



2017

## ENTREPRENEURIALISM MEETS THE SUSTAINABLE CITY: THE CASE OF LEXINGTON'S TOWN BRANCH COMMONS

Thomas E. Grubbs

*University of Kentucky*, [thomas.grubbs@uky.edu](mailto:thomas.grubbs@uky.edu)

Digital Object Identifier: <https://doi.org/10.13023/ETD.2017.379>

[Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Grubbs, Thomas E., "ENTREPRENEURIALISM MEETS THE SUSTAINABLE CITY: THE CASE OF LEXINGTON'S TOWN BRANCH COMMONS" (2017). *Theses and Dissertations--Geography*. 52.  
[https://uknowledge.uky.edu/geography\\_etds/52](https://uknowledge.uky.edu/geography_etds/52)

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Geography at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations--Geography by an authorized administrator of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact [UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu](mailto:UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu).

## **STUDENT AGREEMENT:**

I represent that my thesis or dissertation and abstract are my original work. Proper attribution has been given to all outside sources. I understand that I am solely responsible for obtaining any needed copyright permissions. I have obtained needed written permission statement(s) from the owner(s) of each third-party copyrighted matter to be included in my work, allowing electronic distribution (if such use is not permitted by the fair use doctrine) which will be submitted to UKnowledge as Additional File.

I hereby grant to The University of Kentucky and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license to archive and make accessible my work in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I agree that the document mentioned above may be made available immediately for worldwide access unless an embargo applies.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my work. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of my work. I understand that I am free to register the copyright to my work.

## **REVIEW, APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE**

The document mentioned above has been reviewed and accepted by the student's advisor, on behalf of the advisory committee, and by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), on behalf of the program; we verify that this is the final, approved version of the student's thesis including all changes required by the advisory committee. The undersigned agree to abide by the statements above.

Thomas E. Grubbs, Student

Dr. Andrew Wood, Major Professor

Dr. Andrew Wood, Director of Graduate Studies

ENTREPRENEURIALISM MEETS THE SUSTAINABLE CITY:  
THE CASE OF LEXINGTON'S TOWN BRANCH COMMONS

---

THESIS

---

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the  
College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Kentucky

By

Thomas Edward Grubbs

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Andrew Wood, Associate Professor of Geography

Lexington, Kentucky

2017

Copyright© Thomas E. Grubbs 2017

## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### ENTREPRENEURIALISM MEETS THE SUSTAINABLE CITY: THE CASE OF LEXINGTON'S TOWN BRANCH COMMONS

Although the idea of the entrepreneurial city is nothing new, recent research in contemporary urban geography and related disciplines indicates that the *modus operandi* of such entrepreneurial endeavors has shifted, as a result of an increasing recognition and acceptance of global climate change, to include and even prioritize sustainable urban development discourses and practices. While these discourses purportedly culminate in the production of the “sustainable city,” they often fail to deliver upon their promise to create a greener, more sustainable city for all. Such practices, in an effort to help cities obtain an *urban sustainability fix* (While et al. 2004), often lead to the selective uptake and implementation of “sustainable” policies and projects by local governments and members of the urban elite in their efforts to positively market their respective cities to potential residents and investors. The city of Lexington, Kentucky’s ongoing efforts to establish a new downtown park system—the Town Branch Commons—along the route of a once buried stream, is representative of how such a sustainability fix is both conceived of and ultimately produced by urban elites in the contemporary neoliberal city.

KEYWORDS: Sustainability Fix, Entrepreneurialism, Sustainable Development, Urban Parks, Lexington

---

Thomas E. Grubbs

---

August 22, 2017

---



ENTREPRENEURIALISM MEETS THE SUSTAINABLE CITY:  
THE CASE OF LEXINGTON'S TOWN BRANCH COMMONS

By

Thomas Edward Grubbs

Dr. Andrew Wood

Director of Thesis

Dr. Andrew Wood

Director of Graduate Studies

August 22, 2017

To a more sustainable—*and* just—urban future.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures .....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2: Entrepreneurial Cities and the Urban Sustainability Fix.....	7
2.1: <i>Sustainable Development, Entrepreneurialism, and the Local Growth Machine</i> .....	10
2.2: <i>Selective Sustainabilities and The Urban Sustainability Fix</i> .....	20
Chapter 3: Methodology .....	29
3.1: <i>Archival Research</i> .....	30
3.2: <i>Critical Discourse Analysis</i> .....	32
Chapter 4: A Brief History of Lexington's Town Branch Creek .....	34
4.1: <i>Town Branch Creek and the Founding of Lexington</i> .....	35
4.2: <i>Early Industry and the Disappearance of the Town Branch</i> .....	44
4.3: <i>Housing Along the "Stream of Almost Living Filth"</i> .....	51
4.4: <i>From Sewer to Public Park</i> .....	62
Chapter 5: Creating the Town Branch Commons.....	65
5.1: <i>The Rupp Arena, Arts and Entertainment District Masterplan</i> .....	66
5.2: <i>Introducing the Town Branch Commons</i> .....	70
5.3: <i>A Request for Qualifications</i> .....	73
5.4: <i>The Town Branch Commons Master Plan Competition</i> .....	78
5.5: <i>Reviving Town Branch</i> .....	84
5.6: <i>Design Adds Value to the Commons</i> .....	90
5.7: <i>The Search for a Model Park</i> .....	96
5.8: <i>Governing, Financing, and Operating the Town Branch Commons</i> .....	101
5.9: <i>The Town Branch Commons Today</i> .....	111
Chapter 6:.....	115
Conclusion .....	115
Appendix.....	120
Appendix A.....	120
Appendix B.....	122
Bibliography .....	124
Vita.....	132

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: 1793 Map of Kentucky, John Filson .....	36
Figure 4.2: 1784 Map of Kentucky, John Filson .....	37
Figure 4.3: Colonel Todd’s Plat of “in-lots” of Lexington, laid out in 1781 .....	39
Figure 4.4: The Town Bounds of Lexington – 1791 .....	40
Figure 4.5: Map of Town Branch and its bridges .....	42
Figure 4.6: 1833 Map of Lexington.....	45
Figure 4.7: 1855 Map of Lexington.....	45
Figure 4.8: 1886 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 8.....	47
Figure 4.9: 1886 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 9.....	48
Figure 4.10: 1886 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 10.....	49
Figure 4.11: 1896 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 10.....	50
Figure 4.12: Lexington Kentucky Racial–Residential Map 1887 .....	54
Figure 4.13: 1886 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 16.....	55
Figure 4.14: 1890 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 16.....	56
Figure 4.15: 1901 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 17.....	59
Figure 4.16: 1906 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 52.....	61
Figure 5.1: RAAED Conceptual Illustrative Development Plan. 2012.....	67
Figure 5.2: Rendering of proposed Rupp Arena Renovation by NBBJ Architects. ....	69
Figure 5.3: Renderings of proposed Town Branch park system.....	72
Figure 5.4: Birds-eye rendering of Town Branch and “Central Park” .....	72
Figure 5.5: ‘Design Adds Value to the Commons’ Symposium promotional flyer .....	81
Figure 5.6: Town Branch Commons masterplan overview, SCAPE.....	86
Figure 5.7: Map of the High Line. ....	86
Figure 5.8: Rendered map of the High Line. ....	86
Figure 5.9: Inside Outside TBC Rendering: Commons Green.....	88
Figure 5.10: Inside Outside TBC Rendering: Downtown .....	88
Figure 5.11: Coen Partners TBC Masterplan.....	89
Figure 5.12: Downtown Development Potential. RAAED Masterplan. 2012.....	92
Figure 6.1: Rendering of the future West High Park Townhomes (overlooking what is now a parking lot but will soon be the Town Branch Commons Park).....	119
Figure 6.2: The location of the proposed West High Park Townhomes (circled) in relation to the future Town Branch Commons Park. ....	119

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In early 2011, Jim Gray, the mayor of Lexington, Kentucky, announced the appointment of a 47-member task force to oversee the redevelopment of the city's newly-named Rupp Arena, Arts & Entertainment District, an area which consists of 46 acres of underutilized, publicly owned property at the western terminus of the city's central business district. This task force, chaired by a local attorney and businessman, and made up of an executive committee of other prominent community leaders, led the city in a yearlong planning process that culminated in the creation of a district masterplan by Gary Bates and Space Group Architects, an architecture and urban design firm from Oslo, Norway. This proposed masterplan focused future urban development on three key areas of the city: (1) the renovation and 'opening up' of the city's basketball arena and convention center; (2) establishing more accessible pedestrian flow between the city and the nearby University of Kentucky; and promoting increased pedestrian and bicycle traffic along the city's central axis—via the creation of a linear park along the former route of the now-buried Town Branch Creek. While the first two aspects of this master plan have to-date proved elusive, the idea of constructing a linear greenspace through the city's downtown area remains popular and has received much attention from both private and public sources within the city. In late 2012, Lexington's Downtown Development Authority (LDDA)—a non-profit, quango-type economic development agency—in partnership with the Lexington Center Corporation (LCC)—which oversees Rupp Arena (home to the University of Kentucky's men's basketball team), the city's convention center and the Lexington Opera House—and the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government

