



General Government & Planning (GGP) Committee

January 20, 2026

Summary and Motions

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. Committee members Liz Sheehan (Chair), Shayla Lynch, J.D. (Vice Chair), Dan Wu, James Brown, Chuck Ellinger II, Emma Curtis, Whitney Elliott Baxter, Dave Sevigny, Jennifer Reynolds, and Hil Boone were present. Council members Tyler Morton and Amy Beasley were present as non-voting members.

I. APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 2, 2025 COMMITTEE SUMMARY (Sheehan)

A motion by Ellinger to approve the December 2, 2025 Committee Summary was seconded by Elliott Baxter and approved unanimously.

II. DOWNTOWN AREA MASTER PLAN (Brown/Sewe)

The committee received an update on the Downtown Area Master Plan, a year-long, data-driven planning effort launched in July 2025 to guide the future of downtown Lexington, informed by community values, stakeholder input, and market analysis. Boyd Sewe, Principal Planner in Long-Range Planning, highlighted key findings from public outreach, including a community-wide event in October that drew more than 200 participants and an online survey that expanded participation beyond the event. Twenty-seven percent of survey respondents were ages 18–24, reflecting strong engagement among students and young adults through targeted outreach efforts supported by CivicLex and partnerships with the University of Kentucky, Transylvania University, and Bluegrass Community and Technical College.

Across engagement activities, residents consistently identified priorities related to affordable and diverse housing options, preservation of neighborhood character, everyday retail and walkable shopping, casual and family-friendly dining, improved pedestrian safety, enhanced transit options, and green infrastructure. Staff noted that safety, connectivity, housing affordability, and people-first design emerged as cross-cutting themes and aligned closely with the Comprehensive Plan and Complete Streets principles. A major focus of the presentation was developing a community-supported definition of “downtown” to provide clarity for future policy decisions, infrastructure prioritization, and investment. Participants were asked to sketch the downtown boundaries, with the strongest support for a medium-sized downtown, followed by a more expansive definition. Staff presented a framework that distinguishes the Central Business District, the downtown core, and the surrounding area of influence—informally referred to as “Midtown.”

Councilmembers asked questions about student engagement strategies, housing affordability, demographic representation, pedestrian and street safety, the potential use of two-way streets, anti-displacement considerations, and whether the plan may ultimately recommend additional tools, such as a downtown development authority. Staff emphasized transparency and ongoing community feedback, noting that more detailed affordability findings will be available once the housing and market analysis is fully reviewed.

III. RURAL SETTLEMENT STUDY (Lynch/Duncan)

Lynch introduced the item, described the presentation as a level set and a launch point for implementation, and highlighted the guiding framework for the work: preserve, protect, enhance, and enable. Jim Duncan, Director of Planning, provided an overview of rural settlements and outlined the major categories, including free Black settlements, crossroads communities, rural service centers, and older rural subdivisions. Fayette County has 16 rural settlements totaling just over 500 acres, ranging in size from approximately 5 to 66 acres. Common characteristics include churches or long-standing congregations, community buildings, smaller lot sizes by rural standards, select rural businesses, and limited public services.

He reviewed prior work, which includes the 1971 Rural Settlement Survey, the 1999 Rural Land Management Plan, the 2006 University of Kentucky partnership study with GIS mapping and recommendations, and the continued relevance of subsequent planning updates, including renewed attention during the 2023 Urban Service Area boundary discussions. Recommendations from the 2006 study range from non-regulatory measures such as signage to potential financial assistance and preservation regulations. Duncan emphasized that any regulatory tools should be pursued only through direct engagement with residents and property owners.

Councilmembers discussed next steps, implementation, and the balance between preservation and property rights. Members raised concerns about the potential impacts of historic overlays on property owners and emphasized the importance of approaches that benefit landowners and avoid protections without owner support. Additional discussion addressed the capture of community history during engagement and clarified the distinction between the Rural Settlement Study and the Sense of Place initiative, noting that the two efforts serve different but complementary purposes. Lynch concluded by announcing plans to convene a diverse working group to review study recommendations for each settlement and develop tailored, settlement-specific solutions.

IV. ANNUAL REVIEW OF COMMITTEE ITEMS (Sheehan)

Chair Sheehan noted the *Boards and Commissions Comprehensive Review* is now the *Boards and Commissions Subcommittee*.

A motion by Sheehan to remove *Examine Opportunities to Relocate Programming & Initiatives from the Mayor's Office to Other Relevant Divisions within LFUCG* from the committee was seconded by Sevigny and approved unanimously.

A motion by Ellinger to remove the *Homelessness Need Assessment RFP* from the committee was seconded by Brown and approved unanimously.

A motion by Curtis to remove the *Lexington History Museum* from the committee was seconded by Wu and approved unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:13 p.m.