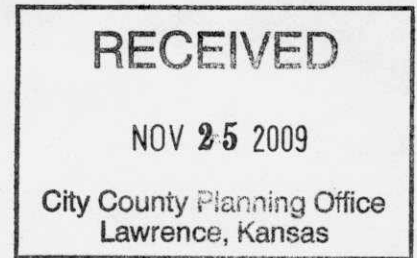


NORTH LAWRENCE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

LAWRENCE, KANSAS

November 19, 2009

**Dan Warner, Long Range Planner
Lawrence-Douglas County Planning Office
PO Box 708
Lawrence, KS 66044**



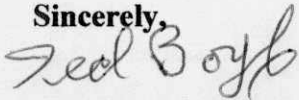
Dear Dan:

The North Lawrence Improvement Association and the residents of North Lawrence endorse and are in full agreement with the comments provided by Citizens for Responsible Planning regarding the process of developing the Northeast Sector Plan.

The NLIA would also like to see the Urban Growth Area pulled back. The other concerns of the NLIA are flooding into North Lawrence from this area as well as the preservation of type 1 & 2 soils for future food production.

Furthermore the NLIA appreciates the opportunity provided by the public meetings concerning this issue and the ability to provide input while this process is taking place.

Sincerely,



**Ted Boyle, President
North Lawrence Improvement Association**

TO: DAN WARNER, DOUGLAS COUNTY PLANNING
FROM: BART HALL, P.Ag. 14 November 2009
RE: GRANT TOWNSHIP PLAN

Please consider carefully the following observation regarding a long-term development plan for Grant Township in Douglas County, Kansas. I have no specific interest, either personal or financial, in the area under discussion, but do, however, maintain a significant general interest in the outcome, since I operate a farm four “bottoms” down-river, in Johnson County.

More particularly, I farm for a living, meaning that we do not work off the farm, and we do not receive a nickel of subsidy or grant money. Agriculture is it. Consequently, I understand all too well the economic challenges of my colleagues up-river, even though nearly all of them receive generous subsidies from the federal government, making their economic lives rather more secure than mine.

Unlike those colleagues, however, I am also an agronomist, specifically trained in soil science. My first two degrees were in geology and geo-chemistry, after which I shifted to general agronomy and then (slightly later) to soil science. In the bargain, I eventually served six years in elected political office at the county level, not in Kansas, thus also understand the dilemma when approached from a political perspective.

These discussions are never easy, which I fully understand from a farmer’s perspective, as well as that of a scientist and a politician. What I have done over the years, therefore, is to resort to first principles and let the results flow from there. What, then, are those principles?

- I am a fervent constitutional conservative. My direct ancestors signed the Declaration of Independence, fought the Revolution, and developed the Constitution for some very good reasons. Therefore, I believe rather fervently in property rights in particular and quite limited government in general.
- Liberty, however, is not license. Rights are not unlimited, and they never have been. Limited government is not the same as anarchy. That is why the Constitution places such prominence on the “blessings of liberty” not only “to ourselves [but also to] our posterity.”
- Some restriction of personal freedom is necessary for the “general welfare,” not only today, but for the future. In Revolutionary New England, for example, homes were required to manage fire and animals in specific ways. In Litchfield, Connecticut in 1789 there was a prohibition against playing “the game of towns, or base-ball” on the village green because errant balls were breaking too many windows.
- There is a huge difference between niggling nanny-state regulation of things that don’t really matter (and we have far too many of those already) and thoughtful

controls on selfish activities likely to harm others, or close off their options, now or in the future.

- I also believe that if things are going well, that will eventually change. If they're going badly, that too will change.

Consequently – and based on those principles – true conservatives actually conserve those things that may be of value to future generations, particularly when replacement would be difficult or impossible. That, therefore, is what I'm asking of the Grant Township plan. Once an area of good soil is given over to development it is lost to our nation's food supply ... FOREVER.

America has been incredibly fortunate for the last century or so. Our population in 1920 was about 106 million. A generation later it was 160 million. Quite happily, the development of hybrid corn, wheat, and vegetables increased yields enough to make up for the population growth.

From 1950 to 1980 our population grew almost 50% to just under 240 million, BUT chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides permitted another increase of yields that once again made up for the population growth.

Once, however, the Baby Boomers began to buy homes in the early '80s encroachment on prime agricultural land became a growing problem. Since that time our population has grown by 70 million, but a lot of good land has disappeared into suburbs and industrial parks. Yields were pushed a bit farther, while heavily subsidized water in California and elsewhere has allowed the cultivation of previously under-used land for farms.

Unfortunately, many of the big horticultural areas of California are now beginning to suffer from soil salinization. The last few decades of irrigation have increased salt levels in those soils to the point it has become challenging to produce some crops. California farmland is already being abandoned.

Questions of "local" food supply are therefore not just some hippy-dippy deal at the Lawrence Farmers' Market.

Much of the soil in Grant Township is of exceedingly rare quality. Less than one-quarter of one percent of all the soils in the world are as good as the Eudora soils in the Kansas River valley. I farm Eudora soils myself, and they are a priceless treasure. Grant Township is full of them, and once they are gone, they're gone. What are you going to do? Bulldoze the local equivalent of Fedex?

