



# NEWTOWN PIKE EXTENSION

## A Word from the Project Manager

By Shane Tucker

**W**e are nearing the end of 2023 and, wow, do we have a lot of good news to report! The Davis Park Pavilion is finished, which means that once again the community will have space for cookouts, reunions, neighborhood gatherings and the like. The park's playground equipment has been delivered and installed. Grass has been sown and needs time to establish itself. By late spring Davis Park should be ready for fun activities and the project team and neighborhood will be able to count among their many blessings a finished park!

The 5,000 square-foot Lexington Community Land Trust (LCLT) Community Center is now under construction. This beautiful, collaborative space will be home to the LCLT offices, a conference room with a kitchenette, a community technology room, a room for preserving the history of the neighborhood, and a community room that will double as a basketball half-court and an event space for larger gatherings. If construction goes as planned, the building will be completed by late 2024. Also remaining on the project team's punch list are the historical markers. They are in safe keeping and will be installed when construction of the Community Center and bus shelters are completed. Construction of the 75-unit apartment complex dispersed among three buildings is underway.

I realize everyone is getting ready for the holidays. I hope you are as excited for the coming new year as I am! In the meantime, have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from District 7!



*When not helping Santa, Shane Tucker is the Local Public Agency (LPA) Project Manager for the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Division of Highways, District 7, Planning Section. He has a BS in Construction Management from Eastern Kentucky University and has been with the Cabinet for 21 years. In 2018 Shane became the NPE Project Manager for KYTC.*



Pictured above: Byron Mitchell, Andrew Grunwald, Whitney Baxter, Juliana McDonald, Hannah LeGris, Mayor Linda Gorton, Senator Reggie Thomas, Jennifer Reynolds, Katie Thompson, and Kelly Baker.

# Community Center Groundbreaking

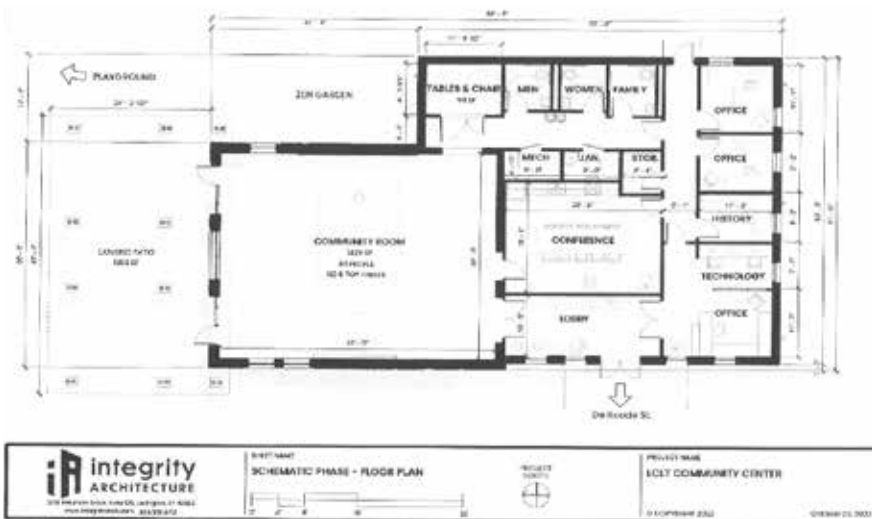
By Robin Baskette

On November 1, Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton; Councilwomen Whitney Baxter, Jennifer Reynolds and Hannah LeGris (Jennifer and Hannah are both LCLT Board members); the NPE project team; Project Manager Ed Holmes; and neighborhood board members came together for the groundbreaking of the neighborhood Community Center. The 5,000 square-foot building will contain the offices of the LCLT, meeting rooms, a technology room, and a room dedicated to the neighborhood's history. President of the LCLT Board, Byron Mitchell, spoke about the community center's benefit to the neighborhood. See his interview with WTVO here: <https://www.wtvq.com/mayor-breaks-ground-on-davis-park-community-center/>.

