

Responses from Ken Kerkhoff, Candidate for the Versailles City Council

1. **What are some specific skills you can bring to improve the City of Versailles as a City Council member? Please share a personal accomplishment to date. Why are you the best candidate for the position you seek?**

I consider working with various factions, finding common ground and taking a leadership role to identify priorities and work to achieve them as one of my strengths. People break down barriers by spending time together and 'HONESTLY' trying to understand opposing views and by developing plans to satisfy the most pressing needs.

Eight years ago the City faced unprecedented financial stress. Due to the recession our income was down significantly and there was strong need to improve services, enhance and beautify downtown and to accelerate economic development. Our water and sewer line infrastructure was aging and significant improvements were becoming necessary.

During my 34 years business experience with IBM & Lexmark I managed large budgets during difficult times

As a long term member of the Finance Committee I am proud of the positive progress we have made to significantly improve the City's balance sheet and I hope to continue to 'Get Things Done" for Versailles & Woodford County.

Most recent results:

- Reduced our tax burden on Versailles citizens
- Significant improvement in city balance sheet
- Much needed investment in our water/sewer infrastructure
- Capital and operational investments for our first responders
- Continued Downtown revitalization (New restaurants, shops, mural, promo video, events, etc.)
- Involved more citizens in dialogue about city issues
- Improved website (City & Tourism Commission)

My wife Nancy, retired Woodford County teacher, and I raised our three sons in Versailles and have been actively involved for 34 years. We are long time members of Southland Christian Church.

I look forward to discussing your concerns and your dreams for the future of Versailles. Please call me at (859)433-5966.

2. **What is the biggest challenge, and biggest opportunity you see facing the City of Versailles?**

Public Safety and quality services is the primary job of government. State of the art Police/Fire facilities, equipment (ie; body cams on ALL officers, etc.), and training are critical. Many communities are facing Opiate issue's and we are taking appropriate steps with Narcan and needle exchange programs.

Economic Development: The largest share of General Fund revenue comes directly from payroll, net profit tax, utility franchise and insurance license fee's. All related to economic development/jobs.

My number 1 priority 8 years ago was funding a full time EDA Director and I will continue that support looking for the right industries and employers for Versailles & Woodford County.

Some of these jobs typically produce higher per capita payroll tax revenue and have a very low impact on the 'quality of life' since they do not typically have the large land requirements. In addition, this demographic tends to consist of young, upwardly mobile individuals who are starting families and who are often willing to pay a slight premium for locally produced goods and food products (which supports the local agriculture economy).

3. **The updated 2018 Comprehensive Plan [Goals & Objectives](#) prioritize infill/redevelopment as a primary strategy to accommodate urban growth needs. What specific recommendations do you have to protect the character and context of existing neighborhoods while pursuing an infill/redevelopment strategy? Please share your ideas for infill and re-development within the Versailles Urban Service Boundary.**

I love the Uniqueness of Woodford County BUT we must have an economic base to support that uniqueness. To my knowledge, there are NO suitable infill areas for light industrial and ensuring we have jobs, (and the tax base that come with that), for the future is one of my biggest concerns.

We are only a corporate decision away from one of our current employers choosing to move from Versailles. Not planning for that would be irresponsible in my opinion.

'Comprehensive Planning' should include future jobs, tax base protection and growth as well as land preservation.

I have always been supportive of infill wherever possible and the acquisition and redevelopment of the old elementary school to senior apartments by Holly Wiedemann, AU Associates (<http://auassociates.com.s157318.gridserver.com>), is a perfect example.

Our town has needed a hotel badly and the Holiday Inn Express opening this August in the old Versailles Center is another example. Something that would not have happened if the council had not taken the initiative to tear the old center down and place on lien on that property. Additional examples are our new police station, (Old St. Leo property), and downtown with the reuse of the Amsden building and the Methodist Church...we need to do even more wherever possible.

I value our beautiful countryside as much as anyone, but as an elected official I face the reality of a city with a poverty rate higher than the state as a whole. One in five people within the city limits have an income below the federal poverty level.

It might be easy for you and I to travel Lexington or Frankfort, etc. to work, shop, eat, etc., but some folks simply do not have that option. Add to that the challenges we face as our local population ages faster than other areas as our young people relocate and we are looking at a serious problem 10 or 20 years down the road. My view as an elected official is with the long-term health of the 'overall community'.



4. Please share some of the ideas you have about enhancing Versailles' downtown business district. How will you help attract businesses to re-locate to Versailles?

The flowers, the New Woodford Reserve mural, the Uniquely Woodford logo and promo video, the "VERSAILLES...It All Starts Here" video and the recently updated city web site were all initiatives I chaired and brought to the table. Marketing Versailles is critical to attracting private equity to our downtown. For years I chaired the Woodford County Tourism Commission and continue to serve by developing the first web site for the county (reservewoodford.com) and I work closely with Ann Hardy (visithorsecountry.com) which brings horse farm tours to 14 Woodford County.

