

Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation
At-Large Council Candidate Survey
April 2010

1. Many residents and visitors to Lexington point to its history and its preservation of areas which have retained their historic qualities as primary reasons that Lexington can distinguish itself from other cities and continue to attract new businesses and residents. Do you agree with those people and do you favor strengthening our historic preservation ordinances and/or the stronger enforcement of existing historic preservation ordinances to help maintain those advantages?

George Brown: I am in favor of strong enforcement and the adherence to existing ordinances and regulations.

Linda Gorton: Yes, Lexington has had many visitors who have commented on its wonderful historic neighborhoods. Thanks to the vision of former city leaders and citizens, we now have many historic neighborhoods. I favor strong historic preservation ordinances as well as consistent, strong enforcement of exiting ordinances.

Steve Kay: I agree that one way Lexington distinguishes itself is through its preservation of a significant number of historic buildings and neighborhoods. I believe that this is an advantage in attracting people to our community that should be strongly supported. I am in favor of strengthening support for historic preservation in our community through whatever mechanisms will build that support, and will make historic preservation efforts more viable in the long term. I would consider specific proposals for changes in the ordinances and for stronger enforcement in light of that long term goal.

Kathy Plomin: I agree that Lexington's historic attributes contribute to the overall attractiveness of the area to new businesses and residents. I believe that we need to have a greater awareness and concern towards identification and enforcement of preservation ordinances.

Don Pratt: I am so sorry that so much of what I remember historic in Lexington has been destroyed. I know many share/show pride in what has been saved but too much more is gone. (I do praise and acknowledge that which has been saved and maintained.) Many, too, have **falsely claimed "preservationist" status** while negligent or idle in enforcing or passing laws, or resisting destruction. (Yes, I remember Mrs. Graves lying in front of bulldozers to save the High Street log house now on Mill St.) Yes to stronger laws or ordinances and expansion to be inclusive of other properties not in specific districts (such as Springs Motel.)

Ismael Shalash: Lexington has a unique balance of exquisite scenery and great history that really makes our city a special place to live. The great history of this city should be honored and placed on display for every resident or visitor to see. I believe strengthening our historic preservation will only continue that growth.

2. Pretend you are having dinner with your friends and you are asked the following question: “What do you think about the CentrePointe situation?” Provide your response.

Brown: Approval has been granted for the development and we should wait on the outcome of all aspects of the project especially the funding. In the interim, I have no relative suggestions for the utilization of the site.

Gorton: The way that the Centre Pointe situation occurred is unfortunate. I acknowledge that this is private property, so technically, the owner has the right to do what he wants with the property within the law. However, given the prominence of the property within downtown Lexington & its potential impact on our city, I suggest that following would have been meaningful: initial interaction, before design, between the developer & the surrounding neighborhoods & businesses to discuss the vision for the property, how it would “fit in” the downtown, & what uses the public thought should be considered; downtown demolition laws prohibiting demolition until project financing is in place; incentives or ordinances for preserving facades of historically important facades, such as those of Morton’s Row. After the initial information became public, I met with Dudley Webb to request that he lower the height of the proposed building (which he did by 4 floors) and to preserve the facades of the Morton’s Row building (which he declined).

Kay: I think the entire CentrePointe situation is unfortunate. The actions taken in regard to the project reveal that we have lacked foresight. We do not have regulations and procedures in place that will ensure that members of the community will have the opportunity for appropriate input on projects such as CentrePointe that will impact the heart of our city. I am also disappointed that in the time since the project was first proposed there has been no evident movement within government to institute changes in regulations and procedures that would prevent a repeat of this situation.

Plomin: The CentrePointe situation and process was unfortunate and taught all of us valuable lessons. Yes it was a private business transaction but its impact on our downtown appearance and vitality was tremendous. LFUCG should have taken a stronger stand and involvement.

Pratt: I personally told the Herald editorial board that Centre Pointe destruction was a done deal **before the last election** and that laws or ordinances had not been passed, even suggested, preventing the “slaughter” of history and character of part of Lexington. Many years before, and even recently, supposed historic preservation leaders failed us! Neglect and “demolition” by neglect of such buildings as we lost is far too often policy that must be ended!