\$2M in funding for the Community Center is coming from the American Rescue Plan Act, and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet is contributing an additional \$1M+ more. The Community Center's estimated date of completion is between October 2024 and June 2025.



Mayor Linda Gorton shakes hands with Jon Wilburn (DFW Wilburn Contractors), Ed Holmes (EHI Consultants) and Joey Nolasco (Integrity Architects)





**GUIDING PRINCIPLES  
NEWTOWN PIKE EXTENSION  
AUGUST 12, 2002**

The below principles create the foundation for implementing the Newtown Pike Extension Project through a partnership of the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG), University of Kentucky (UK), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC). The Newtown Pike Extension Project is an important local and state transportation need that has the ability to improve the quality of life of all persons using or living within the transportation corridor by:

- Reducing traffic congestion both in the downtown and in neighborhoods within the project corridor by providing alternative routes and lessening traffic diverting through neighborhoods.
- Improving pedestrian safety downtown, along neighborhood streets, and on the north end of the University of Kentucky campus.
- Encouraging greater use of alternative modes of transportation by providing an increase in infrastructure that supports walking, cycling and public transit.
- Recognizing the potential impacts of the proposed Newtown Pike Extension on the surrounding communities through the use of extensive public involvement.
- Mitigating the proposed project impacts through implementation of LFUCG's Small Area Plans.
- Cooperating and committing to actions that address the transportation needs, environmental justice issues, and affordable housing within the low-income neighborhoods of Davistown, Irbitown, and Pralinton while providing compatible development and cultural / aesthetic enhancements.
- Providing an opportunity for redefining and improving the attractiveness of the downtown.
- And, accomplishing the above without imposing an unfair burden on other areas.

We concur with these principles for the continuation of the extension of Newtown Pike as signed on August 12, 2002.

*Pam Miller*  
Pam Miller, Mayor  
Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government

*Lee Todd, Jr.*  
Lee T. Todd, Jr., President  
University of Kentucky

*James C. Codell, III*  
James C. Codell, III  
Secretary  
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

*Jose Sepulveda*  
Jose Sepulveda  
Kentucky Division Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration

## Project of a Lifetime

By Phil Logsdon

Where does one begin when discussing a project that spans most of their career? Since the 1930s, part of Lexington's vision had been a project to extend Newtown Pike around the southwest side of downtown Lexington. The project planned in the 1970s died a political death — an interstate spur with an interchange that took out an entire neighborhood.

The Davis Bottom neighborhood existed in an isolated valley below the Versailles Road viaduct, largely invisible to the surrounding community. The neighborhood contained a mix of residential low-income and minority households mingled with industrial businesses and vacant lots. What began as a neighborhood of freed slaves after the Civil War living on marginal, swampy bottom land eventually included Appalachian families fleeing poverty during the Great Depression. This migration allowed Davis Bottom to evolve into the first mixed-race neighborhood in Lexington.

Despite the isolation and poverty, Davis Bottom became a true community, with most families remaining for generations and developing lasting bonds and looking out for each other. Around 2000 the purported road project adopted a new approach which would take advantage of an abandoned railroad spur to minimize direct impacts to the neighborhood. FHWA was consulted on how to develop the project through one of the most marginalized communities in Lexington. My earliest memories of the project include a project team meeting with Gene Cleckley, Director for the FHWA Southern Resource Center, along with FHWA's Kentucky Division Administrator Jose Sepulveda, KYTC Secretary Jim Codell, Lexington Mayor Pam Miller, and University of Kentucky President Lee Todd. Together, they challenged the project team to "do the right thing" and consider this vulnerable population in all decision making. Mr. Cleckley shared examples from North Carolina and Washington where low-income neighborhoods were included in transportation project decision making. He encouraged us to think outside the box and go beyond what those projects accomplished.

