

Prologue

What role does Woodford County play in the Local and Bluegrass Region?

The purpose of this Background Report is to sketch a “regional context” for planning in Woodford County. Chapter 100 of the Kentucky Revised Statutes (the Chapter dealing with comprehensive planning) does not list Regional Coordination as a required or optional element of a comprehensive plan. However, it is included in the Woodford update process because of the recognition that the impacts of growth and development do not stop at county boundaries.

The People, Jobs and Housing Background Report, among others, identifies many of the ways that Woodford’s population and employment are increasingly tied to regional trends and conditions. The Mobility Background Report examines the regional context for transportation planning, and specifically identifies as an issue existing and future transportation service impacts resulting from Woodford’s position between two major employment centers – Frankfort and Lexington. As icing on the cake, so to speak, the Land Use Background Report discusses what impacts that Fayette County’s Urban and Rural Service Area policies could have on adjoining counties such as Woodford.

During the next twenty years, it will become increasingly difficult for Woodford County to chart a course toward achieving its goals and objectives without the active support and cooperation of not only the adjoining counties, but also others within the Bluegrass Region. Hopefully, this Background Report will help the Woodford community and Planning Commission to begin an ongoing dialogue with its neighbors to address common issues and opportunities.

Before starting, however, let’s be sure we are all speaking the same language. Just what do we mean when using the term “region”. The term “**Bluegrass Region**” as used throughout this text includes the following counties: Anderson, Bourbon, Boyle, Clark, Fayette, Franklin, Garrard, Harrison, Jessamine, Madison, Mercer, Scott, and Woodford. These counties are part of the Bluegrass ADD (Area Development

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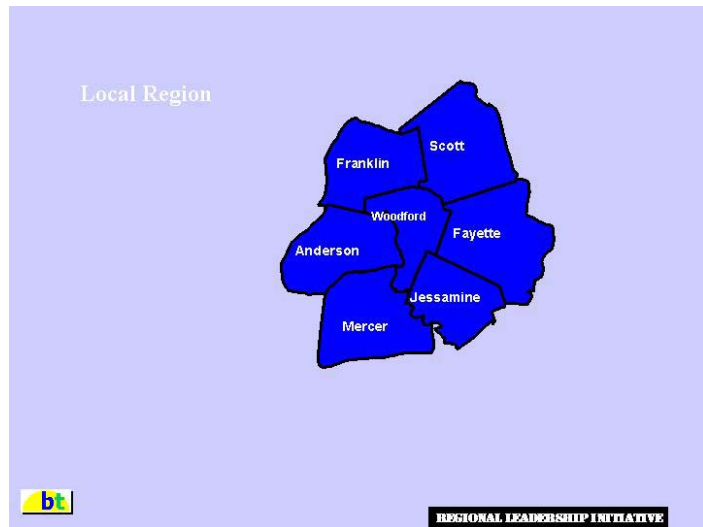
District), one of fifteen ADD’s in the state that perform a variety of “regional” planning and service delivery functions.



The term “**Lexington Metro**” includes a subset of the Bluegrass Region counties: Bourbon, Clark, Jessamine, Madison, Scott, and Woodford. This is an important region as it represents an area in which land use and transportation issues are most closely linked.



Finally, the term “**Local Region**” encompasses the counties bordering Woodford including: Anderson, Fayette, Franklin, Jessamine, Mercer, and Scott. These counties are most closely linked to Woodford for planning purposes, due to the KRS requirement that adjoining counties be advised of an update to the goals and objectives of a comprehensive plan.





How Coordination Occurs - Now

This Chapter's focus is on the entities and processes through which regional coordination of planning either does or does not occur. The Prologue clearly points out that Woodford County no longer holds all the keys to its future. The ability of the County and the Planning Commission to implement the *"Preserving Town and Country Program"* will be determined, in no small part over the next twenty years, by its ability to define a common agenda with other counties in the Local and Bluegrass Region related to economic development, rural preservation, transportation and land use.

The Case for Coordination - Why Is It Important?

Woodford County is bordered on three sides by some of the fastest growing census tracts in Kentucky. Recent Census data reveals 9 tracts with more than a 20% growth rate from 1990 to 2000. Of the 9 tracts, 7 grew at a much greater rate. Most startlingly, 3 tracts' growth exceeded 60%, with one exceeding 78%, and one over 94%! (See Figures 1.1 and 1.2)

This population growth has had, and will continue to have, impacts on Woodford County. Increased traffic is the most visible sign of this growth. Woodford County lies at the center of one of the most heavily traveled commuting corridors in the region (See Figure 1.3). Traffic is passing through Woodford County to destinations in Fayette, Franklin, Scott, and Jessamine Counties. This points out the importance not only of region-wide transportation planning, but tying regional economic development more closely with regional housing patterns.

A compromised environment is another impact of these rapid growth areas on Woodford's borders. The South Elkhorn Creek now carries more water than ever, resulting in higher flood levels¹. Water quality in the creek is suffering as well². Clear

¹ Kentucky Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Cabinet

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Creek, which drains much of western Jessamine County, also carries more water and suffers from decreased water quality. The Kentucky River itself is the focus of concerns related to flooding and water quality. (See Figure 1.5)

A looming issue related to high growth areas is increased development pressure on Woodford's rural lands. As the desire to move to rural areas increases across our region, due in large part from flight away from the blighted conditions of much of our cities and towns, developers and consumers can be expected to cast an eye on Woodford County.

These issues become even more important when considered against future population projections. The region is projected to add 189,735 people in the next 20 years, an increase of 30.25%³. Within that region, the Metro is projected to grow by 150,767 people, or 31.46%. This translates into a Metro growth increase of 80% of the entire region's projected population increase: put simply, the six counties that ring Fayette will see a vast majority of the region's growth. The counties that surround Woodford are projected to grow by 133,722 people, or 31.8 %. (See Figure 1.4 and Tables 1.1-1.4) As these figures show, by 2020 Fayette County's dominance as the prime population growth center will cease. Fayette's share of regional growth over the next 20 years is projected to be 35%: 65% of the growth will occur outside Fayette County. Fayette's share of the Metro's projected growth is 44%.