Shalash: I believe the CentrePointe project has been a disaster. Now only do we have to move historic businesses in downtown Lexington, it’s been a great burden on the people of Lexington. We have more pressing issues right now than trying to develop downtown, especially at the expense of mainly local businesses. Overall the poor planning and execution of this project has only lead to more waste of time and money. Both this city can’t really afford to lose.

3. Would you support adding more historic districts to Lexington's current inventory of historic districts? Should the downtown business area (generally bordered by Jefferson, Second Street, Rose/Elm Tree and High Street) become an independent historic district?

Brown: I don't agree or disagree with expansion of historic districts. Residents and business owners should be integrally involved in any discussion of expansion of historic districts. As a member of the Urban County Council, I could sit in a quasi judicial position and must be careful of adopting positions in advance of a full, impartial hearing.

Gorton: I feel it is very important that neighborhoods first decide whether they want to pursue an H-1 Overlay district. As a strong supporter of historic preservation, it's important to me that we educate the public on the benefits of historic districts and their importance in the fabric of our neighborhoods. If the downtown business area property owners brought forward a historic district proposal, I would be supportive.

Kay: My interest in adding historic districts is best evidenced by my significant involvement in an attempt to achieve H-1 designation for my neighborhood. That attempt unfortunately failed. I believe then, and I believe now, that Lexington would benefit from extending H-1 designation to a number of neighborhoods that presently do not have the designation. However, as a councilperson I would be bound to consider any specific requests solely on merits of the proposal presented. As for a downtown district, I would have to know much more about the details of any proposal.

Plomin: If it was warranted- and consensus on the criteria. I would have to see the details and benefits of the independent historic district.

Pratt: As a poor student the history of that particular area, I will not say with specific recommendations what should be. I do now know why those streets would be a separate area either, but the idea of expansion of historic protection does sound necessary for Lexington to maintain more of our character and history. Yes, we should increase historical districts. As I said in #1, we also should protect specific locations outside these districts!

Shalash: Our historic districts are a real asset to Lexington. Though I do support the preservation of our history, I believe in trying economic times adding more at this time would not be wise. In order to sustain growth we have to find a balance in our neighborhoods. And my main concern at this time is using our money wisely so we can continue to grow as a community.

4. What are your views on the ever-increasing number of houses located in areas zoned only for single family use which are being converted to multi-tenant rental units and do you have any suggestions for addressing that issue?

Brown: In performing my sworn duties as a councilperson, I am obligated and committed to consider the deliberations, reports and recommendations of such specialist groups as the Town & Gown Committee, Land Bank Board, Downtown Development Authority and all other pertinent advising bodies. I must in a quasi judicial manner deliberate on the appropriateness of development in light of ordinances which are in place. I remain committed to protecting the character of established neighborhoods while meeting the needs of all community, universities and students. Also, property rights of owners must be respected.

Gorton: I have spent 2 ½ years serving on the Student Housing Task Force as well as being the Chair of the Council Planning Committee for the past 3+ years, where we have discussed this issue. The problems created when single-family homes are converted to higher density via multi-tenant rental range from increased noise & trash to many vehicles and parking in yards. I have worked to bring forward Zoning Ordinance Text Amendments to deal with these issues. Another significant part of the problem is to insure that the city had adequate enforcement of the laws to prevent illegal use of these properties.

Kay: I support the effort presently going forward in city council to add language to the zoning regulations to ensure that the intention of the zoning in single-family areas is carried out effectively.

Plomin: I am opposed to the vinyl box additions that have been in the spotlight. There has been abuse of code and zoning and it is time to address and rectify. I do believe UK's lack of ownership of issues stemming from alcohol/smoking not on campus should be involved in further consideration. Another option is to look at creative and relevant zoning options for the area.

Pratt: I look at the "single family" use/residence issue with a **major concern** for the students, and other low income residents, that are often in need of their living in close proximity to school or work. The need to increase affordable residencies downtown, and particularly around the university- especially low and moderately priced housing, is a must. Economically integrating neighborhoods is a must. Museum lifestyle living quarters are archaic.

Shalash: This can be a real concern in the future if it's not regulated. Making too main multi housing units will only lead to continuous problems with residents. I believe this will lead to poor living conditions, increase in crime, and poor building code regulations.

