



**PARKING
LOT
DIARIES**

Final Report



**KNIGHT
FOUNDATION**



PARKING LOT DIARIES

Project Lead:

Lexington Downtown Development Authority
101 E Vine St., Suite 100
Lexington, KY 40507, USA
lexingtondda.com

Project Partner:

8 80 Cities
401 Richmond St. W, Suite 372
Toronto, ON, Canada M5V 3A8
880cities.org

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Executive Summary



The Parking Lot Diaries

The parking lot across East Vine Street from the Transit Center will become a brand new pedestrian corridor and a park as part of the Town Branch Commons plan. The Parking Lot Diaries project was all about engaging people and experimenting with new and exciting ways to make downtown better. What amenities and programming would make this area of the Town Branch Commons plan more comfortable and inviting to Lexingtonians as it develops into a pedestrian corridor and park in the future?

The Opportunity

In October 2015, Knight Foundation launched a nationwide competition for the best ideas to improve cities. A partnership was formed between the Lexington Downtown Development Authority and 880 Cities. We submitted an idea to engage the city in a conversation about what residents would like to see and do in a new park space, and then to test out some of those ideas to measure their impact. The Parking Lot Diaries would store these ideas and pass them on to key stakeholders for reference when making decisions regarding the future of the space.



The Ideas

In October of 2016, we conducted 5 community engagement events over two days to get feedback for the Diary from a wide range of audiences. Over 600 citizens generated close to 1,000 ideas. We heard loud and clear that Lexingtonians want more inclusive, accessible, and dynamic public spaces. A summary of these ideas was prepared and shared with Town Branch Commons planners and in an online report for the public.

Town Branch Commons is a 2.5 mile trail and park system that will wind through downtown Lexington following the path of the historic Town Branch Creek, creating vital pedestrian and cycling links. Residents are excited about this plan, but want to make sure the new green spaces and connectivity it creates are both kid and senior friendly, consistently programmed, and accessible to all Lexingtonians.

The Experiments

To provide even more valuable information to Town Branch Commons planners, we wanted to give more than just a list of ideas from the community. We wanted to test out some of those ideas through experiments to see what happened and generate more useful data to give key decision makers. We partnered with several community organizations and businesses to improve physical conditions and bring new life and energy to the area around the Transit Center and Parking Lot on East Vine Street. Seven interventions were launched:

- Taco Tuesday, a lunchtime food truck and seating area in the parking lot
- Live music and busking at the Transit Center
- New greenery and planters along East Vine Street next to the parking lot

- A weekday coffee cart for morning commuters at the Transit Center
- Children's arts and crafts programming at the Transit Center
- Increased signage directing users to the water fountain facilities at the Transit Center
- A Free Library installation at the Transit Center

The Findings

The Parking Lot Diaries project proved there is a demand for programming and activation of public space in this block of the downtown core, and that this programming leads to better impressions, improved quality of life, and connection to Lexington as a whole. While each experiment provided different lessons and sparked different conversations, everything came back to Lexingtonians' latent desire for a lively public space and to feel more engaged with their urban surroundings.

The Parking Lot Diaries also proved that there is a divide between the users of the public transit system and the users of the parking lot, garages, and surrounding office buildings. Those who interacted with the experiments in the parking lot were almost exclusively non-transit users. Those who participated with the experiments at the Transit Center were almost entirely transit riders. Despite being just forty or fifty feet from each other, these two populations did not interact.

Looking at the enthusiastic participation in the experiments, we know that downtown Lexington in general, and the parking lot and Transit Center in particular, would greatly benefit from increased programming. If a key goal of Town Branch Commons is to foster greater connection between residents, future activations must create spaces and experiences that appeal to the different needs of user

groups while fostering a connection to their city's public space.

The Recommendations

Each experiment generated recommendations detailed in the body of this report. As with any true experiment, some tests were more successful than others at achieving the outcomes we hoped to accomplish, but all provided valuable lessons that can be applied to future projects in Lexington.

Larger over-arching themes emerged from the Parking Lot Diaries as well:

1. Don't treat the park that will replace the parking lot as an island. It must serve as a connector to the many different institutions and public spaces nearby, as well as act as a home for the diverse populations who frequent those institutions.
2. The Transit Center side of East Vine Street is not a friendly pedestrian experience. Leverage the investments being made to the parking lot side of the street and streetscape via the Town Branch Commons plan to ensure both sides of the street are improved.
3. Programming is key to the success of the future Karst Commons park. There is an audience for music, food, art, and children's programming here. Feed that audience.
4. Build on the relationships the Parking Lot Diaries has fostered. The pilot projects were implemented by fantastic community minded organizations committed to building a dynamic Lexington. Keep growing those connections.
5. To realize the full potential of the downtown, both public and private institutions will need to work together on strategic programming and design.

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Project Background

Town Branch Commons Plan

www.townbranchcommons.org



Introduction to the Project

Town Branch Commons is a 2.5 mile trail and park system that will wind through downtown Lexington creating vital active transportation connections. As part of that plan the parking lot behind the Phoenix Building and Government Center is slated to become a park. This space sees 800 pedestrians pass through it per day. People come from Government Center, the Lexington Public Library, the Transit Center and the surrounding parking lots. They travel through this parking lot sometimes multiple times per day.

