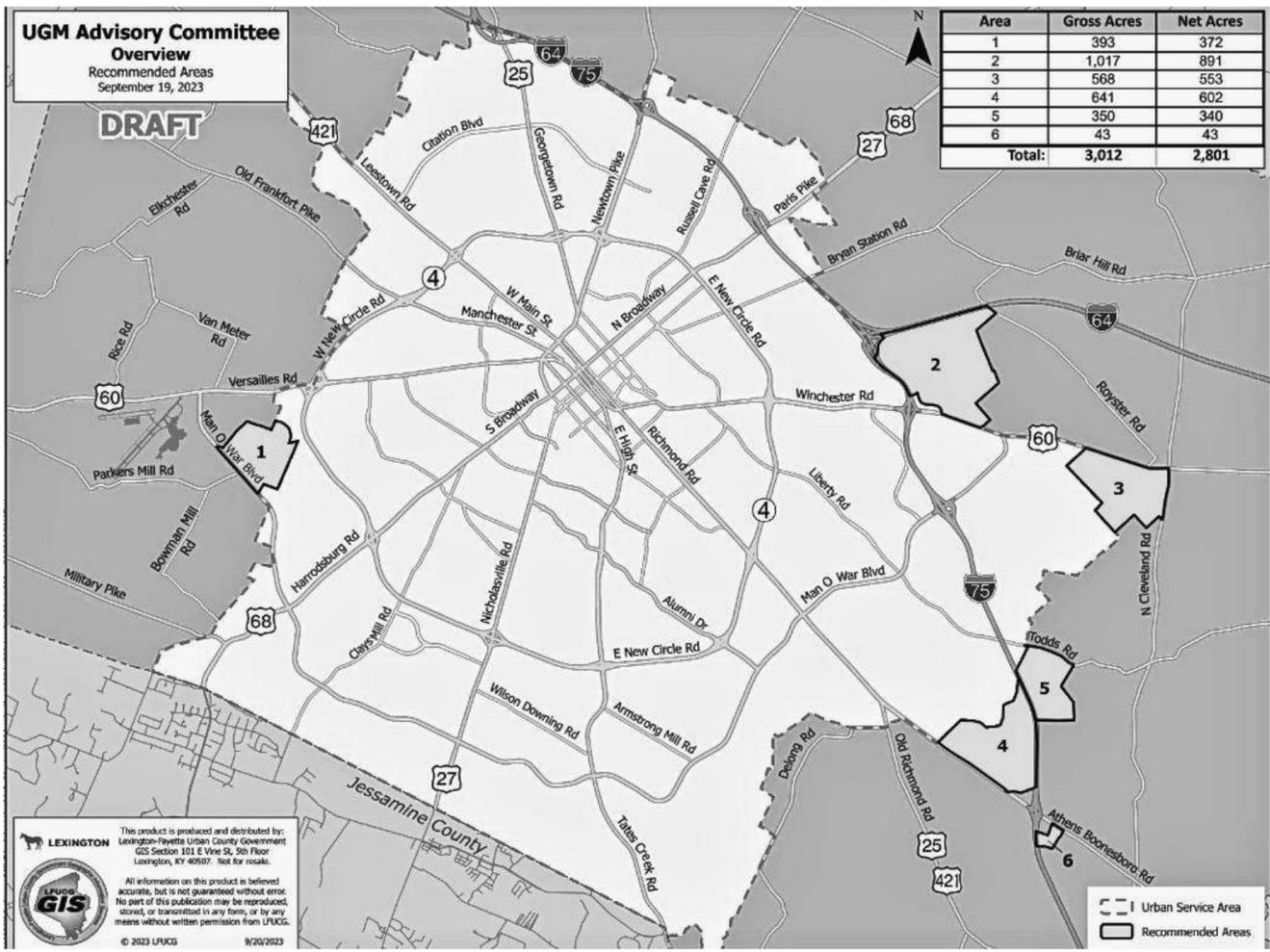


Opinion



A committee tasked with identifying up to 5,000 acres to add to the urban service boundary has identified slightly more than 3,000 acres for new development. Areas around Athens Boonesboro Road, Winchester Road and Parkers Mill Road have been identified for future development.

What HB 443 means for Lexington's development process

BY KEITH HORN



Let's take a look at the impact of a new state law, HB 443, on the process

Lexington uses to approve plans for new building developments. It's important to focus on the facts after a recent opinion piece in this space written by Raquel Carter distorted the truth.