5. Do you support increasing the City's budget for historic preservation, code enforcement and/or building inspection and/or adding stronger remedies to this City's arsenal of enforcement measures to ensure compliance with housing/construction/building codes? Can you comment on what improvements or changes, if any, you might recommend for those City offices/ordinances?

Brown: Increasing the city's budget for historic preservation, code enforcement and/or building inspection would have to be assessed based on fund availability and public hearings, which would garner a sense of community will on these matters.

Gorton: Yes. During my tenure on the Council, I have been a consistent voice for stronger & better funded code enforcement & building inspection. Last year I supported allocating money & positions to code enforcement, which was approved by the full Council. I also supported the Council initiative to implement higher fines for violations. During the past few months I have proposed that the city invest in software which would link code enforcement, building inspection, waste management, & other government divisions so that a property could be queried and all violations & non-compliance issues would be on one site linked to the property.

Kay: I have been active as a citizen on this issue. I have worked with others to encourage changes in the regulations, in enforcement, and in the availability of information. As a councilperson, I will be an advocate for increased transparency, including making all code enforcement and building inspection records available on-line, and for a review of the structure for enforcement and fines.

Plomin: It would depend on funds available- as a city we first need to take care of safety's critical needs- however I do believe in enforcement of existing code.

Pratt: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. At the same time we increase defense of historic property, we must be conscientious of the economic times and the effect on people who do not have means. I would recommend seeking a cooperative effort to help owners, not confrontational, especially those with limited means. I remember a mandate on an elderly woman who could not afford a tree removal. I thought a loan method with a lean on the property that could be held until the change of ownership (a logical interest added). I promise to seek the best advice and proven examples in other cities for MODEL improvements, changes and ordinances! Mark my words!

Shalash: Absolutely, our standards of living have to improve. Code enforcement plays a vital role in making sure our structures are proper assembled. They must make sure we continue to keep our standards high so neighborhoods can feel safe. Land owners have a responsibility of safety to their tenants. It is the job of code and building inspectors to ensure those safeties.

6. Have you given any thought to which individuals you might endorse or hope to see appointed to fill vacancies on boards/commissions such as the Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, Courthouse Area Design Review Board, and Board of Architectural Review? What attributes or experience will you look for in persons who are recommended to the Council to fill any vacancies that might arise?

Brown: My evaluation, of each candidate before the council, would be based on the individual's commitment to serve and their understanding of the responsibilities of the Board or Commission. I would further be looking at the professional expertise that each candidate would possess.

Gorton: During my years on the Council, I have been a public voice for diversity on our boards & commissions. It is important that these boards have members who are familiar with the issues as well as objective about the issues. Critical thinkers, visionaries, neighborhood advocates, citizens with architectural as well as planning experience would be very valuable to these boards/commissions.

Kay: I served on the Planning Commission for four years, and valued the range of experience and perspectives among my fellow commissioners. This included specific areas of relevant expertise. I would look for similar balance when reviewing appointments for these boards.

Plomin: I feel strongly that when decisions are being made that have impact on our community residents that we have a well rounded representation of voice around the table.

Attributes/Experience- Relevant experience and skill sets to the position and matter

Pratt: Yes. The people I am thinking of for appointments **or for advice** would be trustworthy due to reputations and roles in this city. I repeat part of my answer to question #1, "Many... have **falsely claimed "preservationist" status** while negligent or idle in enforcing, passing laws or resisting destruction. I need to learn, via studying, success in other parts of the state and nation. Lexington can succeed and being the example. The greatest attribute is honesty. One great method of appointment would be for the public help, not just inside advice.

Shalash: I have not reviews the candidates to these positions at this time. These individuals should have either background in zoning, land use, or similar type experiences. We want individuals who have vision of a better city.

7. What do you view as the function of the Downtown Development Authority and do you have any plans to recommend a re-direction of the focus or goals of the DDA?

Brown: The mission of the Lexington Downtown Development Authority is to direct redevelopment initiatives in downtown Lexington specifically. I have and would interject that the DDA not be all consumed with the bricks & mortar of redevelopment initiatives and be sensitive/considerate of the people who live in and around downtown. Maintaining/consideration of the demographic composition of the downtown, in my opinion has to always be on the table as the goal of improving quality of life is pursued.