The 2015 Lexington Public Space Public Life Study identified significant potential for this area to become a thriving public space. Town Branch Commons hopes to capture that potential. But understanding and including public feedback to guide policy and investment takes effort. That's why we implemented the Parking Lot Dairies project.

In the Parking Lot Dairies, we led a series of community engagement activities to ask the community what they wanted to see and do in a new park downtown. Next, through a series of partnerships with community members and organizations we set-up several experiments testing those ideas in the existing public spaces in the area – the parking lot and the Transit Center. We captured the results of those experiments in here, in the Parking Lot Dairies. We hope that the results and recommendations here will inform the future design, build, and programming of the new corridor and park in the Town Branch Commons plan.

The Parking Lot Dairies was a partnership project between the Lexington Downtown Development Authority and 880 Cities. The project was funded by the Knight Foundation through a 2016 Knight Cities Challenge grant.



Timeline

May 2016 - The Parking Lot Diaries Project is awarded a Knight Cities Challenge grant

October 2016 – Series of engagement activities hosted to collect ideas

February 2017 - Meetings with community partners to plan experiments to test ideas

May 2017 - A month of experiments take place in the parking lot and Transit Center

June 2017 - Data from experiments is compiled and synthesized

Methods

The Parking Lot Diaries Project consisted of two phases: **Engagement** and **Experiment**.

In the **engagement** phase, we wanted to know what would encourage people to visit more often and stay longer in this part of downtown and a new public park. We asked questions, used some images for inspiration, and collected people's ideas on sticky notes. We spoke to over 600 people and collected 996 ideas for what people would like to see and do in this new space.

In the **experiment** phase, we used the key themes that we found from the engagement results and put them into actionable experiments. We found community partners to help us execute those experiments and had volunteers help us evaluate their success through surveys. The survey questions we used for these experiments are included in Appendix A.

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Project Rationale



Town Branch Commons is an ambitious vision of revitalized public space, stormwater treatment, and added pedestrian and bike pathways that will transform downtown Lexington. With East Vine Street slated to be the main spine for the pedestrian and biking corridor, the new park and the Transit Center are positioned to become major anchors in the urban core. The Parking Lot Diaries sought to test out interventions in the urban realm that can help inform the future vision for these key public spaces.

The Parking Lot Diaries is based in the belief that public spaces are symbols of our

democracy, spaces for social integration, and should reflect the diversity of our communities. Public spaces, from parks to streets to sidewalks to public transit are the lifeblood of our cities, and therefore should be completely accessible and available to all. Too often public spaces overlook the most vulnerable among us and fail to plan for children, women, and older adults. Creating public spaces for all requires ensuring spaces are active, vibrant, and safe all year round and at all times of the day. The Parking Lot Diaries has sought to include these principles in our interventions and in our final recommendations.



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Engagement Results

Engaging People

On October 19th and 20th, 2016 we spent many hours soliciting ideas from the community for this new park space. We asked community members what kinds of things would encourage them to stay longer in this area or what would encourage them to visit more often. We spoke to over 600 people and collected 996 ideas for what people would like to see and do in this new space. This engagement series was also complemented by an online survey.

In each location, we exchanged snacks for ideas. We collected ideas with sticky notes on boards with photos of the spaces now and inspirational images. Our goal was to solicit ideas from a variety of members of the Lexington community.



University | People Engaged: 140



Parking Lot | People Engaged: 50



Transit Center | People Engaged: 150



Senior Center | People Engaged: 160



Central Library | People Engaged: 100

996 ideas

Out of the 996 ideas for the new park space, each of them fell into one or more of these **six major themes**. And from these themes we pulled out experiment ideas.



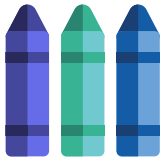
41%

Design



34%

Programming



16%

Things for Children



15%

Greenery



14%

Safety



8%

Music & Entertainment

Every idea was recorded and summarized in the Phase One Engagement Summary Report, including a list of all 966 ideas. Available for free download on our website.



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Experiment Phase

The Experiments

Using the feedback from the community engagement, we worked with community partners to program the month of May 2017 with the following experiments:

- Tacos Tuesdays
- Live Music
- Free Little Library

- Additional Greenery
- Morning Coffee Cart
- Water Fountain Signage
- Children's Art Activities

We used community volunteers to help document, survey participants, and evaluate these experiments. You'll find the surveys from our evaluation in Appendix A.

MAY 2017

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

	COFFEE ON THE GO TRANSIT CENTER 7 AM - 9 AM		TACO TRUCK TUESDAY EAST VINE ST. PARKING LOT 11 AM - 1:30 PM
	KIDS ARTS & CRAFTS TRANSIT CENTER 3 PM - 6 PM		LIVE MUSIC TRANSIT CENTER 4 PM - 6 PM

The Experiment: Taco Tuesdays

Where: In the East Vine Street Parking Lot (across from the Transit Center)

When: Tuesday Lunchtimes 11am-1:30pm

What were we trying to test?

Food trucks and places to eat lunch were amongst the popular suggestions we heard in our engagement phase for potential uses of the parking lot. This experiment tested whether people would leave offices, purchase their lunch, and eat in the parking lot if given access to food and seating options. We were also testing whether transit users would cross East Vine Street to get lunch while waiting for their bus.