(LFUCG), sent out a request for qualifications (RFQ) soliciting consultant firms for involvement in an international design competition with the intended goal of conceptualizing and masterplanning a new downtown greenspace network that would come to be known as the Town Branch Commons (TBC). According to this RFQ, the proposed plan should:

Utilize sound and innovative landscape architecture, civil engineering and urban design principles that will focus on strengthening Downtown Lexington's public space network as well as improve the overall livability of Downtown by producing a vibrant, well-connected public space system that attracts visitors and serves as a catalyst for community activities. (LDDA, 2012b, p.2)

In order to be considered for inclusion in the competition, interested design firms were required to meet specific criteria, including having: “significant experience with successful *large-scale, multi-million dollar* public space projects; team experience leading bold visioning and *consensus building* efforts with multiple stakeholders and the public; detailed understanding of *environmental sustainability* methods and technology; and *national and international urban design experience* that will bring a broader perspective to Lexington's challenges and opportunities” (LDDA, 2012b, p.4; emphasis added). Qualifying conditions such as these represent a recent trend in urban design and greenspace development that increasingly prioritizes the inclusion of so-called “sustainable” practices and that views the development of local parks from a national and even international perspective. Like most of the other competition entries, the winning design—proposed by the landscape design firm SCAPE from New York City—presented the Town Branch Commons as a green swath cutting through the heart of the city's downtown. SCAPE's proposal featured a prominent reintroduction of the now-hidden Town Branch Creek and sought a reintegration of the city with its pre-urban ecosystem. This narrative of

reconnection between the city and nature relies heavily on emphasizing the historical role of the Town Branch in the origin and development of the city itself. However, this history—as it is typically told—is often incomplete and usually overlooks the most tumultuous aspects of the urban waterway’s past. A more thorough investigation into the history of the Town Branch reveals it to be the site of numerous instances of both environmental injustice and social wrong. The current public discussion around the Town Branch focuses largely on the positive impacts that the TBC project could have on the future of the city without reckoning with—or even acknowledging—its troubled history. The questionability of this selective historical narrative, when combined with a similar selectivity in the project’s use of the discourses of sustainability and internationalism noted above, highlights the need to further examine the history of, as well as the various actors and practices involved in, the proposed development of the Town Branch Commons.

By making use of the theoretical frameworks offered by recent scholarship in the areas of sustainability studies and sustainable urban development, new urban politics (NUP), urban neoliberalism and the entrepreneurial city, as well as environmental gentrification, this research project works to demonstrate how the TBC project fits into a larger trend of urban design and redevelopment that has as its foremost goal the attraction of global capital to the city. While the idea of the entrepreneurial city is nothing new, recent research indicates that the *modus operandi* of such entrepreneurial endeavors has shifted, as a result of the increasing recognition of widespread environmental crises and the existence of our planet’s changing climate, to include and even prioritize sustainable development practices. Such practices, in an effort to obtain an “urban sustainability fix,” lead to the selective implementation of certain “sustainable” policies and projects by local governments and members of the urban elite. While such attempts at sustainability are

generally to be lauded, the positive effects they produce are often unequally distributed within society and can result in the continuation of urban inequality (despite their claims to the contrary) as well as the production of instances of “environmental” gentrification. The goal of this research project is therefore to investigate and critically analyze the proposed TBC project, in regard to the conditions outlined above, by answering the following set of research questions:

- What is the socio-ecological history of the Town Branch Creek and how does this history correspond to the present condition of the creek and to the TBC project?
- How does the design of the TBC project and its public advertising make use of various discourses of sustainability?
- Who are the various actors involved in the TBC project, how do they relate to one another, and how does the design and implementation of the TBC project reflect their various interests?

In order to answer these questions, this project utilized a mixed-methods approach to research. This methodology consisted primarily of archival research into the socio-ecological history of the Town Branch Creek as well as a critical discourse analysis of the TBC Park proposal and the various materials utilized in the public promotion of the project. Archival research into the history of the Town Branch Creek, and the city of Lexington more generally, was undertaken in order to better understand the socio-environmental linkages that have defined the changing relationship between the public and the creek throughout the city’s history. Specifically, this research included a close reading of various maps associated with the creek and the urban morphology of the city’s downtown, as well as a content analysis of various historical public documents and popular media that allow for a better understanding of the urban environmental imaginaries associated with the creek throughout its history. This archival research also helped to reveal the ways in which



various groups or interests have benefited from, or been negatively affected by, the presence of the creek within the city. A critical discourse analysis of various content related to the development of the TBC Park proposal and the subsequent public marketing of the project was also conducted. This was carried out with the goal of better understanding the historical evolution of the TBC project and to identify how various discourses of sustainability have been deployed in the service of promoting the park to both the public and to potential investors (including private, state, and institutional actors). Using the results of this analysis, the TBC proposal was then compared to similar urban park projects (e.g., the High Line in New York) in order to situate the TBC project within a larger conversation on urban sustainability and park design within the contemporary neoliberal city. Ultimately, the research undertaken here works to place the TBC project within the wider practice of contemporary neoliberal urban development, which markets its potential for success through various discourses of sustainability that purportedly culminate in the production of the “sustainable city”, but that often fails to deliver upon its promises of creating an equitable, greener, more sustainable city for all.

First, however, **chapter 2** will provide a brief overview of the various literatures the author used in researching, writing about, and understanding the history of the Town Branch and the Town Branch Commons project, including scholarship on sustainable urban development, urban entrepreneurialism, and environmental gentrification. **Chapter 3** will then discuss the methods and methodology employed in researching the history of the Town Branch and the development of the Town Branch Commons. **Chapter 4** will provide a brief history of the Town Branch Creek from the founding of Lexington in the late 1700s, while **chapter 5** relays the history of the Town Branch Commons project and the various actors and activities involved in its creation, with a specific focus on the

project's incorporation and use of various discourses of sustainability and how these relate to the entrepreneurial context of the park's creation. Finally, **chapter 6** will provide some concluding remarks.

## CHAPTER 2:

### ENTREPRENEURIAL CITIES AND THE URBAN SUSTAINABILITY FIX

As reported in the 2014 revision of the United Nations' *World Urbanization Prospects* report, the total global urban population exceeded the global rural population for the first time in history sometime in the year 2007. According to this report, "in 1950, more than two-thirds (70 percent) of people worldwide lived in rural settlements and less than one-third (30 percent) in urban settlements, [while] in 2014, 54 percent of the world's population [was] urban" (United Nations 2014, p.7). Serving as a milestone of human progress, this event has reinforced an already widespread understanding of the 21st century as being, undeniably, the *urban* century. The UN report goes on to suggest that due to continued population growth and rural-to-urban migration, the global urban population will continue to rise over the next half-century, reaching as high as 6.3 billion people (66 percent urban) by the year 2050 (United Nations 2014, p.11). Given that the trend towards urbanization has historically been accompanied by a relative increase in rates of consumption, (e.g., consumer goods, energy, food, etc.), the 21st century is almost certain to be a century of increasing mass consumption and resource depletion.

Such dismal predictions have resulted in an extensive global discussion oriented around the possibilities and pitfalls associated with continued urban growth and development. Coupled with a growing recognition of the ongoing (and emerging) effects of anthropogenic climate change and widespread environmental degradation, the onset of the so-called urban century would appear to put forth a particularly challenging set of obstacles for the human race to overcome if it is to at least maintain current standards of living while also ensuring the wellbeing of the planet's environments and ecosystems. The

identification of such difficulties, and the proposing of solutions by which they might be overcome while still maintaining current standards of living, is the domain of what has come to be known as *sustainable urban development*.

While the concept of sustainability has its roots in the rise of the early environmentalist movements that coincided with increasing levels of industrialization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the emergence of sustainability as a *primary* organizing principle of human and environmental development has occurred most noticeably over the span of the last five decades, with the 1987 release of the Brundtland Report considered by many to be its proper beginning. In the thirty years since, the concept of sustainable development has matured from an expression known only by a select few in planning- and development-related professions to a mainstream approach to development thinking that encompasses a wide range of competing actors and discourses. Because of its increasing popularity and high rates of public approval, sustainability has largely become the dominant development narrative mobilized by urban planners, development agencies, international economic institutions, and local, state, and federal governments. However, while such an uptake of sustainable practices and policies might at first glance appear reason enough to celebrate, the increasingly high-profile nature of sustainable development is potentially detrimental to the original aims of the Brundtland Report in that such widespread use has led to the production of multiple interpretations of what “sustainability” actually means. Within the context of the ongoing neoliberal restructuring of local and national governments, the proliferation of competing sustainability *discourses* can be readily observed in recent rounds of entrepreneurial urban growth that aim to utilize, in some form, instances of sustainable master planning, ecological (landscape) urbanism,

densification and growth management strategies, and green branding—all with the aim of creating some recognizable iteration of the “sustainable city.”