Gorton: The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was established by the Urban County Council in order to promote development, land use and activities that impact the downtown area of Lexington. The Council Intergovernmental Committee has reviewed the mission and goals of the DDA within the past year. It would be appropriate for the Council to review whether the original mission of the DDA needs any new focus/goals.

Kay: On their website they say their mission is "...to promote development, land uses and activities that make downtown Lexington the lively, thriving, stimulating and diverse economic, cultural and residential heart of Central Kentucky..." To help achieve a better balance in the ways they pursue this mission, I would advocate for at least one person representing downtown residents on both their board and their advisory board.

Plomin: I see LDDA as a conduit for downtown redevelopment initiative and projects. The LFUCG downtown plans and politics are coordinated through LDDA- I do feel that DLC and LDDA need to even more interactive and coordinated perhaps under the same umbrella.

Pratt: I do not have a history of, or with, the DDA, but have a deep suspicion of too much of what is happening, or has happened (and some of highly questionable personalities) in leadership roles downtown... and their associations. Three of the best goals for downtown I have ever heard came during the battle to keep from closing Vine Street at Rupp Arena. They were: create affordable, in addition to the plush housing, to keep people downtown as their lifestyles, stop the self contained nature of high rise structures so that week day workers go outside their buildings and onto our streets and require new structures in the downtown area to have all 1st floor levels be retail spacing.

Shalash: They function to make downtown Lexington as appealing and attractive as possible. They help with the development of business as well as housing. They have a crucial role in the development of the core of the city because a downtown Lexington can go a long way in the economic growth of Lexington. But at the same time we must grow within our limitation without sacrificing those things that make downtown so special in the first place for example the historic districts. I believe we have more pressing issues than downtown Lexington. Bigger isn't always better.

8. Go back to your dinner with your friends. You are asked, “What do you think about the Lyric Theatre?” Provide your response.

Brown: The restoration of the Lyric Theatre was absolutely necessary to maintain the tie to Lexington’s African-American history in the East End. There was the need to have a repository of entertainment history made in that theatre and to remember the economic vitality of the DeWeese Street business district. I believe there was a community obligation to restore the Lyric just as the city did with the Kentucky Theatre on Main St. some years ago.

Gorton: The Lyric Theatre has wonderful potential and represents a very important part of the history of Lexington. Many people today remember the glory days of the Lyric Theatre when the top black entertainers performed there. With the ongoing renovation and expansion of the Lyric Theatre, the future for live entertainment, a museum, and cultural events in the East End looks excellent. This will compliment Lexington’s cultural environment.

Kay: The Lyric Theatre promises to be an exciting addition to the artistic, educational, and cultural life of the entire community, but especially for downtown, and more especially for the East End. In addition, it promises to be a spur to economic and residential development for the Third Street corridor and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Plomin: I am a big advocate for the arts in our community and believe the Lyric reflects a history of our arts that needs to be memorialized. It will also be a catalyst for the growth and vitality of the East End.

Pratt: I was against the abuse of power that required the development of this “historic” property. I was concerned with the location due to parking as well as security concerns that threaten attendance by many people. The sweet heart (probably criminal) deal, that kept Ben Snyder block from being saved and Lexington having a much more dynamic arts, cultural or science center being built there, brought about this legal mandate for spending on this black facility with some history (a facility that I do not object to). My opposition was due to the location and that what the city is doing to the structure now. What they are doing now is another flawed, and seriously questionable, sweetheart deal. Despite honest opposition to the early plans, I attended the first **wonderful** meeting to look at what should be done with the Lyric Theatre. Then and there a HUGE audience divided into groups and came up with suggestions of multiple uses and wonderful creative thinking of expanding functions within the facility. I came away with awe! This participation of citizens was totally ignored for behind closed door thinking and inside planning, sweetheart contracting that has led to a grossly inflated price and poor planned usage of space and money. The Lyric could become another Opera House that usage is not beneficial enough to the majority of citizens, including the majority of the black community. (Note: I love the Opera House restoration.)

Shalash: I am very adamant about the reopening of the Lyric Theatre. I believe there is no better way to grow a city’s culture than with art. This theater will bring life back to a community that has been severally lacking. This historic piece of property is a part of Lexington history that needs to be open.

