



Setting the Stage

What issues and opportunities have been presented in the previous three chapters that may have an impact on the goals and objectives for long-range planning in Woodford County?

Land, water and air. In the planning business these resources are the “big three”. Woodford County’s location in the inner bluegrass physiographic region and proximity to the Kentucky River have afforded it the luxury of having some of the best agricultural lands in the Commonwealth and the water resources to support a highly productive agriculture based economy.

Woodford’s growth, and more importantly the growth of its neighboring counties, is now beginning to stress the capacity and function of its natural systems and resources. This has been pointed out not only in the preceding chapters but also in other Background Studies. Woodford has taken significant steps to preserve its prime agricultural lands by enacting urban service areas around its two most prominent municipalities, and it is currently acting to ensure sustainable sources of potable water for the future. However, it will need to address other potential trends and issues related to land, water and air that may prevent the achievement of its long range planning goals and objectives.

These trends and issues are identified on the following pages, and will serve as a beginning point for community discussions and goal setting activities. Storm water management, stream restoration and management, rural area development, equine/agricultural production and management practices, and other terms will come to forefront of the 2003 Plan Update as the long term health of Woodford’s land, water and air resources is considered.

Trend/Issue No. 1

What role should agriculture and the equine industry play in Woodford's Future?

The transition from tobacco to other agricultural products has already begun. The horse industry certainly has helped this transition, securing an important role in Woodford's economic future.

Are there sufficient equine industry support services in place to serve this growing sector and should local governments play a greater role in promoting, protecting or enhancing this industry?

The future success of the Urban Service Areas (USA) of Versailles and Midway will depend on the continued economic viability of agricultural/equine industry use of non-USA lands. This is particularly true for lands at or near a USA boundary.

What other agricultural products and services are likely to remain or become viable options in the future? With the success of the Equus Run vineyards and wine making enterprise, what agricultural and agri-tourism inroads can be made through this type of product?

Trend/Issue No. 2

More than 1,000 acres of Woodford farmland has been preserved through private conservation easements or agricultural preservation easements acquired through the State's PACE program. Does Woodford have all the tools it needs to preserve lands for agriculture and equine needs?

Conservation or agricultural preservation easements obtained through the state's PACE program (Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement), and through private actions, are very important tools to preserve lands for agriculture use. However, funds for the PACE program are very limited and there is substantial competition for funds within the Commonwealth.

A planning issue for Woodford is whether it should, in some capacity, identify and develop local funding resources to purchase easements or support the development of essential agricultural/equine industry infrastructure? At present, the only county in Kentucky that has established a locally (at least partially) funded PACE program is

Fayette. Woodford County has one farm easement purchased through the PACE program.

If Woodford determines to create a local funding source for the purchase of agricultural easements, there is a related issue. That issue will become the method and manner by which Woodford and/or the State will acquire easements. Will there be geographic priority areas or priorities among the types of agricultural/equine enterprises? These are just a few of the issues that will emerge if Woodford determines to preserve lands for agricultural purposes.

Trend/Issue No. 3

The Kentucky River forms the western boundary of Woodford County and is one of its' primary sources of drinking water. Is Woodford doing all it can to protect this water resource?

The Kentucky River Authority has performed assessments of the River through its entire basin. In the Woodford portion of the basin, the River's waters failed to meet standards for human contact because of pathogens found. The source of those pathogens included agricultural operations and combined sewer overflow. Although the combined sewer overflow is most likely a problem created by upstream communities, Woodford and other communities will continue to experience the impacts of the problem unless a regional forum is identified for discussion, prioritization and resolution of this issue.

In addition to the issue of water quality in the Kentucky River, there are also questions about its value as a recreational resource and potential to support an eco-tourism element of the local economy.

Trend/Issue No. 4

Does Woodford protect the water quality of its streams, as well as the adjoining upland habitat?

The other major streams in and around Woodford—including Lee Branch and South Elkhorn Creek—are experiencing water quality problems. An issue that will emerge more fully as a result of Woodford's equine industry is the relationship between stream water quality and waste generated by animal operations.

The current trend toward 25-foot riparian setbacks may not be sufficient to ensure appropriate filtering of sheet flow waters entering the stream channel. Additional buffers, with vegetative and maintenance requirements, may be needed to address the existing problem. How this issue is addressed will have a significant impact not only on Woodford's water resources, but on the quality and viability of associated wetlands and upland habitat. Storm water management and erosion control practices may need to be implemented in conjunction with animal operations to preserve stream water quality. Just what those practices should be is a planning issue.

Trend/Issue No. 5

Woodford's rural roads and natural lands (scenic views, farmlands, dry laid stone walls, etc.) are parts of the formula for underlying the agri-tourism business. Has this linkage been adequately addressed in planning efforts (Preserving Town and Country)?

Although Old Frankfort Pike is considered to be an historic resource, the issue that surrounds all similar Woodford roads is whether there are sufficient teeth in local regulations to ensure the original relationship between land and road is maintained.

An example of where this relationship is in question is US 62 from US 60 to Midway. The level, type and speed of traffic, in combination with the road characteristics, has resulted in safety and capacity problems. Improvements to address these problems would undoubtedly impact the current road and land relationship in a negative way.

Too often, local governments are passive and reactive to these issues, lacking the money or authority to address this issue in a proactive way. At issue in Woodford County is a definitive statement of the importance of such road/land corridors to the economic and cultural well being of the community.

Trend/Issue No. 6

Woodford's land resources exhibit a significant potential for sinkhole formation. The karst geology underlying much of Woodford County is a potential hazard not only for construction but also for potential degradation of groundwater resources. Are Woodford's development

regulations sufficient to ensure these issues are addressed during the development process – whether that development is for urban, rural or agricultural purposes?

Karst geology and sinkholes is a subject that many worry about only when it may affect proposed development of homes, businesses or workplaces. It is rare that sinkholes rise to a high level of community concern when the areas most prone to sinkhole formation are in rural areas comprised of farms.

Most of the information presented in Chapter 1 would seem to indicate that the potential adverse impacts from karst geology extend beyond the human habitat. Of concern is the groundwater aquifer and the connections between surface waters and groundwaters provided via karst geology. Agricultural and equine industry practices can have a significant effect on groundwater quality. Why is groundwater quality important? Because many farm owner utilize wells to provide potable water, if not for human consumption then for irrigation and animals. In addition, the City of Versailles derives some of its drinking water supply through surface and groundwater resources of the Clear Creek watershed.

Trend/Issue No. 7

Although Woodford County’s air has not yet been impacted by continued urbanization, automobile traffic utilizing Woodford roads may contribute to future problems. Is the potential for future air quality problems an issue now? Is it a regional issue?

As is the case so often with air quality, communities don’t act to protect it until a problem already exists. It is difficult, if not impossible in today’s world to increase public awareness and mobilize public opinion for a problem that “may occur”. Woodford’s air quality meets all nationally accepted standards at the moment, although some of its neighbors are beginning to experience problems. The Mobility Background Report suggests that Woodford can expect more traffic in the future – a concern because traffic increases tend to also create air quality problems.

The issues for Woodford County to address include whether this is a priority for immediate action, what avenues are available for regional actions to protect air quality, and what local actions can be either taken or planned to proactively preserve air quality?