



FAYETTE ALLIANCE

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Brittany M. Roethemeier, J.D.

June 24, 2021

Dear Mayor Gorton, Vice Mayor Kay, and Councilmembers,

Please accept this letter on behalf of Fayette Alliance, a non-profit founded fifteen years ago, in 2006, dedicated to achieving smart, equitable growth in Lexington-Fayette County through land-use advocacy, education, and research. We believe that preserving our unique and productive Bluegrass farmland, advancing smart and equitable growth, innovative development, and improving our infrastructure are all essential to Lexington's continued success. In furtherance of this mission, we respectfully submit the following with regard to the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget and the American Rescue Plan Act funding.

Fayette Alliance appreciates the significant time and effort invested in analyzing our community needs and discussing careful solutions to address them in the LFUCG Fiscal Year 2022 Budget. In addition to support for the Budget and specific allocations therein, Fayette Alliance believes Lexington has a transformational opportunity to utilize the American Rescue Plan Act funding allocated to our community, and proposes recommendations for priorities as our leadership and community members continue to evaluate how best to distribute these funds.

As our community grows, the need for smart and equitable growth, housing, infrastructure, and as always, the balance of our urban and rural areas has never been more important. Well planned infrastructure strengthens our community, boosts our economy, expands opportunity and promotes equitable development. Simultaneously, investing in our rural areas provides economic stability and security to our entire community as well as enhances our quality of life; crucial for both continued economic development and maintaining our cultural identity. In light of these many priorities, Fayette Alliance applauds Mayor Gorton, Vice



Mayor Kay and the Urban County Councilmembers for the final proposed Budget and the emphasis on infrastructure, housing, quality of life, economic development, community services and our rural areas. These robust investments represent a well thought out balance to our city and benefits that offer support for all our community members.

Specifically, Fayette Alliance commends key support for the following:

Those investments in **equitable housing and community development**, which help us grow smart and responsibly address our housing needs, including:

- Creation of a Housing Advocacy and Community Development Department;
- New position in Mayor's office to focus specifically on implementing the recommendations of Task Force on Racial Justice and Equality;
- Increased funding of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund from \$2M to \$3M; and
- Increased funding for code enforcement and Homelessness Prevention.

Those investments in our **rural land and green space**, which enhance our quality of life, protect the factory floor of our signature agricultural industries, and promote future sustainability, including:

- Funding of the Purchase of Development Rights program in the amount of \$2M, a cornerstone program which has not been fully funded since 2018; and
- \$75,000 for a community-wide tree canopy study.

Those investments in **local economic development and jobs** for all of our community members, enhancing City revenue and resiliency, including to our economic development partners, the local JOBS fund and training programs.

And lastly, those investments in our **community and social infrastructure** to improve and enhance quality of life for all, strengthen our neighborhoods, and increase equitable access to amenities:

- \$100,000 to the Neighborhood Grant Match Program, which has been doubled from prior years;
- \$3.6M to Extended Social Resource (ESR) programs; and
- \$4.8M for parks capital improvements, which will benefit every district throughout our community, increasing the quality and

accessibility of our open space and green space for all community members.

American Rescue Plan Act Funding Priority Recommendations

This year's budget is a far cry from 2020 - our revenues were more than expected and the thoughtful and conservative continuation budget proposed by Mayor Gorton in 2020 helped the City prepare for a difficult year. In addition to being in a positive financial position as a result of caution, care, and preparation, Lexington has a tremendous opportunity to make transformational community investments with the funding from the **American Rescue Plan Act**. Funding priorities must be thoughtful, creative and intentional; to be used to meet our community's needs, make investments in our City that benefit all of our community members, provide a return on investment looking forward, all while complying with federal guidelines and intention for those funds in light of community impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fayette Alliance would recommend the following categories with the potential to meet these requirements and make the most significant impact to our community. These broad categories need and require further refinement, but Fayette Alliance requests consideration of the following as the Councilmembers evaluate our needs and a more detailed process for determining how to spend these incoming funds:

- **Economic Development Infrastructure: Building infrastructure for the 200 acres of economic development land at the Coldstream/University of Kentucky Dairy Farm.** Allocating funding to enable infrastructure development at the land acquired by LFUCG through the land swap with the University of Kentucky is critical to increasing opportunities for jobs for our community members, especially those impacted by COVID-19, as well as improving regional competitiveness and attractiveness for companies which Mayor Gorton has outlined support for, including high-tech and ag-tech businesses. This funding offers a timely opportunity to make a significant investment in our economic development infrastructure, which has been negatively impacted by the pandemic, that offers a high return on investment in the decades to come and which will benefit our community as a whole.
- **Affordable Housing Development and Infrastructure: Increased funding to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) and funding to innovatively incentivize and subsidize development of affordable housing outside the AHTF, which could go towards waivers of exaction and permit fees, required infrastructure**

construction for developments and land acquisition for projects which meet criteria related to affordability. Additional funding for the AHTF is consistent with the recommendations of the Neighborhoods in Transition Task Force and the Mayor's Commission on Racial Justice and Equality/Housing and Gentrification Subcommittee, and funding which can incentivize and subsidize affordable housing development through infrastructure, fee waivers and land acquisition, could significantly contribute to removing the cost barriers of affordable housing development, offering innovative solutions to support this most critical need in our community in multiple ways. Further, allocating funds in these ways can show commitment to maximizing existing land to meet community housing needs, encourages responsible and efficient use of existing vacant and underutilized land, and supports our community strategy of infill and redevelopment while preventing displacement.

- **Transformational Quality of Life Investments: A project such as the Fayette Alliance Rural Trails Plan, an urban/rural trail network connecting all 12 Council Districts, and investment in our agricultural community through projects with an emphasis on expanding economic development and education.** These investments can respond to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as they relate to equitable access to green and open space, food security, and investment in our agricultural and local food economy. Further, they can positively impact our entire community's quality of life, enhance our economy, promote county-wide connectivity of our rural and urban areas, and pay high dividends to our future generations.

While additional and in-depth conversations are necessary to determine how these priorities can meet the intentions and requirements of the American Rescue Plan Act funding as well as compliance aspects of the same, it is critical to consider from a community perspective which investments can make the most impact as we move forward.

Fayette Alliance requests and appreciates consideration of the above, and commends Mayor Gorton, Vice Mayor Kay and the Councilmembers' dedication to ensuring our community investments can have lasting, transformational impacts and address our most pressing community needs.

Thank you for your commitment to our community, and on behalf of Fayette Alliance, I sincerely thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brittany M. Roethemeier". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'B'.

Brittany M. Roethemeier
Executive Director