

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Margaret Graves. I serve as the Chair of the Bluegrass Land Conservancy Board of Directors.

BGLC was established in 1995 and is a non-profit nationally accredited land trust working to conserve farmland in 25 counties in the Bluegrass region. We currently hold 165 conservation easements conserving over 33,000 acres on more than 160 farms. These farms include 27,000 acres of prime farmland and soils of statewide importance. In Fayette County we hold 17 conservation easements conserving nearly 2,400 acres of productive farmland.

In real estate, we all know location matters!! Location, location, location. In this case, the proposed location in rural Fayette County has enormous consequences.

If approved, the EKPC proposal to establish a utility scale ground mounted industrial solar facility on 387 acres in Fayette County's RSA would set a dangerous land use precedent that would adversely impact farms throughout Fayette County by allowing an industrial use in a zone reserved primarily for agriculture.

Lexington Fayette County has a long history of protecting rural land for agricultural use dating back as early as 1958 when Lexington adopted the first urban service boundary in the US. This community wide commitment to conserve rural land for agricultural use has continued through comprehensive plans, ordinances and programs. BGLC has worked closely with the Lexington Fayette County Government to establish and implement the award winning Fayette County Purchase of Development Rights program which to date has conserved nearly 33,000 acres of Fayette County farmland at a cost of approximately \$78 million.

Permitting industrial solar facilities within the RSA will hinder ongoing efforts to conserve additional Fayette County farmland.

According to the USDA, 99.6% of the land within the proposed site is prime farmland or farmland of statewide significance. These high quality soils are an irreplaceable finite natural resource & should be reserved for agricultural use.

We support solar energy. In fact, we have PDR farms that have solar panels on their barns rooftops. However, we believe that solar energy facilities should be located on rooftops, parking lots, or brownfields. NOT on prime farmland. Fayette County farmland is an internationally recognized asset and is the factory floor of our signature agricultural and equine industries. These land based industries contribute enormously to our economy and quality of life.

The rural landscape of Fayette County farms brings tourists from across the United States and world to Kentucky. The proposed site is located on a Kentucky designated scenic byway and abuts the Upper Reaches of Boone Creek, a federally designated National Register of Historic

Places rural historic district. There are places in Fayette County where solar facilities would make sense. But not on prime farmland in RSA.

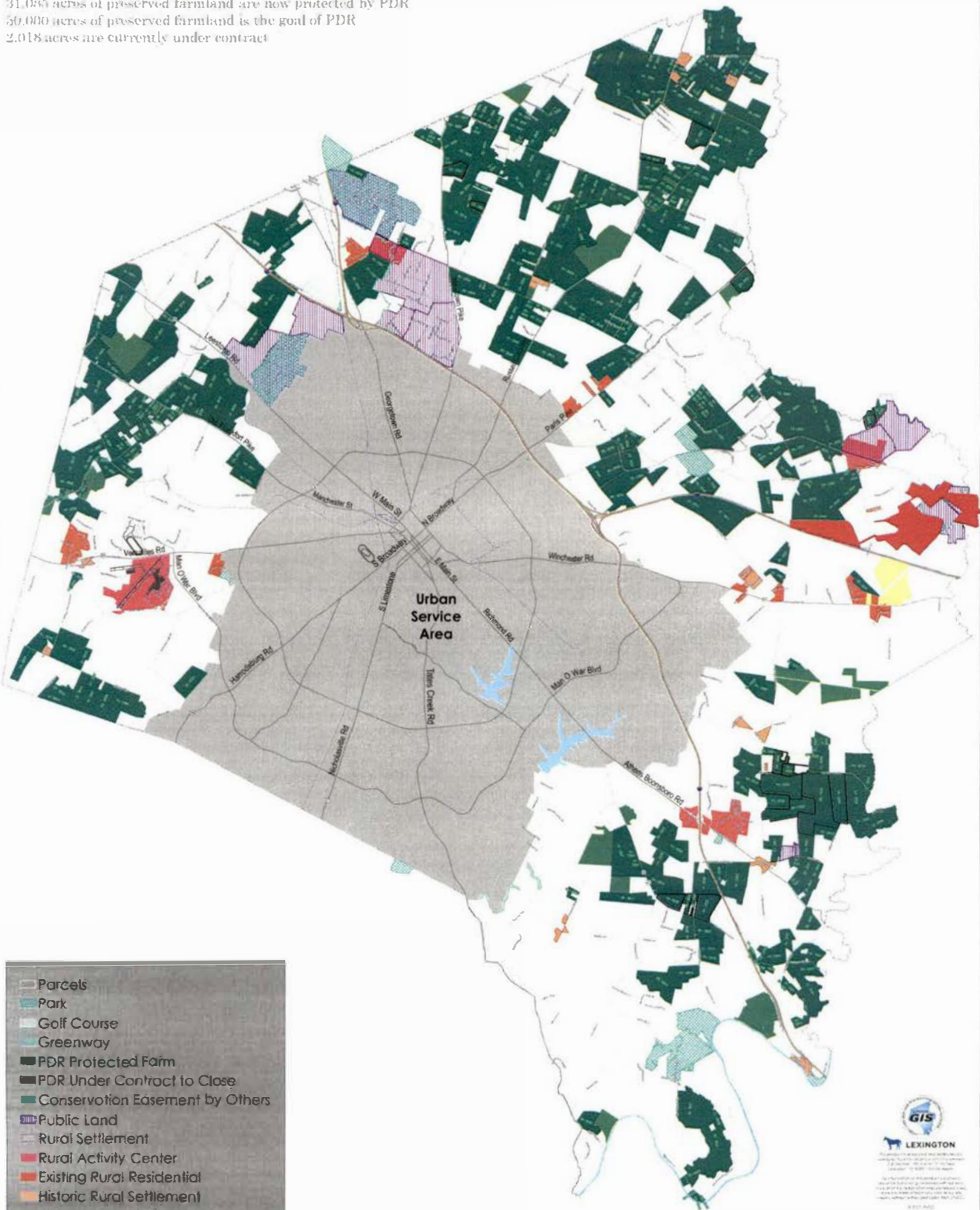
We urge you to reject the proposed solar project and honor the longstanding efforts and investment by Lexington Fayette County in conserving its scenic and productive farmland for agricultural use.