Salsarita's, a Mexican restaurant, operated the food truck, and served tacos, burritos, nachos, beverages and a daily special. Adirondack chairs were provided by the project for seating, and some Tuesdays saw musicians performing, adding to the atmosphere.

What did we learn?

There is a demand for an outdoor lunch area
100% of people surveyed said that they would visit the area and take advantage of the space if there were lunch options and pleasant places to sit and eat.

"It's so close to the office"
"The proximity is really helpful"
"I know this space, it's comfortable, so I want to come here"

Chairs, food, and music, made the space more welcoming

The engagement process highlighted people's feelings that the parking lot is an uncomfortable, unfriendly space. Surveys on Taco Tuesday showed the addition of seating, food and entertainment made 100% of respondents feel more comfortable in the

space. People appreciated the chairs being movable, allowing different groups of people to arrange the chairs as they saw fit. Requests for more shade and protection from the heat were made as suggestions for ways in which the space could be made more welcoming in the future.

"It looks inviting"
"It's open"
"I like the bright colors"
"The space feels different"

Transit riders did not participate in Taco Tuesdays

Despite the feedback received from transit riders during the engagement phase indicating the desire for food options, transit users did not participate in Taco Tuesdays. Site observations by project volunteers describe very few people crossing East Vine Street from the Transit Center to the parking lot during Taco Tuesdays. Those who did predominantly skirted around Taco Tuesdays, or after investigating what was happening and who was present, turned back, as if feeling unwelcome in the space.



Parking Lot before Taco Tuesday setup

Recommendations for the future:

Continue to provide flexible, comfortable seating options.

There is a lack of outdoor seating in this area of downtown. Having a place to enjoy lunch and decompress leads to greater appreciation for and connection to their city and each other.

Invest in shade and noise dampening structures.

People appreciated the opportunity to purchase their lunch and enjoy themselves in an outdoor setting. However, the addition of shade structures to the seating areas would increase levels of comfort while encouraging greater numbers of people to linger in the space after purchasing their lunch. Similarly, noise buffering from heavily trafficked East Vine Street would allow for easier conversational flow and add to an oasis-like atmosphere.

Build on success of Taco Tuesdays by diversifying food options.

Taco Tuesdays succeeded in demonstrating the demand for an outdoor space to purchase lunch and enjoy downtown surroundings. Build off that success and diversify the food options available, generating more interest and participation from area residents and office workers.

Better integrate the Transit Center into the fabric of the downtown.

Transit users were not major participants in Taco Tuesdays. Possible remedies to this include the installation of the forthcoming crosswalk across East Vine Street, better advertising of affordable daily special option to transit riders, and improvements to the public realm that better connect the Transit Center to the city, as well as dignify the Transit Center itself to its ridership.



Parking Lot after Taco Tuesday setup



Office workers lineup for lunch



People enjoying their lunches and the new seating

The Experiment: Live Music

Where: Transit Center Platform

When: Friday Evenings 4pm-6pm

What were we trying to test?

We heard from many people in our engagement phase that music or live music would be attractive programming for a future public space. Through this experiment we were testing whether people liked having live music in this area. We were also hoping to encourage more social connections to be made between the people using the space.

What did we learn?

People like having live music to listen to on the Transit Center platform

95% of people surveyed felt that live music made them feel more comfortable at the Transit Center noting that the music made them feel good or that the space felt more tranquil, friendly, or welcoming with someone playing music.

Transit riders, many of whom are very low income residents, showed appreciation in the form of monetary donations to the musicians. Every musician received tips, indicating significant gratitude for the performance.

"I love it! I wish it was here every day. Turn up the volume!"

"It feels more hospitable"

"The music adds tranquility to a hectic procedure."

"This is not a cool place to be, the music is really, really nice."

The 5% of people who didn't enjoy the music were upset about the volume and found it challenging to have a conversation over the noise.

Live music made people curious enough explore a new place

We learned from surveys that people were visiting and lingering on the Transit Center platform, people who typically wouldn't be there:

"I park here (Transit Center Garage) for work and usually I'm just passing through but heard the music and decided to check it out. Normally I wouldn't hang here because usually this place is kind of sketchy, but the music is different."

Transit riders wanted to be a part of the program

While evaluating, two young men approached us and were curious how they could participate in the program noting that they would love the opportunity to perform.

Recommendations for the future:

Keep music upbeat and audible.

Amplified music was more successful at engaging people at Transit Center. When people were engaged they were smiling and enjoying themselves rather than being disengaged while waiting for their buses.

Look for entertainers on the ground.

When looking for entertainers, advertise the opportunity in Transit Center as well via posters or signage not simply through e-mail or social media.

Continue the Live Music program.

Transit riders really loved the music and appreciated that entertainers spent their time there. This program could easily continue at a very low cost and be an easy way to improve the transit experience in Lexington.

It's not just about Entertainment.

Live performance and other art based interventions change the perception of a place. They make Transit Center more enjoyable and make rides feel safer in the space.