One of the early commitments was the project's Guiding Principles, signed by those leaders in 2002. These principles along with the empowerment from our leadership provided a foundation for evaluating every project decision. It was a large and cumbersome project development team with representatives from federal, state, and local governments, a consultant team led by Stantec, with major support from Third Rock Consultants (NEPA) and EHI (community engagement). From the beginning, the project team took a collaborative approach. But that didn't mean we agreed on everything. We argued a lot and hammered things out. We educated ourselves and each other on regulatory needs, financial constraints, process, and who was authorized to approve actions. Sometimes things got heated, but at the end of the day, we came to a consensus and moved on.



*In order from top, counterclockwise: Gene Cleckley, (former) Mayor Pam Miller, (former) KYTC Sec. Jim Codell and (former) FHWA Director Jose Sepulveda*

At that time, I was coordinating environmental studies for the KYTC District 7 office. For a relatively small project, there was a lot to study: Archaeology and Historic Resources (including an individual Section 4(f) evaluation), extensive Hazardous Materials requiring clean-up (a car crushing metal recycler with a battery disposal problem, and a plume of pesticides from the Southern States loading dock), and, not surprisingly, minimal ecological impacts. The main concern was the impacts to the community, especially the dramatic increase in property values that would almost certainly dislocate the renters. The vulnerability of the population was borne out through a Community Impact Assessment, which found a steady decline in population and housing stock and neglect of public infrastructure and code enforcement since a road project was proposed through the neighborhood in a 1930s City Master Plan.

FHWA agreed that the “threat” of this road project, lasting over generations, had impacted Lexington’s investment decisions and contributed to the decline of the neighborhood. FHWA also adopted the project team’s finding that the project’s history and vision would have a disproportionate impact, resulting in an unfair burden on the low-income and minority community of Davis Bottom. The project team worked with the community and explored a range of solutions, settling on a plan to redevelop the most vulnerable 25 acres adjacent to the project, while offering residents within the mitigation area an opportunity to remain in the redeveloped neighborhood at or near their current rental or ownership stake.

Coordinating funding and decision making across three levels of government was a challenge and further complicated by Lexington’s small-town structure. Any expenditure over \$20,000 required Council approval. That meant that most spending requests were rolled into large funding agreements that took months to develop, and additional months to approve and execute. These supplemental agreements were the lifeblood of the project but were so complex that they often held up implementing critical decisions. This inability to make quick decisions hurt the project team’s credibility with the neighborhood.

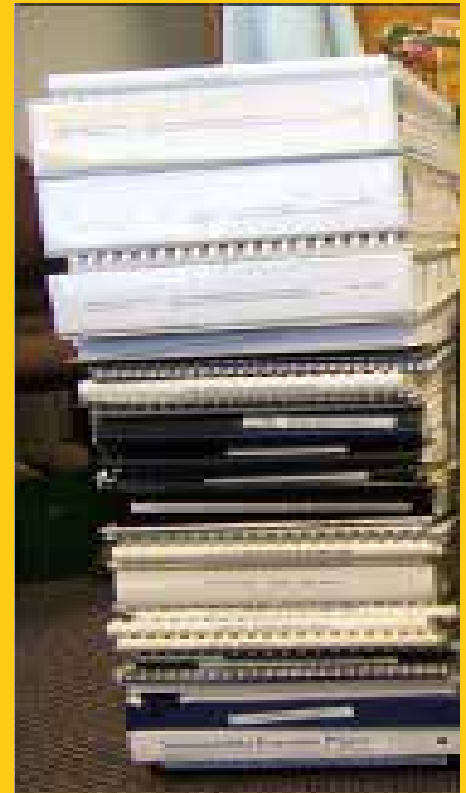
The project was implemented over the tenure of multiple mayors, governors, KYTC Cabinet Secretaries, and FHWA Administrators. FHWA never wavered in their support of the project, and it was never put on hold or shelved. However, priorities shifted, affecting the pace of decision making.

The relationship between the project team and members of the affected community required work. Understandably, the community was wary of outsiders and did not trust the project team to address their concerns. Traditional public involvement techniques sometimes fell short of building trust. Informal activities surrounding these events – such as shared meals, and project team members participating in Community Unity days – eventually broke down some barriers and allowed personal relationships to develop. The addition of a Community Liaison also helped.

