



General Government & Planning (GGP) Committee

September 9, 2025

Summary and Motions

Committee members Liz Sheehan (Chair), Shayla Lynch, J.D. (Vice Chair), Dan Wu, James Brown, Chuck Ellinger II, Hannah LeGris, Emma Curtis, Dave Sevigny, and Jennifer Reynolds were present. Whitney Elliott Baxter was absent. Councilmembers Tyler Morton and Lisa Higgins-Hord were present as non-voting members.

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chair Sheehan.

I. APPROVAL OF JULY 1, 2025 COMMITTEE SUMMARY (Sheehan)

A motion by Chuck Ellinger II to Approve July 1, 2025 Committee Summary, seconded by Hannah LeGris, the motion passed without dissent.

II. LEXINGTON'S PRESERVATION & GROWTH MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (LPGMP) (Wu)

Vice Mayor Wu introduced the main agenda item, the latest draft of the LPGMP, emphasizing the program's intention – to create a transparent, consistent, and data-driven framework for preservation and growth management. Chair Sheehan reinforced the importance of aligning the program with the Comprehensive Plan.

Planning Manager Hal Baillie began by reviewing the project timeline and noting how the process has evolved from the initial framework introduced in May of this year. He emphasized that the program was designed to broaden the scope of the Comprehensive Plan, codify long-standing practices transparently, and establish a data-driven approach through the Imagine Lexington Analytic Research Center. This framework, he explained, ensures review and accountability at each level of decision-making.

The presentation then turned to the results of public engagement. Surveys and outreach revealed that residents strongly favored infill and redevelopment over expansion, expressed concern about bias in the process, and wanted the city to focus on activating existing vacant land rather than removing acreage from the Urban Service Area (USA). Respondents also asked for more opportunities to participate in decision-making and called for a stronger emphasis on preservation throughout the plan.

Baillie outlined the updated process framework, highlighting the Growth Trends Report now in development. A key shift is that commercial and industrial land needs have been removed from the baseline formula and reassigned to a newly created "Special Economic Development Need" track. Under the new process, the Planning Commission will transmit the Growth Trends Report, along with its recommendations, to Council. The residential need formula will rely on Kentucky State Data Center projections, United States Census figures, and local permit data, making it more responsive to shifting development trends.

Council's role, Baillie explained, has also been clarified. Even in the absence of a defined residential need, Council may still evaluate policy or regulatory changes. If a need is identified, Council must first consider those changes before weighing any expansion. The Council will be responsible for setting a

minimum acreage to meet the need, but a cap ensures that no more than 30 years of residential demand is included in the expansion.

The Planning Commission's responsibilities were also addressed. A revised vacant land review defines which parcels are eligible for removal from the Urban Service Area and clarifies the makeup of the review subcommittee. Proposal review has been strengthened by establishing application steps, locational requirements, and timelines. The master plan process, however, remains unchanged. For economic development matters, the Special Economic Development Need process applies solely to employment and industrial land. This process defines who may initiate such a request, sets a maximum acreage limit, and specifies distinct roles: the Council will determine whether a need exists and initiate the zone change, while the Planning Commission will amend the Comprehensive Plan and evaluate the zone change request.

Baillie closed by identifying several outstanding issues still requiring attention, including the housing backlog flagged by both the Kentucky Housing Corporation and LFUCG, the proper accounting of residential units in mixed-use and commercial zones, and the timing of the Growth Trends Report itself.

Chair Sheehan opened the floor for questions and discussion, which centered on preservation and the importance of embedding equity, the housing need formula, ensuring accountability for vacant land, and maintaining guardrails to manage growth responsibly.

Committee members stressed that preservation must go beyond farmland to include neighborhoods, cultural identity, and protection against displacement. Baillie agreed and stated that while the Planning Commission focuses on land use, it is up to the Council to develop policies that embed cultural and equity considerations, with opportunities to tie the LPGMP more explicitly to the Comprehensive Plan's equity goals.

In response to concerns about the housing need formula, Baillie explained that the formula avoids speculative assumptions and relies solely on official projections and density averages. Housing impact from the University of Kentucky and commuter flows were also mentioned. Baillie said off-campus student housing is included in the formula, while dormitories are excluded. Commuting is not directly factored, though population and job projections capture some impacts.

Some committee members would like Council to have more authority and for greater transparency of undeveloped parcels in the USA. Tracy Jones, Managing Attorney, said that Law discourages retroactive removal, limiting the process to new additions after adoption, though she said barriers to development could be studied.

The main concern raised over the Special Economic Development Needs process was the fear that it could invite lobbying. Baillie stressed that it raises the bar with strict requirements: a willing property owner, documentation, Planning Commission review, and a two-thirds Council vote. This structure was presented as a safeguard against speculative expansion.

Next steps include an opportunity to provide input at a Special GGP meeting scheduled for September 16, 2025, at 6 p.m. A presentation of the final draft is scheduled for the December 2, 2025, committee meeting.

No further action was taken on this item.

III. ITEMS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE (Sheehan)

Bring Back the Bluegrass was reassigned to Councilmember Morton, and Absentee Landlords was reassigned to Councilmember Curtis.

A motion by James Brown to remove the MAG Study Review from committee, seconded by Dan Wu, passed without dissent.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:12 p.m. by Chair Sheehan.