



The Fayette Alliance

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Executive Director

Elizabeth Knox van Nagell

LFUCG Urban County Council
200 East Main Street
Lexington, KY 40507

July 8th, 2008

Dear Council members,

I am here on behalf of the Fayette Alliance. The Fayette Alliance is a coalition of agricultural, neighborhood, and development interests whose aim is to promote urban and rural vitality in Lexington-Fayette County.

Farmland preservation, and innovative infill redevelopment are essential pillars of the Fayette Alliance's mission—and, more importantly, the prosperity of Lexington-Fayette County.

The CentrePointe project marks a pivotal opportunity for downtown Lexington, and the greater Bluegrass Region. If done right, CentrePointe will anchor and facilitate an urban renaissance of epic proportions—drawing artistic energy, market investment, and

knowledge-based economies into our city. Under this model, Lexington will grow without anemically consuming its most treasured and finite asset—Bluegrass farmland. As affirmed by countless experts and Commerce Lexington trips, this strategy is crucial to Lexington’s success in the 21st Century and beyond.

But the real question remains: How can we realize CentrePointe’s potential and get it right? The answer is simple: community participation. CentrePointe may be a private venture, but it will impact the public for generations—by changing the urban fabric in which thousands of people work and live, and by requiring taxpayer resources-TIF or no TIF- for services and infrastructure. CentrePointe will not exist in a vacuum, but rather as a product and reflection of Lexington-Fayette County and the greater Bluegrass Region.

Since March 2008, the Fayette Alliance has conditionally supported CentrePointe—provided that the developer meaningfully respond to the community’s concerns with the project. Throughout the negotiation process, we asked that CentrePointe:

- Follow the recommendations of the Downtown Master Plan; specifically that the building’s scale and function be oriented toward Main Street to promote downtown’s most viable pedestrian corridor;
- Ensure that its first floor retail spaces interact with the street for optimal pedestrian energy and accessibility;
- If feasible, integrate the block’s historic structures into its design.
- Complete an infrastructure analysis to ensure that the city’s antiquated sanitary sewer and stormwater systems can adequately service the development.

Despite these requests, the developer has failed to meaningfully address the aforementioned community concerns, and consequently the Fayette Alliance withdraws its support for CentrePointe at this time. After reviewing the latest design plans, it is apparent that the developer is unwilling to work with policy leaders and civic advocates to substantially address the issues of scale, layout, and the integration of existing structures into CentrePointe’s final development plan.

Particularly, CentrePointe does not satisfy Recommendation 1 of the Downtown Master Plan which requires that downtown infill projects promote a pedestrian network, and “strive to strengthen existing neighborhoods by respecting the historic fabric and introducing compatible uses that complement the community’s attributes and needs.”

Consensus among architects from the University of Kentucky and the private sector agrees that CentrePointe is a too large for the block and downtown Lexington in general. In addition, many feel that CentrePointe’s Vine Street façade discourages pedestrian activity along the corridor. In deference to their professional opinion, the Alliance agrees and asks that CentrePointe’s scale be reduced to promote compatibility and walkability in the existing block and urban core.

Further, it is unclear whether the current structures on the Woolworth block can be feasibly saved and incorporated into CentrePointe’s final design. Historic or not, these

buildings represent the unique scale of the block, and should be preserved and integrated into the development if possible in furtherance of the Downtown Master Plan.

Demolition of these buildings should stop until financing for the project is secured, and local preservation, banking, and real estate experts can assess the buildings' viability and meet with the developer to determine the best course of action.

In addition, as designed, CentrePointe will displace the Lexington Farmer's Market—a significant economic and cultural institution for local farmers and urbanites. The Alliance asks the developer and/or LFUCG to establish a new location for the farmer's market before construction proceeds.

Lastly, there has been little discussion about CentrePointe's infrastructural impacts on Lexington-Fayette County's compromised sewer and stormwater systems. In furtherance of the EPA Consent Decree and its Capacity Assurance Program, a thorough infrastructure analysis must occur before development begins.

The Fayette Alliance strongly supports investment in downtown Lexington. No doubt, it is a key component to preserving and promoting our rural resources and the signature industries that thrive on it. Nevertheless, not all infill is good infill-and community participation is crucial to the success of CentrePointe and Lexington's ability to responsibly accommodate our future growth needs.

Leon Krier, a famous architect, said it best: "All buildings, large or small, public or private, have a public face, a façade; they therefore, without exception, have a positive or negative effect on the quality of the public realm, enriching or impoverishing it in a lasting and radical manner. The architecture of the city and public space is a matter of common concern to the same degree as laws and language-they are the foundation of civility and civilization."

We respectfully ask that LFUCG and the developer establish a transparent and structured public participation process to meaningfully address the aforementioned community concerns. It is our hope that we can all work together to achieve a win-win for our great city. To do otherwise hangs the promise of CentrePointe and Lexington-Fayette County in the balance.

Sincerely,

Knox van Nagell
Executive Director