Ideas that sound great on paper get more complex as you discuss the nuances and peel back the layers, and a lot of discussion and research went into developing reimbursement formulas for existing and future LCLT residents. There was tension from the ROW staff regarding mitigation to develop replacement housing for displaced residents. There were long sessions to iron out what activities were traditional ROW and fell under the Uniform Act, and which were environmental mitigation efforts – even when they looked a lot like ROW activities. It was a steep ask to have African American property owners give up fee-simple ownership of their home in exchange for participation in a Community Land Trust and a smaller bundle of home ownership rights.

Employing Dr. Juliana McDonald to oversee the Rapid Assessment Protocol was a turning point for relationships between Project Team members and community members. The key to the exercise was training project team members to interview community members in their homes.

The open-ended nature of the exercise allowed for meaningful hours-long visits and revealed personal insights for all participants. It was an intentional investment of time. Suddenly we were able to see each other as three dimensional people instead of stakeholders or agency workers. The project took on a more personal urgency after those interviews, allowing us to come to consensus on a delivery model for affordable housing. The project assisted in the incorporation



of LCLT, a non-profit which holds the 25 acres in trust for affordable housing and supporting uses. It includes residents on its board

When KYTC's original project manager (PM), James Ballinger, was promoted to Chief District Engineer, I was asked to become PM. This coincided with the release of Federal ARRA funding in early 2009 and the announcement that Kentucky would host the World Equestrian Games (WEG) at the Kentucky Horse Park in September/October 2010. This shifted the project team's focus away from mitigation efforts toward getting Phase IV constructed before the WEG.

A segment of the overall project from Main Street to Versailles/High Street was prioritized because it would provide redundancy between US60 and US25 and establish an alternative route from the airport to the Horse Park if New Circle Road were to break down during the games. The approval of the Record of Decision (ROD) at the end of 2007 and the absence of relocations in this segment helped make it shovel-ready. RJ Corman leveraged their position to ensure a strong ROW settlement and adequate clearance under the project's proposed bridge.

The signature bridge concept grew out of an unexpected promise made by Mayor Jim Newberry during a speech. Local stakeholders who envisioned a redeveloped Manchester Street corridor were not impressed with the traditional concepts proposed by the project team. During a meeting with this group, a concept of six pedestals to hold artwork was proposed and sketched by a local architect on a sheet of vellum. That simple design was carried forward with little change. The mayor also promised that utilities would all go underground, and after evaluation, most utilities were buried. The overhead transmission lines were reconstructed in a neat bundle far above the project.

As the July 24, 2009, advertisement date for construction neared, it became clear how much goes into putting together the bid package. In addition to the routine plans and specifications, we developed an incentive/disincentive component to ensure that the contractor would have the road open to traffic prior to the WEG. Thank goodness for Keith Caudill and his counterparts in KYTC's Central Office for helping with all the necessary details for the bid package. This process also prompted a detailed discussion of what streetscape amenities to include in the bid. Some of us felt that the Corridor Plan and Southend Park Urban Village Plan had been communicated to the public in a way that committed the project team to implement streetscape elements such as signature intersections, textured crosswalks, and street furniture. Others felt appropriate elements could be added later. However, the fact that this connection wasn't explicitly drawn in the ROD meant that FHWA may not enforce these elements. Lesson learned. If there is a project commitment, it needs to be included in the NEPA document.

After the contract was awarded, we held weekly status meetings with the contractor to identify any concerns with the project schedule. Each meeting started with a reminder of the start date for the WEG. As the contractor was excavating for bridge piers, they encountered petroleum-contaminated soils. The site had been used to extract lamp oil from coal when the city had gas streetlights. The waste material was buried and forgotten. Thanks to Gerry Fister from Third Rock Consultants, we were able to stockpile and cover the material while construction continued and then dispose of it appropriately.