This chapter will provide an overview of the current literature on sustainable urban development, urban entrepreneurialism, and environmental gentrification. The purpose of this literature review is to set up a critique of contemporary neoliberal practices of sustainable urban development in which entrepreneurial cities market themselves to both their residents and outside investors through various discourses of sustainability. While these discourses purportedly culminate in the production of the “sustainable city,” they often fail to deliver upon their promise to create a greener, more sustainable city for all. Although the idea of the entrepreneurial city is nothing new, recent research in contemporary urban geography and in related disciplines indicates that the *modus operandi* of such entrepreneurial endeavors has shifted, as a result of an increasing recognition and acceptance of global climate change, to include and even prioritize sustainable urban development practices. Such practices, in an effort to obtain an urban *sustainability fix* (While et al. 2004), often lead to the selective implementation of “sustainable” policies and projects by local governments and members of the urban elite in their efforts to positively market their cities to potential residents and investors. The positive effects that this selective implementation produces, if it does so at all, are often unequally distributed within society and can oftentimes result in cases of ‘environmental gentrification’ characterized by a geography of uneven urban development and the continued existence of widespread urban inequality.

Section 2.1 of this chapter outlines a brief history of the manifold environmental and social contexts that led to the advancement of the concept of sustainable development in the Brundtland Commission’s groundbreaking 1987 report, *Our Common Future*, as

well as the various ways in which the concept of sustainable development has been mobilized by urban governments, policy makers, planners, and engineers since the late 1980s. Following upon this, section 2.2 will show if and how sustainable urban development has been achieved during this period of increasing neoliberalism and globalization—through a discussion of While et al.’s concept of the “sustainability fix”—in order to ascertain the present state of *urban sustainability*.

### *2.1: Sustainable Development, Entrepreneurialism, and the Local Growth Machine*

What exactly is meant by the term “sustainable”? The Oxford English Dictionary defines sustainable as meaning an activity or process “capable of being maintained or continued at a certain rate or level,” or, more specifically, “designating forms of human activity (especially of an economic nature) in which environmental degradation is minimized, especially by avoiding the long-term depletion of natural resources” (www.oed.com). While such a definition provides a basic understanding of what sustainability entails, this serves only to produce a new set of questions: *What* exactly is to be sustained? *How* is it being sustained? And *for whom* is it being sustained? Since it is the concept of “sustainable development” that we are keen to focus on here, we will take as our point of departure the meaning of that specific phrase as put forth by the so-called “Brundtland Commission” (i.e., the World Commission on Environment and Development) in its 1987 report, *Our Common Future*: namely, that sustainable development is development that “... meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, p.41). As Rob Krueger and Justin Agyeman note,

“this definition implied a shift from the traditional, conservation-based usage of the concept [of sustainability] as developed by the 1980 World Conservation Strategy (IUCN, 1980), to a framework that emphasized the social, economic and political context of *development*” (2005, p.411). However, while the Brundtland Report no doubt helped to reify the concept of sustainability by linking it together with the issue of development, the widespread implementation of sustainable development goals and policies would generally prove difficult, not least because of the difficulties inherent in answering the questions posed above (what is to be sustained; how is it being sustained; and for whom is it being sustained). Moreover, as Jennifer Elliott has argued, the report’s focus on ‘needs’ as the point of entry into envisioning sustainable development has also been problematic:

Fundamentally, ‘needs’ mean different things to different people and are linked to our ability to satisfy them, i.e. are closely aligned to ‘development’ itself. So, society is able to define and create new ‘needs’ within certain groups (that could be interpreted as ‘wants’), without satisfying even the basic needs of others. These questions highlight the many sources of conflict in the debates over the meaning of sustainable development: conflict between the interests of present generations and those of the future; between human well-being and the protection of nature; between poor and rich; and between local and global. (Elliott 2006, p.11)

As Sneddon et al. note, these debates over the meaning of sustainable development and the conflicts of interest between those seeking to pursue their own versions of sustainable development were obvious to the early critics of the concept and added to their skepticism toward the achieving of any realized instance of “sustainable development.”

While the broad goals [of sustainable development] were widely embraced, critics argued that steps toward their implementation would be thwarted; first, by fundamental contradictions between the renewed call for economic growth in developing countries and enhanced levels of ecological conservation; and, second, by the inattention to power relations among the local-to-global actors and institutions supporting unsustainable development. (Sneddon et al. 2006, p.254)

However, as Scott Campbell has argued, the same competition between opposing definitions and discourses of sustainability that Sneddon et al. would suggest have hindered the realization of “sustainable development” is instead indicative of the concept’s ultimate potential for success:

Yet there is also an optimistic interpretation of the broad embrace given sustainability: the idea has become hegemonic, an accepted meta-narrative, a given. It has shifted from being a variable to being the parameter of the debate, almost certain to be integrated into any future scenario of development. We should therefore neither be surprised that no definition has been agreed upon, nor fear that this reveals a fundamental flaw in the concept. In the battle of big public ideas, sustainability has won: the task of the coming years is simply to work out the details, and to narrow the gap between its theory and practice. (Campbell 1996, p.301)

In order to better understand the challenges posed by the negotiation of the various ‘needs’ mentioned above, as well as the existence of competing definitions and discourses of sustainability, the remainder of this section will focus on the pursuit of sustainability within a particular context—the contemporary city—and on how the concept of sustainable development has been mobilized and (re)produced by various municipal governments, policy makers, planners, engineers, and other urban elites since the late 1980s amid the ongoing globalization, neoliberalization, and urbanization of the last several decades.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the world is now thoroughly urbanized and looks to become almost overwhelmingly urban by the end of this century (approx. 80 percent urban). As a result, cities have come to represent one of the most obvious—and most pressing—arenas for addressing issues of poverty, injustice, and environmental degradation through the use of sustainable development strategies. However, even among urban planners, the concept of sustainable urban development is still relatively new: as scholar and planner Michael Gunder has noted, “in the United Kingdom, sustainable development emerged as a key planning discourse during the 1990s... in relation to the



tension created by the demand for housing provision in the countryside” (Gunder 2006, p.210). Similarly, “the number of North American planning schools offering a dedicated specialism in environmental planning increased more than threefold between 1984 and 2000 and now is offered by 86 percent of all accredited ACSP [Associate of Collegiate Schools of Planning] schools” (Gunder 2006, p.210). It is clear, then, that the field of urban planning, the policies its practitioners produce, and the governing bodies that enact those policies has responded in force to the various motivating factors that led to the creation of the Brundtland Commission, the production of *Our Common Future*, and, subsequently, the conceptualization of sustainable development:

Over the last three decades increased concerns about global environmental degradation, together with higher expectations with respect to quality of life in cities associated with middle-class back-to-the city movements, have meant that urban managers now face more stringent demands in terms of environmental protection and promoting sustainable urban development; in other words... the urban and environmental are being reconnected in various ways. (While et al. 2004, p.553)

However, while the responses to these concerns have been noticeably widespread, they are far from being uniform in composition:

There has been a surge in material in recent years dealing with the concepts of sustainability and its action-oriented variant sustainable development. This has led to competing and conflicting views over what the terms actually mean, and what is the most desirable means of achieving the goal. (Krueger and Agyeman 2005, p.411)

Instead, sustainable urban development strategies—and the literatures describing them—have tended to take increasingly disparate (though often parallel) approaches to the production of so-called “sustainable cities,” be it through *urban greening* (Bowd et al. 2015; Bowler et al. 2010), the creation of *eco-cities* (Roseland 1997) or *sustainable parks* (Cranz and Boland 2004), the practices of *ecological urbanism* and *urban resilience* (Spirn 2011; Steiner 2011), *sustainable urbanism* (Farr 2011), or, similarly, *smart growth* (Downs

2005; Krueger and Agyeman 2005), just to name a few. Whatever the form these strategies might take, each relies on the framework of ‘sustainable development’ as put forth by the Brundtland Commission and that framework’s focus on integrating the economic, environmental, and social aspects of development. However, and this point is imperative, the degree to which these three components (i.e., economic, environmental, and social) are in balance is not constant from one set of sustainable development strategies to the next (Campbell 1996; Davidson 2010; Gunder 2006). Returning once again to Elliott, she notes that “the attractiveness (and the ‘dangers’) of the concept of sustainable development may lie precisely in the varied ways in which it can be interpreted and used to support a whole range of interests or causes” (Elliott 2006, p.10). One underlying cause behind the lack of an agreed upon meaning of sustainable development by urban managers and policymakers is the changing context of the urban governance—and cities more generally—over the last several decades. Like the rise of contemporary environmentalism and development studies in the second half of the 20th century, the shift to sustainable urban development should not be viewed as having taken place in a cultural, economic, or political vacuum. Instead, such a shift must necessarily be viewed against the backdrop of increasing globalization that, combined with the trend away from Fordist-Keynesianism toward more neoliberal forms of governance, characterizes the period of time from the late 1970’s to the present day.