Conserved Land in Lexington-Fayette County, Kentucky



PDR Protected Farms, Applications Under Contract, Conservation Easements by Others, and Other Conserved Lands

31,055 acres of preserved farmland are now protected by PDR
 50,000 acres of preserved farmland is the goal of PDR
 2,018 acres are currently under contract



- Parcels
- Park
- Golf Course
- Greenway
- PDR Protected Farm
- PDR Under Contract to Close
- Conservation Easement by Others
- Public Land
- Rural Settlement
- Rural Activity Center
- Existing Rural Residential
- Historic Rural Settlement

GIS
 LEXINGTON
Map prepared by GIS Department, Lexington-Fayette Urban Government, 2011. All rights reserved. This map is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to be used for legal or other purposes. The GIS Department is not responsible for any errors or omissions in this map. The GIS Department is not responsible for any damages or losses resulting from the use of this map. The GIS Department is not responsible for any changes to the map data after the date of publication.

Good morning, I am Adrielle Camuel and I am the state Representative for House District 93 located in Fayette County. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the proposed solar farms. I share many of the same concerns residents of Fayette County have expressed to me about the proposed solar farm site in Fayette County.

Kentucky needs more opportunities to harness and utilize renewable energy. Solar is necessary to meet our goals, but the most important thing is where it is located. In the proposed location in Fayette County, we are risking our prime agricultural land - farmland that supports our economy and our identity. The proposal is located on a Kentucky Scenic Byway (US 60), which is vital for tourism and designated by the state to have both economic and cultural importance. My family and I often take this scenic byway out of Lexington when we go home to Morehead because of the peace and beauty it provides as you drive along the rolling ribbon of road.

The people of Fayette county value their farmland for agriculture, and our local land use policies make that clear. This location for solar is not appropriate - and further, it is outside of EKPC's service area. Only 2% of their services benefit Fayette County, but

by siting this proposed facility on important Fayette County land, our community risks much more.

I would also argue there are thousands of acres in Kentucky to locate solar that don't also jeopardize an entire community's cultural and economic foundation - and that don't have the environmental and economic significance that our prime farmland does (think brownfields, strip mines, etc already stripped of productive soils).

Please keep in mind that Fayette County is the #2 county in Kentucky for ag sales.

Businesses in Fayette county are already installing solar, residents are installing solar, we are doing our part and it should continue to grow.

Community members are against this facility in this location for all that it jeopardizes for our county and ask the PSC to consider community sentiment in making their decision.

I am asking please don't jeopardize what sets our community, apart!

My name is Robert James and I am a full-time farmer in Lexington. I am also the incoming President of the Fayette County Farm Bureau. Farm Bureau serves as the voice of Kentucky agriculture and has policy promoting solar energy production and promoting agri-voltaics. Farm Bureau supports and encourages adding solar panels to existing buildings and we are intrigued by the potential to place solar arrays over parking lots, possibly protecting the cars beneath from the heat of the day. Solar energy may have a bright future since it apes the method by which farmers have been growing our food since time immemorial. But we do not believe that future is today.

The benefits of this proposed facility are ultimately tangential, while the costs to our Fayette County farmland are permanent. We farm in the Inner Bluegrass region of the state with some of the most fertile and productive soils in the country. The concrete foundations for the panel arrays and the grading necessary for construction of the site will permanently alter and destroy the productive soils beneath them.

