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County highly desirable, lacks master plan for infrastructure

Nashville Business Journal - by [Scott Takac](#) Nashville Business Journal

A lot of the land planning occurring in Williamson County will determine if there's continuity and aesthetic views in the area's future.

LandDesign's Nashville office has been involved in several Williamson County projects during the last 11 years and is working on many more. The firm has more than 40 employees who offer urban design, land planning, civil engineering and landscape architecture services.

LandDesign's projects include land planning for the Westhaven and Berry Farms communities, site design of the Mars Petcare headquarters and Jamison Station mixed-use development and civil design for The Gates at Carlisle and Franklin High School.

To find out more about the planning and design challenges Williamson County faces and how they're being addressed, the Business Journal turned to LandDesign managing partner Dwight Kiser.

Lexington, Ky. has white horse fences and New Orleans has its wrought iron work and walkable French Quarter. What design features could become part of Williamson County's own brand? I find it hard to identify any one physical element that succinctly brands Williamson County. Quite frankly, I don't think it can or should be done.

However, if you ask me to describe what makes Williamson County unique the word that immediately comes to mind is diversity.

From the weathered facades and historic charm of downtown Franklin to the crisp lines and continuity of brick and mortar of Maryland Farms and the rolling pastures and four-rail fences of Leiper's Fork, these diverse images - call them brands if you will - are what make Williamson County so one-of-a-kind. Its diversity is its brand.

No one could have predicted the county's recent growth. Will it ever be possible to catch up planning-wise?

First of all, I don't think Williamson County or its cities are to worry about "catching up." For the most part, the operative words most consistently heard are "quality design and quality growth."

The county and its cities are in the unique position of being able to dictate growth at their leisure. Because of its consistent high desirability as a location to live, work and play, the county can afford to be selective in the types of development it considers for approval.

In fact, the county and its municipalities have put procedures in place that preclude rampant growth and foster high design standards that continue to make the county attractive to all aspects of development.

Is there any inter-community effort toward a collective vision for the county? Not really. What is both really unique and challenging for LandDesign is that each community - and the county - has its own feel, its own special characteristics or persona that it desires to portray.

We have had to become experts at understanding the idiosyncrasies of each in order to be successful players in all. Again, it's about the diversity and I support that.

The one aspect that does trouble me however is the overall lack of a well-planned and coordinated infrastructure plan for the entire county. When I say infrastructure, I primarily mean water, sewer and roads - the framework or "bones" of the built environment.

There are numerous utility districts in Williamson County and to my knowledge the majority do not plan for orderly growth of their systems - either internally or across their jurisdictional lines.

The majority have a build it and turn it over attitude which precludes orderly development and results in a patch-work quilt approach. Personally, I would love to see a single authority that would be proactive in the long-range planning of the county's systems in order to foster deliberate growth.

stakac@bizjournals.com 615-846-4278

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