9. Indicate whether you have ever visited or attended a function held at each of the following sites:

	Brown	Gorton	Kay	Plomin	Pratt	Shalash
Hunt-Morgan House	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mary Todd Lincoln House	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Ashland- the Henry Clay Estate	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The Pope Villa	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
African American Cemetery #2 on 7th St	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Waveland	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
The Distillery District, including Buster's	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
McConnell Springs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
The Old Carnegie Library	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Old Morrison at Transylvania University	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

10. What would you identify as the three most pressing issues facing the City of Lexington?

Brown: 1. Economic development- There is a definite need for generating an adequate revenue stream. The necessity to supply the citizens of Fayette County with the basic services required for an ample quality of life. Also, citizens should have the right to earn an adequate wage to support themselves and their family.

2. Sewers (Sanitary/Storm)- We have a significantly expensive problem in our community as a result of decaying infrastructure. As a result of the neglect in our systems we received a significant fine from the EPA and are now being forced, per an agreed judgment, to make the required repairs.

3. Infill & Redevelopment- If we are going to fervently preserve our rural land it becomes increasingly necessary that the inner core has more density. We must adequately fund the program and put all necessary criteria in place. I believe elected officials must have the necessary courage to move forward with the plans for our community. We can't be deterred from completing outlined tasks because "NIMBY" is certainly alive and well in Fayette County.

Gorton: First, our budget situation, specifically our decreased revenues. For the past two years our city has faced flat revenue growth and during this current fiscal year we have had to cut our budget by 5%. We heavily rely on occupational license fees & business net profits tax for revenues; we suffer during an economic downturn when jobs are lost & business profits are down. Second, the challenge of growing up not out, so that we are able to continue to protect our agricultural & equine businesses as well as our beautiful landscape which is known around the world & is important to our tourism industry. Finally, Lexington's aging population and the necessary infrastructure & planning to support our older generations is not in place. (e.g. sidewalks, mass transportation, etc) We need to develop a clear focus on how to provide the public infrastructure for our elders to continue to live a quality life in Lexington.

Kay: Full and timely implementation of the EPA consent decree, so that our sanitary sewer and storm water systems are safe and adequate and our groundwater is protected.

Continued economic prosperity in the face of economic instability at the state, national and international levels.

Preservation of the best parts of our natural and man-made environment that are at the heart of our quality of life.

Plomin: 1. Budget Deficit- need for more innovative and collaborative thinking

2. Regionalism- we must change mindsets- as limited resources continue to be a reality we need to look at a regional strategy

3. Shared vision and consensus leadership- looking at common ground

Pratt: A) the economic instability facing Lexington and the nation. B) the lack of cooperation of the University of Kentucky (which has faculty far more capable than its administration) to help in our community not abuse or neglect our community C) preservation via better planning and action for saving our "bluegrass," including our farms, significant properties, character and history.

Shalash: A. Better use of city finances, instead of always having a budget crisis. B. We need to do a better job creating jobs to stimulate the growth of this community. C. Focus on all parts of the city instead of only the downtown area

11. What is your perception of the Alltech WEG and do you see the Games as a positive or negative for our City and why? How will the average Lexington citizen be affected by the Games?

Brown: I believe the Alltech WEG will have a very positive effect on our community. I think we should selfishly be looking at getting as much economic residual as possible from the Games being in our community. I believe we must have substantive initiatives which will carry on well beyond 2010 and will position us well for the legacy of the Games to be long remembered as a turning point in how the world sees Lexington and Central Kentucky. It would be a terrible thing if we move into October, 2010 and beyond only to revert to community/business practices which have stifled our growth and economic vitality for many, many years. How are we going to seize attention during this very short period on the world stage? Will the world see our community as welcoming and ready to do business with them?

Gorton: The Alltech WEG coming to Lexington, KY is an opportunity of a lifetime for our community. It will have a similar impact on our area as that of the Olympics. Most of the impact will be positive. Tickets have already been purchased by people in every state and many foreign countries. Many of these attendees have never been to Kentucky and it is an opportunity to tell our story about our region, its beauty, its friendly people, and the importance of our horse industry. Many of the people who attend will return in the future for another visit. As with any mega-event, there is a lot of hard work going on and many of our citizens have registered to help as volunteers during the WEG. There will be lots of special events for our own citizens.

