

Purchase of Development Rights Program Executive Summary

PDR is now in its 11th successful year of conservation easement acquisition and has become an award winning and nationally recognized farmland preservation program. Lexington-Fayette County's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program was the first agricultural conservation easement program by a local government in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Protecting our world famous rural landscape from urban sprawl has been a community goal in Fayette County for over 50 years. Three major actions are accomplishing this goal. One, in 1958, an Urban Services Boundary was implemented as a planning tool to limit development to urban areas served by sanitary sewers. Two, in 1999, the minimum lot size in rural Fayette County was raised from 10 acres to 40 acres. Three, in 2000, an ordinance was passed by the Urban County Council creating the Purchase of Development Rights Program and the Fayette County Rural Land Management Board, Inc.

There are six main goals of PDR. One, in accordance with the Urban County Government Charter and the Rural Service Area Land Management Plan (adopted in 1999), the PDR program supports the integrity of the Full Urban Services District. Concentrating growth in an urban center reduces the cost of public services to local government. Two, to support the purpose of the Urban Services Boundary (adopted in 1958) as described in the Rural Service Area Land Management Plan. Three, to protect the agricultural, equine and tourism economies of Fayette County by conserving large areas of rural farmland. Four, conserve and protect the natural, scenic, open space, historic and agricultural resources of rural Fayette County. Five, use conservation easements to protect 50,000 acres of rural Fayette County by the year 2020. Six, provide funding of \$140 million (local, state and federal funding) over 20 years. 50,000 acres of farmland is required in order for Fayette County to support the existing agricultural infrastructure and to protect our global brand identity as the 'Horse Capital of the World'. 50,000 acres is only 27% of all of the land in Fayette County. This finite resource supports an agriculture industry with a market value of products sold of \$504 million dollars a year (2007), a \$1.6 billion dollar a year tourism industry (2007), a \$144 million dollar cattle industry (2006) and a horse industry with an economic impact that exceeds \$1 billion dollars annually. In 2006, Fayette County was the number 2 county in Kentucky with \$387 million in cash farm receipts.

PDR has a staff of LFUCG employees who direct and administer this voluntary program. The Fayette County Rural Land Management Board, Inc. is appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council. Applications to the PDR program are evaluated and the farms are visited by the staff. The applications are ranked by the staff and approved by the Board. The farms are appraised in rank order. The Board makes offers to purchase the development rights on the farms and places conservation easements on the properties. Once a purchase contract is signed, a closing is scheduled. The farms are monitored annually for conservation easement compliance. The farms may be sold or bequeathed, but the conservation easement runs with the title of the land in perpetuity.

229 farms with over 25,602 acres are protected by conservation easements, 51.2% of the 50,000 acre goal. 1,705 acres of the total acreage are donated conservation easements, resulting in a savings of over \$4.4 million dollars in conservation easement acquisition funds to the LFUCG.

More information can be found on the PDR web site at www.lexingtonky.gov/index.aspx?page=497