The year 1973 is that which is most often associated with the transition from Fordism proper to the period generally recognized as being noticeably *post*-Fordist and which is typically characterized by a high level of “economic restructuring and social and political readjustment” (Harvey 1989a, p.145). More specifically, as David Harvey has argued, the key change taking place during this time period is the transition away from the

relatively rigid means of capital accumulation that existed under Fordism (e.g., large-scale investments in mass production systems) toward altogether more flexible strategies, which were based upon “flexibility with respect to labor processes, labor markets, products, and patterns of consumption” (Harvey 1989a, p.147). As Harvey goes on to note, this emerging period of *flexible accumulation* is characterized by “the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation” (Harvey 1989a, p.147). Of particular importance to this thesis project is the reorganization of the global financial system since the early 1970s which has undoubtedly resulted in a profound reordering of the relationship between capital and the state: “the formation of a global stock market, of global commodity (even debt) futures markets, of currency and interest rate swaps, together with an accelerated geographical mobility of funds, meant, for the first time, the formation of single world market for money and credit supply” (Harvey 1989a, p.161). Such a profound increase in the mobility and pervasiveness of global capital, coupled with the distressed fiscal status of the US government since the 1973-75 recession, led to a rapid reversal in the hierarchical relationship between the state and capital: as Harvey notes, “there had, of course, always been a delicate balance between financial and state powers under capitalism, but the breakdown of Fordism-Keynesianism evidentially meant a shift towards the empowerment of finance capital *vis-à-vis* the nation state” (Harvey 1989a, p.165). Specifically, the improving position of finance capital resulted in the nation state losing some of its former capacity to control the flow of capital across its own borders and thus, by extension, its ability to control fiscal and monetary policy within those same borders (Harvey 1989a, p.165).

Also contributing to the increasing dominance of capital over the state is the noticeable shift toward more neoliberal forms of governance – specifically with regard toward the role of the state in market regulation and intervention – that occurred alongside the transition toward more flexible accumulation strategies during the early post-Fordist era and which continues into the present period. It is typically agreed upon that this process of neoliberal restructuring included a systematic rolling back, or *lessening*, of various institutional constraints (typically imposed by the state) against increased marketization, commodification, and overexploitation of workers with a simultaneous *increase* in the power wielded by private capital (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). As Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore note, “the linchpin of neoliberal ideology is the belief that open, competitive, and unregulated markets, liberated from all forms of state interference, represent the optimal mechanism for economic development” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, p.2). These strategies are in most cases understood to have occurred in response to the declining rates corporate profitably under Fordism and the perceived failures of the Keynesian regulatory framework in preventing the economic crisis of the preceding decade. Brenner and Theodore go on to describe how “neoliberal doctrines were deployed to justify, among other projects, the deregulation of state control over major industries, assaults on organized labor, the reduction of corporate taxes, the shrinking and/or privatization of public services, the dismantling of welfare programs, the enhancement of international capital mobility, the intensification of interlocality competition, and the criminalization of the urban poor” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, p.3). It is important to note that these core characteristics of neoliberal restructuring (i.e., the various processes of “deregulation, liberalization, and state retrenchment” mentioned above) are not limited to the scale of national and international policy agendas—as was common during the Fordist-Keynesian era, given the

prioritized role of the nation state in the process of capital accumulation—but instead “have been imposed at a range of spatial scales, from the global and the continental to the national and the local, albeit always in context-, territory-, and/or place-specific forms” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, p.vi). Of particular concern to the project here is the deployment of the neoliberal ideology outlined above, along with its necessary conditions, at the scale of the local (i.e., the urban) and the various changes that occur as a result—both to the locality affected and to neoliberalism itself.

As Brenner and Theodore explain, there has been a marked intensification in the neoliberal restructuring of urban governments and governance practices and outcomes within the last three decades: “While the processes of institutional creative destruction associated with actually existing neoliberalism are clearly transpiring at all spatial scales, it can be argued that they are occurring with particular intensity at the urban scale, within major cities and city-regions” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, p.20). The key takeaway here, however, is not that the ideology of neoliberalism has been increasingly deployed at the scale of the local so much as it is that the neoliberal ideology itself has changed as a result of its recent urbanization: “Since the early 1990s, the reproduction of neoliberalism has become increasingly contingent upon specifically urban strategies of various kinds... the point [being] not only that neoliberalism affects cities, but also that cities have become key institutional arenas in and through which neoliberalism is itself evolving” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, p.ix). In other words, not only has neoliberalism become vital to understanding contemporary cities and ongoing processes of urbanization in the 21st Century, but—as a result—an urban lens has become indispensable to understanding the restructuring of, and the practices employed by, neoliberalism itself.

This shift in the study of political economy and neoliberalism from what were historically national and international perspectives to a more nuanced, localized, and urban understanding occurred parallel to a globalizing shift in the study of cities themselves. Geographer Kevin Cox coined the phrase the “New Urban Politics” (NUP) in order to describe what he saw as a shift in the focus of the study of urban politics away from previous areas of interest (e.g., the politics of collective consumption) towards a new concern with the politics of local economic development (Cox 1993; 1995). Cox’s writings on the NUP reveal not only a shift in the kind of urban politics under consideration, however, but also a shift in scale: from the local to the global. Cox notes that such a shift in the scale of analysis is necessary to understanding the workings of and motivations behind the NUP: “in order to comprehend their politics, it is asserted, cities have to be placed within the context of change in a more global space economy” (Cox 1993, p.435). As described above, within the global capitalist system capital itself has become exceedingly mobile or *hypermobile*. However, this is not to say that all elements of the global economy have become similarly mobile. As Cox argues, “within cities there are a variety of economic interests which, as a result of immobility, are dependent on the health of the urban economy” rather than on the national and international markets alone (Cox 1993, p.435). As a result, according to Cox, these landed economic interests—which include, among other actors, property owners, realtors, banks, and even local governments—work through the local government apparatus in order to direct investment (of the hypermobile global capital mentioned above) into their respective cities.

However, given the hypermobility and relative scarcity of global capital, cities are inevitably forced into competition with one another for the chance to secure such capital from extra-urban sources, including state and federal governments as well as

multilocal corporations (Cox 1993; 1995). These competing actors make up what sociologist Harvey Molotch (1976) referred to as the “urban growth machine” or what, in a more broadly defined sense, political scientist Clarence Stone (1989; 1993) termed the “urban regime.” In *The City as a Growth Machine* (1976), Molotch suggested that—at least in the US context—the primary motivator and organizing principle for most localities tends to be a growth-first ideology: that is, the desire for growth provides the key operative motivation toward consensus for members of politically mobilized local elites, however split they might be on other issues, and... is the overriding commonality among important people in a given locale—at least insofar as they have any important local goals at all” (Molotch 1976, p.310). As a result, Phil Hubbard argues, “the focus of much urban governmental activity is no longer the provision of services for city residents, but a concern with the prosperity of the city and its ability to attract jobs and investment” (Hubbard 1996, p.1441). For Molotch, this functioning of the city as a “growth machine”—and the growth-first mentality behind it—is at work in each and every objective the city and its elites seek to accomplish, regardless of if they seem economic in nature or not: “this growth imperative is the most important constraint upon available options for local initiative in social and economic reform. It is thus that I argue that the very essence of a locality is its operation as a growth machine” (Molotch 1976, p.310).

In order to compete for attention from the limited sources of non-local, highly mobile capital noted above, these groups of actors that make up Molotch’s growth machine engage in what Harvey (1989b) referred to as the practice of “urban entrepreneurialism.” According to Harvey, this new type of urban politics represented a shift (during the 1970s and 1980s) from the more “managerial” approaches to urban governance that were prevalent in the 1960s toward an increased awareness that “positive benefits are to be had

by cities taking an entrepreneurial stance to economic development” (Harvey 1989b, p.4).

Harvey goes on to note three of the defining characteristics of this new urban entrepreneurialism:

“First, the new entrepreneurialism has, as its centerpiece, the notion of a ‘public-private partnership’ in which a traditional local boosterism is integrated with the use of local governmental powers to try and attract external sources of funding, new direct investments, or new employment sources... Secondly, the activity of that public-private partnership is entrepreneurial precisely because it is speculative in execution and design, which... in many instances... has meant that the public sector assumes the risk and the private sector takes the benefits... [And] thirdly, the entrepreneurialism focuses much more closely on the political economy of place rather than of territory. (Harvey 1989b, p.7)

While all of these characteristics are important to understanding the work this thesis undertakes, it is perhaps the last of these that is most important to the project proposed here. According to Harvey, entrepreneurialism eschews more traditional approaches to urban governance that were meant to address and improve conditions across a particular jurisdiction (e.g., social housing) in favor of new strategies that are not beholden to that jurisdiction in its entirety; instead, entrepreneurialism produces—if it does so at all—“benefits [that are] indirect and potentially either wider or smaller in scope than the jurisdiction within which they [are produced]” (Harvey 1989b, pp.7-8). As a result, the benefits associated with neoliberal urban development are often unevenly distributed, both those that result from the influx of global capital and those that emerge from the process of attracting that capital in the first place.