Figure 1.1 Bluegrass Region: Population Growth (as a percentage) by Counties

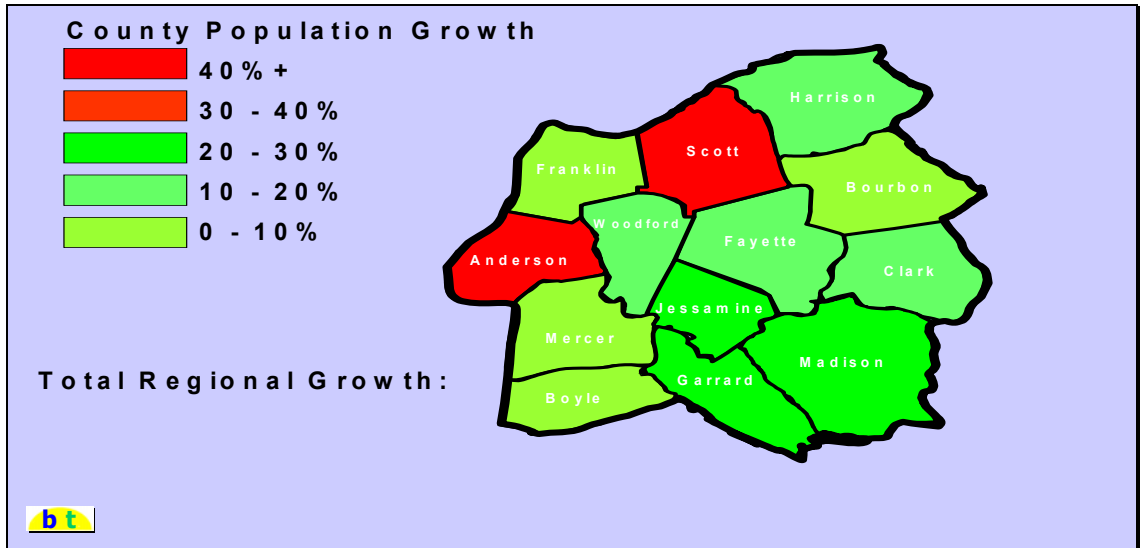


Figure 1.2 Population Growth by Census Tract: Bluegrass Region

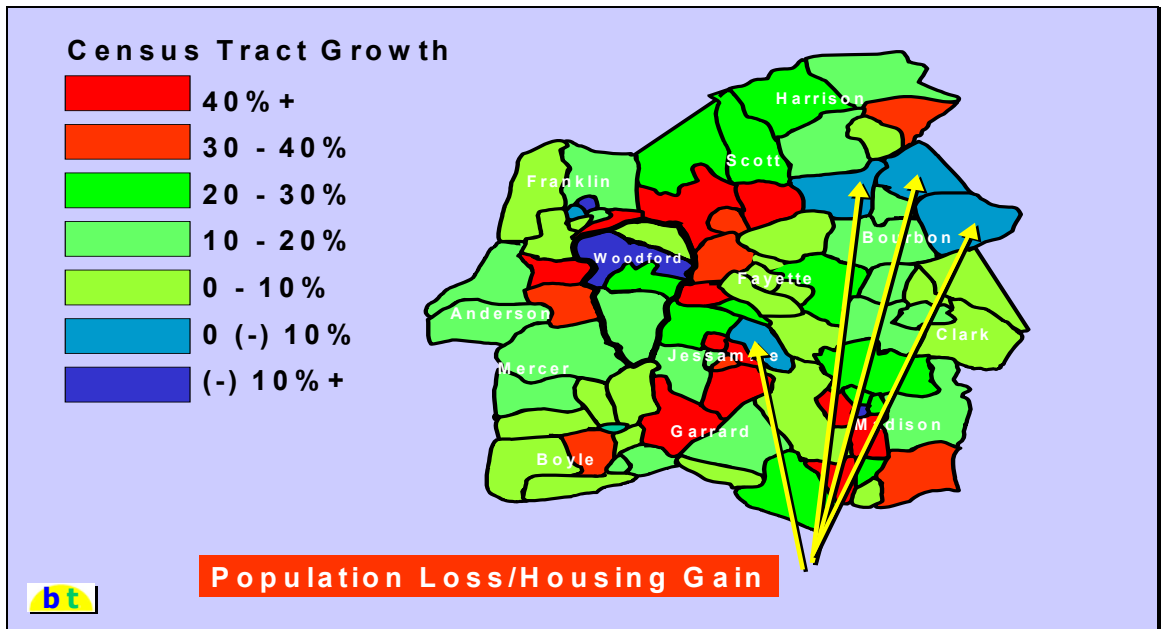


Table 1.2 Population Projections by County – Bluegrass Region

			Population Projections		2020	% Growth
	Census 2000	2005	2010	2015		
Anderson	19,111	21,977	25,036	28,495	32,347	69.3%
Bourbon	19,360	19,392	19,350	19,260	19,110	-1.3%
Boyle	27,697	28,503	29,273	30,085	30,888	11.5%
Clark	33,144	35,135	36,932	38,631	40,226	21.4%
Fayette	260,512	279,005	295,664	311,436	326,446	25.3%
Franklin	47,687	49,196	50,440	51,469	52,255	9.6%
Garrard	14,792	16,943	19,251	21,840	24,683	66.9%
Harrison	17,983	19,195	20,380	21,590	22,772	26.6%
Jessamine	39,041	43,521	48,116	53,174	58,647	50.2%
Madison	70,872	77,378	83,629	89,741	96,102	35.6%
Mercer	20,817	21,735	22,549	23,339	24,110	15.8%
Scott	33,061	38,696	44,851	51,981	60,146	81.9%
Woodford	23,208	24,896	26,427	27,897	29,288	26.2%
Total	627285				817020	189735
Total Change						30.3%



Table 1.3 Population Projections – Local Region

Surrounding Counties			
	Census 2000	Census 2020	Total Change
Anderson	19,111	32,347	
Fayette	260,512	326,446	
Franklin	47,687	52,255	
Jessamine	39,041	58,647	
Mercer	20,817	24,110	
Scott	33,061	60,146	
Total	420229	553951	133722
			31.8%

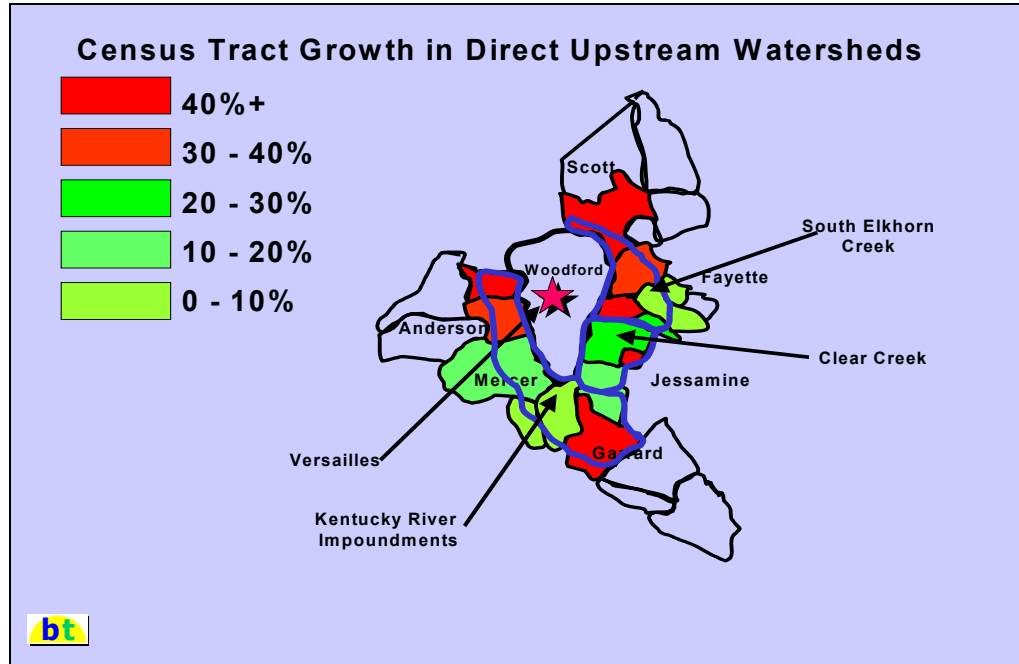


Table 1.4 Population Projections – Lexington Metro Area

Metro Area Counties			
	Census 2000	Census 2020	Total Change
Bourbon	19,360	19,110	
Clark	33,144	40,226	
Fayette	260,512	326,446	
Jessamine	39,041	58,647	
Madison	70,872	96,102	
Scott	33,061	60,146	
Woodford	23,208	29,288	
Total	479,198	629,965	150767
			31.5%
65% Change	of 13 Counties Within the Metro Area		
35% Change	of 13 Counties Remaining in Region		



Figure 1.5



Regional Transportation Planning and Implementation

As we have seen, the area contiguous to Woodford County may be expected to grow by over 133,000 people in the next 20 years. The region is also very mobile, with over 30% of the region’s employees working outside the county in which they live. This trend can be expected to intensify due to increasing population outside of Fayette County, coupled with continued large-scale job creation in Fayette and Scott Counties.

The Lexington Metro area is currently served by two transportation organizations. One, the Bluegrass Area Development District’s Transportation Planning Committee, is a group made up of regional citizens whose job is to recommend road projects to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. Committee recommendations to the Cabinet are advisory only and proposals may be assigned to the statewide long-range facility plan or placed on the state 6-year road program for funding. While this group seeks some regional consensus, essentially the planning efforts are focused on transportation projects in particular counties. This Committee is responsible for reviewing transportation improvement project proposals within Woodford County.

The other group is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). This federally funded organization’s purpose is to coordinate transportation planning in

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Fayette and Jessamine Counties – which are included in the “ Lexington Urbanized Area” as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Census and Federal Highway Administration. The MPO is responsible for the development and implementation of a long-range transportation plan and 6 year funding program within its geographic area of responsibility. Woodford County is not an invited participant in the activities of the MPO, but can readily be impacted by its’ decisions related to long-range planning and facility improvements. (This shortcoming may continue despite the fact that 65% of the region’s population growth, and 55% of the Metro’s growth, is expected to occur outside Fayette County).

Planning for air travel is another important regional issue. Regions around the world are planning for, and building, new and expanded airports. Questions have been raised about Bluegrass Airport’s ability to provide for increased passenger and cargo flights. Yet there is no definitive study, which confirms or refutes that concern. If the Bluegrass Airport is unable to meet demand due to space and locational problems, where would the region’s airport be located? What issues would building a new regional airport raise for Woodford Countians, who presently enjoy the best access to Bluegrass Airport in the region?