Kay: The WEG will be a significant positive for our community. In addition to the immediate impact the games will have on our economy due to the influx of tourists, we will be seen in a positive light by people from around the world, both those who attend and those who view the games through various media. Improvements to the Horse Park will have lasting benefits, and will enhance its ability to continue to attract visitors to Lexington. The average citizen will be able to take part in all of the artistic and cultural events planned as part of the overall event.

Plomin: Positive. I admire the ambitious undertaking and believe the marketing and visibility of our city through the games is a valuable opportunity.

The average citizen will be somewhat affected (if attendance reaches projections) in traffic, housing, restaurant, and entertainment.

Pratt: With lack of knowledge of World Equestrian Games, I only fear that the Alltech WEG games become more public relations hype than benefit. Were as the public is optimistic about the attention, and increased revenue, for our community, I join in the spirit. I welcome the international community that this represents and hope we prove worthy! The average citizen may have some of the "trickle down" benefits like we had "trickle down" economics in the past.

Shalash: This is our Olympics. We WEG will put Lexington on the world stage. All eyes will be on us and we have to take advantage. This will be by far the quickest way to stimulate our economy on a local level. The city stands to generation a lot of revenue from the WEG. The average citizen I hope will enjoy the experience of this once in a lifetime event. Traffic will be a factor to most residents but it will be ready. Our city is ready for this world wide event.

12. Do you favor increasing the Urban County Government's monetary support for the PDA (Purchase of Development Rights) Program?

Brown: The Council has a responsibility to deliberate on all matters before it and to review them in light of the availability of funds. I remain committed to the preservation of unique and sensibly targeted farmland, priceless to the area & would respect those zoning laws currently designed & in place to provide such protection.

Gorton: I am the only current Council member who was on the Council in 1999 when we passed the Rural Land Management Plan and in 2000 when we adopted the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program. I have been a strong supporter of this program as it is a critically important part of our overall Comprehensive Plan for Land Use. Nationally, PDR is considered a success and is referred to across our country as an excellent example of land-use planning for rural areas. In 2009 I made the motion to include \$ 1 million in the city's budget beyond the \$ 2 M already budgeted, with the hope that we could obtain a potential additional match at the Federal level. In order to maintain our PDR program successfully, we need to balance funding for our downtown & Infill & Redevelopment to take pressure off the rural area to develop.

Kay: I have been a strong supporter of the PDR program since its inception, and was privileged to have a small part in the discussions that led to the Rural Land Management Plan and the PDR program. I believe that the current level of support should be maintained, as we are moving steadily toward the goal of purchasing the development rights for 50,000 acres of Fayette County farm land.

Plomin: I am a proponent for PDR and would favor additional support if it could be made available. The challenges of lack of budget funding come into play for this to happen.

Pratt: With the economic struggles of our citizens at these times, such would be a mistake. Lexington should certainly not increase more investment without more reassurance and review of the benefit from and laws of PDR. I have said from the beginning that our "zoning czar," Bill Lear (who as a state legislator was responsible for bad state zoning laws), was a significant part of the PDR rules and regulations making my opposition. My opposition issues were multiple, though **I COMPLETELY AGREE WITH THE INTENT**. A few of these were: a) Development next to and around any PDR agreed property, including counties adjacent to Fayette Co. over which we have NO control b) The value of property for development may increase to a level that set buy out penalties would not be a disadvantage to an owner. c) What options in other successful communities could we have pursued (like: Portland, OR and Denver, CO.)? d) What about requiring higher density housing in all new development when changing the urban services area?

Shalash: PDR is a good program that will help keep Lexington farmland preserved. I do support in an increase because I believe that economic growth can be supported from agriculture as well as our horse farms industry. Development is necessary for every city to prosper but with limitations. You can't get away from our roots; we should stick to what made Lexington so special in the first place.

13. Do you support converting downtown streets such as Limestone, Vine, Short, High and Upper from one-way to two-way traffic?