## *2.2: Selective Sustainabilities and The Urban Sustainability Fix*

Echoing Harvey, geographer Kevin Ward has suggested that one of the key themes “running through contemporary work on entrepreneurial urbanism and the politics of local economic development has been that that emphasizes the restructuring of the built



environment. It is argued that new kinds of landscapes have emerged, as strategies to market and promote cities consist of a variety of urban design elements” (Ward 2016, p.137). Similarly, Hubbard argues that “place-marketing is inevitably accompanied by the fabrication of a new urban landscape, which can therefore be seen as both an expression and a consequence of attempts to re-image the city, playing a crucial role in the entrepreneurial ‘selling’ of cities” (Hubbard 1996, p.1444). Such a “fabrication of the landscape” necessarily entails growth in some form, whether via greenfield development or through urban infill and redevelopment. But as While et al. note, “the shift to a developmental urban politics comes at a time when the local state is facing increasing demands in terms of protecting and enhancing the natural environment” (While et al. 2004, p.549). As growth (both economic and physical) has historically been regarded as antithetical to the concerns of sustainability and environmental protection described in section 2.1, the concurrent rise of “growth first” (Molotch 1976; Peck and Tickell 2002) neoliberalism together with an increased emphasis on the sustainability of cities seems paradoxical. However, as While et al. go on to argue, a reading of entrepreneurialism and sustainability as being perpetually at odds is problematic in that it tends to overlook the way in which certain discourses of sustainability often line up with the goals of neoliberal urban growth: “rather, it would appear that urban entrepreneurialism itself might depend on the active remaking of urban environments and ecologies [called for by promoters of urban sustainability]” (While et al. 2004, p.550).

In discussing the urban growth machine thesis, Jonas and Wilson describe the way in which public opinion plays into the core strategies of entrepreneurialism:

At the heart of [the urban growth machine] is the ‘rentier class’—those centering around developers, realtors, and banks who have an interest in the exchange of land and property... But more than simply being interested in

the material consequences of growth, rentiers want to ensure that the citizenry is receptive in the first instance to changes in their surroundings. With this in mind, the growth machine toils to generate solidarity among growth-receptive interests; to create, in other words, the “community ‘we feeling’” that Molotch viewed to be so essential for uniting locals around the goal of growth. (Jonas and Wilson 1999, pp.5-6)

Given the discussion around the severity of contemporary ecological crisis and corresponding calls for increased sustainability, it would make sense that urban growth coalitions would need to engage, at least superficially, with the public desire for environmentalism. However, While et al., in suggesting the concept of a *sustainability fix*, argue that rather than viewing sustainability as a hurdle to new development, entrepreneurialism has instead tended to view sustainability as an entirely new frontier upon which development might take place with an altogether renewed intensity:

The historically contingent notion of a ‘sustainability fix’ is intended to capture some of the governance dilemmas, compromises and opportunities created by the current era of state restructuring and ecological modernization. Although nature and its production has always been a necessary precondition for capital accumulation, sustainable development is itself interpreted as part of the search for a spatio-institutional fix to safeguard growth trajectories in the wake of industrial capitalism’s long downturn, the global ‘ecological crisis’ and the rise of popular environmentalism. (While et al. 2004, p.551)

As While et al. go on to note, however, “the notion of a sustainability fix does not deny progress on ecological issues, but [instead] draws attention to the selective incorporation of ecological goals in the greening of urban governance (While et al. 2004, p.551). The relative flexibility of what is or is not included in various sustainable development strategies can be attributed to the argument that the concept of sustainability is now urban planning’s central *empty signifier*, implying that it serves as a point of agreement between various stakeholders while failing to refer to any one particular meaning (Davidson 2010; Gunder and Hillier 2009). Echoing the discussion of the multiple interpretations of

sustainable development noted above, Mark Davidson argues that “despite [its] widespread adoption, there remains little agreement over what sustainability actually means” (Davidson 2010, p.391). He goes on to suggest that the concept of sustainability is itself largely relative and has in effect become a catch-all term for describing various solutions to the myriad ills plaguing the contemporary city. Thus, the mobilization of sustainability as an organizing principle for urban planning and policy oftentimes produces disparate and competing discourses on what is truly sustainable and thus results in a plethora of “actually existing sustainabilities” (Krueger and Agyeman 2005, p.411). In addition to this selectivity in regard to which sustainable practices are ultimately undertaken, recent research in the field of critical sustainability studies has also emphasized the unevenness in the distribution of benefits from those practices that do get implemented. Reflecting Harvey’s discussion of the prioritization of place over territory, this research suggests that the effects of sustainable urban development are often geographically confined to those areas that most directly benefit the members of the growth regime responsible for their development in the first place; as a result, any benefits to the other members of the local community are felt, if at all, incidentally and indirectly.

While previous rounds of entrepreneurial urban development focused primarily on the creation of industrial and technology ‘parks’ as a means of enticing the inflow of global capital and urban redevelopment aimed at increasing consumer spending in the city (malls, sports stadiums, arts and entertainment districts, etc), the most recent incarnation of this practice (in regard to the sustainability ‘fix’ noted above) often takes the form of urban ecological restoration, urban greening, and increased park development (Birge-Liberman 2010; Brownlow 2006; Checker 2011; Cucca 2012; Davidson 2013; Dooling 2009; Pincetl 2003, p.979). According to Mark Davidson:

The instrumentality of park design and management has become associated with two agendas: neoliberalism and sustainability. Each agenda has associated with it a common set of policy goals. Examples of neoliberal policy goals include the desire to increase economic efficiencies by having parks managed and maintained by private companies and the introduction of revenue-generating functions in order that parks become self-sustaining. Sustainability-related policy goals include the construction and reform of parks in order to reduce auto transit, remediate polluted lands, and regenerate social interaction. (Davidson 2013 p.657)

As sociologist Kevin Loughran argues, “rather than existing for the broad public, new spaces such as the High Line in New York and Millennium Park in Chicago represent an effort by city governments and elite private interests to leverage parks for profit” (Loughran 2014, p.49). Despite the costs associated with their construction and maintenance, urban parks (and greenspace more generally) are promoted as fix-all solutions to contemporary urban ills and advertised to the public as being the most affordable, expedient, and obvious means of increasing the sustainability of cities:

The effectiveness of park restoration and the urban sustainability movement depends on a collaboration of local interest groups and larger state institutions. The reliance on private park ‘friends’ groups and conservancies figures centrally into the entrepreneurial agenda of the neoliberal city. The push for sustainability results in the production of green images, in the form of designer ecologies, as a means to improve the livability of the city and to commodify urban space. (Birge-Liberman 2010, p.1392)

Similarly, Hubbard argues for the need to pay attention to the various roles that these images, and the process of urban design they emerge out of (as seen in such projects as the High Line and Millennium Park), play “in the process of place marketing and urban entrepreneurialism” (Hubbard 1996, p.1442). As he goes on to suggest, the study of such imagery and design projects should be done with an eye toward the ideologies that they embody—in this case that of neoliberalism, entrepreneurialism, and sustainability—and the realized effects of those ideologies within cities:

[Of particular concern is] the role that the urban landscape plays as a representation of the process of urban regeneration, and hence with its potential for lubricating the transition from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism. Centrally, it is argued that these new urban landscapes are not simply an expression of the broader economic and sociocultural processes effecting Western cities, but that they are centrally implicated in such processes. (Hubbard 1996, p.1442)

The rebuilding and repackaging of the urban landscape is never just physical and economic, but also encompasses social, political and cultural processes. Therefore, although the re-enchantment of the city is frequently justified with reference to a seemingly innocent desire for good design, this belies the way in which the urban landscape acts in an ideological sense, supporting a set of ideas or assumptions about the way a society is and the way it should be. (Hubbard 1996, p.1445)

As a result of this coopting of “sustainability” by local growth machines seeking to use it as a tool for “place marketing and urban entrepreneurialism,” claims about the capacity of parks to elicit improvements in overall urban sustainability are often overstated or otherwise misrepresented by the various urban regimes that produce them (Brownlow 2006; Checker 2011; Cucca 2012; Davidson 2013).

In practice, the distribution of green spaces within the urban environment is often uneven and tends to be allocated along lines of race and class (Birge-Liberman 2010; Brownlow 2006; Checker 2011; Cucca 2012; Goodling et al. 2015; Loughran 2014), a process that Melissa Checker refers to as *environmental gentrification* and that Sarah Dooling terms *ecological (eco) gentrification* (Checker 2011; Dooling 2009), as a result of its tendency to mirror the workings and effects of more traditional forms of urban gentrification in US cities. In the areas that *do* receive improvements to their greenspaces in this neoliberal manner, the increased development and resulting influx of capital typically results in more traditional forms of gentrification in which property values rise and the inflow of new, oftentimes wealthier, residents make it difficult for the area’s original residents to remain in place (Checker 2011; Cucca 2012; Dooling 2009; Loughran

2014). Also contributing to this process of environmental gentrification is the fact that the current neoliberal paradigm in urban park design is increasingly creating urban greenspaces that are geared exclusively towards those actively participating in the capitalist system (i.e., shopping, dining, or otherwise consuming) and is therefore producing spaces that are becoming more and more socially exclusionary toward those of lower incomes (Loughran 2014; Madden 2010) which, again, often occurs along lines of race and class.

