

Planning Commission Presentation  
June 12, 2006  
Council Chambers, 7:00 p.m.

Thank you Chairman, Commissioners-

My name is Knox van Nagell, and I am the director of the Fayette Alliance. I appreciate the opportunity to come before you tonight as a participant in this most important and honorable process.

The Fayette Alliance is a true coalition of concerned citizens from the downtown, business, neighborhood, and agricultural communities of Fayette County. Those of you in the audience who are supporters of the Fayette Alliance, would you please stand? Thank you.

The mission of the Fayette Alliance is, through education, to promote our irreplaceable farmland in Fayette County, to protect our unique agricultural enterprise from erosive urban expansion, and to secure a better, more prosperous future for our entire community.

In achieving this mission, we aim to educate the public about the economic benefits of our unique Bluegrass farmland, to defend key agricultural areas from further suburban encroachment, and to promote infill and redevelopment as the preferred location for new growth in Lexington.

In this vein, we hope to participate in a candid, reasonable, and factual discussion about growth in Fayette County. The issue before us is not whether we grow, but how we grow.

In answering this critical question, it is apparent that we do not need to expand the Blue Sky Rural Activity Center for several reasons.

**First, an expansion of Blue Sky will establish a dangerous precedent that will undermine the purpose and function of the urban service boundary.**

- According to the Rural Land Management Plan, Rural Activity Centers are “free standing small urban service areas with a predetermined, limited range of urban functions”.
- An expansion of this urban area will bleed commercial and industrial activities into the surrounding rural landscape. This “bleeding-out” will frustrate the purpose of the urban service boundary, which is to

[S]eparate urban intensity uses from other horse farms and other rural activities, reduce sprawl development along major roadways, provide for better cost control of government infrastructure and services, reduce

impacts on fragile environments, and maintain the central focus of downtown. 2001 Comprehensive Plan

- Without question, the urban service boundary has served the Lexington community extremely well. However, an expansion of the Blue Sky rural activity center will undermine this most treasured boundary, and threaten the critical balance of urban and rural land uses in Fayette County.
- As such, the Blue Sky expansion violates goals 4, 5, 6, and 9 of the 2006 Goals and Objectives.
  - **Goal 4:** Develop and implement a green space system that preserves the urban and rural identity of Fayette County and provide a framework for regional and local planning.
  - **Goal 5:** Protect and preserve Fayette County's significant historic and cultural heritage.
  - **Goal 6:** Maintain and enhance the agricultural economy, horse farms, general agriculture farms, and rural character in the Rural Service Area.
  - **Goal 9:** Maintain the boundaries and manage land use in established Rural Activity Centers.

**Second, an expansion of Blue Sky will threaten the agricultural enterprises surrounding the facility.**

- According to the 2006 Rural Sanitary Sewer Capability Study, and the 2001 Comprehensive Plan, the farms located in the area are core equine agricultural or prime agricultural lands that have at least 50% prime soils, and 75% prime and secondary soils.
- This land is a finite natural resource. It sustains a viable agricultural industry that has a **\$1 billion dollar impact on the regional economy**. Dr. Timothy A. Woods, "Strategies for Developing Agricultural Opportunities in the Greater Lexington Area", 2005.
- Accordingly, an expansion of Blue Sky will compromise an economically viable agricultural area of Fayette County.

**Third, the Blue Sky expansion will compromise the quality of life and character of the Athens Historic Rural Settlement.**

- The Rural Land Management Plan defines Athens and other rural historic settlements as "An essential part of the rural character of Fayette County...and the rural land management plan requires the preservation and enhancement of these settlements".

- The expansion proposal calls for the construction of a travel center that will accommodate buses, motor homes, and tractor- trailers. The noise and traffic congestion caused by this development will most assuredly destroy the historic and environmental integrity of Athens.
- Therefore, the expansion will violate goals 5 and 15 of the 2006 Goals and Objectives.
- **Goal 5:** Protect and preserve Fayette County’s significant historic and cultural heritage.
- **Goal 15:** Preserve, protect, and enhance the character and quality of existing neighborhoods; of the 2006 Goals and Objectives.