Figure 1.6



From the perspective of mobility, Woodford County currently must compete with other counties in the Bluegrass ADD (as well as the KTC District) for the necessary state and federal funds to undertake improvements identified in its transportation

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plan. The challenge for Woodford is not the fact that it must compete for funds, but the fact that it must compete in the absence of a policy/priority framework for regional coordination. The competition for project funding becomes, therefore, a purely political process for individual counties.

A policy/priority framework for regional coordination can help to “level the playing field” by focusing on regional priorities including for example, mobility improvements that support the attraction of major new employers to the region, or improve access to existing employment centers for workers. Setting priorities can also have another effect of the selection of improvement projects that help to preserve communities – a problem that Woodford faces as the midpoint in the corridor between the employment centers of Frankfort and Lexington.

Regional Infrastructure Planning

Basic environmental services including potable water, sanitary sewer, stormwater management and solid waste have been planned and provided in the past through local government (usually at the County or City level) or private utility companies. Any type of regional coordination has generally occurred through the efforts of the Kentucky Public Service Commission, the BGADD or as a result of the land use policies of counties in the Local or Bluegrass Region.

A significant regional issue that has not been fully addressed is long-term potable water supply. This is an issue that is not only critical to ensuring a high quality of life, but to economic development as well. Several groups are currently involved in regional water issues⁴, but as yet, there has been no pronouncement that a viable solution to long-term water supply has been assured

There is also no regionally coordinated sanitary sewer planning. Rather each community has set its own plans independent of the possibility of cooperation. Regional solid waste disposal is another topic that has not been discussed at length. These issues will only become more pressing with the anticipated 189,000 person population increase over the next 20 years.

On-site, or “package”, sewage treatment facilities are permitted or active in Anderson, Mercer, Jessamine, Franklin and Scott Counties. These types of systems have notoriously poor environmental records. Continued proliferation of these systems could have dramatic long-term effects on the water quality in Woodford County. Presently, there is no regional mitigation plan for addressing the problems caused by these systems.

⁴ List of groups involved

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The reasons for a lack of coordination at a regional level stems primarily from the focus of state and federal regulations and policy governing the planning and delivery of services such as potable water. In Kentucky, and the Bluegrass Region, the focus for water supply planning has been on counties and the provision of a readily available central water supply delivery system. A shift in this focus to the challenges of multiple service providers and service areas, as well as supply issues, will benefit counties such as Woodford in the long term. Why? Streamlining the supply and delivery systems at the regional level could lead to a more efficient system and user rates.

Regional coordination will be particularly important in another service area – solid waste collection and disposal. Adding 183,000 plus new residents in the Bluegrass Region will certainly tax current facilities for waste disposal – particularly for more heavily urbanized portions of the Region. Woodford County could be adversely impacted by two aspects of future lack of coordination – the siting of future disposal facilities and rate increases from waste haulers to compensate for increased disposal fees or inefficiently located facilities.

Figure 1.7

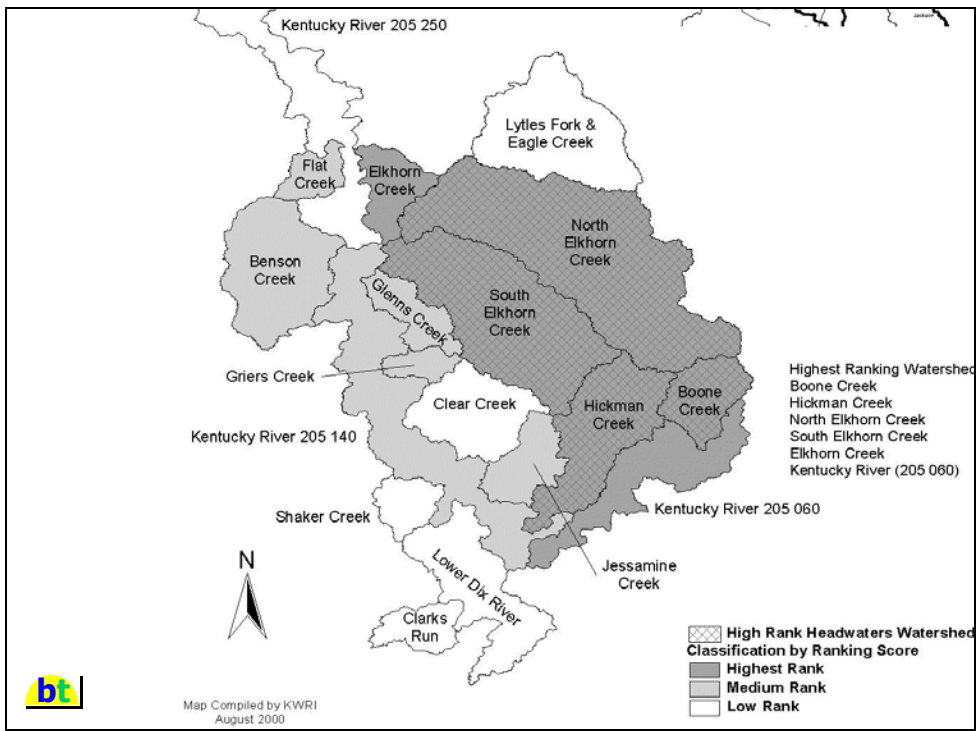


Figure 1.8

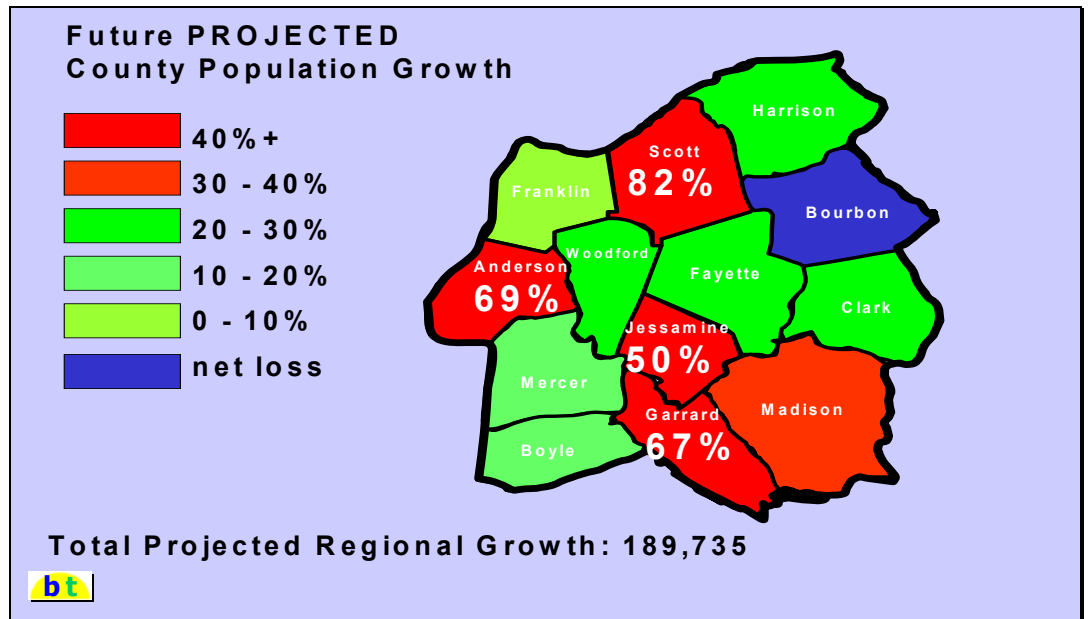
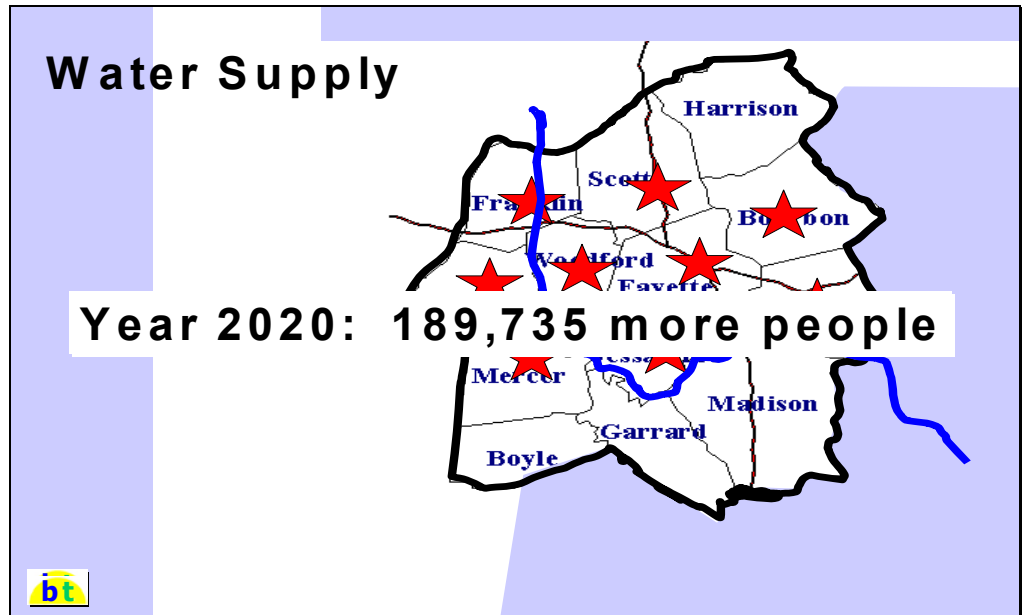