Dear Parking Lot Diaries,

Recently I have been evaluating the Friday night musicians during rush hour. I made observations and conducted surveys on the platform as people were passing through during their everyday commute. When I first arrived on the platform for a Friday night music event, I was not expecting things to go very well. I have been in and around the Transit Center more than the average Lexington citizen and I knew that people didn't enjoy spending time there. I thought people would most likely ignore the musician and go on with their day. However, I'm happy to say that I was pleasantly surprised with the results. Not only did almost everyone I spoke to tell me that they loved the music and it made the space more comfortable, but even people I didn't speak with seemed to genuinely enjoy it through their body language and facial expressions. There were several transit riders who had busses to catch on the other side of the platform, but waited for their next bus near the music. Many of Lextran's users interacted with the performers at some capacity and would often leave a tip. One of the most memorable moments conducting evaluations was when a woman I spoke to came back and offered a suggestion to have more country music. When I informed her that we, in fact, had a country artist out the previous Friday night, she replied, "Shoot! I missed it!" I thought it was fairly significant that someone could miss anything on the Transit Center platform. Lastly, I witnessed not only a positive response from the community, but a desire to participate as well. My first time conducting data evaluations, I was approached by two young men asking to be a part of the "music program." Personally, I believe that displayed a desire for a space to be creative in public. I hope that based on the results of this experiment, Lextran can continue to support the creativity of its clients through programming and activities.



Local musician Rhyann Sinclair, All the Little Pieces performing at Transit Center. Audience member joined in with a harmonica and gave her his last two dollars afterwards.



Transit rider leaving a tip for the musician.



Musicians performing for transit riders.

The Experiment: Added Greenery

Where: Greenery along East Vine Street (parking lot side)

When: Month of May

What were we trying to test?

The streetscape of East Vine Street across from the Transit Center was overwhelmingly described as harsh, cold, dirty, and unwelcoming during the engagement phase. Suggestions for improving the streetscape centered on softening the street by introducing greenery to create a friendlier pedestrian environment. The experiment tested whether the placement of planters and flower beds changed people's perceptions of East Vine Street and succeeded in creating a more welcoming atmosphere.

Partnering with the Bluegrass chapter of America in Bloom and Lexington's Parks and Recreation department, we installed a series of planters along the North side of East Vine Street across from Transit Center and painted them bright, cheerful colors. The planters were in place for the month of May and will remain until the Town Branch Commons improvements transform the street and as long as Parks and Recreation continues to maintain them.

What did we learn?

People like flowers and greenery on East Vine Street

75% of people surveyed indicated they appreciated the addition of flowers and plant life to East Vine Street. The vast majority of surveyed respondents indicated it added color and life to a very urban space, or a similar sentiment.

People were concerned about the lack of sidewalk space

While the majority of people enjoyed the additional greenery, a significant minority of residents surveyed indicated they were concerned that the planters were occupying too much sidewalk space, as such a small amount of the space on East Vine Street is allocated for pedestrians.

Greenery alone is not enough to influence how people feel about the space

While many people enjoyed the additional greenery, a significant portion of respondents also commented that the small amount of greenery was not enough to change their perceptions of the streetscape.

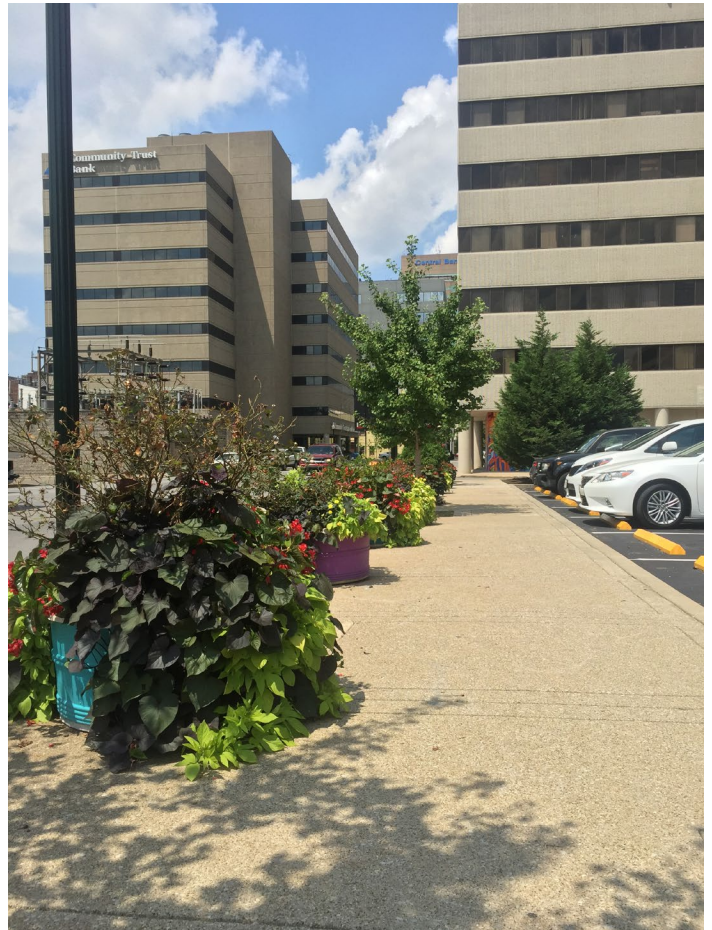
Recommendations for the future:

Ensure benches, lighting, bike racks and other street furniture are introduced along with new greenery.

Town Branch Commons will see significant investments to the public realm along the north side of East Vine Street in the next three years. The design plans call for a completely new streetscape, pedestrian and biking infrastructure, and new trees and greenery. As indicated by our findings, additional street furniture must be included along with the greenery to ensure the space is safe, comfortable, and well used by members of the community.