Fayette County Farm Bureau and other groups commissioned the University of Kentucky to study the economic impact of agriculture in Fayette County. One result of the study was an estimate that a 10% decrease in agricultural production due to the loss of farmland in the county would result in a decreased economic output of approximately \$20 million dollars.

The reasons for siting this project within Fayette County on prime soils are not clearly outlined. Power transmission infrastructure is ubiquitous in the state. There are many such places in Eastern Kentucky, where EKPC operates a much larger footprint than Fayette County. Personally I would conjecture that the main reason this site was selected is its view from the interstate; which would make the project more of a billboard to passing motorists than a proper investment in energy production.

Commissioners, I know there are many more variables in this case for you to weigh. As a humble farmer I can't familiarize myself with all of them. I have spent my life working with dirt, bringing it to its full potential to produce the best crops it can. I know that the solar arrays of this project will be the last crop that that ground will grow.

~~This proposal is for a 40-MW facility on a 386-acre site meaning a production of 0.1 MW per acre, which is not a yield any farmer would be proud of. If one megawatt lights up hundreds of homes then at this rate one acre will light up tens of homes. The American Community Survey estimates Fayette County to have 136,104 households. If you took the total area of Fayette County and covered it with solar panels, then it could produce approximately enough power to power 15,000 homes, or just over 1/10 of the homes in Fayette County. Don't even think about powering the other businesses and industries.~~



Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Linda Gorton
Mayor

Oct. 29, 2024

Public Comments: Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton
Application of EKPC to Build Two Solar Farms
Case No. 202400129

- Good morning and thank you, **Chairman Hatton** and **Commissioners Regan and Stacy**, for the opportunity to speak to you today.
- I am Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton, and I am here to object to the proposal to build a commercial solar operation in Fayette County on prime farmland.
- As you may know, Lexington is home to a merged city-county government. As Mayor, I represent about 320,000 people throughout Fayette County in both rural and urban areas.
- Fayette County encompasses almost 183,000 acres, including just over 132,000 acres that are zoned agricultural. Our farmland is considered among the best quality soils in the country, if not the world.



FOLLOW MAYOR GORTON IN THE HORSE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD
www.facebook.com/MayorGorton | [www.X.com/MayorGorton](https://www.x.com/MayorGorton) | www.instagram.com/MayorGorton
200 East Main Street | Lexington, KY 40507 | (859) 4232255 | www.lexingtonky.gov



- Our countryside is home to many of the world's best thoroughbreds – I know you've seen the beautiful pictures – horses bring thousands of tourists to our county. We also have prime farmland for cattle operations.
- When I look at Bluegrass farms, I see businesses. The rural area is truly a work horse for our economy ... one estimate is that 1 in 12 jobs in Fayette County can be attributed to farming operations. Agriculture is estimated to generate \$2.3 billion a year for our economy.
- We have worked hard to preserve and protect our land – it is our identity. In 1958, Lexington enacted an urban growth boundary, which restricted development in the rural area. It is the oldest growth boundary in the nation.
- In 2000, we enacted a “Purchase of Development Rights” program through which we purchase agricultural conservation easements in order to preserve farmland for generations to come. To date, there are 285 farms protected by this program, totaling more than 31,000 acres.
- Despite these protections we must remain vigilant to protect our irreplaceable farmland.



- Today, there's a new threat from East Kentucky Power Company, an electric utility company. The company wants to build a solar facility on 388 acres of prime farmland in the Horse Capital of the World. We anticipate we will receive similar proposals in the future.
- Sadly, the company did not even bother to properly vet its proposal in Lexington. The company sponsored a single public meeting on May 16th at its Winchester office building in Clark County. There have been three press releases – one on May 9th, one on May 14th, and a third on April 29th. That's it.
- Our government supports solar. We are developing our own solar programs, as well as investigating whether our Haley Pike landfill can accommodate solar. We think solar projects are possible here without forcing us to give up irreplaceable farmland, a key component of our signature industry.
- In their responses to our attorneys, East Kentucky Power Company admits this project offers no quantifiable benefits to Fayette County. No new jobs.



- Very little, if any, of the power generated by this proposed facility would benefit Fayette County customers. With only about 7,000 local customers, the footprint of this company in Fayette County does not justify the use of 388 acres of farmland.
- Fayette County's Planning Commission has gone on record in opposition to solar enterprises on agriculturally zoned property. The matter will soon be taken up by the Urban County Council.
- As you make your decision in this case, we encourage you to consider the approach the PSC took in 2007, when it asked Lexington for its position in Kentucky-American Water Company's source of supply case. As the Commission wrestled with the issues in that case, it ordered Lexington as an intervenor in the case to provide its position before the PSC ruled. (4865-7276-2354, v. 2)
- I urge the Commission to do so again. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I would like to tender my public comments for the record.



Linda Gorton, Mayor

