIONS MUST WORK TOGETHER OR FALL APART



"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

SEPTEMBER 1, 2002

BY STEVE AUSTIN

Abraham Lincoln, who knew the Bluegrass as well as anyone, spoke these words 154 years ago. Today, who doubts his wisdom? This is lasting truth: All must work together or all will fail.

But here in Central Kentucky we don't see one house, do we? We prefer to think of our individual communities as the perfect fit, the right size house nestled among many others. We believe that our houses are solid.

Yet we really do live in one house. The political borders that we identify with so strongly -- the county line, the city

limits -- are nothing. Larger, more important things wall the actual house we live in: our economy, environment and heritage, for example. A regional frame bounds our lives. We may live in Richmond, educate our kids in Lexington and work in Georgetown. This is the true size of our house.

If we are one house, are we divided? Yes. We are fragmented and distrustful. We are jealous of and angry with the other inhabitants. We seek to insulate and isolate our individual rooms from all others. We misunderstand or deliberately misconstrue our interdependence.



Fortunately, many in our house have begun to understand the importance of regionalism. They see that by working together we can only get better. Some, however, despise the term. They think regionalism means Lexington telling them what to do. They hear a new layer of government bureaucracy. They see local folks losing out. They fear a loss of control.

Regionalism is none of those things. Instead, regionalism will help us build the strongest house possible.

Regionalism is understanding our interrelationships. It is increasing our political clout. It is improving our economic development. It is helping one another to improve the quality of life in our house. And make no mistake: if we do not strengthen our quality of life, we will lose in the 21st century economy. Without a high quality of life, we cannot expect great jobs to come here. Or to stay.

Understanding our interrelationships is most important right now. For example, over 50 percent of the jobs in our region are within 3 miles of downtown Lexington. Each morning, nearly 65 percent of the workers in Jessamine County buckle up and drive into Lexington to work some of those jobs.

Big deal? Lexington keeps the payroll taxes of those workers as well as those from at least a 20-county area. Many of these are among the fastest growing communities in the state. They are desperate for the services -- providing cash that stays in Lexington each week.

This desperation has led local leaders to make disastrous land-use decisions in an attempt to balance the inequity. This works against our desire to create the kind of region that will attract and keep bright, talented, hard-working and, especially, young, people.

Traffic is another critical regional issue. Our population is likely to increase by 200,000 people in the next 20 years. Yet no new roads, and only a few improvements are planned.

Understanding patterns of traffic on a regional scale is imperative so that we can plan the best roadways possible. But there is no region-wide transportation planning organization.

Green space also ranks as a top regional issue. Some counties have strong policies to develop the economic potential of agriculture, environment and heritage. Many others do not. Fayette and Woodford counties have made great strides in this direction. But is that enough? Isn't it probable that for one county's policies to work fully, all counties must be working in the same direction?

Our environment is another key issue. Septic tanks in rampantly suburbanizing countrysides drain into the ground and streams that provide us water.

And since we are creating a region where we must drive everywhere to do everything, our traffic-bound autos dirty the air. There is no regional plan for mitigating or alleviating these effects.

Infrastructure coordination is especially interesting given the discussion about whether the Urban County

Government should buy Kentucky American Water. If Lexington does, will it provide other regional communities with water, or will it dispose of everything outside of Fayette County?

We need solutions:

- ♦ First and foremost, the next mayor of Lexington must become a regional leader. The next mayor must get to know the leaders in other communities, understand their concerns and direct Lexington's policies toward helping -- or at least not harming -- its neighbors. To this end, Bluegrass Tomorrow is sponsoring a first-ever Mayoral Candidate Regionalism Debate in October.

- ♦ The region's payroll tax gainers need to begin a dialogue about the best ways to ensure a high level of services in all the communities that house our workers. It will be a regional and a local failure if we hoard our gains, at the expense of our neighbors. Our regional economy will struggle if we have unhappy workers, or worse, if we lose them.

Our own communities will suffer if multitudes move in to enjoy the best public benefits in the region. By balancing economics, we can get the best of both worlds.

- ♦ We need an expanded regional transportation organization. The existing organization covers only Fayette and Jessamine counties. The addition of other counties will reduce Jessamine's feeling of insignificance. And placing issues, trends and solutions in a regional perspective will ensure that we use scarce transportation funds more wisely.
- ♦ We need a regional planning commission. A regional community, Woodford County for example, taking a leadership role, could propose this. The purpose of the commission, at a minimum, would be to set common goals, policies and standards for the region's absolutely irreplaceable resource: the Bluegrass horse country.