Figure 1.9



Regional Agriculture Trends

Agriculture lies at the heart of Woodford County's heritage and present sense of identity. The question arises whether it will remain so in the future.

Many counties in the region have seen dramatic decreases in land in farms and in agricultural income.⁵ These declines have been accompanied by additional urban level development in formerly rural areas. If the pace of development increases in outlying regional counties, even leading to over-building, more speculators, developers, and consumers may be expected to consider Woodford County.

But there are many positive agricultural indicators in Woodford and surrounding counties. Woodford County ranks 2nd state wide in total value of agricultural products as well as 2nd in the value of Thoroughbred horses nationally⁶. Four of the top six agricultural value counties border or are near Woodford County: Fayette, Bourbon, Jessamine, and Scott.⁷ The same order holds true nationally for Thoroughbred production as well.⁸ (See Figure 1.6)

Woodford's agricultural prominence is due to its location on the western edge of the most productive agricultural land in the state – the Bluegrass of Kentucky. (See Figure 1.11). Currently, no organization exists to manage this regional resource, or ensure continued increases in productivity and income. Fayette County individually, has instituted a Purchase of Agricultural Easements/Development Rights program to ensure that the most productive lands may remain in agricultural use or available for agricultural use.

⁵ Kentucky Department of Agriculture

⁶ Kentucky Department of Agriculture; The Bluegrass: A Finite Resource, University of Kentucky Landscape Architecture, 1999

⁷ Kentucky Department of Agriculture

⁸ The Bluegrass: A Finite Resource, University of Kentucky Landscape Architecture, 1999