The problems outlined above—uneven greenspace development and distribution, environmental (or ecological) gentrification, and the social exclusivity of neoliberal park design—form the fundamental problematics of sustainable urban development under neoliberalism and globalization. As Bowd et al. note, within the present context “global neoliberalism *is* the dominant global regime of truth (Foucault), or axiom. Thus, it is global neoliberalism that advances certain views of landscape, which in turn dictate the meaning and ideology behind specific forms of urban greening” (Bowd et al. 2015:936). Under such conditions, as Bowd et al. go on to argue, sustainable urban development via urban greening is oftentimes reduced to a mere aesthetic that can then be marketed to urban managers and residents alike as a *potential* means of creating a more sustainable urban environment (Bowd et al. 2015). This focus on creating such marketable aesthetics, and the production of sustainable discourses more generally, result in a flattening out of the concept of sustainability and severely limit its potential to realize a balance of benefits in all three areas—economic, environmental, and social—of sustainable development simultaneously:

Green aesthetics and environmental sustainability are not always as mutually inclusive as the concepts might suggest, as aesthetics are often a dominating influence in the process of planning green urban environment. (Bowd et al. 2015, p.936)

As a concept, urban [sustainability] been largely produced through the enmeshing of environmental goals with market ideology and a psychocultural, evolutionary, and historical bias towards beauty or aesthetics over the ecological. This has informed how green spaces in cities are imagined, constructed, and represented. (Bowd et al. 2015, pp.940-41)

As suggested in the introduction to this paper, competing discourses of ‘sustainability’ are selectively adopted and mobilized by various urban development regimes, resulting in the production of *selective sustainabilities*, which is utilized here to describe realized instances of sustainable urban development that are characterized by a geography of uneven development and the continued existence of significant urban inequality. As Michael Redclift has previously noted:

Since the path-breaking deliberations of the Brundtland Commission, the expression ‘sustainable development’ has been used in a variety of ways, depending on whether it is employed in an academic context or that of planning, business or environmental policy. As a result, during the last 18 years we have been confronted with several different discourses of ‘sustainable development’, some of which are mutually exclusive. (Redclift 2005, p.213)

It is this mutual exclusivity, coupled with the selective deployment of such sustainable discourses and policies by various urban elites, regimes, and growth machines, that is most troubling about the implementation of sustainable urban development strategies in the current neoliberal era. As Ken Portney has suggested, “if it is possible to imagine that cities can take sustainability seriously and if it is also possible that cities can vary in the extent to which they do so, it is also possible to contemplate why some cities are more serious about pursuing sustainability than others” (Portney 2002, p.371). In looking at the case study of Lexington’s Town Branch Commons project, the following chapters will address instances of sustainability and sustainable development as they are pursued through the entrepreneurial policies characteristic of neoliberalism in the 21st century. First, however, the following chapter will discuss the methods and methodology the author

utilized in researching both the history of the Town Branch Creek and the proposed Town Branch Commons development.



## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed by this thesis project consisted primarily of archival research into the socio-ecological history of the Town Branch Creek as well as a critical discourse analysis of the TBC Park proposal and the various materials utilized in the public promotion of the project. Archival research into the history of the Town Branch Creek, and the city of Lexington more generally, was undertaken in order to better understand the socio-environmental linkages that have defined the changing relationship between the public and the creek throughout the city's history. Specifically, this research included a close reading of various maps associated with the creek and the urban morphology of the city's downtown, as well as an analysis of various historical public documents and popular media that allowed for developing a better understanding of the urban environmental imaginaries associated with the creek throughout its history. This archival research also helped to reveal the ways in which various groups or interests have either benefited from, or been negatively affected by, the presence of the creek within the city. A critical discourse analysis of various content related to the development of the TBC Park proposal and the subsequent public marketing of the project was also carried out with the goal of better understanding the historical evolution of the TBC project and to identify how various discourses of sustainability have been deployed in the service of promoting the park to both the public and to potential investors (private, state, institutional, etc.). Using the results of this analysis, the TBC proposal was then compared to similar

contemporary urban park projects (e.g., the High Line in New York) in an attempt to situate the TBC project within a larger conversation on urban sustainability and park design in the neoliberal city.

### *3.1: Archival Research*

The primary research method employed in this project was that of archival research. This research was focused on two separate but interconnected historical themes: (1) the history of the Town Branch Creek and (2) the more recent history of the Town Branch Commons project. While the general history of the Town Branch Creek (1) drew heavily upon secondary sources—such as Charles Staples’ book, *The Pioneer History of Lexington, 1779-1806* (1996, originally published in 1939), and Maude Lafferty’s *The Town Branch* that was featured in a collection of work by the Woman’s Club of Central Kentucky—it also relied extensively on primary archival sources in the form of historical maps and newspapers. Articles referencing the Town Branch Creek—as well as people, events, or places related to the Town Branch in some way (such as Robinson’s Row and Branch Alley)—were searched for online through the Lexington Public Library’s Local History Index, a searchable database of local newspapers. Microfilm versions of any articles with titles or contents that appeared relevant to the history of the Town Branch Creek were then viewed on microfilm reader in the Kentucky Room of the Central Branch of the Lexington Public Library. In addition to these newspaper sources, the author also relied on historical maps to gain insights on the historical development of Lexington and the Town Branch, including the 18th century John Filson map of Kentucky as well as numerous Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of 19th and 20th century Lexington. Maps were

viewed online through the University of Kentucky's online archive, ExploreUK, as well as in person at the Kentucky Room of the Public Library.

More contemporary archival sources were relied upon in researching and compiling the history of the Town Branch Commons project (2), including the internet archives of various organizations, government bodies, and private businesses, as well as the online archives of the *Lexington Herald-Leader*. While the proposed Town Branch Commons development is public knowledge, many of the project's details have not been extensively discussed in the public realm. However, because the city's governing body—the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council—has been intimately involved with the project since its inception, the Council's online collection of meeting minutes, agendas, memos, resolutions, and any supplemental material for those meetings and resolutions—which were accessed through the city's Legistar webpage (<https://lexington.legistar.com>), an online web platform used by local governments and other governing bodies to allow public access to their records—provided a wealth of knowledge about the Town Branch Commons and details of the project that have not been publicly discussed by the city or reported on by the local press. Additional resources related to the TBC project—and to the TBC design competition in particular—were provided to the author during a visit to the Lexington Downtown Development Authority (LDDA) offices by the LDDA's president and COO, Jeff Fugate. These materials, including press releases, financial records, and the competition materials submitted by each of the firms involved in the design competition, were important for understanding the evolution of the TBC project and its use of various discourses of sustainability.

### *3.2: Critical Discourse Analysis*

The discussion and deployment of these discourses of sustainability were called into question by the author and the practices of discourse- and critical discourse analysis were drawn upon in order to better understand the ideologies at work within the Town Branch Design competition, and the TBC project more generally, with regard to the contemporary practices of sustainable urban development and entrepreneurial urbanism in the present period of neoliberal restructuring of the national and local state.

As Norman Fairclough notes, “discourse is commonly used in various senses including (a) meaning-making as an element of the social process, (b) the language associated with a particular social field or practice (e.g. 'political discourse'), and (c) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective (e.g. a 'neo-liberal discourse of globalization')” (Fairclough 2009, pp.162-63). Additionally, as he argues elsewhere, “the exercise of power, in modern society, is increasingly achieved through ideology, and more particularly through the ideological workings of language (Fairclough 1989, p.2). As a result, in order to understand the workings of power in contemporary society, it is necessary to first understand the ideologies and discourses through which that power is mediated. Critical discourse analysis (as well as discourse analysis itself) offer a means to begin investigating the power of certain discourses and ideologies to do real work in the world. In the case of the Town Branch Commons project, the author employed an understanding of critical discourse analysis in order to better explicate how the power of local economic elites is exercised through the contemporary ideologies of neoliberalism and entrepreneurialism, which themselves are often publically mediated through the discourse of sustainability. While no specific methods were utilized

to carry out this critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the Town Branch Commons competition and project materials, keeping the insights of CDA in mind while researching and analyzing those documents—and the various actors that produce and utilize them—proved useful for understanding what kind of work the TBC materials do and what outcomes they have and might continue to produce. In this way, the use of CDA in this project served mainly to structure the author’s research agenda and understanding of the discourses of sustainability, and to suggest future research directions and possibilities for continuing to examine the Town Branch Commons and, more generally, the co-opting of sustainability discourses by neoliberal and entrepreneurial interests and ideologies.

CHAPTER 4:  
A BRIEF HISTORY OF LEXINGTON’S TOWN BRANCH CREEK

The history of Lexington’s Town Branch Creek is inherently tied to the history of the city itself, as the early town was originally settled along the banks of the stream at the end of the 18th century. As a result, the route of the Town Branch, or as it is more formally known, the Middle (or Town) Fork of the Elkhorn Creek—is almost singularly responsible for the layout and orientation of the present-day city. While many US cities that trace their origin back to this same time period are often characterized by street grids aligned with the cardinal points of the compass, Lexington’s orientation is noticeably different—existing at nearly a 45-degree angle to the typical North-South axis. While this deviation from the standard practice of town planning no doubt made sense to the residents of the early city, it might be cause for some confusion today given that the Town Branch itself is no longer visible along its route through the city’s downtown. While initially serving as the town “commons” area, the Branch was gradually covered over by an assortment of bridges, railways, roadways, and buildings, slowly disappearing from sight and the public consciousness over the course of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was not until the early 2000s that the general public began to once again take interest in the long-buried waterway, an interest that has today blossomed into the series of plans making up the proposed Town Branch Commons.

