



Trends and Issues That Influence the Goal Setting Process

What trends and issues were identified in the preceding Chapters that may have an influence on the direction, type and timing of growth in Woodford County.

The goal setting process ties vision and action together within the framework of a comprehensive plan. The vision for Woodford County, which has been laid out in the *Preserving Town and Country* planning program, is based on a clear delineation of areas intended for urban uses and purposes and those intended for rural and agricultural purposes. Every community faces challenges to the achievement of its vision. These challenges are referred to as trends and issues and serve as a beginning point for the development of goals and objectives.

Trend/Issue No. 1

Population Growth Outside of Cities

The data from Chapter 1 (specifically Table 1.7) indicates that Woodford cities are still growing, but at a slower rate than for areas outside these cities. We know that a sizable portion of non-city growth is occurring within the unincorporated portions of designated Urban Service Boundary areas. There are three sub-issues related to this population shift away from incorporated cities.

- The relatively small amount of growth indicated for Versailles raises an issue and concern about housing reinvestment and infill opportunities. The Urban Service Boundary strategy will continue to work well **if** core communities continue to grow and provide the types of services and amenities that will attract additional investment. Without a growing tax

base, communities like Versailles might find it very difficult to continue to provide the type and level of services that will attract and hold future development with the USB.

- There may be increased pressure on USB land resources (and potential non USB land resources) without a viable strategy to encourage infill development within Woodford cities. The pace of development of USB resources, and ultimately the size of USB areas could be affected by this trend.
- Midway is an exception to the population shift issue in that it has experienced significant population gains (in percentage) over the past decade. However, if such growth continues Midway will be facing a challenge to its current character as a village. The Midway Commerce District will certainly be an influencing factor in how Midway grows in the next twenty years.

The *Preserving Town and Country* planning program has recognized the inherent relationship between towns and town service areas, particularly through the emphasis on master planning for downtown Versailles and the Lexington Street Corridor. Goals and objectives that support positive relationships between town and town service areas should be a key feature of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan Update.

Trend/Issue No. 2

An Aging Population; Declining Household Size

Woodford's population is aging and its households are getting smaller. These trends can present several issues for planning. First, declining household size can mean fewer school age children resulting in declining numbers of pupils in public schools. Second, it can mean that demand for housing units per unit of population may actually increase! It will certainly influence the type and location of housing units demanded by future Woodford households.

An aging population also presents challenges in the labor market. Are Woodford children leaving the community, and if so, for what reason? How will this affect Woodford's ability to attract jobs, particularly in knowledge based job sectors. Will younger workers be attracted to Woodford as a place of residence and employment if median housing values continue to increase as they have in the past decade?

How these questions are answered could have an impact on the pace of development of USB land resources, economic and housing development strategies and incentive packages, and where the Board of Education places priorities in terms of capital and learning resource investments.

Trend/Issue No. 3

Job Growth is Outpacing Population Growth

During the last decade Woodford's population grew by 16.3 percent and the number of jobs increased by 18.7 percent – a small but important difference. Should this trend continue in the next two decades two planning challenges are apparent. First, an expanding employment base could mean that residents from surrounding counties in the Local Region will be drawn to Woodford jobs – commuting in for employment purposes. The obvious impact for Woodford from this scenario is increased traffic on local roads.

The second planning challenge involves the fiscal side of growth. Commuting workers can mean limited income from occupational taxes, property taxes, sales taxes, etc. Getting jobs may only be part of the challenge of fiscally responsible growth.

Trend/Issue No. 4

Job Location and Commuting Patterns

Current trends in employment by place of residence (see Table 2.4 on page 25 of Chapter 2) indicate that the manufacturing and retail trade sectors have experienced significant declines (11 and 12 percent respectively). On the other hand, the “services” sectors (communications, finance/real estate, services and government) have experienced significant gains. When this data is reviewed in light of employment by place of work information (Table 2.6), the most evident trend is that a significant number of Woodford residents (almost 38%) are commuting out of county for service jobs – and the percentage of the Woodford workforce that is commuting out increased in the last decade.

While Woodford County reaps the occupational tax benefits from having the workers whose jobs are out-of-county, this can be a dangerous benefit. Why? If those workers begin to choose to live closer to their place of employment, Woodford could lose a portion of its workforce and its occupational tax revenue.