**Lastly, the Blue Sky expansion will require costly sewer lines.**

- As you know, Blue Sky is currently serviced by two private sewer treatment facilities: the Blue Sky treatment plant, and the Boonesboro Manor Plant.
- According to the 2006 Rural Sanitary Sewer Capability Study, “**no capacity exists** in the current LFUCG [sewer treatment] facilities for the Blue Sky Rural Activity Center”.
- Therefore, any additional sewer services needed by the Blue Sky expansion, beyond what can be accommodated by its two treatment facilities, will cost the city **\$14,000 acre** to construct. 2006 Rural Sanitary Sewer Capability Study.
- These expenses are significant, especially in light of potential EPA sanctions that could mandate millions of dollars in storm water, sewer, and water quality remediation.

**Accordingly, the Fayette Alliance respectfully requests that the Planning Commission deny the Blue Sky expansion proposal.**

In addition, the Fayette Alliance opposes the proposed re-designation of the Kingston Hall property from economic development to residential land use for several reasons.

**First, economic development property financially benefits the city.**

- The Kingston Hall property was specifically brought into the urban service area in 1996 as economic development property.
- Changing its land use designation to residential will wholly undermine the economic development land use concept because there are only two locations within the urban service boundary with this designation: Hamburg and Kingston Hall.

- Lexington owes itself economic development property because it generates revenue for the city without needing many urban services. According to the 1999 American Farmland Trust study, such properties only require **\$.22 in urban services** for every dollar of revenue they generate, thereby creating a net gain for the city. On the other hand, **residential properties** require **\$1.64 in urban services** for every dollar of revenue they generate, thereby creating a net loss for the city.
- Moreover, there is plenty of vacant land available within the urban service boundary for residential development. According to the Division of Planning, there were **5,673.09 acres available for residential development within the urban service boundary** in December 2005.
- Accordingly, it makes good economic and land use planning sense to maintain Kingston Hall's current designation.

**Second, Kingston Hall provides an essential buffer between intense urban development and the rural properties in the area.**

- The farms surrounding Kingston Hall are core equine agricultural or prime agricultural lands that have at least 50% prime soils, and 75% prime and secondary soils. As such, several major thoroughbred operations are located in the area, and residential development on Kingston Hall will most assuredly disrupt these vital businesses.
- The thoroughbred industry in Fayette County provides Lexington with unparalleled economic benefits, a sense of place, and international recognition as the "Horse Capital of the World".
- For example, the Kentucky thoroughbred industry generated over **\$855 million dollars in sales last year**, it employs over **50,000 people statewide**, and it has a **\$4 billion dollar impact on the state economy**.
- In cash receipts, Fayette County thoroughbred farmers are ranked second in Kentucky. 2005 USDA Annual Report.
- Further, according to the Lexington Convention Visitor's Bureau, **60% of tourists visit Lexington to see its thoroughbred farms and countryside**. Such tourism annually contributes over **\$1 billion dollars to the regional economy**.
- Consequently, residential development on Kingston Hall will not only disrupt the lucrative thoroughbred operations surrounding the property, but it will undermine the scenic quality of the area-just in time for the 2010 World Equestrian Games.

**Third, changing Kingston Hall's land use from economic development to residential violates the 1996 Expansion Area Master Plan.**

- The Expansion Area Master Plan specifically states,
  - In expansion area 3, design limitations should be imposed on economic development between Newtown Pike and Russell Cave Road to ensure that development of those lands does not have an adverse impact on the agricultural use of land immediately to the North of the expansion area.
- Residential development on Kingston Hall will disrupt the agricultural operations in the area, a situation expressly prohibited by the Expansion Area Master Plan.
- On the other hand, Kingston Hall's current economic development designation satisfies the 2001 Comprehensive Plan and goals 3, 6, 10, and 11 of the 2006 Goals and Objectives.
  - **Goal 3:** Promote land uses that are sensitive to the natural and built environment.
  - **Goal 6:** Maintain and enhance the agricultural economy, horse farms, general agricultural farms, and rural character in the Rural Service area.
  - **Goal 10:** Preserve, promote, and enhance those aspects of the natural, built, and cultural environment that encourages tourism.
  - **Goal 11:** Provide diverse business and employment opportunities for Lexington Fayette County.

**For these reasons, the Fayette Alliance respectfully opposes the re-designation of the Kingston Hall property from an economic development to a residential land use.**

Thank you.