South Kenton County residents speak up… “Keep it rural”

Citizen opinion surveys are often met with indifference in this age of electronics and instant polling. And yet, a recent questionnaire sent through the mail to more than 3000 South Kenton County residents sparked a good deal of interest and an unprecedented response. Over 1000 were completed and returned.

“I have worked with surveys on many topics around the state of Kentucky for 35 years and have never seen this level of agreement in responses to a survey,” said Dr. Lori Garkovich, Professor and State Extension Specialist in the Department of Community and Leadership Development at the University of Kentucky. “In analyzing the results it is apparent that the general message from the community to public officials is pretty straightforward - keep the area rural.”

Over 94 percent of the responses came from residents who live in southern Kenton County and more than 80 percent of those have lived in the community for over ten years. Garkovich calls this response “unprecedented.”

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements that presented conditions and issues in South Kenton County. Among the most telling responses were these.

"It is important to keep agriculture a viable part of the South Kenton economy."
   Strongly Agree: 68.7% Agree: 23.5% TOTAL AGREE: 92.2%

"It is important to maintain the rural character of South Kenton County."
   Strongly Agree: 70.7% Agree: 19.3% TOTAL AGREE: 90.3%

"I am satisfied with my access to commercial and retail stores where I live."
   Strongly Agree: 49.3% Agree: 37.5% TOTAL AGREE: 86.8%

"Subdivisions and other residential development should be directed away from land which is being used for preservation or conservation purposes."
   Strongly Agree: 52.2% Agree: 31.7% TOTAL AGREE: 83.9%

"Subdivisions and other residential should be directed away from land which is being used for agriculture."
   Strongly Agree: 49.6% Agree: 30.4% TOTAL AGREE: 80.0%

"If residential and retail development occurs around these existing communities, it should maintain the small community character of these places."
   Strongly Agree: 41.8% Agree: 38.0% TOTAL AGREE: 79.8%

On the other hand, when presented with a set of statements that describe development patterns the respondents see as unacceptable, they clearly express their disagreement.

"Subdivisions should be allowed in undeveloped areas."
   Strongly Disagree: 36.2% Disagree: 26.3% TOTAL DISAGREE: 62.5%

"South Kenton County needs to have more employment centers (e.g., clusters of large employers)."
   Strongly Disagree: 28.5% Disagree: 32.1% TOTAL DISAGREE: 60.6%
"If the opportunity arose to sell my farm for development, I would take it."
Strongly Disagree: 42.9% Disagree: 16.0% TOTAL DISAGREE: 58.9%

Detailed survey results of all questions are available for viewing at on the NKAPC website or in the community section of the Kenton County's Fiscal Court website.

“This survey provides us with a clear message from the community. Citizen responses will have implications on the recommendations we’re crafting for the Direction 2030 comprehensive planning effort,” said Sharmili Reddy, AICP, Planning Manager at NKAPC.

Additional focus group meetings are being planned to extend the conversation beyond the scope of the survey.