The law, passed last year by the Kentucky General Assembly, requires changes in the way Lexington reviews and

approves these plans. Development plans include the specifics about a building project ... size, access, landscaping, parking, etc.

To comply with the law, the Planning Commission has proposed changes to our development plan approval process. In early May, those proposed changes

will go to the Urban County Council for its consideration.

The state law is short — two paragraphs long. It requires establishment of a process for approval of development plans; and creation of objective standards for these plans.

Lexington did not advocate for the state law. We are simply adjusting

to its requirements. On the other hand, Commerce Lexington, Lexington's Chamber of Commerce, did advocate in Frankfort for its passage.

The most significant impact of HB 443 is on public input in the development plan process. Proposed changes that are required by HB 443 have raised public concerns.

Before HB 443, in Lexington every development plan was reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission after a public hearing. HB 443 removes this public hearing

process.

Beginning July 1, the state law will require staff-level review of development plans.

The second part of the new law requires the establishment of objective standards for developments. That is exactly what Commerce Lexington's "Lexington for Everyone" asked the legislature to do.

Curiously, Mrs. Carter, a Realtor who is a member of Commerce Lexington's "Lexington for Everyone" Board, and of the Board of Adjustment, said that the changes proposed in Lexington's process will "add cost and bureaucracy" and "red tape" to the development process.

If anything, the changes proposed because of HB 443 will make our development approval process faster because the new standards depend upon meeting specific and basic objective standards.

It's also important to understand that the changes proposed in response to HB 443 were developed after meetings with many individuals and groups, including the development community. Oddly enough, Mrs. Carter has never requested a discussion about the proposed changes even though, as a member of the Board of Adjustment, she has frequent contact with planning staff.

As Commissioner of the Planning Department, my focus is on complying with the new state law, while also assuring the safe and timely development of property in Lexington. I believe the changes proposed will accomplish those goals.

Keith Horn is commissioner of Planning and Preservation for the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ANTI-DIVERSITY

Just read where the University of Kentucky succumbed to the MAGA-mania by cancelling events dealing with Blacks and LGBTQ. What's next burning books?

Bob Sutton, Springfield

UK CAPITULATION

We saw this coming, but now it's clear: The University of Kentucky has bent the knee. The endowment, research funds, meager teaching assistant and professor salaries, and, of course, exorbitant administrator salaries are saved. We should all breathe a sigh of relief that Big Blue is saved from the ire of Big Red. Or is that Big Orange?

Not so fast. Because there's a real cost here. As students on the margins are forced to reimagine the Harambee and Lavender graduation ceremonies, other students are watching. Alumni are watching. Kentuckians that want this madness to stop are watching. And we're wondering, if UK won't fight for our Commonwealth, who will?

It might feel convenient to let Harvard withstand the storm. They have the dragon hoard of old Puritan money, after all. They cannot do it alone and they will not endure forever. But here's the real cost: Wanna-be autocrats begin with outlandish demands. They only become bona fide autocrats when knees are bent to protect budget lines and endowments. It feels like many of our institutions have forgotten what it means to resist: You must suffer a little to build your power.

Next up: The Wildcats become the Tame Kittens.

Rev. Dr. Brian Chenoweth, Lexington

SEGREGATION?

How many articles is the Herald going to publish advocating for segregation at the University of Kentucky? We have seen at least three stories asking why UK has ended special segregated ceremonies for black and / or LGBTQ students. The better question is why the university ever had them? Weren't we supposed to be going for the melting pot? These students went through four years of classes together but they need to be separated at graduation? As for "marginalized communities"; if you have achieved a degree from a major university, you are already far ahead of the game in America. Unless you majored in one of the programs that pushes for things like segregation. In that case, you'll probably find yourself making coffee.

Doug Reed, Lexington

EDUCATIONAL DIVERSITY

The Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE) call to eliminate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives is a blatant step in the wrong direction—especially when Kentucky's academic outcomes are already in crisis. Most of our students do not read or complete math on grade level. Instead of scaling back efforts to reach all learners, KDE should be doubling down.

Most of Kentucky's Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools—those identified as the lowest performing—are concentrated in Jefferson County, our state's largest and most diverse district. These schools face deep, systemic inequities that DEI initiatives are designed to confront.

Meanwhile, many of our Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools earn that designation due to their English Learner and disability populations.

KDE's mission is to provide equity and excellence for all students—from the most rural communities to our urban centers. If KDE truly believed in its mission, it would invest in the tools proven to close opportunity gaps. DEI isn't about division—it's about removing barriers that prevent students from succeeding.