Figure 1.10

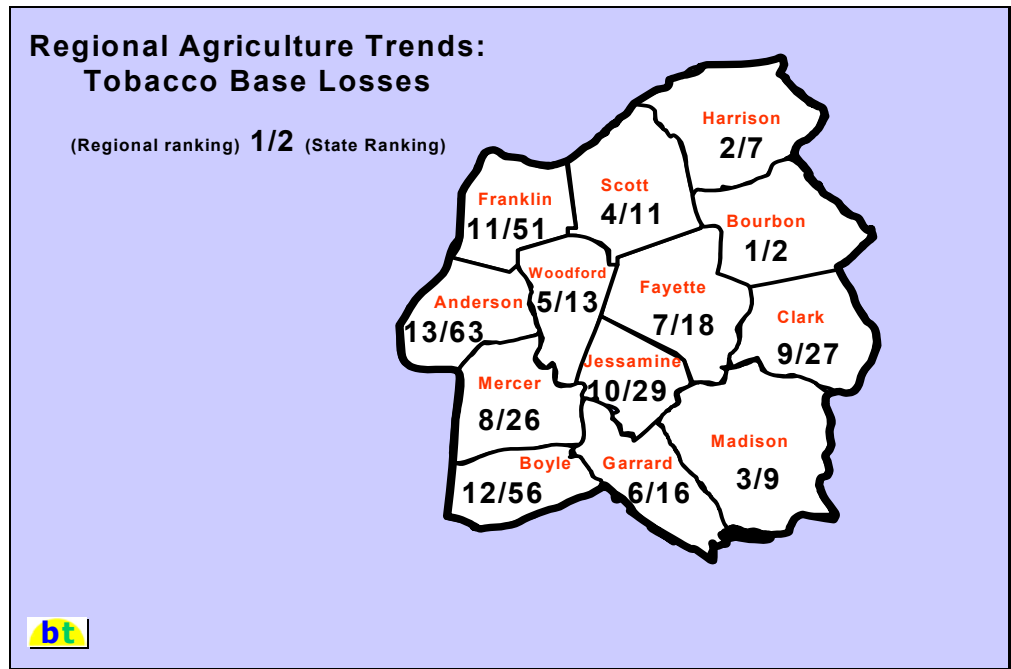


Figure 1.11

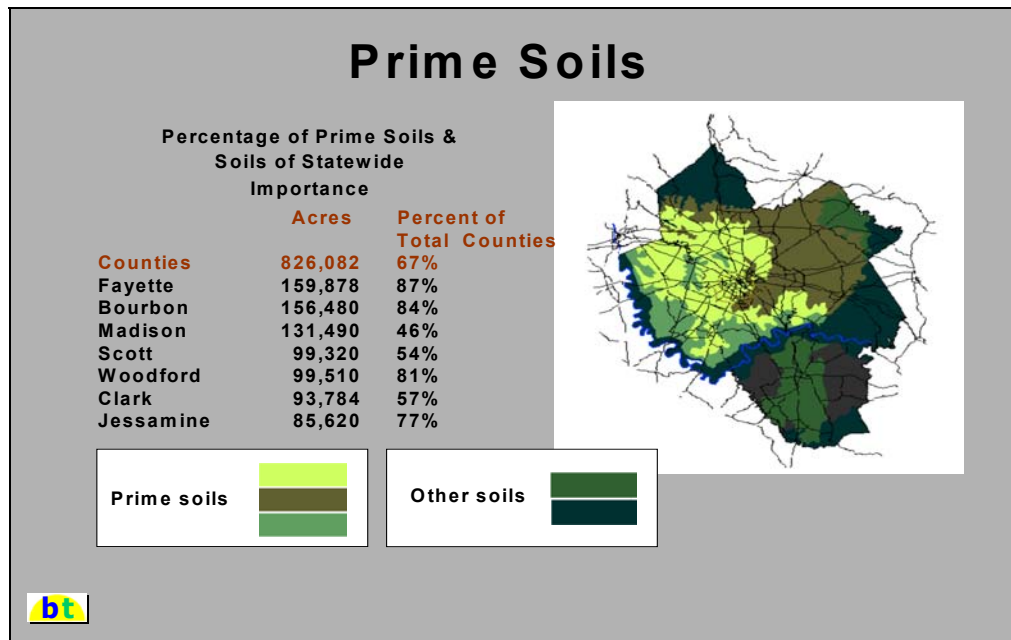


Figure 1.12

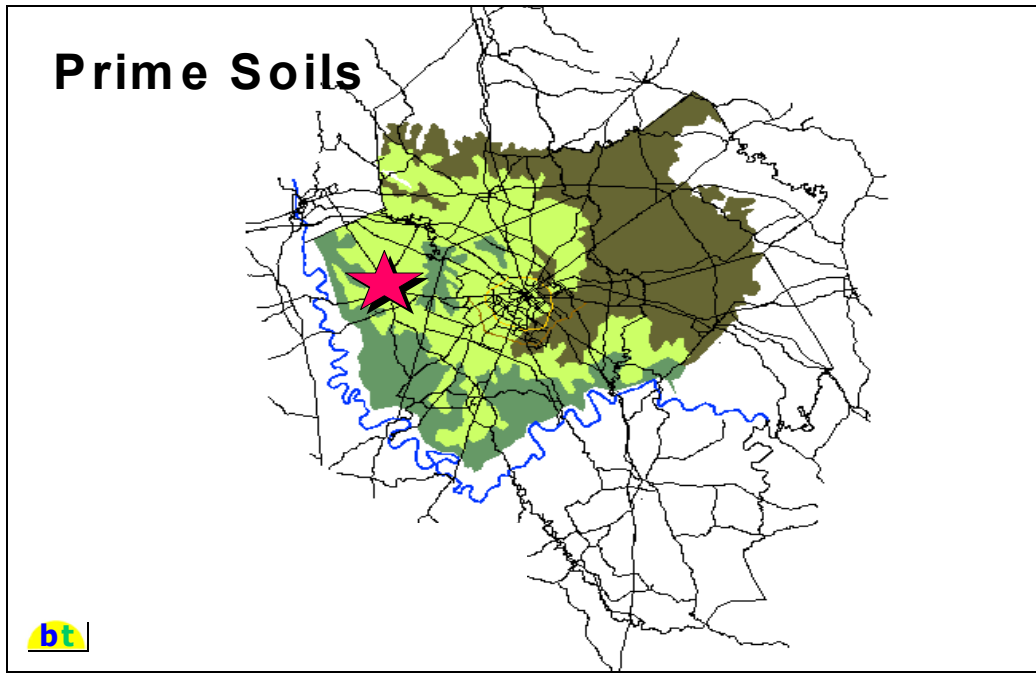


Figure 1.13

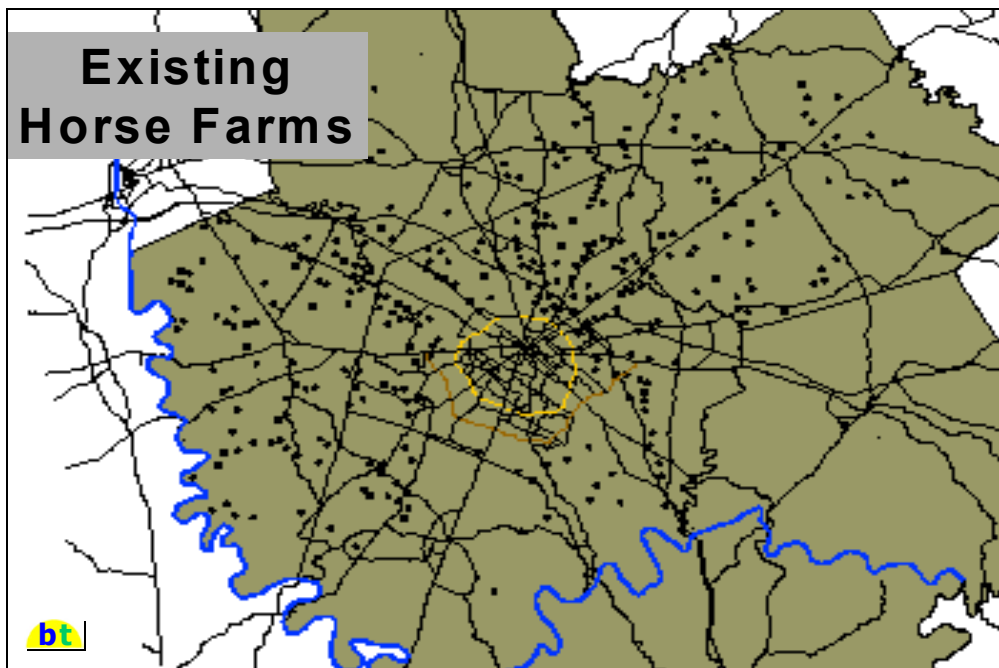


Figure 1.14

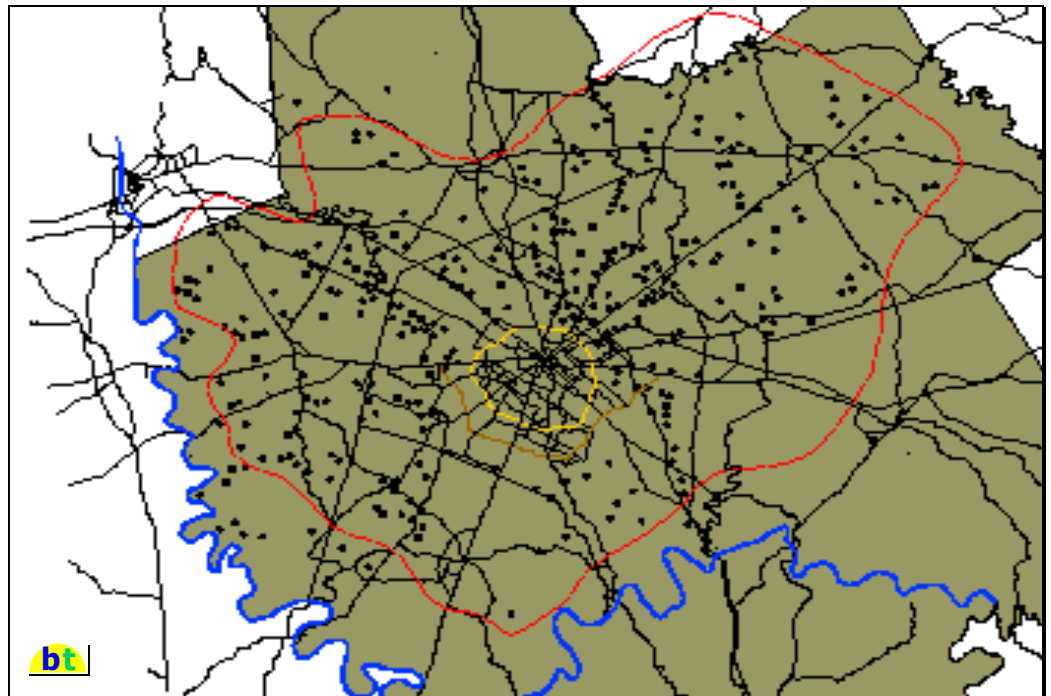


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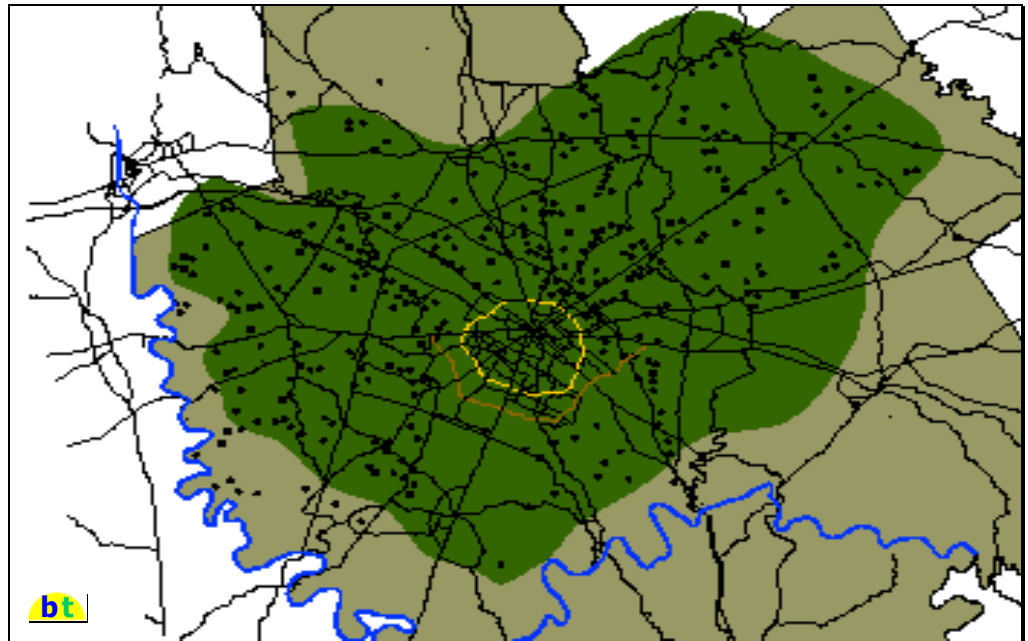


