



**COMMERCE CABINET
KENTUCKY HERITAGE COUNCIL**

Steven L. Beshear
Governor

The State Historic Preservation Office
300 Washington Street
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
Phone (502) 564-7005
Fax (502) 564-5820
www.kentucky.gov

Marcheta Sparrow
Secretary

Donna M. Neary
Executive Director and
State Historic Preservation Officer

June 23, 2008

Courthouse Area Design Review Board
c/o Billy Van Pelt, Design Review Officer
200 East Main Street, 9th Floor
Lexington, KY 40507

Dear Mr. Van Pelt and Members of the Courthouse Area Design Review Board:

The Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office has been involved in preservation across the Commonwealth since 1966, working with Lexington and other communities across the state to preserve and protect historic resources and to revitalize their downtowns. Kentucky is fortunate to have a rich and diverse cultural heritage, much of which is rooted in local Main Streets.

Town centers are important places of commerce and entertainment. What makes each one unique are the many historic commercial and nearby residential structures that comprise downtown and tell the unique story of that community. Not only do these areas attract visitors and tourists interested in an authentic local experience, they also enhance the quality of life of all Kentuckians.

Not surprisingly I am disturbed about the CentrePointe project and the long-term impact this building, as currently proposed, will have on the entire Lexington community. Instead of capitalizing on the revitalization of downtown and the thriving entertainment district, proceeding with CentrePointe as envisioned will negatively impact the community by destroying a vital block of Lexington's historic fabric.

It is the demolition of these historic buildings that most concerns me and it is in my capacity as Kentucky's State Historic Preservation Officer that I am writing to you. As part of the Council's federally mandated role, we are charged with identifying resources that are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

At this time I would like to go on record as stating that the following 12 historic buildings have been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:

- FADT-61, 119 South Limestone Street
- FADT-105, 152 West Main Street
- FADT-106, 156-160 West Main Street
- FADT-107, 162-164 West Main Street
- FADT-190, 126-128 South Upper Street
- FADT-191, 116-118 South Upper Street
- FADT-209, 120 South Upper Street
- FADT-241, 109 South Limestone Street
- FADT-242, 111 South Limestone Street
- FADT-243, 137 West Vine Street
- FADT-244, 136-138 West Main Street
- FADT-245, 117 South Limestone Street

These buildings represent two pivotal eras of Lexington's development: the 19th century, and the New Deal era modernization of the commercial center. Individually and as a whole, these buildings track the forward movement of the community and thus share a historic context. On this block there are buildings that represent well over a century of construction, different materials and architectural styles – and 182 years of businesses, people and stories that together make downtown Lexington unique and a place that is special and diverse for those who live in the community as well as the people who visit.

This is not the first time the Heritage Council has voiced its concern about the demolition of these historic resources. In the late summer of 2006, Heritage Council staff met with CentrePointe developers, the Downtown Development Authority and concerned citizens several times to discuss historic preservation options for this project. At that time we recommended incorporating historic buildings into the development of a quality new infill construction project. So, it is discouraging that nearly two years later, the design proposal brought forward seeks demolition of the block with no consideration for the existing buildings, and historic preservation concerns are portrayed as coming late in the game.

The Kentucky Heritage Council has a history of sharing preservation-based economic development strategies with property developers and downtown leaders. For example, the Kentucky Main Street Program is a Heritage Council initiative that fosters economic development in downtowns using proven preservation strategies. Lexington participates in this statewide network, with Lexington's local Main Street program administered by the Downtown Development Authority. Participation in this program assumes a local commitment to the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

As demonstrated throughout Kentucky and across the nation, the Main Street program works. In fact, over the past three decades this program has helped reinvigorate central business districts in nearly 100 communities across the state and pumped more than \$2 billion of investment into local economies. Through Main Street and other programs the Heritage Council promotes implementation of the proven, long-term solution to maintaining vibrant downtowns -- locating small businesses, unique restaurants, retailers and entertainment venues and other adaptive uses in existing rehabbed buildings.

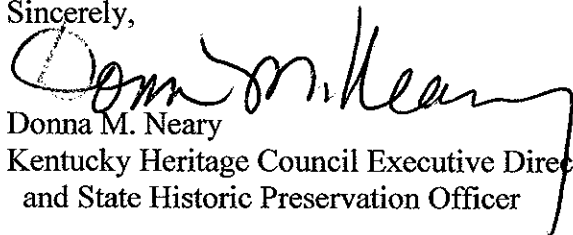
More good news for the preservation of these buildings is that state and federal historic preservation tax credits -- real financial incentives -- may be used to rehabilitate them. Just in the last three years the state credit has been utilized by Kentuckians to generate more than \$170 million of private investment in the rehabilitation of historic buildings listed in the National Register.

Of great concern, the proposed project will dwarf the historic courthouse. The proposal is incompatible with the downtown master plan and courthouse overlay design guidelines. The courthouse area design overlay zone was established to, among other things, prevent monolithic developments that destroy historic character. The intent of the zone is to "encourage growth and redevelopment in the downtown area, while preserving and protecting the unique features and characteristics of the area..." In other words, growth and redevelopment are encouraged using existing historic buildings, while adding well-designed and human-scaled infill.

It has been exciting to see the level of dialogue the CentrePointe proposal has generated among local preservation supporters and the city. Comments have appeared in the news and out in the public, especially among the grassroots supporters working through Preserve Lexington. Like others who have spoken out against the current design, our goal is not to stop or discourage downtown development but to encourage the community and its leaders to think about what kind of growth would most benefit Lexington today, and the legacy these decisions will leave for future generations.

Not long ago the developers of CentrePointe stated on a blog that they want to build "what works." We hope they are listening, and we would very much like to work with them and others to develop a project that can be a national model for collaboration, compromise and vision.

Sincerely,



Donna M. Neary

Kentucky Heritage Council Executive Director
and State Historic Preservation Officer