Finally, I co-chaired the Woodford County Work Ready re-certification committee which is critical to attracting business.

5. Are you in favor of further annexation of surrounding land outside the Versailles urban services boundary (USB)? If so, where and how would you change the boundary?

I voted for the Edgewood Farm annexation and I truly understand the reluctance of some to support that. There are certainly properties that are distressed and could use some attention within the city and I have and will continue to support infill and redevelopment of these properties. The reality is that it takes a motivated seller with capital and an reasonable ROI willing to purchase and invest in fixing up these properties. I have yet to find any suitable infill areas for light industrial .

In my view this is really the way development should occur. We should be looking at a large piece of property instead of trying to piecemeal our way into the future. If developed, I would favor a mixed-use development.

If we are to grow I don't know what direction is better than this property. I favor shrinking the existing boundaries of the USB to accommodate these additional acres, thereby achieving a near zeroing out of acreage.

6. Do you support the study of a merger of the county government with one or more of the city governments?

Counting executives and members of the two city councils and fiscal court, 23 elected officials represent Woodford County, which has a population of roughly 25,000. By comparison, in Lexington, which has a merged government, 16 elected officials represent more than 318,000 people.

Since day one I have supported studying the benefits of merged city/county governments. In fact I voted FOR a resolution to do just that a few years back. Your point above is dead on in my view something we need to investigate.

7. In your opinion, is Versailles city transportation and infrastructure adequate to support our community? If not, where would you like to see improvements made?

With the current SSES & WWTP upgrade nearing completion our water & sewer infrastructure is in great shape.

Public Transportation is clearly lacking and needs attention. I co-chaired the Work Ready Community re-certification committee and a key component of our recent renewal request included:

“Transportation Help - The Community Transportation Association of America in cooperation with Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky, Inc. are working on a transportation improvement project for Central Kentucky. Part of this project is to study the need for and potential of a more regional approach to providing mobility services in the region.”

We need to find ways to get folks w/o transportation options to jobs here in the county. I am willing to participate and would welcome input on this important need.

8. What are your plans for improving the environmental sustainability of our county? How would you support investments in more renewable alternative energy development?

This should be a county wide effort and would welcome the opportunity to participate in any efforts to study this.

We should consider looking at recent Kentucky success stories:

[How\\$mart KY](#)– East Kentucky Power Cooperative distribution co-ops are using local construction crews to make Eastern Kentuckians’ homes more energy efficient. The construction costs are returned through a pay-as-you-go approach, where residents get to pocket some of the savings on the monthly bill and use some of the savings to pay the loan back. [Learn more about our co-op work here.](#)

[Kentucky: Green and Healthy Schools Program](#) – With 160 highly energy efficient [Energy Star school buildings](#), we are a national leader in this arena. Some of these building generate renewable electricity on site! These schools are out-performing expectations and saving us thousands of dollars.

9. Do you support or oppose the extension of Falling Springs Blvd. at or near U.S. 62?

As emotional as folks get about this issue I am still in favor of it. Other solutions involve acquiring data to support specific changes within the city. Finally, with so many State Roads involved, we have limited impact but to continue requesting changes we feel are needed to improve traffic flow and congestion.

10. Agriculture is an annual \$565 million-dollar industry that supports 1 in 3 jobs (specifically 2,783 jobs) in Woodford County. Woodford County farmland also anchors a burgeoning travel and agri-tourism industry. What are some ideas and specific policies that you have to strengthen the agriculture industry sector within the Versailles city limits?

We can help the ag sector within the city limits by a change in the zoning codes to allow greater density within the city limits. Also the purchase of development rights and by helping developers within the city limits reduce their costs so they can create more affordable housing for the workers we need in the ag sector. Put teeth in the code enforcement officers ability to punish landlords to adhere to reasonable rules & regulations. As mentioned earlier a public transportation plan is also needed.

I serve on the Mayors Affordable Housing Task force and we met in July with Rick McQuady, Lexington Affordable Housing manager. My notes from that meeting include:

- Rename Affordable Housing to Workforce Housing
- Gap Financing-Preservation just as important as new housing
- Ky Housing Corp & Fed Home Loan Bank (Cinti) & Developers should ALL be involved

Also below is a very creative idea from member Lori Garkovich we will be looking at:

“Community land trusts are nonprofit, community-based organizations designed to ensure community stewardship of land. Community land trusts can be used for many types of development (including commercial and retail), but are primarily used to ensure long-term housing affordability. To do so, the trust acquires land and maintains ownership of it permanently. With prospective homeowners, it enters into a long-term, renewable lease instead of a traditional sale. When the homeowner sells, the family earns only a portion of the increased property value. The remainder is kept by the trust, preserving the affordability for future low- to moderate-income families.”