



MOST KENTON COUNTY RESIDENTS FAVOR HILLSIDE PRESERVATION

Scientific survey measures public opinion as NKAPC seeks broader input

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FORT MITCHELL – A majority of Kenton County residents place a high priority on hillside preservation and agree that preserving hillsides is an appropriate use of the community’s resources.

These are among the findings of a scientific telephone survey conducted recently by Levin & Associates, a marketing firm operated by Dr. Aron Levin, a marketing professor at the Haile/US Bank College of Business at Northern Kentucky University. The survey was commissioned by the Northern Kentucky Area Planning Commission (NKAPC) as part of The Hills project.

The Hills project is designed to solicit public opinion on how Kenton County residents feel about its largely-undeveloped hillsides. This survey is a final step to solicit, gauge, and analyze public sentiment received during the project’s year-long outreach. Final recommendations from the project will be included the county’s next comprehensive plan.

“We provided a number of different opportunities for residents to join our community-wide discussion on this issue,” said Dennis Gordon, NKAPC’s executive director. “Because the resulting input will guide the next comprehensive plan, we decided to test the conclusions we’d taken away from those discussions. The scientific results pretty much reflected what residents told us during our outreach efforts.”

Among the survey’s findings:

- Most respondents prefer a mix of hillside development and preservation.
- More than half want the community to place a “high” or “very high” priority on preservation.
- One third of the respondents “care deeply” about Kenton County hillsides and favor “full preservation.”
- 80 percent of the respondents agree or strongly agree that “undeveloped hillsides add to the visual appeal of Kenton County.”
- 65 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that preserving hillsides “is an appropriate use of our community’s resources.”
- Just 10 percent of the respondents said they “don’t care” about hillsides.
- More than half of the respondents indicated that they would be “interested” or “extremely interested” in any decisions made regarding hillsides in Kenton County.

“Kenton County residents have been telling us for several years that they want us to focus on the community’s undeveloped hillsides. That’s part of the reason we initiated The Hills project,” Gordon said. “These scientific data show pretty clearly that a majority of residents recognize our undeveloped hillsides as a valuable community resource and want us to make sure we use that resource wisely.”

Gordon says the challenge before staff now is to find an appropriate response to all those who have weighed in on this subject.

“Although the survey results show that a clear majority of citizens favor hillside preservation, we can’t use those results as a basis to prohibit all future hillside development. Conversely, we can’t ignore the will of our citizenry just because the answer is going to be difficult,” he stated.

“These results affirm one of our earliest goals for The Hills project—to identify ways that development can occur in conjunction with preservation, not in spite of it.”

NKAPC is the professional planning staff for Kenton County’s 19 local governments. Under Kentucky law, NKAPC staff is responsible among other things for researching and preparing the county’s comprehensive plan, a guide for public and private land use actions.

Levin & Associates conducted phone interviews with 300 Kenton County adults during the first two weeks in December. Phone numbers were randomly selected. The majority of interviews were conducted in the evening and on weekends to fairly represent respondents who work outside the home. The vast majority of respondents have lived in Kenton County for a decade or more. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 6.5 percent.

“Although the results of the previous surveys conducted by staff did provide useful information, the results could not be considered to be at the same level of scientific accuracy as the information contained in this survey,” said Dr. Levin. “That was largely due to the method I used to conduct the survey. When you review the results we were able to obtain within our margin of error, you can be assured that you are looking at an accurate representation of how the population of Kenton County feels about these issues.”

The survey was the latest effort by NKAPC to seek public input on The Hills project. To date, three public forums, two online surveys, and an online discussion forum were used to gather input. The online forum remains open at nkapc.org.

“Staff is analyzing these scientific results and beginning to prepare policy recommendations that will be included in the new comprehensive plan,” Gordon concluded. “As we complete those recommendations, we’ll schedule a final public forum and discuss our conclusions with county residents.”

More information about the survey, including its methodology and a breakdown of individual responses, as well as information about The Hills project can be found at nkapc.org.