

Together Lexington
Courageous Conversations
LGBTQ+ Inclusion
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THE FACILITATION CENTER

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 concerns and issues regarding the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ population.

Outcomes:

- Prioritized list of key issues
- List of ideas for how these concerns/issues might be addressed
- Recommendations for next steps

Introductory Activity and Opening Conversation

Participants were given postcards and asked to select an image that spoke to them about the LGBTQ+ population's inclusion or lack of inclusion in Lexington. Participants then introduced themselves and shared their postcards. The following questions and comments were captured after the introductory activity.

Find an image that speaks to you about the LGBTQ+ population's inclusion or lack of inclusion in Lexington.

- A leader in our organization is lesbian and she is a wonderful leader who recently got married – to my wife and I, it was friends getting married and it didn't matter
- Community is afraid to come out – we have to peek and see if it's going to be a safe place and if we are going to be accepted
- Diversity of LGBTQ+ community – we can't talk about sexuality without talking about race and society – the community is diverse
- LGBTQ+ runs across all ages, races, etc. – no boundaries
- Many of us are of the working class and diverse members of the community – we are hard workers
- People knew me as a person first and not by my sexual orientation – I don't label people
- Sometimes it feels isolated and I feel left out
- The population is blazing new trails; people of the LGBTQ+ community have to learn how to do things that haven't been done before and be creative in new ways of doing things
- Things are happening to you but you don't necessarily have a lot to say – other people make decisions for you
- Thinking and afraid that things aren't going too well; nervousness; wondering
- We are walking together anyway

Where have you seen or experienced positive examples of inclusion regarding the LGBTQ+ population in Lexington?

- Fairness ordinance
- Human Rights Commission
- Lexington Police Department
- Lots of resources (e.g., Pink Pages, Pride community services organization, etc.)
- Our universities' emphasis on supporting the LGBTQ+ community
- Pride Festival (last Saturday in June; this year will be our 10th)
- So many groups in Lexington try and help anyone in the LGBTQ+ community
- This is a thriving LGBTQ+ community – we have a pretty sizeable LGBTQ+ population
- University of Kentucky provides partner benefits
- We have a young population on our police force and younger people tend to be more accepting

Where have you seen or experienced examples of the opposite; lack of inclusion?

- Certain parts of town are not friendly to the LGBTQ+ population
- When I was campaigning in 2014, one house out of 1,200 was opinionated and it was pretty scary; I will not go back to that street
- I think the Fayette County School System leaves a lot to be desired – they are not supporting the youth as much as they could
- We are continually fighting for the same things and we don't see a lot of progress – we've been working on the schools for a better part of 15 years, but not much progress has been made
- Incident with t-shirts for Pride Festival (vendor refused to make them once they found out what was going to be printed)

How does the inclusion or lack of inclusion of the LGBTQ+ population impact Lexington?

- Acceptance of diverse populations is used as a gauge to measure the progressiveness of a place – in looking for a place to live, people are looking for a place that accepts diverse populations
- Could have a negative impact on jobs and economic development
- From a creative standpoint, we can benefit from more creativity in the city
- If churches aren't accepting, then people won't come and that will be an avenue lost
- If Lexington is seen as a place that is supportive, then obviously we will get more people here paying taxes
- People want to experience what it feels like to be 100% accepted – Pride Festival could be a very big boost to tourism

- Women's tour group – people will pay to know they will be with others like themselves to feel safe
- Word of mouth – if I'm going to an establishment and I know they are inclusive or vice versa, then the word of mouth will get out because we have a good network

What are the factors Lexington should consider in regards to inclusion of the LGBTQ+ population?

- All people see are those that are flamboyant and they think that's the lifestyle – they don't see the rest of us (e.g., nurses, council women, etc.)
- Always be accepting
- Anything we can do to bridge gaps between different groups
- Good continuing education to get an understanding on topics such as LGBTQ+, homelessness, etc. – there are so many things that we need to learn about
- Good medical care for transgender (they currently have to go to Cincinnati)
- Inclusion is normal – there's no separation between populations
- Police have added a component in their 32-week program on Autism to be able to recognize people who may be autistic – there needs to be a knowledge base on the LGBTQ+ too
- Public Safety officials need to be educated and have a deep understanding of social norms
- There are excellent programs for teachers, but schools do not mandate teachers to attend
- Think about what you're saying to the younger generations – the tide is changing and the model is going to look different – the city needs to keep pace with that; interpreting the change through the lens of the future
- Tourism (VisitLex) does a very good job of making sure Lexington is not like North Carolina, to make sure Lexington never goes down that road
- We have to be able to talk about things in safe environments
- We need more opportunities for empathy from people – opportunities to bring people in and educate them, particularly people/groups that are not in agreement
- We need to focus on what we can do to make transgender be the next acceptable thing and make it safe for them to come out – they are starting to come out very young
- Youth and kids

What are the key issues regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion in Lexington?

Participants were asked to answer the key question within their small groups.

- City's Comprehensive Plan – city lead each of these areas – how awesome and it is at the forefront in Lexington with actionable steps
- Lack of visibility
- Lack of elderly/senior/assisted living homes that are specific to LGBTQ+ population
- More education
- Need more gender neutral family restrooms
- Need to have fair representation that exists on boards and commissions
 - On LexKY.gov search get on board – program provided by Plantory (next session fall 2017)
- Programs for foster parents

What can be done to address these issues?

Gender Neutral Restrooms

- Review new building codes
- Take away the designation of men's and women's restrooms

More Education

- African American churches/inter-faith dialogue to unite being non-judgmental
- Current health practitioners
- Fayette County Public Schools
- Public Service Announcements
- Social media
- Teaching the worth of all people

Fair Representation

- Distribute Pink Pages
- LGBTQ+ and Pride Center group lists
- Secure/Recruit LGBTQ+ members to serve on boards and commissions
- Use targeted recruitment

More Visibility

- Create an art mural at the airport, etc.
- LGBTQ+ population could volunteer for community-at-large events so people can see the individuals without judgment
 - Spanish and multi-language resources in public places (153 languages spoken in Lexington)
- Partner with the Chamber of Commerce

Key Next Steps

- Looking for compassionate actions to help our community – using some of the actions to move forward
- Move the recommendations forward
- Representation at LGBTQ+ Consortium – invite City Council members to attend – next meeting is in June
- Running Public Service Announcements
- Set up these types of conversations at the Pride Festival

Meeting Debrief

Evaluation Questions/Responses

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?

- Coming up with solutions and not just ideas
- Examples on action
- Learning from LGBTQ+ people. Enlightening
- Loved the postcard activity
- Small group conversation

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

- It felt bad to have the two men in the room sitting at the back and not participating. Why? Don't you see this is important?
- More participation
- Reach out to organization/churches, folks who are traditionally opposed

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

- Great idea!
- I appreciated having one or two straight allies participating
- Really appreciate the structure and ability to openly have dialogue