Leverage the Town Branch Commons plan to improve the streetscape on the south side of East Vine Street.

Throughout the engagement process, we heard that both sides of East Vine Street were unhospitable environments in need of improvements. The Town Branch Commons plan will provide those necessary enhancements to the north side of East Vine Street. "Lextran has committed significant funds as part of the federal and state funding for this section of Town Branch Commons. The findings from Parking Lot Dairies should be taken into account when spending those funds to the extent that they can be used to leverage improvements recommended here.



Planters installed with the help of the Bluegrass Chapter of America in Bloom and Parks and Recreation.



Volunteers helped to paint the planters.

The Experiment: Morning Coffee Cart

Where: Transit Center Platform

When: Monday-Friday 7am-9am

What were we trying to test?

The engagement phase highlighted a strong desire among transit riders for a place to get a cup of coffee and snack while waiting for their bus. Many transit riders face long commutes with few options for refreshment along the way. This experiment sought to test whether, if available, transit riders would purchase coffee at the Transit Center, and whether office workers who park in the garage behind Transit Center would stop on the platform on their way from their cars to the office for coffee.

We partnered with A Cup of Common Wealth, a local independent coffee business that is known for their commitment to community and giving back to Lexington. Through the grant, they created a mobile coffee cart that was stored at the Transit Center when not in use. Hot coffee was sold at an affordable price point, with cold brew sold at a more expensive price point.

What did we learn?

There is a demand for coffee

89% of people surveyed said that they would purchase coffee at the Transit Center on a regular basis.

A coffee cart created a more welcoming platform environment

There were few positive qualities ascribed to the Transit Center platform during the engagement phase. The coffee cart, to a large extent, helped create a friendlier atmosphere, with 98% of survey respondents indicating that the cart made them feel more comfortable. New acquaintances were made and new connections fostered, with many customers indicating they spoke to new

people while getting their coffee.

"It makes things feel more like home"

"It's relaxing"

"I feel better about the day"

"It feels more safe"

"It opens people up"

Non-Transit riders did not purchase coffee

Only 5% of those purchasing coffee would not have been at the Transit Center otherwise. This would indicate that more than coffee is required to create an atmosphere on the platform where non-transit riders are encouraged to visit.

Riders were grateful for the coffee and wanted to pay it forward

One of the most positive outcomes of the project was the evidence of gratitude and generosity shown by low-income riders who gave donations to purchase cups of coffee for other riders using A Cup of Common Wealth's popular pay-it-forward system.



Cup of Commonwealth's motto: Embrace Community, Serve Others, Create Culture

Recommendations for the future:

Explore opportunities for further testing of coffee shop viability.

The one month trial was a success in terms of establishing a solid demand for coffee on the Transit Center platform during the morning rush hour and the effects on making the space more vibrant. Due to budgetary restraints, we were unable to test demand during the afternoon and evening rush hour. Furthermore, demand may fluctuate depending on time of year. A longer pilot of 6-12 months can further solidify the case for a permanent café at the Transit Center.

Reach out to A Cup of Common Wealth to gauge interest in continued presence at the Transit Center.

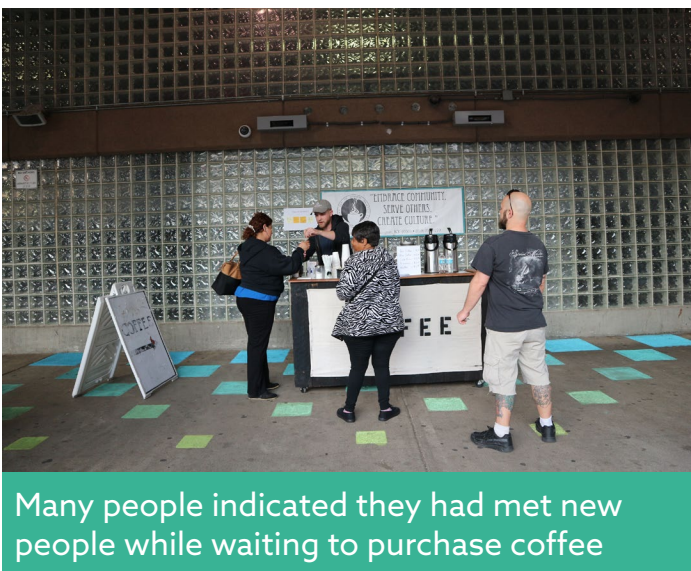
Building on the point above, the team at A Cup of Common Wealth is a great fit for the Transit Center, as they are committed to contributing to the community and they already possess a mobile coffee cart. Furthermore, transit riders expressed a strong affection for A Cup of Common Wealth and their product. If they are interested, A Cup of Common Wealth should be engaged to continue on piloting the viability of a coffee shop at this location.

Continue to empower transit riders.

Throughout the engagement process, many transit riders vented frustration at what they felt was indifference on the part of the city to their concerns and needs. Many felt that Transit Center would never improve. Given the positive reception the coffee cart garnered, the city and Lextran should build on momentum created by recent interventions (Parking Lot Diaries, BUST! boredom) and continue to invest in further improving the environment on the Transit Center Platform.



