

# An Open Letter to the Lexington-Fayette County Community



FAYETTE  
ALLIANCE

In 1958, Lexington became the first community in the U.S. to institute an Urban Service Boundary to protect the farmland that is our identity. Last week, the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Board of Adjustment approved a 12-field soccer complex and 750 parking spaces in the Agricultural-Rural zone. This decision threatens the historic precedent set by those who had the foresight and determination to safeguard this community's most important resource with potential consequences that would negatively impact generations to come. The land in question is immediately adjacent to equine and agricultural operations that are the pillars of both our local economy and Lexington's proud identity as the Horse Capital of the World. In approving the proposal, the Board of Adjustment also took the highly unusual step of removing the most critical of the 19 conditions recommended by the City of Lexington's professional planning staff to preserve the integrity of the Agricultural-Rural zone should the project move forward.

This decision was just the first step in Lexington Sporting Club's multi-faceted plan that would disrupt Lexington's Bluegrass farmland as we know it. The next two steps are proposals to amend existing zoning ordinances to permit lights, concessions, and retail sales at that same complex in the rural area – an area that has been protected from this exact type of development for decades – in addition to a 10,000-person stadium and thousands of surface parking spaces in the nearby Economic Development zone.

Fayette Alliance supports bringing professional and youth soccer and the corresponding infrastructure to Lexington. However, we must do so in a responsible manner that protects our trademark industries and the productive farmland that makes Lexington unique. We already find ourselves on a slippery slope: together, these proposals would allow intense commercial uses in the rural area. They represent a major change from Lexington's nearly 70 years of thoughtful growth policies and the consequences, if approved, will long outlive us all.

At the Board of Adjustment hearings, dozens of community members voiced their opposition to the development, highlighting the adverse impacts it would have on their livelihoods, the agricultural and equine industries, and the surrounding environment. The approval of the soccer fields and parking lot was a disappointing dismissal of the valid concerns of the citizens of Lexington and its city planners. The result, including the Board of Adjustment's unprecedented move to gut the most important of the city planning staff's recommendations, all but ignores this community's longstanding support for the balance between urban and rural uses of the land that we have worked tirelessly to maintain.

This decision, and those that will come before the Planning Commission later this month, could set a dangerous precedent for our community. They put our rural area at risk by opening it up to similar intense development throughout Lexington-Fayette County. Where will we draw the line if the physical Agricultural-Rural zone boundaries and conditions outlined by our own city planning staff are so readily ignored from the start? Fayette Alliance isn't waiting around to find out; our founding mission is to advocate to protect the finite resource that is our Bluegrass farmland for generations to come. To this end, we are appealing the Board of Adjustment's decision and filing an Open Records request to understand how last Tuesday's vote resulted in not only the approval of a proposal that saw near-universal opposition throughout the meeting, but also the inexplicable decision to eliminate the most protective of the 19 recommendations made by planning staff.

On Thursday, July 28th the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the next phases of the project, which threaten both our rural area and the job creation for which our economic development land is explicitly designated. Aside from the obvious concerns voiced by the community about these proposals – from light and noise pollution to storm water runoff and safety issues – the farmland that is under threat features finite, prime soil for agricultural uses that can never be replaced. The economic development land is zoned as such because it is critical to our community's economic success; acres upon acres of parking lots certainly are not. If these proposals are approved, there is no going back. No do-over.

**The decisions we make about land-use today have a far greater impact on our children's futures than a worthy soccer program located on the prime soils that form the foundation of our unique community and its signature industry.**

**While soccer can be played at other existing facilities, our farmland is irreplaceable. If you share our fundamental belief in the need to protect our hallowed Bluegrass land, please join us in attending the Planning Commission meeting on July 28th at 1:30pm at City Hall and make your voice heard in opposition to these proposals. We must stay engaged and demand transparency from Lexington Sporting Club around this project; our community has too much at stake to let this pass.**