

The Oldham Era

UK students reveal plans for growth, economic development in county

By Nathaniel Kissel

Friday, April 2, 2004 9:58 AM CST

There was a certain excitement in the air March 25 as the hopes and dreams of lifelong Oldham County residents mixed with the imaginations of University of Kentucky students.

Landscape architecture students presented a master plan for Oldham County -- as well as specific plans for certain areas -- at the John W. Black Community Center in Buckner.

As the second part of a project that culminates their college careers, students gave recommendations for what the county needs to effectively grow.

Students first met with community members in February to learn about their concerns for Oldham County. Based on that meeting, the students formulated a master plan.

Participants visited several stations in the meeting room with information about the areas addressed by the project -- La Grange, Pewee Valley, Westport, greenways, parks and recreation, tourism, the county's conservation park and the group's master plan.

The master plan, which details an overall vision for the county, determined how the county should be zoned.

"It's nothing set in stone," student Andy Watson said of the preliminary plan, which provides several new additions to the county.

Among those new additions were a small airport near Henry County and an Oldham County bypass that would run from Shelby County, to La Grange, to Crestwood and out of the county through Pewee Valley.

Student Emily Listerman said the group used several maps of the county detailing streams, slopes and soil types. Using this information, members determined what areas of the county were suitable for development and which should be reserved for conservation. Listerman said the group also focused on keeping industrial development within the Interstate 71 corridor.

Among the students' biggest concerns was the current state of package treatment sewage plants and septic systems in the county. Listerman said students recommended the establishment of three regional sewage plants to address the county's growing problem with compromised streams and overworked plants.

The group also has big plans for several of the county's communities, including La

Grange and Pewee Valley.

The group provided three plans for La Grange. One calls for highlighting the Main Street area and encouraging development of both residential and commercial zones. Another calls for the two-block section of Main Street between Second and Walnut streets to be closed off during a few days of the week to make it more "pedestrian-friendly." A third plan calls for an extension of the downtown theme to a four-block area.

Molly Clendenin, a student who worked on plans for La Grange, said her group tried to encourage the idea of the city as a tourist attraction by highlighting the uniqueness of the train that splits Main Street. She also recommended developing areas leading to Main Street, especially the Ky. 53 corridor, to extend historic charm and let visitors know what's ahead.

"You will have more of a sense of arrival and you will know you are entering a historic area," Clendenin said.

Clendenin said La Grange needs to encourage growth along its alleyways and side streets to connect residential areas to Main Street. She envisioned the development of an "art walk" or "restaurant way" in those areas.

For Pewee Valley, Phil Canfield envisioned a 5-mile bike loop connected to the county's proposed interurban greenway. The bike loop would take visitors through historic areas in the Pewee Valley community. Canfield also recommended adding second floors to buildings and filling in areas of concrete in commercial zones to further economic development.

The students have high hopes for the rest of the county as well.

Along the riverfront, students suggested commercial development and a larger area for boaters. They suggested an expansion of the recreational common space in Westport to enhance the community atmosphere. Students envisioned growth of available space in Buckner, Crestwood and Goshen for playing fields, as well as the development of the county's conservation park off Ky. 524.

In addition to an airport, students examining Oldham's tourism potential suggested the expansion of scenic byways and the interurban greenway along less-traveled roads.

Oldham County Judge-Executive Mary Ellen Kinser said she is excited by the ideas presented and the possible future they describe.

"I think the ideas and the visioning are inspiring as to the potential the county could achieve," Kinser said.

After Thursday's meeting and the input received from the community, the students will go back to the drawing board. A final presentation will be given May 6.

E-mail us about this story at nkissel@oldhamera.com.