Figure 1.16

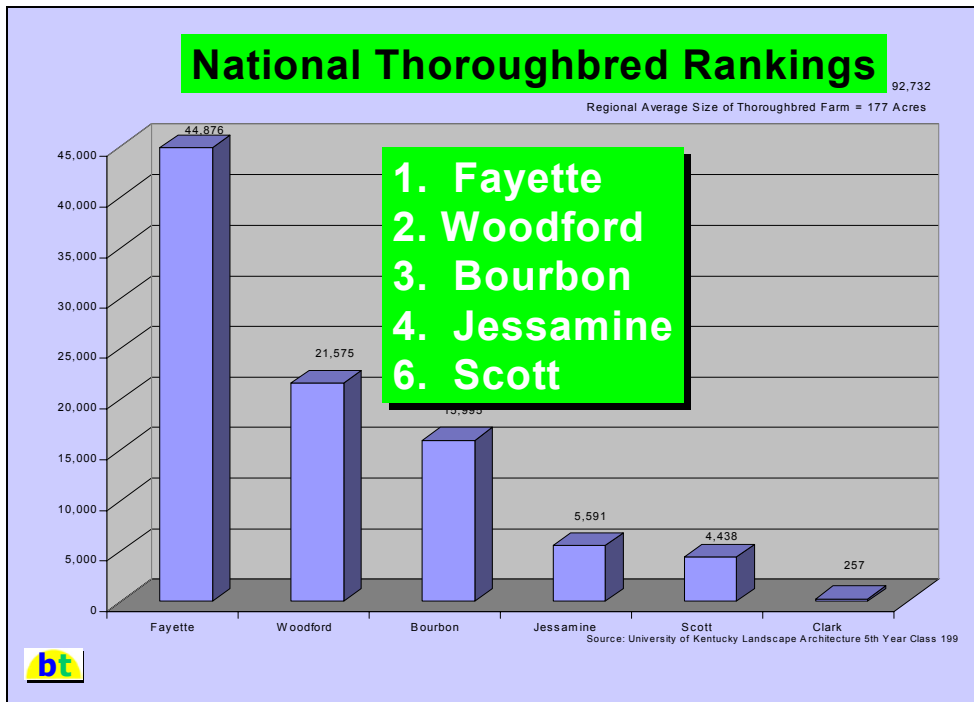


Figure 1.17

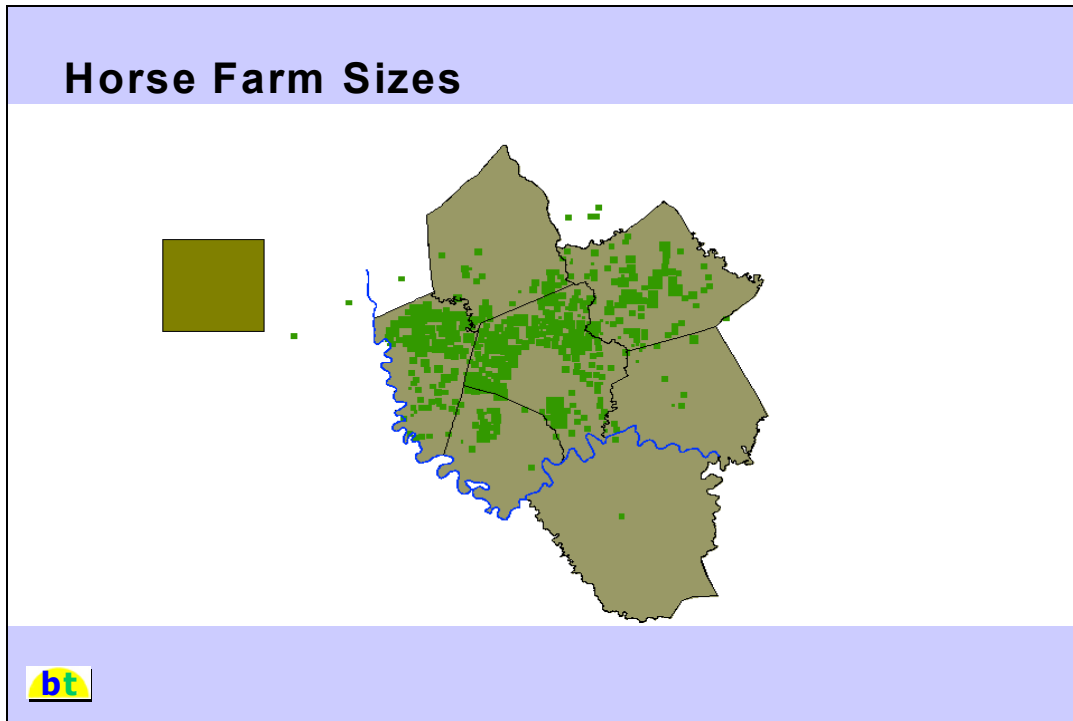


Figure 1.18

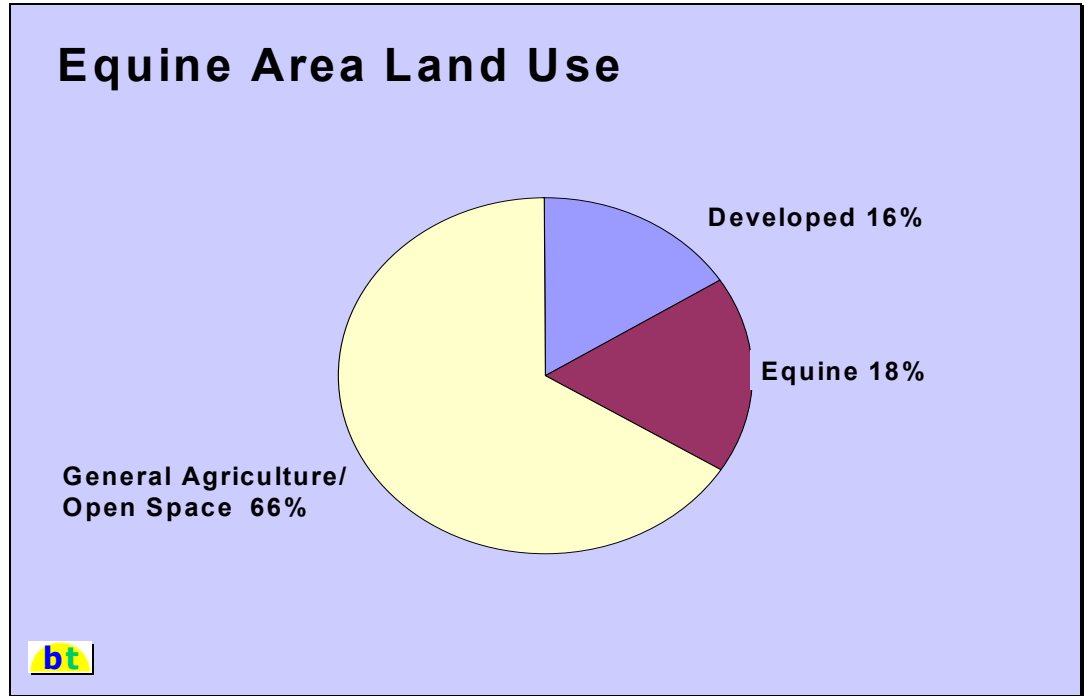
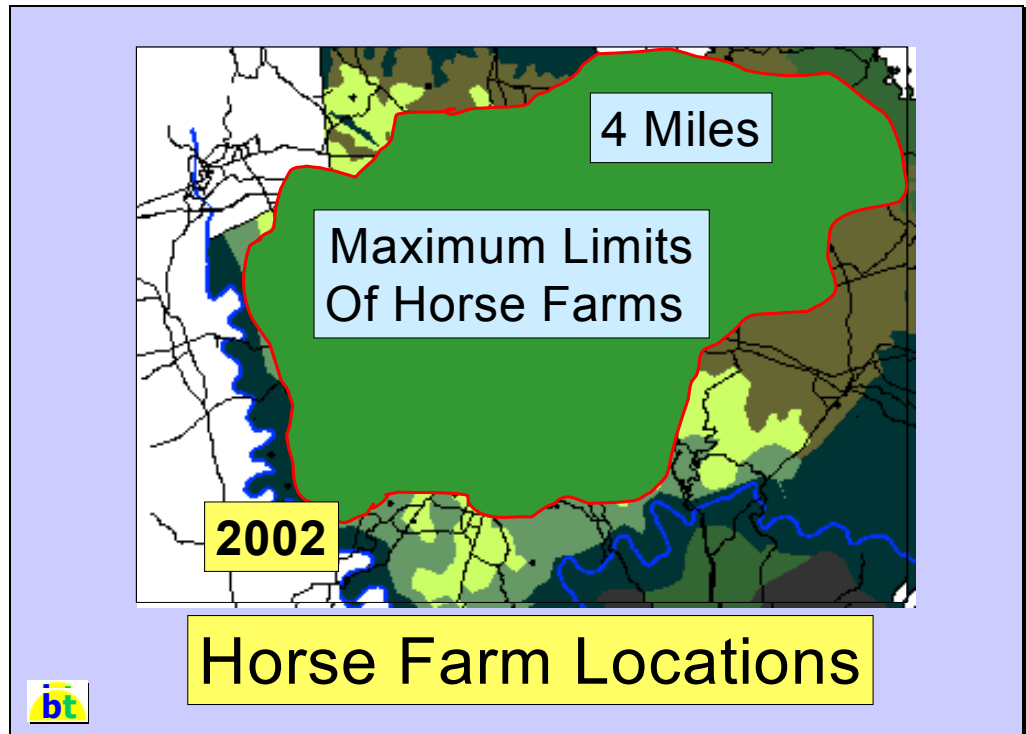


Figure 1.19



Regional Land Use Issues

The predominant form of urban development in the region is for communities to sprawl outward from their historic centers. No community has resisted this trend. Besides being inefficient with land and service funds, these low-density development patterns threaten the separate identity of every town in the region.

