

Quality of Life Equals Economic Development and Job Creation

Thank you. My name is Knox van Nagell and I am here on behalf of the Fayette Alliance.

During this budgetary cycle, we face many challenges as our city is still recovering from the great recession. Many deserving programs and initiatives need funding—and yet revenues are down, and the budget is extremely tight.

To emerge from this financial crisis, Council should focus its efforts on jobs and economic development. That is why The Fayette Alliance is asking that you approve and issue a \$2 million bond for the Purchase of Development Rights Program; re-approve and issue a \$2 million bond for Infill Redevelopment; and fund the implementation of Downtown Design Standards.

With this strategy, Council will accomplish a balanced growth approach—and in turn, a unique quality of life—that's not only good for our environment, but ultimately our pocket books.

PDR is instrumental to maintaining the farmland we cherish, the international brand we market, and the payroll taxes we use to finance this government. PDR does what zoning alone cannot—preserve the factory floor of our signature industries forever. This is needed, as we cannot leave our most prized environmental and cultural asset vulnerable to political whim and planning trends. It is far too important for that.

Here are just a few of the numbers: Fayette County farms support **21,000 direct local jobs**, generate a **\$3 billion impact on our regional economy** and over **\$800 million in local gross product each year**, and produce **over \$17 million annually in veterinary payroll alone**. Further, it anchors our Bluegrass brand that is key in today's "creatives" economy — the value of which, at this juncture in our city's great history, cannot be calculated or comprehended.

In addition, it directly benefits LFUCG's coffers by having farms under conservation easement—as they generate more revenue on the dollar than they demand in costly city services—a net gain of 7 cents to be exact.

PDR is a beacon program of LFUCG that is diligently and transparently achieving the stated goals of its charter. Council needs to match the **\$2 million in federal money PDR has in hand**, and allocate \$2 million to the program in local bonds. To do otherwise, not only hangs our farmland, signature industries, and cultural identity in the balance, but questions your commitment to good government and process.

All ships rise on a rising-tide, and also essential is the health, vitality, and character of our urban core.

According to the recently released LFUCG Housing Market Study, we have roughly **12,000 acres available inside our city** for potential redevelopment projects. A land bank and vacant land commission are proven strategies that can work with free market forces and enable Lexington to grow in a dynamic and economically transformative way.

If administered properly, this is a winning approach for everyone—by increasing property tax revenues, while also facilitating investment in our cityscape that can result in affordable housing, mixed-use development, and public greenspaces. Please re-affirm your commitment from 2008, and re-approve and issue the \$2 million for infill redevelopment to fund these crucial economic development initiatives.

As with capitalizing on any opportunity—the devil is in the details. As demonstrated by Charleston South Carolina, Madison Wisconsin, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, and other progressive cities—downtown design and character is economic development. For example, each year, **4 million visitors** go to Charleston just to walk its streets—translating into billions in revenues, business development, and thousands of jobs in the community.

Let us collectively learn from the CentrePointe and CVS pharmacy projects, and together implement an objective downtown design framework that developers, architects, and community advocates can buy-into.

Only with financing, can the needed research and community dialogue occur to move this CRITICAL piece of the puzzle forward. You should finish the work of the 2005 Downtown Master Plan, and finance the establishment of downtown design guidelines and form-based codes. Without them in place, we will continue to frustrate our economic potential with unnecessary controversy and discord. This we simply cannot afford to do.

We appreciate the opportunity to come before you tonight. We understand this is a very difficult budgetary time for LFUCG. However, in these challenging times you have the opportunity to fundamentally address the economic problems of the day by financing PDR, infill redevelopment, and downtown design guidelines.

These programs are not tit for tat propositions, but independent non-competitive initiatives that, if successful, can work together to create a world-class city in a world class landscape—and conversely an unparalleled quality of life and economy.

Thank you.