

November 1, 2021



Chair Brown and Members of the Planning and Public Safety Committee,

Please accept this letter on behalf of the Fayette Alliance with respect to our support for SRA 2021-1: Amendment to Articles 1 and 6 to Revise Standards for Street Patterns & Continuity.

Founded in 2006, Fayette Alliance is a non-profit dedicated to achieving sustainable, 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 growth, innovative development and improving our infrastructure are all essential to Lexington's continued success.

As we continue to grow our city and encourage new development which achieves our goals, like increased and equitable housing choices, more Affordable housing, complete neighborhoods, expanded access to transportation options, amenities and services, **the way we design our streets is paramount to our community members' quality of life.** We know from the Lexington Sustainable Growth Study that we have thousands of vacant acres of land, primarily residential and located in our existing, undeveloped expansion areas.¹ Building comprehensive, safe, equitable, and accessible communities from the outset starts with our street patterns; which not only improve traffic flow through our neighborhoods but make them safer for walking, biking, and even playing outside. The changes to our existing policies proposed by SRA 2021-1 will only impact *new* neighborhoods - which means we have the ability to encourage maximizing development on our vacant land for more homes, and at the same time create safer, more walkable, and more livable communities for all of our neighbors.

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¹ *The amount of land which qualifies as vacant within the Urban Services Boundary is approximately 5,117 acres, the majority of which is zoned residential. Lexington Sustainable Growth Study, Existing Conditions and Growth Trends Report, July 13, 2021, pg. 45.*

<https://lexsustainablegrowth.mysocialpinpoint.com/engage/home>

More walkable and livable communities also play a key role in building equity in our new neighborhoods. In most communities built in the last 50 years, the design was built around the car; sprawling, low density and scattered development separated by busy and multi-lane roadways, which requires reliance on automobiles.² Members of our vulnerable and marginalized communities, including people of color, have been historically less likely to own cars and more negatively impacted by these poor development patterns.³ All working families who own a car must deal with the burden of the associated costs - which are significant. **In Lexington, transportation costs account for 24% of a regional typical household income of around \$50,000.**⁴ Research shows us that compact, walkable neighborhoods with access to jobs, transit, and businesses are more sustainable, more affordable, and more efficient.⁵ As we build new neighborhoods in our vacant areas, ensuring we have policies in place to make them equitable, walkable, and safer for all forms of transportation, will ensure we have successful communities moving forward.

More connected street networks - which mean shorter blocks, fewer cul de sacs, and more connections to adjacent parks, open spaces and greenways - reduce travel speeds, encourage multi-modal transportation, and increase access to amenities which increase our quality of life. While it may at first seem counter-intuitive, the more intersections there are in a given neighborhood, the safer our neighborhoods are and the less car-centric they can be. More connections to other streets means less traffic, increased access for emergency vehicles, reduced speeds, and better overall access to places like parks and green space, which are highly correlated to our overall health and wellbeing. **These policies encourage street design which has people in mind as opposed to just cars.**

While shorter blocks and cul de sac lengths could result in less space for lower density, sprawling residential development, these reforms offer the opportunity to design our communities with the intention of offering more housing options from the outset. Incrementally changing our housing stock and

² Golob, T., & Brownstone, D. (2005, February). "The Impact of Residential Density on Vehicle Usage and Energy Consumption." University of California Energy Institute. Policy & Economics Paper EPE-011.

Retrieved from <http://repositories.cdlib.org/ucei/policy/EPE-011>.

³ Sánchez, T., Stolz, R., & Ma, J. (2003). "Moving to Equity: Addressing Inequitable Effects of Transportation Policies on Minorities." The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University.

⁴ The Center for Neighborhood Technology, Housing + Transportation Affordability Index, htaindex.cnt.org.

⁵ Id., <https://htaindex.cnt.org/fact-sheets/?lat=38.0405837&lng=-84.5037164&focus=place&qid=10176#fs>.

increasing the offering of diverse housing options, which was one of the most pressing recommendations coming out of the 2017 Housing Demand Study, partnered on by Fayette Alliance, LFUCG, LBAR, BIA, and others,⁶ in addition to more connected streets, will change our communities for the better.

The reforms proposed by SRA 2021-1: Amendment to Articles 1 and 6 to Revise Standards for Street Patterns & Continuity offer an opportunity to implement our community's Goals & Objectives as set forth in the 2017 Comprehensive Plan, build more equitable and livable communities for our future, and serve our community for decades to come. These updates to our policies reflect a responsible and sustainable approach to the growth of our community.

I appreciate your consideration of our support for SRA 2021-1, and your commitment to the Lexington community.

With gratitude,



Brittany M. Roethemeier, J.D.
Executive Director
Fayette Alliance

Cc: Jim Duncan, Director of Planning
Kevin Atkins, Chief Development Officer
Walt Gaffield, President, Fayette County
Neighborhood Council

⁶ Fayette County Housing Demand Study, May 16, 2017.