Brown: At this time I am unsure of my position as it relates to converting Downtown streets from one-way to two-way traffic. When I was on the Council, I remember that there was significant cost to making this change. Can we afford the cost? I would need to see the configuration of the streets and how this would affect the businesses and residents in the surrounding area. I would, also, think that there would be considerable discussion as Council deliberates its position and the direction it will ultimately take.

Gorton: I am supportive of converting Short & Second streets, as well as Upper & Limestone to two-way. We converted 3d & 4th Streets a few years ago and it has been considered a success, with few resulting problems. A few years ago a traffic study was conducted regarding two-way conversion. Based on that study, I am not completely convinced at this point that Vine & Main should be converted. I will need to have more input from the engineers showing these two streets will result in a good situation if converted to two-way.

Kay: I support converting back to two-ways streets as a crucial part of making downtown more pedestrian friendly and thus more attractive for residents and visitors. We need to think about our street system as more than just a way for automobile traffic to move as quickly as possible.

Plomin: Yes I do. I believe it would add to the vitality of downtown and help to increase retail base.

Pratt: Yes to some and NO to others, but no absolute commitment now. I will be open to learning why or why not. I would certainly be as honest and concerned as I, and few others, were with such decisions as the closing of Vine Street next to Rupp Arena, permanently closing of Rose Street at the Medical Center and now planning and development of a major part of the extension of Newtown Pike.

Shalash: Absolutely not. One way traffic was designed to increase traffic flow. By making these streets two ways will only hinder traffic flow but I believe would cause more sever gridlock. I think it would be smart to keep things the way they are.

14. Your dinner with friends in concluding. You are asked this final question: “When you get to the Council, what are you going to do about the Lexington Mall property?”

Brown: The deterioration of this once valuable community retail establishment is troubling to every citizen in Fayette County. I think the government could enter into conversations with the owners to explore a mutually beneficial direction for the use of the building and/or the land on which it sits. I believe that the government should be careful with our position as it relates to the respect of private property rights. I would insist that Code Enforcement would enforce all ordinances and regulations as they relate to the maintenance and upkeep of the property.

Gorton: Lexington Mall is privately owned. I will continue to encourage our mayor and others to have dialogue with the property owner to move forward on a development proposal that will enhance the Richmond Road corridor.

Kay: I will advocate for regulations that raise taxes on empty properties, so that owners of properties such as Lexington Mall have an incentive to either redevelop them or put them up for sale. Many communities have adopted such regulations with very positive effects.

Plomin: It’s time to do something as too much time has gone by since Dillards closed several years ago. The city must aggressively work with the Saul Company for redevelopment as this is a “gaping” hole in our community landscape.

Pratt: The Lexington Mall issue may be the primary reason for bringing out opposition to the local ownership of OUR water company. The suggestion of condemnation by a previous mayor probably brought out the hostile vote toward local ownership. Condemnation of private property is a terrorizing idea to so many citizens- in light of the nationally publicized Connecticut court case, yet citizens hardly acknowledge that KY AM condemns private property regularly. Their pipeline to their future Owen County treatment facility has been more destructive (condemnable environmental destruction for sure) and more costly than the act of condemning Lexington Mall would have been. (Lexingtonians are somewhat seeing this in the KY AM Water Company rate increase requests.) Taxation and inspections to make sure demolition by neglect may be a couple of actions Lexington can maintain to push owners to do something more positive than their acts now. I would wish the owners cooperation, but I do not know or have such experience, or lack of experience, with them.

Shalash: The Lexington Mall property currently is a big waste of space. It needs to be addressed soon. It’s an eye sore, but with proper planning it can be converted into something. I don’t believe a mall would work there but it can be put to good use.



To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you for your correspondence. The questions you asked could best be answered by meeting with you or your representative and thus having a full discussion of your issues. I am available to meet individually or if you want to host a forum, I would avail myself to your request. I can be reached at (859) 321-1351.

As an At-Large Councilmember since 2003, my voting record is a public record. I have and will continue to provide basic services to all Fayette County residents, be fiscally responsible and work to provide jobs through economic development. Moreover, I am proud of my record where it deals with Historic Preservation. My stance on issues is available on my website, www.churckellinger.com or I can send you a brochure when they are finished printing them.

Thank you for your correspondence, and I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck".

Chuck Ellinger