Waiting for the bus is a perfect amount of time purchase and drink a coffee



Many people indicated they had met new people while waiting to purchase coffee

The Experiment: Children's Art Activities

Where: Transit Center Platform

When: Monday Afternoons 3pm-6pm

What were we trying to test?

During our engagement phase, many people expressed interest in having participatory art in a new public space. We partnered with On the Move Art Studio to bring quick art activities for kids to the Transit Center platform. We were testing whether families would engage with programmed activities, particularly art-based activities during their commute. Art on the Move created a new craft for children to do each week and children could complete the project on the platform during their 10-15 minute wait or take home the supplies to complete the project there.

What did we learn?

Children like doing art during their commute

We surveyed children during rush hour and 89% of them said they liked being able to do art at the Transit Center while they were there. A large majority of riders take public transit every day and kids spend a lot of time waiting at Transit Center. Caregivers occupy their children with electronics, food, or give them their phone to play with.

Children are bored at Transit Center

Of our surveyed caregivers, we learned that a child's commute on Lextran can be 15 minutes to 2 hours in length with at least half taking 60-90 minutes. When children had art activities to keep them entertained 72% stated that Transit Center wasn't boring. They would also like to see more art, reading, and play opportunities in the Transit Center.

Offering Children's art activities changes adult's perceptions of the Transit Center

Having an activity to occupy children in a productive and playful way changed how people saw the Transit Center. 100% of survey respondents said their perceptions of the Transit Center were changed in a positive way.

Recommendations for the future:

Art programming and children's programming at Transit Center should continue.

The art programming was enjoyed by children and it also helped caregivers keep their children entertained in an adult-focused space.

Art activities should be quick.

A child could spend five minutes on the project or twenty minutes. Transit riders don't always have a lot of waiting time when they change buses.

On the Move Art Studio should continue to be engaged in providing art activities.

They were approachable and excellent at engaging children and their caregivers at Transit Center. This can be done at Transit Center as well as in the new park spaces as part of the Town Branch Commons plan.

Dear Parking Lot Diaries,

I coordinated and led the art creations for On The Move Art Studio at Transit Center. I wasn't quite sure what to expect but I was really excited about the possibility. I was pretty familiar with the transit system in Lexington and knew that unlike larger cities, very few people outside of the low-income demographic ride the bus. As a result, I was excited to provide something to brighten up the days of folks riding the bus with kids as many are often hustling back and forth between several different jobs and other arduous obligations.

I interacted with Both kids and adults. Everyone seemed to love it. The kids were excited to participate and the adults said things like "Wow that warms my heart." The kids were excited. Their eyes lit up when they saw the activities. Also, adults seemed to be impacted too, even if they didn't have kids. They smiled and said thank you for what you are doing.

It was wonderful, thank you so much. Many of the riders are in poverty which is a miserable experience. I know this both because of the demographic and because as a social worker I personally knew many of the riders and their situations. Anything we can do to lighten the load for even a fleeting moment is important and valuable. We're all in this together so thank you for supporting this!



Girls making puppets



Boys planting flowers for a Mothers Day gift



Children contributed to a canvas painting each week that will be hung in a public location

The Experiment: Water Fountain Signs

Where: Transit Center Platform

When: Permanent

What were we trying to test?

In the engagement phase of this project we heard from many people that a water fountain would be a welcomed feature in the new park space across from the Transit Center. Knowing that there were already water fountains in the Transit Center we installed signage that directed people to the water fountains. We were testing whether people knew about these water fountains and if they would use them.

What did we learn?

People are aware of the water fountains

We surveyed people at Transit Center at different times of day over the month of May and 67% of respondents said they were aware of the water fountains before the signs were installed. Although, for the individuals who were introduced to the fountains via the added signage they noted that the signage wasn't large enough to stand out on the Transit Center Platform and it could be more descriptive about the specific location of the water fountains.

"Even with the signs, the water fountain isn't visible unless in the waiting room"

"They (the signs) are a good idea, but need to be bigger for people to see"

"(the signs) Don't stand out, especially when it gets dark"

But they don't use the water fountains

Of our surveyed caregivers, we learned that 81% of respondents don't use the water fountains for several reasons.

Because ... the water fountain locations feel unsafe

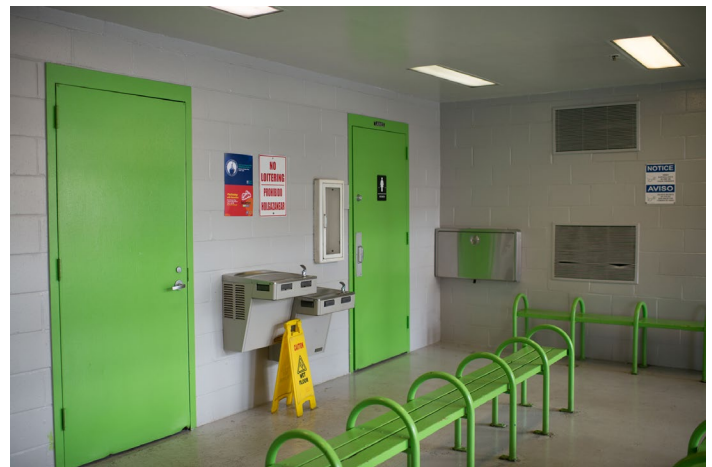
Many respondents stated that the waiting areas feel unsafe so they don't use the water fountains because they are in the waiting rooms. All of these respondents were women ages 20 to 60 years old.