Few communities are concentrating significant redevelopment efforts within the established cores of their towns. This lack of investment, or in many cases, actual disinvestment, helps to spur this sprawling growth. Woodford County has seen this effect most dramatically on its borders with Fayette and Franklin Counties.

Other concerns relate to disparate land values in the region because of varying land use policies. A community with carefully planned growth will have higher land prices than one with a more liberal attitude toward development. This in turn affects regional commuting patterns as has been mentioned.

Many communities are also concerned about the lack of understanding of the consequences that occur when Fayette County makes significant land use decisions. This was most recently felt when Fayette County increased its minimum rural lot size to 40 acres and Woodford determined in the early 1990's to increase the minimum lot size to 30 acres for a large portion of the county.

Figure 1.20

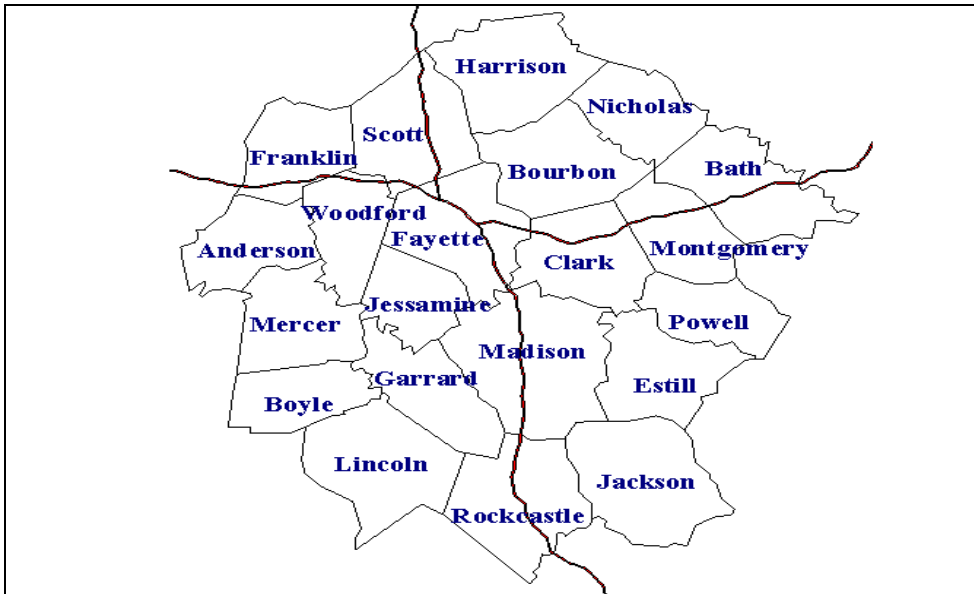


Figure 1.21

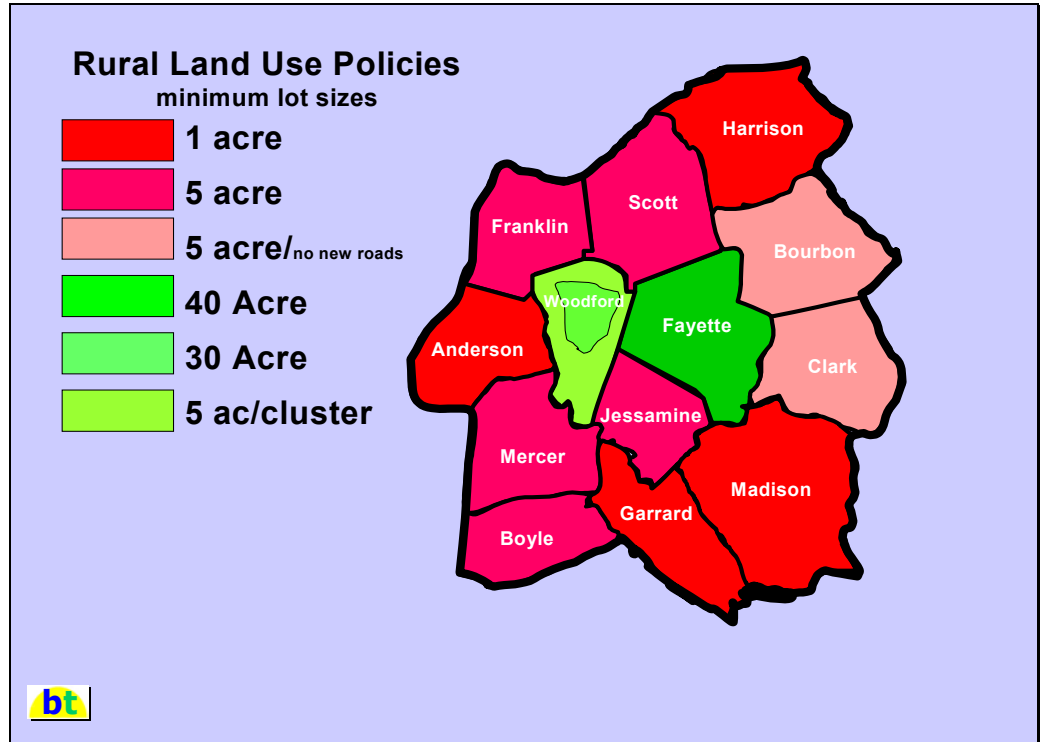
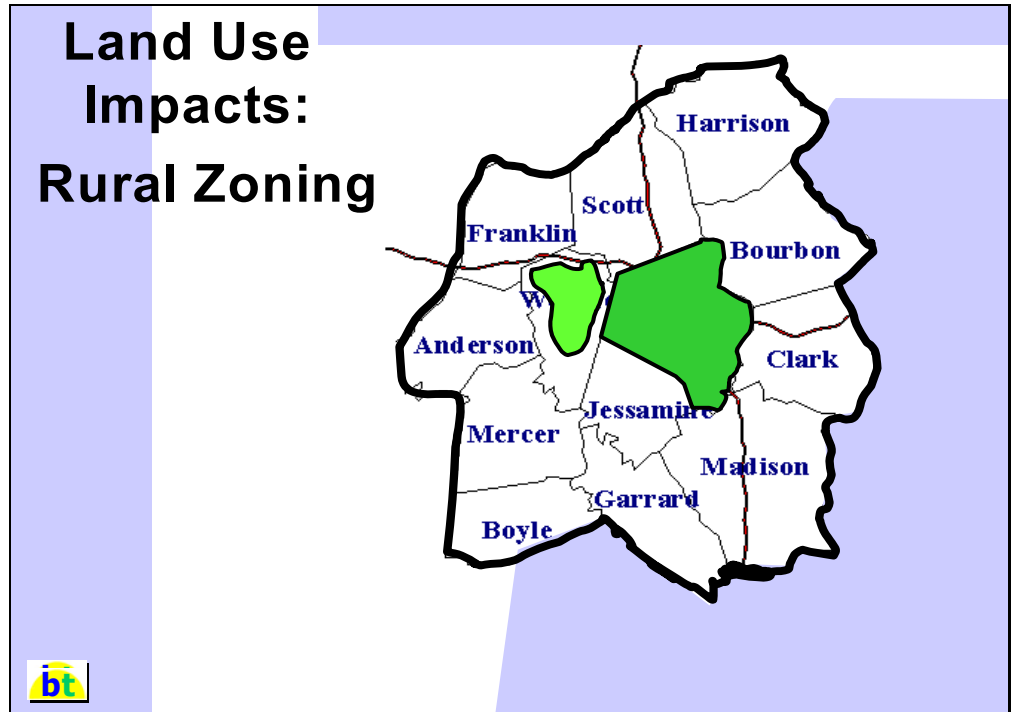


Figure 1.22



Regional Economic Issues

The present pattern of economic development has created a regional set of winners and losers. The economic gainers are those counties with interstate access. The economic losers are those communities without interstate access but with high residential growth rates.

