

Together Lexington
Courageous Conversations
Gentrification
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FUNNELING IDEAS INTO ACTION

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Purpose and Outcomes

Overall Purpose: To encourage meaningful discussion and awareness among all members of our community.

Meeting Purpose: To identify community concerns regarding gentrification in Lexington and share ideas on how to address them.

Outcomes:

- Prioritized list of key gentrification issues in Lexington
- List of ideas for how the community might address these issues
- Recommendations for next steps

Introductory Activity and Opening Conversation

Participants were asked to introduce themselves at their tables, share what brought them to the event, and what gentrification means to them. Volunteers were asked to share their definitions of gentrification with the larger group. This conversation led to further discussion on current, local events related to gentrification, causes, and who is impacted. Key points from some of those conversations are captured below.

What are the causes or drivers of gentrification?

- Affordable price points
- Generational shift
 - Close to public transportation, etc.
- Housing shortage
 - Short 1100 houses annually
- Location
- Population growth
- Refurbish to raise property value
- Someone moving into an area making it “cool”

Who are the groups or population segments involved in or impacted by gentrification?

- Community as a whole
 - Trickles down
- Developers
- Elderly
- Investment groups
- Local government

- Low income
- People without better options
- Police force
- Renters
- Schools

What are the key gentrification issues in Lexington?

The group identified positive impacts, such as better quality housing, preservation of historic homes and architecture, and raised tax assessed values, which help the schools. One participant shared they felt nothing positive came from situations when people are involuntarily displaced. Participants were then asked to answer the key question within their small groups. Once all of their issues and concerns were listed, each small group was asked to identify the two most critical issues for the community to address. Their prioritized responses are presented below.

Critical Issues and Concerns

- Balancing investment in quality housing with displacement
- Cultural displacement
- Displacement
- Lack of diversity (of all kinds) = Missed opportunities
- Lack of financial safety net
- Need more affordable housing
- Need more housing
- Not enough land for development
- Options are taken away, not created
- Where do displaced go?

Additional Issues and Concerns

- Accessible amenities
- Community conversation
- Consequences not fully planned – i.e. schools
- Development should fund affordable housing
- Displacement

- Economic pressure
- Elderly
- Homeownership for profit only
- Inequality of codes/rules/law application
- Insider versus Outsider
 - Who is investing?
- Issue is intertwined with many other issues
 - Racism, education and wealth income inequality
- Kentucky House Bill 72
- Lack of communication to impacted residents
- Lack of opportunity for advancement for people without wealth
- Lack of protected, permanently affordable housing
- Lack of respect for communities and history
- Loan discrimination
- Market driven factors are hard to tamp down
- Not enough education on home ownership
- Perpetuates cycle of poverty
- Prevention of displacement
- Public transit
- Pushy developers
- Racism
- Reinforce tenants' rights
- Renters' rights
- Slumlords
- Social impact
- Stop unwanted displacement
- There is an upside for someone
 - Can we expand the upside?
- University of Kentucky (UK) expansion
- What about the children?
- Without it = Gentrification accountability
 - Expectation of basic level of standards by landlords
 - Tenants have to work to maintain basic levels

How can the community address this challenge?

Using their prioritized critical issues and concerns, each small group was asked to answer the key question. Listed beneath each critical issue or concern are their ideas on how they can be addressed.

Affordable Housing/Homeownership

- Expand urban boundary
- Incentivize affordable housing

Balancing Investment Quality with Displacement

- Having local businesses (anyone who can afford it) invest in these communities (neighborhood associations)

Cultural Displacement

- Communication is inadequate to help hear all voices and to know where conversation and decisions are happening
- Empowerment – but rethinking how we define it. Civic engagement looked at differently.
 - Comprehensive plan input sessions – attend On The Table events
- Responsibility of government to seek out input from the community

Displacement

- City Council open up urban service boundary only for affordable housing projects that are deed restricted for a minimum of 50 years
- Education
 - Resources, homeownership
- Find/Create more land for development
- More funding
 - Grants, federal funds, homeowner improvements in areas that need revitalization
- Signage: If you don't live here stay away

Lack of Diversity = Missed Opportunities

- Maintain diverse housing situations by creating laws/policies for rent stabilization
 - i.e. various types of properties offering rent control

Lack of Education

- Raise funds to help educate
 - Advocate for themselves and learn where people are who can help
 - Home care, homeownership/lending, renters' rights

Key Next Steps

Participants were asked to provide recommendations for next steps based on the conversations.

- Find a way to provide education
- Involve more people that are impacted
- Invite people affected to events
 - Exposure
- Involve those that have studied this topic

Meeting Debrief

To bring the session to a close, participants were asked to complete an evaluation. The complete evaluation results will be tabulated at the conclusion of the 12 conversations, but the closing three questions are included below to inform the remaining conversations. Duplicate responses are denoted with an asterisk.

1. What worked for you during tonight's session?

- I enjoyed that we had the opportunity to speak in small groups on our thought/ideas and sharing thoughts in our large groups***
 - The small table format encouraged good conversation.
- Being able to express the issues*
- Open discussions, learned a lot*
- Facilitation
- Good topic, opportunities to share
- Great discussion*
- I got to hear from others
 - I learned about how other people think
- Putting names with faces
- The consensus building aspect of selecting ideas to report

2. What would have made tonight's session better?

- Include the impacted groups**
- More diversity of attendees*
- ADVERTISE TO EVERYONE! (A lot of community did not know about this.)
 - Market the event more
- Get group closer together
- If you want to engage affected people, you'll need to go to places where they already feel safe, heard and respected.
- Include more community members. Could use more community members from lower socioeconomic status.
 - Go to community members being impacted through churches, community activists, etc. Use creative collaboration methods such as storytelling.
- None
- Outreach to affected communities and businesses

3. Do you have any lingering comments and/or questions?

- Continued conversation is key. What is going to happen with this info??
 - How do we move forward after conversation?
- Good topic and conversation
- It felt safe and inclusive with the people here however; include the people who are super important in finding out how this can be solved!
- Personally invite neighborhood people (door to door)
- Thanks for staffing this and facilitating - keep it up
- There are ways to address this without only relying on the market, i.e. expanding the urban service boundary. Rent stabilization and permanently affordable housing if possible.
- We need more ACTION