

League of Women Voters of Lawrence-Douglas County

P.O. Box 1072, Lawrence, Kansas 66044

June 25, 2006

Planning Commission Chairman
Members
Lawrence-Douglas County Planning Commission
City Hall
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

RE: ITEM NO. 4: HIERARCHY OF PLANS

Dear Chairman and Planning Commissioners:

We view the "Hierarchy of Plans" and how they are defined as key elements in successful land use planning. The Watershed Plan is appropriately listed under the Comprehensive Plan because it provides the studies to determine the effect of the land characteristics on the potential of an area for development. We have two requests regarding the current plan descriptions.

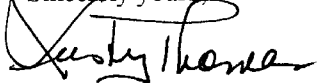
Our first request is to correct the wording under "Watershed or Sub-basin Plan." In the description of the "Purpose or reasons to use a watershed or sub-basin plan.." please revise the wording of the first point to read: "1. Provide information regarding the impact ~~on~~ *of* the natural environment on the potential *for* future development."

We also question the position taken in the Hierarchy of Plans, that neighborhood planning occurs only after neighborhoods are established. Regardless of the name given to the Sector Plan level, "neighborhood planning" has to occur *before* development, not just after neighborhoods exist. There are critical elements that have to be determined *and located* before development occurs in order for residential areas to function as neighborhoods. Fort Collins, as one example, has an "Advance Planning" department. They establish future neighborhood boundaries by the location of arterials (normally section lines), then within these boundaries determine the location of neighborhood collectors, neighborhood shopping areas, parks, connector streets, and other needed neighborhood uses and reserve areas, as far in advance as feasible. The developers determine where the local streets will be. Although some current thinking about planning divides sections into half-sections for more walkable neighborhoods, and even smaller portions of sections are divided into "pedestrian sheds" or transit-oriented developments, regardless of the size—by sections or half-sections, Sector Planning is the level within which the framework of residential neighborhoods is determined.

Our second request, therefore, is that the Sector Plans should include plans for the future urban areas at the neighborhood level, and the elements that neighborhoods need should be included in a more detailed description. The immediate need for this type of Sector Planning becomes more apparent as development proceeds in our Urban Growth Area. If an urban framework of neighborhoods isn't planned in advance for the UGA, we will find that the amorphous and random development which is occurring there now at suburban densities will remain forever suburban, even with compensating "ghost plats" for future re-subdivision. There must be an overall map of the physical framework into which the "ghost plats" can be designed to fit that will allow the suburban developments effectively to be re-subdivided as portions of future neighborhoods.

Our appeal regarding the Hierarchy of Plans is to be as specific as you can in what each plan is supposed to accomplish. Without a clear knowledge of the potential of the environment provided by watershed plans and a mapped structure within which the "ghost plats" of suburban development can fit to form neighborhoods, our hope for the Urban Growth Area eventually to become a functional part of our city will be in vain.

Sincerely yours,



Rusty Thomas
President



Alan Black, Chairman
Land Use Committee

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City County Planning Office
Lawrence, Kansas