Because ... people feel the water fountains are not clean

Repeatedly it was mentioned that the water fountains were "gross", "nasty", and "unclean" so people were reluctant to use them.

Because ... the water fountains are often broken

Broken water fountains came up many times as an excuse for people to not use the water fountains. We even discovered the extent of this problem while we were installing the signage for this experiment. Only one of the two water fountains at the Transit Center were operational.



Transit Center waiting area where water fountains are located

Recommendations for the future:

Keep water fountains in good working condition.

Consider installing water bottle refill attachments so people can use them regularly and will worry less about the spread of germs.

Increase signage.

Increase the signage within Town Branch Commons and the Transit Center to direct people to available water bottle refill stations and fountains.

Consider the value of water fountains.

Keep in mind that having a water fountain in a public space encourages people to stay there longer, to enjoy what is happening in the park. When there are people staying in a public space and participating in positive activities the space feels safer and over time more and more people will use it.



Signage created for Parking Lot Diaries and hung in Transit Center



Broken water fountain

The Experiment: Free Library

Where: Transit Center Platform

When: Permanent

What were we trying to test?

Throughout the engagement process, we heard from many transit riders that with so much downtime at the Transit Center while waiting to transfer busses, having something to do would greatly improve their transit experience. One of the more popular ideas proposed to fill this down time was a free library where transit riders would have access to free reading materials. Library users were encouraged through social media and posted signs to think about dropping off a new book the next time they were in the Transit Center. Riders could also leave their own books which they no longer needed. This experiment sought to measure the demand for reading materials at the Transit Center, and whether transit users would make use of the books while waiting for their bus if made available.

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) took the lead in designing and constructing the library, creating a visually appealing and easily maintained structure. To initially stock the library, project funds were used to purchase the majority of books at very low cost from the Friends Book Cellar, while other books were generously donated by residents interested in the project who wished to contribute to their community.

What did we learn?

There is a massive desire for reading materials at the Transit Center

In the few weeks since the library has been installed, the books have become incredibly popular, necessitating several trips to replenish stock. To date, over 300 books have been borrowed and read by transit users. 83% of people surveyed said they liked and used the

Free Library. When the library is replenished with reading materials, they are always gone within 24 hours.

Demand for reading materials is not limited to a particular genre or age group

The reading materials made available were intentionally selected to cover as wide a range of genres, interests, and reading levels as possible. Based upon which books have been taken, there is no one particular type of book that has been more or less popular. Books geared towards children, youth, and adults have been equally popular. Similarly, genres as varied as fantasy, horror, science fiction and mystery have all been met with equal level of appreciation.

Transit riders see value in having greater access to the public library

One of the best community assets in the vicinity of the Transit Center is the Central branch of the Lexington Public Library. During the engagement process, transit riders expressed a wish to have greater access to the library, particularly while waiting to transfer busses. The enthusiasm shown by riders for the Free Library further demonstrates the demand for books and other engaging activities at the Transit Center. 100% of people surveyed indicated they had a library card, and 85% indicated that they would make use of a library book drop-off station if it was present at the Transit Center.

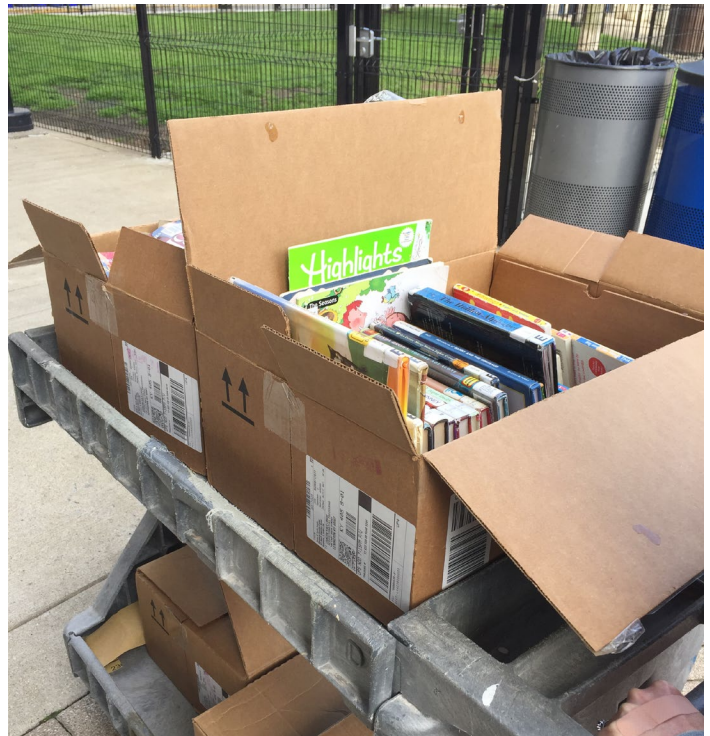
Recommendations for the future:

Continue to operate the Free Library.

The success of the book lending program has been enormous, and has created a shared space where transit users can spend their commute reading and improving literacy levels. As efforts continue to be made to make the Transit Center more people-friendly, this successful intervention can help lead the way forward.

Explore additional partnership opportunities with Lexington Public Library to capitalize on the enthusiasm and demand for reading materials.