Ultimately, the contractor was able to open the road to traffic ahead of schedule. New Circle Road never broke down, but we had our first segment of the project constructed! And we got a new name for the extension — Oliver Lewis Way



I participated on the LCLT Board from Fall 2017 through December 2022, taking over the KYTC representative spot from Pam Clay-Young.

During that time, the LCLT's first Executive Director, Barbara Navin, resigned to take a job in her native Colorado. We hired Russ Barclay who had been Executive Director of a local Habitat for Humanity office. Russ was a great people person and established good relationships with the residents. He also spent a lot of time getting his arms around the finances of the organization and the project. He and I worked with Shane Tucker – the most recent KYTC PM — to dig through agreements, document key expenditures, and handle reimbursement requests. During that process, we identified a range of funding commitments that hadn't been processed due to bureaucratic requirements, miscommunication, or failure to allocate funding required by the project. Another lesson learned: keep track of all of the project's financial commitments for mitigation in a place easily located by future project team members. The exercise eventually resulted in a sunset agreement between the major players (KYTC, Lexington, and the LCLT) to articulate the final project commitments and actions required of each party, tying both to a schedule.

Another major focus was getting Phase I land assembled, rezoned, and transferred to the LCLT. This multi-step process turned out to have several roadblocks and took much longer than anyone anticipated. Scheduling impacts resulted in lost opportunities — neighborhood development, the ability to generate income, and the design and construction of the new park were all delayed. And maintenance of the newly vacant land became a point of contention for residents. Each of these distractions took away from the core mission of the LCLT and eroded trust from the neighborhood members. Due to family needs, Russ resigned and moved to Minnesota, leaving us with another Executive Director search. Bringing Josh Fain onboard coincided with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Suddenly, we were meeting remotely. Progress on the land transfer was further stalled. Implementation of other project commitments – finalizing plans for the park, community building, streetscape, and interpretive history slowly advanced. By the time the land transfer was completed, the market for commercial development had mostly dried up due to Covid.

Development that was proposed was not appropriate for the neighborhood (gas station, drive through restaurants, etc.). A promising idea for a new farmer's market was never realized.

As I write this, ground has broken on new Community Building. The LCLT is searching for a new Executive Director. Stuart Goodpaster has taken over my role on the Board of Directors. Over the past 20 years, the neighborhood has been completely transformed. Some families moved on from the neighborhood. Others have established deeper roots. One person moved from being a long-term renter to a homeowner. The road project has been an overall benefit to the larger community, providing a much-needed connection for Lexington residents.





As I reflect on the project and its impacts, I have some disappointments. Some of the delay was inevitable and resulted in lost opportunities. Many details could have been better managed. For most of a generation the neighborhood has been without a park. What if there had been marketable lots before Covid hit? Would we have viable businesses instead of empty land? How will the LCLT sustain itself if the land isn't developed soon?

The entire project has been one of solving the next problem to make the next step easier. The project was supposed be easier after we acquired the park and brought in fill, constructed the temporary housing, completed acquisition of the last parcel, installed utilities, built the first homes, completed the land transfer, updated the bylaws, hired an executive director, advertised the park design... eventually, you realize that nothing about the project is easy. It is complicated and messy, and you just work through it one step at a time. No one person does it all. It is a team effort.

The project has many friends and supporters. I have confidence that the community leaders and project supporters will continue to work together to advance the LCLT. The neighborhood is already a home to many and is on its way to becoming a thriving community.



## COUNTDOWN TO COMPLETION

- Park –**  
June 30, 2024
- Community Building –**  
June 30, 2025
- Streetscape –**  
December 31, 2024
- Bus Stops –**  
December 31, 2024
- Historical Markers –**  
June 30, 2025

For more information on the Newtown Pike Extension Visit:  
<https://ktc.uky.edu/npe-main/>

Our thanks to: Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC), Kentucky Transportation Center (KTC), Lexington Community Land Trust (LCLT), Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG) (Engineering and Parks Departments), Adobe Stock. Special thanks to Integrity Architects for the Community Center plan Newsletter: Pam Clay-Young — Editor, Robin Baskette — Editor, Michael Mabe — Graphic Artist/Creative Director

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