For example, Jessamine County – which is not located on an Interstate route - accommodated nearly 10% of the entire region's population growth (11.6% of the metro growth) yet added less than 4% of the region's jobs⁹. By contrast, Scott County – which is located on an Interstate route – accommodated over 10% of the entire region's population growth (12.55% of the metro growth), and added over 20% of the new jobs in the region¹⁰.

This imbalance affects the economic losers through a dramatic need for services-providing payroll taxes. For example, 55% of Jessamine County's workers leave the county each day¹¹. They leave their payroll taxes in other counties, but return home each evening with expectations of a high level of community benefits. There is currently no discussion, nor has there ever been, for regional revenue sharing.

A picture of this imbalance becomes clear when considering that nearly 50% of all jobs in the Lexington Metro region are within three miles of downtown Lexington¹². This percentage ranks Lexington as having the second most dense employment center in the nation¹³. While Lexington's economic efforts have been successful for itself, what impact are they having in the region?

Another economic issue that is often over-looked, or even sometimes resented, is the importance of the Thoroughbred industry to the local and state economies. Over 80,000 jobs are directly tied to this industry and the state gains over \$3 billion in revenues as well¹⁴. Too often, in our region we conceive economic development to be about attracting factories. Yet the Thoroughbred industry is simply a factory without a roof and should be factored into all economic development plans.

⁹ Bluegrass Tomorrow: Framework for a Regional Plan, 1999

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Brookings Institute, 2001

¹³ Ibid

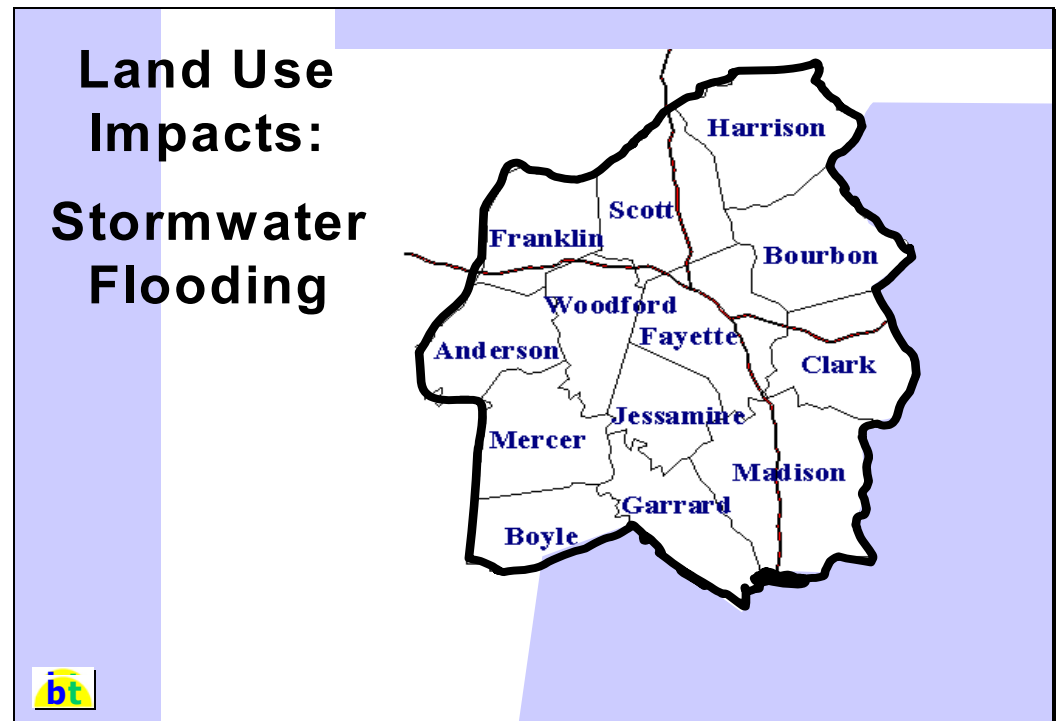
¹⁴ Kentucky Thoroughbred Association

Regional Environmental Issues

As previously mentioned, compromised environmental quality often results from rapid unplanned development. In Woodford County's case, increased flooding, lowered water quality and damaged ecosystems have occurred¹⁵.

Another critical environmental issue is the use of the Kentucky River. The Kentucky River provides the drinking water to a sizable portion of the County. Obviously then, protecting the water quality of the River should be highest on local citizen's priority list. But land use along the river is not regulated to ensure this. For example, in Woodford, Mercer, and Anderson Counties, extensive rural developments on septic systems are permitted anywhere in the direct watershed of the River.

Figure 1.23



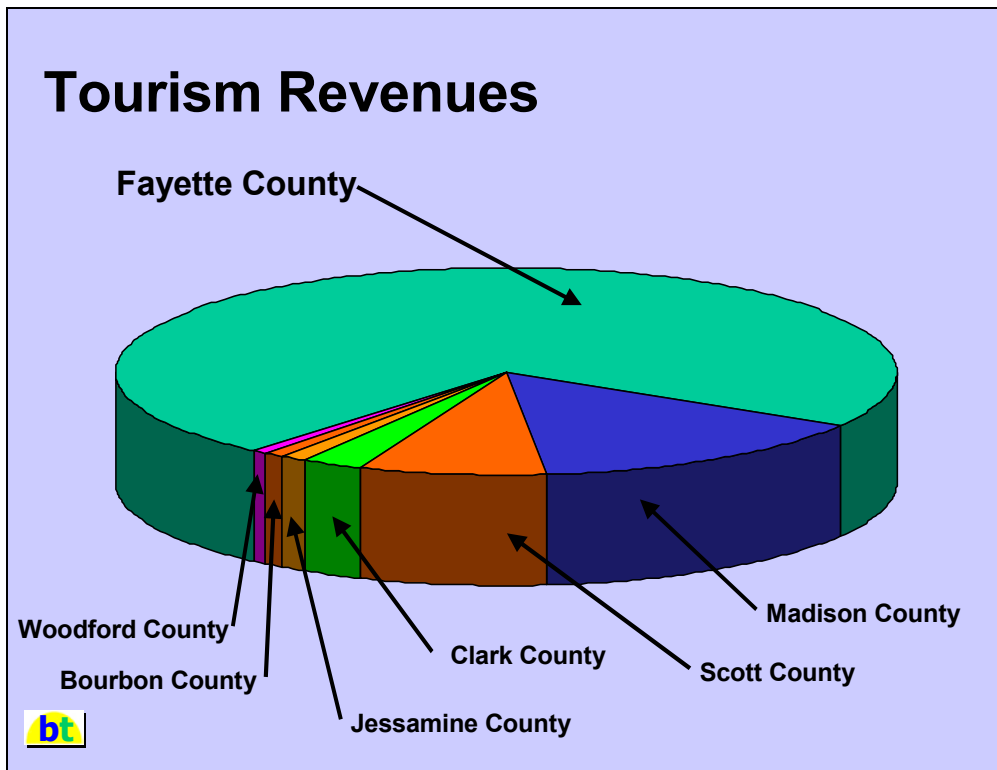
¹⁵ Kentucky Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Cabinet

Regional Tourism

Although many speak of the importance of tourism to the future of their community, few understand the economic importance of tourism to the regional economy. In the late 1990's, tourism accounted for nearly \$1 billion per year in the region¹⁶. Yet this money was not evenly distributed. For example, in 1998, Woodford County had **100 times** less tourism revenue than Fayette County¹⁷. Other regional counties fared similarly.

This disparity may be due in part to the fact that there is no true regional tourism promotion and coordination organization.

Figure 1.24



¹⁶ Lexington Convention and Visitors Bureau, 1999

¹⁷ Ibid