Due to the success of the experiment, the Lexington Public Library is partnering with Lextrans and adding the Transit Center library to their existing Tiny Library program. This is a fantastic step, and can serve as a launching pad for further literary based interventions. Potential literacy related programs that could be piloted include children's story time at the Transit Center, a transit riders book club, or a creative writing competition.



Books were either purchased from the Friends Book Celler or donated by residents.



The library was designed and fabricated by Nick Hodge and Blane Hornung, architecture students at the University of Kentucky College of Design.



Many different genres of books were tested out.

A decorative background featuring a large, sweeping curve that divides the page. The area to the left of the curve is a solid dark blue, while the area to the right is white. The curve itself is a lighter blue, creating a sense of depth and movement.

6

Big Picture Recommendations

Through the Parking Lot Diaries we learned a lot about preferences for design and programming in the area around this soon-to-be park. Based on our experiments and conversations with the community, we have five recommendations for this future park.

1. Don't think about the park as an island.

The parking lot is surrounded by a variety of stakeholders who already have a presence in this area. There are people working at Government Center, the Library, and the LexTrans ridership. While these groups might be different they should all feel welcome in the new park. Use very visual and physical cues to connect the new park with its surroundings, sending the message that the space is public and use is encouraged by all.

2. Streetscape improves for people walking and biking should be made to both sides of East Vine Street.

Park users will come from all directions and already we see the most pedestrian traffic in this area comes from the Transit Center. Make sure those future park users feel safe in getting to the new park so they can make the most of its amenities.

3. Don't overlook the importance of programming in the park.

Through this project we saw that there is an audience for art, music, food and other amenities that could take place in the new park space. Programmed activities create public life in a park and ensure that there are many eyes to keep a place feeling safe. People are in this area of downtown for 18 hours per day therefore there should be programming for 18 hours per day. For many, walking through that park on their way to work or on their way

home may be their only opportunity for play, to smile, or to connect with nature.

4. Maintain and cultivate the relationships that were made through this project.

Partners like On the Move Art Studio and A Cup of Common Wealth were fantastic at connecting with the stakeholders at Transit Center and could be wonderful partners for continued programming at Transit Center and in the new park space across the street when upgrades have been made to the corridor.

5. They Major Players in Downtown Lexington need to work together.

The City of Lexington, the Lexington Public Library, the University of Kentucky, the YMCA and many more are major players in Downtown Lexington. All the stakeholders should be working together toward the vision of the Town Branch Commons plan and the use of public space in the downtown. By working together partnerships can be used to leverage change for public spaces to the benefit of multiple stakeholders.

A large, decorative blue curved shape, resembling a thick arc or a partial circle, sweeps across the left and bottom portions of the page. It has a gradient from a darker blue on the left to a lighter blue on the right.

Appendix

A

Experiment Surveys

Appendix A: Experiment Surveys

Surveys used to elevate experiments as part of the Parking Lot Diaries.

Art on the Move Survey

Adult Questions									
How frequently do have children with you at TC? (everyday/ a few times per week/a few times per month)	E -everyday F - few x week M - few x month								
How long is your commute with children? (minutes)	45								
Do children's activities here change your perception of the TC in a positive way?	Y/N								
How do you usually keep your children entertained during your commute?	BOOKS								
Children Questions									
Do you come to the Transit Center at a lot?	Y/N								
Do you feel bored at the Transit Center?	Y/N								
Do you like doing art at the Transit Center?	Y/N								
What other kinds of things would you like to do at the Transit Center?									

Date: _____

Comments:

Friday Night Music Survey													
Does live music here make you feel more comfortable?	(y/n)												
Why or why not? Comments:													

Site Observations				
Time	age	gender	what are they doing?	D- Dancing WL - Watching and Listening AE - Actively Engaged ETC
				Comments:

Greenery Survey													
Do you like this new greenery?	(y/n)												
Does it change how you feel about this space?	(y/n)												
Why or why not? Comments:													
Greenery Survey													
Do you like this new greenery?	(y/n)												
Does it change how you feel about this space?	(y/n)												
Why or why not? Comments:													
Greenery Survey													
Do you like this new greenery?	(y/n)												
Does it change how you feel about this space?	(y/n)												
Why or why not? Comments:													

Little Library Survey		Date		Time	
Do you like reading?	Y/N				
Did you use the Free Little Library?	Y/N				
Did you like it?	Y/N				
Do you have a library card?	Y/N				
Would you use a library book drop-off station if it was here?	Y/N				
Little Library Survey					
Do you like reading?					
Did you use the Free Little Library?					
Did you like it?					
Do you have a library card?					
Would you use a library book drop-off station if it was here?					
Little Library Survey					
Do you like reading?					
Did you use the Free Little Library?					
Did you like it?					
Do you have a library card?					
Would you use a library book drop-off station if it was here?					
Comments					

Taco Tuesday Survey											
Would you visit this space frequently if there was food available?	Y/N										
Have you met anyone new while using this space?	Y/N										
Does this space feel more comfortable to you?	Y/N										
Why or why not?	traffic, noise, food, seating										
What would encourage you to eat your lunch outside?	more greenery to block noise of buses										
Site Observations											
Time	age	gender	what are they doing? S- Sitting SE -sitting & eating P- passing through B-buying tacos ETC.								
			Comments:								

[illegible]