The Kaw Valley at one time furnished potatoes for much of the region, along with watermelons, sweet corn and other crops. Canneries employed scores of people to preserve crops for the winter. Canneries are less common in this era of quick-frozen crops, but the essential point is the same.

To choose only one example, potatoes yield about 25,000 pounds per acre around here. *Per capita* consumption is 126 pounds per year, but let's limit it to the 44 pounds per year consumed as fresh potatoes. The 15-county KC metro area has a population of 2 million, and on that basis consumes about 88 million pounds of potatoes in fresh form. That's about six square miles of potatoes, and in a sensible production system you return to potatoes perhaps once every four or five years.

Only certain soils are suitable for potato production, most notably (around here) Eudora soils. If other areas get into trouble, where are you going to find 25 or 30 square miles of Eudora soils if they've been given over to industry? Between the Fedex facility at Edwardsville moving upriver to Topeka there are only about 40 square miles of Kansas River bottomlands, and by no means is all of it the Eudora soil type.

And potatoes are only one crop for fresh consumption. What about the other heavily consumed vegetables? Tomatoes? Spring and fall lettuce? Onions? Sweet corn?

More to the point, UN population growth estimates for the US anticipate a population over 400 million by mid-century. We are the only developed nation in the world with a growing population. How, exactly, do we expect to feed an additional 90 million people? As it is, we must produce more food in a single year than was required to feed the nation for the entire first half of the 19th Century.

As an agronomist I can declare with confidence that yields for most crops have topped out. We already have captured the yield increases available from hybridization, fertilizer, and pesticides. Genetic engineering is improving crop quality (in some cases) and reducing the demand for inputs (in others), but it is *not* increasing yields. Increasing quantities of food therefore depend upon continued availability of suitable high-quality land.

The Kaw and Missouri River valleys are irreplaceable for horticulture, and consequently remain a profoundly important insurance policy in view of projected population growth. These valley soils would become even more critical in case of food supply disruptions in other production areas, particularly because prolonged drought is a significant ongoing threat in most of those areas.

In recent years heavily subsidized water in places like California, heavily subsidized road transport across the country, and relatively low energy prices in general have significantly distorted the economics of food production in the Kaw Valley. Will that last forever? Obviously not.

So, in forty years do you think it will be worth the fight for your successors to demand the bulldozing of those old industrial parks in what used to be Grant Township in order to make way for food production? Would you wish that battle on them in a time of distress ... or would you prefer to convey the option, unhindered and uncompromised?

At the end I must return to the question of property rights. Zoning in Lawrence and other cities does not generally permit someone to open a pub in his living room. If he wishes to operate a pub he must locate in a sector where such activities will not destroy or disrupt the intrinsic value of a residential area. Suburbs, too, are subject to restrictions on property rights in order to preserve what is of value for the present and the future.

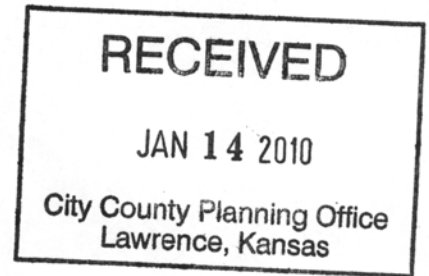
It is therefore unrealistic — and unreasonable — for property owners in rural areas to demand completely unrestricted property rights merely by virtue of a rural situation. This is particularly true when unrestricted activity eliminates irrevocably important future options. Rural citizens do not, and should not, have completely unlimited “property rights” just because they don’t live in town.

I must also highlight a conceptual problem, distressingly common amongst planners — it is the belief that farmland is a place to **hold** land until a “higher and better” use comes along. Over here in Johnson County, that’s even part of the official definition of “rural” land.

For most of the soils in Grant Township, and Kansas River bottom land soils in general, however, **agriculture is the highest and best use.**

I strongly encourage you, therefore, to encode that reality within the framework of the Grant Township development plan. Please do not permit property owners in Grant Township to liquidate irrevocably — for their personal and immediate gain alone — the entire intrinsic future value of those remarkably rare soils.

Vivian E. Miller
25962 Linwood Road
Lawrence, KS 88044



Mr. Dan Warner, Long Range Planner
Lawrence-Douglas County Planning Office
6 E. 6th Street
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

Dear Mr. Warner,

I own land in the Northeast Quadrant near the Airport. I like to see land used for agriculture including my land. Despite my wish for the land, I am shocked that zoning might be placed into effect that would tell me how my land could be used. I am very opposed to such zoning. If such zoning were put in place, it would be like a slap in the face by big brother.

We farmers do not have much voting power as there are only a few farmers compared to those living in Douglas County. That fact does not justify the majority running rough shod over a small minority of farmers.

Thank you for your consideration of these thoughts.

Very Sincerely,

Vivian E. Miller

Vivian E. Miller

Mr. Warner

My husband was a farmer. So I hold up for farm people. I certainly am not in favor of forcing farm people of selling their land for other businesses. This area is good farm ground and should be in a farming community unless the farmers want it otherwise.

Sincerely

Vivian Miller