Trend/Issue No. 5

The Changing Employment Base

A changing employment base can mean several things for Woodford's planning efforts. Is Woodford continuing to do the things that will help it to attract and retain the types of jobs it wants? How does Woodford compete with other counties in the Local and Bluegrass regions to attract major employers. Is it important to reverse the decline in the number of manufacturing jobs – or is it important to create the

workforce and type of community that knowledge based industries look for when searching for sites?

The data seems to support a conclusion that Woodford County is near a point of transition in terms of its population and employment characteristics. How Woodford views its position in a “regional” economy, and what it wants to achieve in terms of its residents and workers, will be key determinants in shaping the community of 2020.

Trend/Issue No. 6

What Will Replace Tobacco? Horse Farms and Agri-Tourism?

There are a number of reasons why tobacco will cease to be the primary agricultural crop for Kentucky and Woodford farmers. What will replace the income lost in the process of transition that is going to occur over the next several years? It is apparent from the data in this Background Report as well as Regional Coordination that the horse industry is expanding beyond its’ traditional base of Fayette County and growing in size. This trend is very evident in Woodford County.

Woodford’s heritage of prime agricultural land resources, formerly committed to tobacco production, are now valuable in other ways. The issues facing Woodford in this transition are many of those associated with industrial recruitment. Will the horse industry be fully recognized as an “industry without a roof” and will local governments undertake to plan and commit resources to the needs associated with this industry – including land resources. Also, can and should Woodford coordinate with its neighbors to ensure this industry is considered a “regional resource” requiring similar and complementary land use policies between neighbors.



Labrot and Graham Distillery near Versailles

Finally, as Woodford considers ways to replace income lost from tobacco production, what should be its position with regard to a growing potential for agri-tourism (some would also include eco-tourism in this term). Is this a potential economic sector that Woodford wants to pursue and how is this accomplished?

Trend/Issue No. 7

Where Will Woodford Residents Shop for Goods and Services?

Woodford's position in the regional economic structure has been as a source of workers for Fayette and Scott Counties. As the number of "rooftops" have increased in Woodford its' attractiveness to retail shopping and commercial enterprises. The recently approved, and under construction, Lexington Center project will substantially increase local shopping potential.



Rendering of Lexington Center Mixed Use Commercial Center

The trend to more rooftops, and its relatively high median family income, will continue to be attractive to retailers. The issue is whether more Lexington Centers will be proposed, and how Woodford will address such proposals – not only in terms of commercial development but also in terms of the impact to the town centers of Versailles and Midway.

Trend/Issue No. 8

Woodford's Heritage – Who's Minding the Store?

In Chapter 3 Woodford's significant inventory of historic and culturally important sites and districts was examined. This inventory is certainly a community asset. How should these assets be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan Update? Typically, communities assume such assets will be preserved and do not properly plan for their protection until it is too late. Communities should realize that many of these assets are in private ownership and they should be proactive, not reactive, advocates for preservation.

Woodford may also have a wonderful opportunity to incorporate many of these historic and culturally significant resources into a larger program promoting agri/eco/historic tourism.

Trend/Issue No. 9

Woodford's Neighborhoods and Small Communities

The Preserving Town and Country planning program focused attention on building neighborhoods the old fashioned way – with civic uses and green spaces – and incorporating places not only to live but to work and shop. Small communities are, in most respects, an extended type of neighborhood and should be planned in similar fashion.

The planning issues for Woodford County include this new focus on neighborhood building, but should also include a focus on the “how to” of preserving existing neighborhoods within communities such as Versailles and Midway.

Trend/Issue No. 10

The Housing Market, Neighborhoods and Woodford's Changing Household Characteristics

Woodford's average household size will likely continue to decline over the next two decades, influencing the housing market in ways that may not be readily apparent at this time. However, the planning issues that may surface include the need for smaller lots to accommodate the types of housing products that older residents will want, or will be attractive to younger home buyers looking for affordable housing opportunities. There is an inherent conflict between the zoning regulations in effect now within Woodford, and the densities that housing developers may need in the

future in order to provide products demanded by the market. These conflicts are sometimes realized through contentious struggles to rezone property for higher density housing. Woodford has addressed part of this issue through the *Preserving Town and Country* focus on building diverse, mixed use neighborhoods. However, this focus cannot be truly realized without the necessary improvements to the systems governing the development of such neighborhoods.