Stripping DEI from our schools sends a dangerous message that our students' success doesn't matter. KDE must recommit to equity—not retreat from it.

Natalie Gwishiri, Frankfort

EDUCATIONAL TRANSPARENCY

The Fayette County Board of Education recently announced a series of "community conversations" on key topics like facilities planning and federal funding. But despite the name, the district has confirmed these events won't be recorded or streamed, effectively shutting out parents and caregivers who work evenings, lack transportation, cannot find childcare, or face accessibility challenges.

Even more concerning, it's unclear if these "conversations" are meant to be two-way dialogues. The district has not explained whether attendees will be able to ask questions or offer input. Conversations typically involve an exchange of sentiments and ideas—not one-way productions.

For the past year, the board has also consistently found the time, funding,

and resources to produce the board chair's "Murphy's Minute" video series—yet those same efforts are noticeably absent when it comes to other district-hosted public forums. Showcasing our students in social media posts while making it harder for families to remain engaged isn't leadership—it's performative politics.

If equity, transparency, and accountability are truly more than buzzwords, the board must begin to act like it and ensure as many families and community members as possible can meaningfully participate in and stay informed of the discussions and decisions that affect our schools.

Alex Dixon, Lexington

HORSE RACING'S COST

It should be the primary concern of the racing industry for the well-being and safety of the horses. No deaths or serious injuries should be acceptable.

However, as we have seen, even though the horses are well groomed and pampered, they are taken out on the track and whipped to run faster and faster. Pushing a horse past its limit can lead to death or injury.

Fourteen horses have died during at Churchill Downs in the last two years. They died because they were forced to run, suffering broken bones, heart failure, etc.

When humans participate in a sporting event, they do so by choice. Horses have no choice. Horse racing is a cruel industry which solely benefits the owners and tracks. When horses can't win, they are often sold, some to slaughterhouses. Think about this when you place your bet.

Harold Wilson, Corydon

TRUMP 2028?

When you hear Steve

Bannon and the rest of the MAGA hive talk about President Donald Trump running or serving a third term, they are not actually talking about him running for that third term. Think about it. The Constitutional gymnastics the GOP would have to go through in order to secure a Trump run cannot overcome, even with the best legalese, any requirement it would only apply to Donald Trump. Here, I remind you of a two-term, former President and/or a popular actor who could definitely give Trump a run for his or Elon's money.

A good dictator and his gang are not going waste the time, energy and most importantly, money, on the possibility of Trump losing in 2028. No, the MAGA/GOP is talking about nothing less than Trump staying in office for a third term — as in no election at all. This is the only scenario that makes any sense. In trying to overthrow the 2020 election, Trump and Republicans left nothing to chance. They weren't calling for another election or do-over. They're happy to take your money, loyalty, your country, they just ain't going to take a chance on losing.

Ross DeAeth, Lexington

FEAR OF TRUMP

I am growing very tired of hearing our representatives in Congress whine about their fear of acting against President Donald Trump's administration when they actually hold the power to end it! They have the power to impeach him and to remove him from office. Trump should be afraid of them!

I urge them to remember, "the only thing you have to fear is fear itself"! Take the power you have and end this horror story. Your loyalty should be to our Constitution and to

America, not to some temporary wannabe dictator!

Barbara Rave Plymale, Lexington

AWARENESS

While Alcohol Awareness Month is coming to a close, it's important to be mindful of alcohol consumption all year round. The current U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend limiting alcohol to two drinks or less per day for men and one drink or less for women, and state some people should not drink at all.

As part of the process to update the 2025 Dietary Guidelines, the federal government recently commissioned an independent report on the scientific evidence on moderate alcohol consumption and health. The report concluded that those who drink in moderation have a lower risk of all-cause mortality, which means they live at least as long or longer than those who do not drink at all. The report also linked moderate alcohol consumption with a decreased risk of cardiovascular disease and an increased risk of breast cancer.

Roughly half of all U.S. adults enjoy beer, wine or spirits, and a recent Responsibility.org survey found that 9 out of 10 adults say they know their personal limits when it comes to alcohol consumption. It's well known there are risks associated with alcohol consumption, particularly heavy consumption, so it's just as important to know your personal risks. Talk to your health providers about what is right for you, based on your lifestyle, family history, genetics and other individual factors.

Kathleen Zelman, MPH, RDN, LD, Distilled Spirits Council advisor

Edited by Liz Carey