This resource adds more than \$3 billion a year to the state's economy. Yet it is managed by at least six planning organizations.

Imagine if Toyota's factory, instead of being in Georgetown, covered territory in six jurisdictions. Would its future be assured? Would Toyota have ever come here at all?

- ♦ We need a regional environmental council with teeth. We do not want to end up one day unable to enjoy our place on Earth because it has become as polluted as a Third World country. We also need a regional discussion about the Kentucky American issue.

And we need one more thing. As individuals we must begin to gauge the true size of our house. It has many rooms, but only one roof.

*Originally published in the Lexington Herald-Leader.
Reprinted with permission.*

WHY SUPPORT BLUEGRASS TOMORROW?



MEMBERSHIP IN BLUEGRASS TOMORROW IS A GOOD INVESTMENT FOR CENTRAL KENTUCKY.

Bluegrass Tomorrow was the first organization in Central Kentucky to publicly promote the idea of regional planning cooperation. Without it, each county is on its own to deal with the impacts of urban growth, protection of open space and improving quality of life and economic development opportunities.

Bluegrass Tomorrow would not have been around for 17 years without the support of our loyal members. It is YOU that makes our mission and **Vision** possible. We are working hard to achieve a "**well developed and well preserved**" Bluegrass region and hope that you will continue to support Bluegrass Tomorrow by renewing your annual membership.

As you know, we promote **balance**. From our very first project, the litigious issue of the widening of Paris Pike, we have been **the voice of reason...the voice of balance**. How we handle growth in the coming years will determine both our quality of life and our economic competitiveness for the remainder of the 21st century. In this century, these two things are inseparable. The most successful people and businesses desire both a high quality of life and economic competitiveness. These qualities determine which regions will attract and retain successful people. How a region grows is directly related.

Current growth trends demonstrate the need for development alternatives. Traffic is increasing at an alarming rate. Few new developments have walkable destinations such as offices, shops, churches and schools. Because of these trends, an increasing number of citizens believe that growth is negative and, therefore, should be opposed.

Growth does not have to be bad. It is, after all, good for our economy. On the other side of the issue, preservation of our Bluegrass landscape, our state's prime agricultural resource, is good for the economy. Our beautiful landscape is finite. We must grow without sprawling into our signature Kentucky farmland. We must find patterns of development that allow us to use this limited resource more efficiently. Seeking such patterns will prove that our region is sincere about finding a balance between growth and preservation.

Bluegrass Tomorrow depends on your contributions to accomplish our Vision. **Please support our work and join our growing membership by using the enclosed envelope.** Your membership renewal will allow us to educate our region about critical planning issues for our future generations.

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO CONTINUE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE BLUEGRASS.



CONTACT INFORMATION

P. O. Box 34185
Lexington, KY 40588
p. 859.977.3792
f. 859.977.3795
www.bluegrasstomorrow.org

Stephen D. Austin, President/CEO
steve@bluegrasstomorrow.org

Beth Robinson Willmott, Vice President for Operations
beth@bluegrasstomorrow.org



ABOUT BLUEGRASS TOMORROW

Bluegrass Tomorrow was formed in 1989 by a coalition of business and conservation interests to promote coordinated growth planning for the central Bluegrass Region of Kentucky on the premise that growth planning is the key to building and sustaining stronger communities. We bring together all stakeholders: business, private, government, community and environmental interests in an integrated and collaborative approach to regional planning.

Bluegrass Tomorrow's vision for the region is one where strong economic growth continues in harmony with the protection of the irreplaceable qualities that make this such a great place to live. By using innovative approaches to planning for these necessities, our region can outshine every place in the world.

By "well developed" we mean development that employs respect for the environment and heritage, allows for walkability and transportation alternatives, incorporates greenspaces, creates places for people, offers housing choice and affordability, keeps community focus on our downtowns and neighborhood centers that are the hearts of our communities, and yields home-grown economic success.

By "well preserved" we mean promoting the continued growth and expansion of agriculture, especially our world famous equine industry that provides us with a brand identity matched by few regions anywhere, protecting the incomparable views from our roads, safeguarding our sensitive and fragile environment, and enhancing our unique architectural legacy.