#### *4.1: Town Branch Creek and the Founding of Lexington*

As John Staples recounted the city's early history in *The History of Pioneer Lexington, 1779-1806*, the first white visitors to "Lexington," which was then a part of the Commonwealth of Virginia, traveled upstream along the Elkhorn Creek in 1775 (1996, p.8). According to Staples, the group of settlers, led by William McConnell—who had traveled northeast from Fort Boonsboro at neighboring Harrodsburg, Kentucky—quickly decided upon a name for the place at which they had arrived at:

The version [of the story] generally accepted is that early in June 1775 a part of hunters from Harrodsburg camped around a spring and talking with enthusiasm of the beautiful country through which they had passed fell to discussing a settlement and a name. One Suggested "York," another "Lancaster," but these were dropped for "Lexington," as the discussion had turned to the strange story reaching them through the wilderness of how the British Army had been repulsed in a little Massachusetts village. (Staples 1996, p.8).

This naming event took place at a spring, now known as McConnell's Springs, which fed into the Middle Fork (Town Branch) of the Elkhorn (**Figures 4.1, 4.2**) approximately one mile to the southwest of what would eventually become the city of Lexington (Lancaster 1978, p.3). According to Staples:

The site of the Town of Lexington first appears in written record when Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia, issued a military warrant dated April 19, 1774, to James Bufford, a sergeant in the Virginia Militia, who had served during the French and Indian War, for 200 acres, a tract which included a considerable portion of the present business section of Lexington... near the head of middle fork of Elkhorn. (Staples 1996, p.9)

The tract was first surveyed in August of 1775 before changing hands several times, eventually ending up in the possession of Colonel John Todd, who ultimately transferred some 70 acres to the Trustees of Lexington. This acreage was combined with that surveyed by other members of the early settlement, resulting in a combined 640 acres of land that

Figure 4.1: 1793 Map of Kentucky, John Filson.



Source: University of Kentucky Archives.



Figure 4.2: 1784 Map of Kentucky, John Filson.



Source: University of Kentucky Archives.

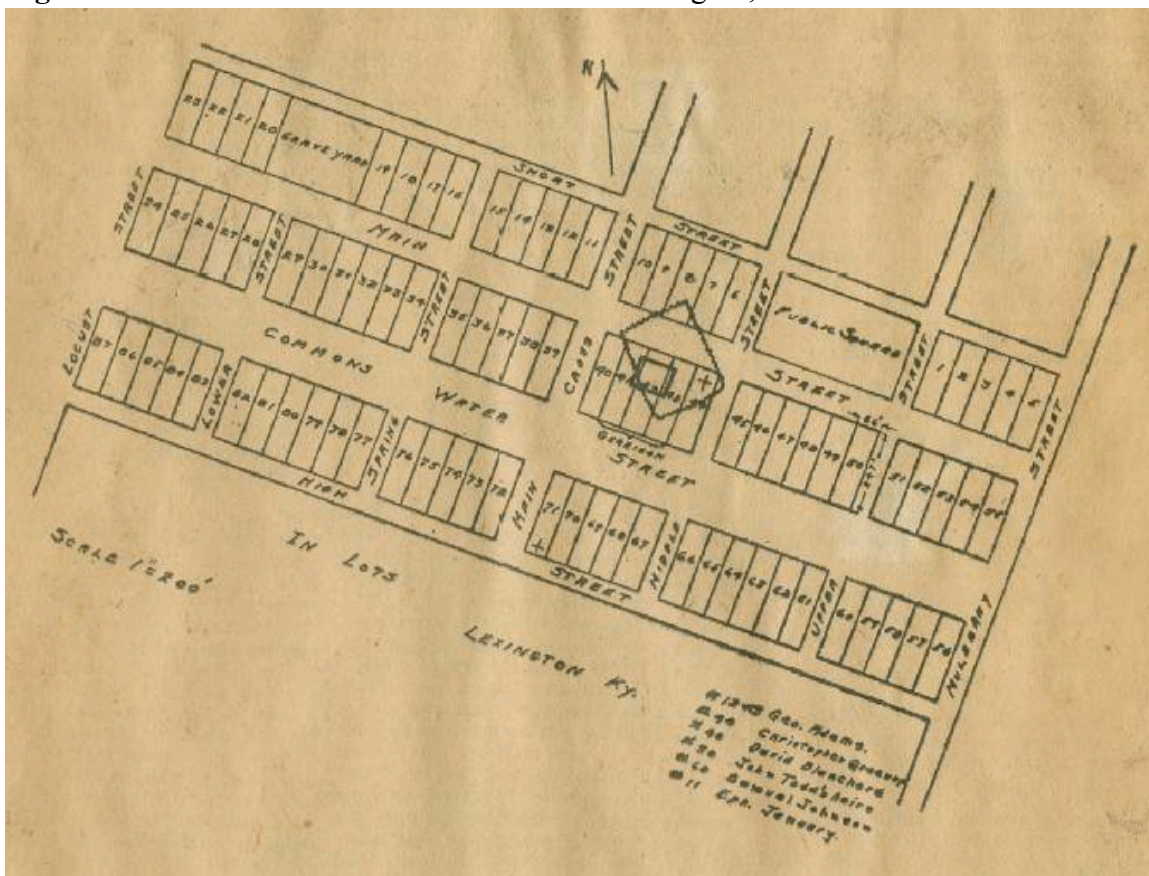
would soon become known as Lexington (Staples 1996, p.10). With the dividing of Kentucky into 3 counties (Jefferson, Lincoln, and Fayette) by the Virginia state legislature in 1780, Lexington became the county seat of the northernmost county, Fayette. Lexington's first political organization appeared soon thereafter on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1780, when the town's settlers, by then numbering forty-seven in total, signed a citizen's compact—the "Articles of Agreement between the Citizens of Lexington"—detailing how the city would be laid out and divided into lots (Lancaster 1978; Staples 1996, p.22):

At their (the settler's) joint expense, half-acre lots were to be laid out and drawn for, and property previously held was to be relinquished in favor of the new arrangement. The town layout was not to be oriented to the compass, but rather aligned to the Town Fork of Elkhorn Creek, whose course became the site of an elongated common ten poles (165 feet) wide. Lots were arranged on a grid in three rows, one on the rise south of the stream, extending to Hill (High) Street, and two on the more level north side divided by Main Street and bounded by Short Street. (Lancaster 1978, p.9).

In addition to these half-acre "in lots," the trustees plan also allowed for a series of 5-acre "out lots" to be given to each landowner as well to provide space for growing crops and livestock (Staples 1996, p.10). The first recorded plat of the town (**Figure 4.3**), which noted both the locations of the 87 "in lots" and the existence of the "Commons"—which, at 10 poles wide was made up of both Vine and Water streets and the Town Branch which ran between them—was included in the Trustees' book on March 26, 1781 (Lafferty 1917, p.7). The size and location of the "out lots" can be seen in the 1791 recreation of this plat included in Staple's book (**Figure 4.4**).

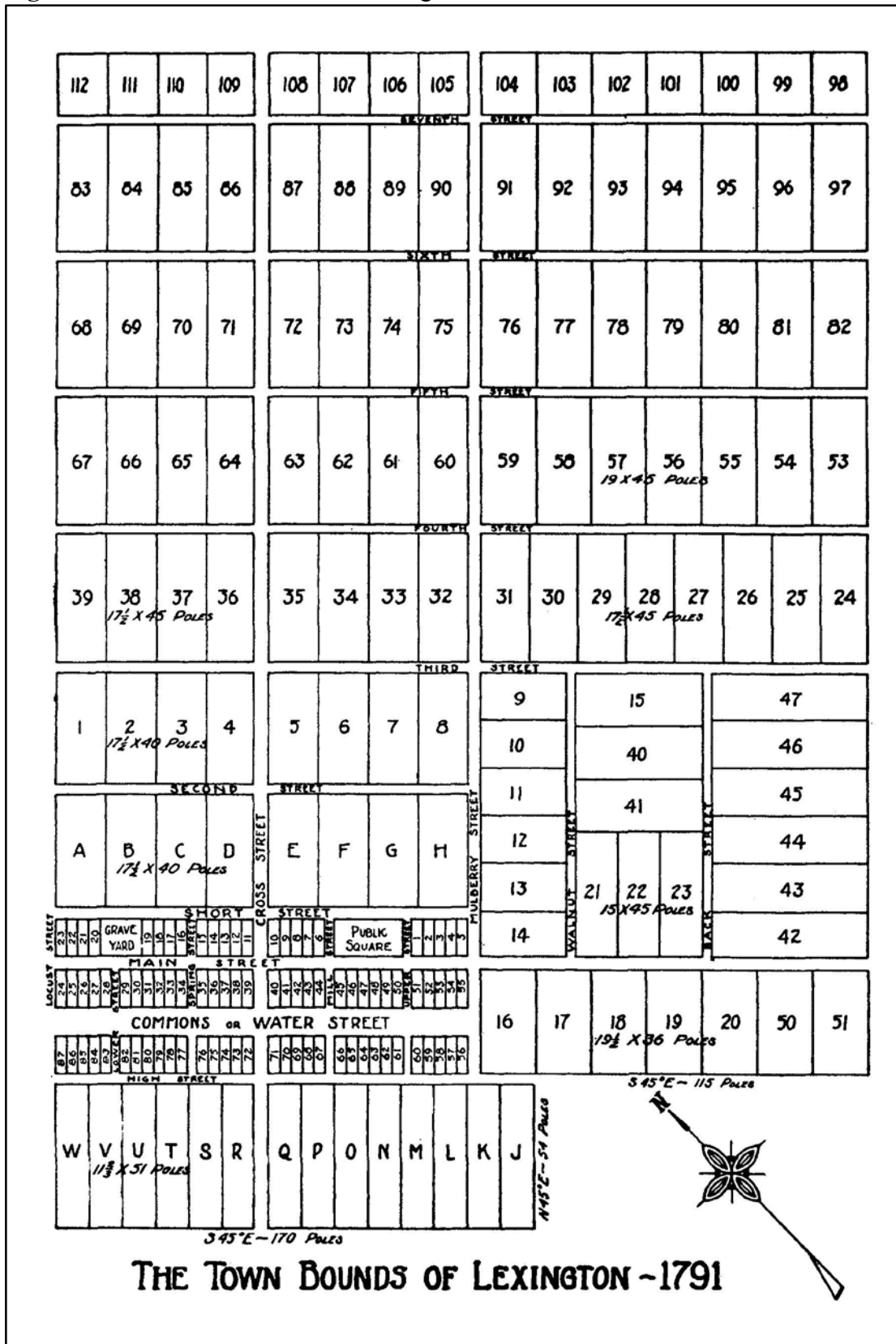
In response to an appeal made by the settlers in April of the following year, the Virginia Assembly passed an act:

Figure 4.3: Colonel Todd's Plat of "in-lots" of Lexington, laid out in 1781.



Source: Lafferty, 1917.

Figure 4.4: The Town Bounds of Lexington – 1791.



Source: Staples, 1996.

Recognizing the Town of Lexington... [and naming] the trustees who were to serve to the end of the year, and after that, they were chosen by popular vote at election held the last of each year or the beginning of the new year. (Staples 1996, p.23)

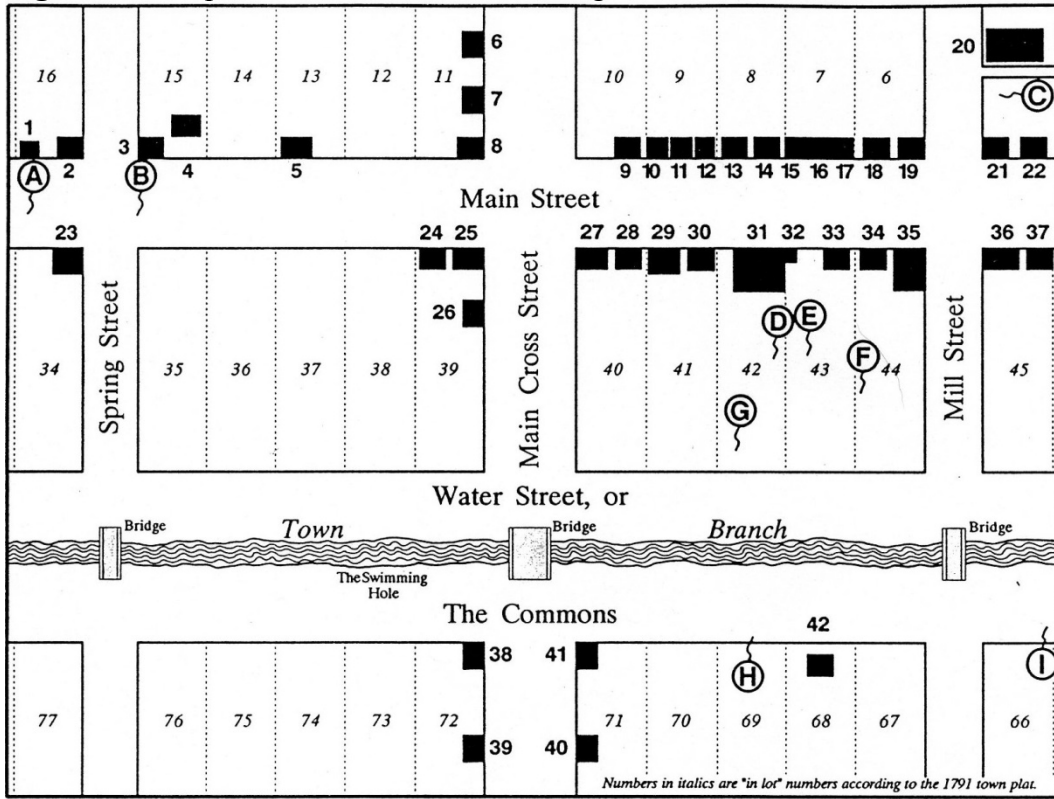
Between 1780 and 1785, much work was undertaken by the settlers to prepare the town's roads and lots for future development. While much of this work included clearing the heavily wooded land along the banks of the Town Branch, the residents were also forced to address the existence—for better or for worse—of the Branch itself:

The minute book of the trustees' meetings shows frequent orders requiring the settlers to clear Main street of stumps, and finally in 1785 this appears to have been accomplished as far west as the graveyard now occupied by the First Baptist Church property... This same year they built a bridge across the town fork of Elkhorn at Main Cross street. Other bridges were built on Main street across Mill street and on Main street across Spring street. The next year a bridge was built over the town fork on Mulberry street. The trustees also issued very stringent orders prohibiting boys from fishing off any of these bridges. Mill street was opened south of High street, by Thomas Bradley, in 1788 and John Cocke built what is claimed to be the first water mill in Kentucky this same year, at the lower end of Lexington using the waters of Town Fork. (Staples 1996, p.24)

The locations of three of these bridges, including the large bridge at the Main Cross street (present-day Broadway), in relation to the Town Branch and The Commons can be seen in **Figure 4.5**. The need for a number of stone and brick bridges to be erected over the Town Branch (Lafferty 1917, p.20), together with the prohibitions against fishing and the existence of a mill powered by the waters of the Branch, suggest that the flow of water it contained was considerable. Two years later, in 1790, the Trustees decided to reclaim parts of the town commons that had been previously sold off and to regularize and straighten the path of the Branch through the town:

Resolved, two lots having been sold of what is called the town commons to the great prejudice of the inhabitants in general, for which reason we are under the necessity of purchasing them back again. Resolved, That the unappropriated ground lying eastward of the town be sold for the purpose

**Figure 4.5: Map of Town Branch and its bridges.**



Source: O'Dell, 1993.

of refunding the purchase money of said two lots, and for digging a canal to carry the branch straight through the town; also, to have a row of lively locusts planted on each side of said canal. (Staples 1996, p.67)

The Trustees' plan to channelize the Branch and line it with trees indicated their envisioning of the commons it created as providing a vital public function. However, despite this desire for a beautiful space along the Branch that would benefit the entire town, the susceptibility of the Town Branch corridor to sporadic flooding was the cause of frequent headache for the town's residents, leading to additional improvements made to the stream as early as 1797, including extending the canal even further downstream:

On May 1, 1797, that the board resolved—"On account of the town branch having overflowed several times, Andrew Holmes is directed to straighten the 'canal' on Water Street, from where it ends to John Cocke's water mill, and to build a bridge across same at Lower Street. (Staples 1996, p.316)

Staples, quoting from the Trustees' book of minutes, notes that further improvements to the Branch were required again beginning just over a year later in late 1798 and continuing into 1799:

On October 22, 1798, the trustees employed George Teagarden to build a stone gutter across Main street at Cross street, on a good foundation, and also a bridge to be built across Mulberry, Upper and Milne (Mill) streets over the Canal. (Staples 1996, p.147)

During the years 1798 and 1799 the trustees continued their efforts to have the pavements laid; "repair the canal on Main street, walling and covering same, and opened a subscription to assist in paying for same." They also filled up Main street and made it level as far west as Mill street. (Staples 1996, p.316)

However, despite these many improvements, the Town Branch continued to flood its banks on occasion—including major events in both 1802 (Staples 1996, p.316) and again in 1808 (Lafferty 1917, p.22)—thus continually requiring an input of effort by the town's residents in order to coexist with the stream.

While little was written on the Branch in the following decades, it can be assumed that such instances of flooding and resulting maintenance were the norm throughout much of the early 19th century. While many changes occurred in the city during this time period, including the ceding of power from the board of Trustees to a larger “board of councilmen”—who in turn elected the city’s first mayor in 1832—the presence of the Branch in the daily life of the town’s residents continued unabated (Staples 1996, p.316). However, as Maude Lafferty observed writing in 1917,

[The canal] is now arched over with brick and all the buildings between Water Street and Vine Street, including the Market House, the Police Station, and those beyond are built over it. Thousand[s] of people pass over it daily oblivious of its existence, for it has disappeared from sight. (Lafferty 1917, p.23)

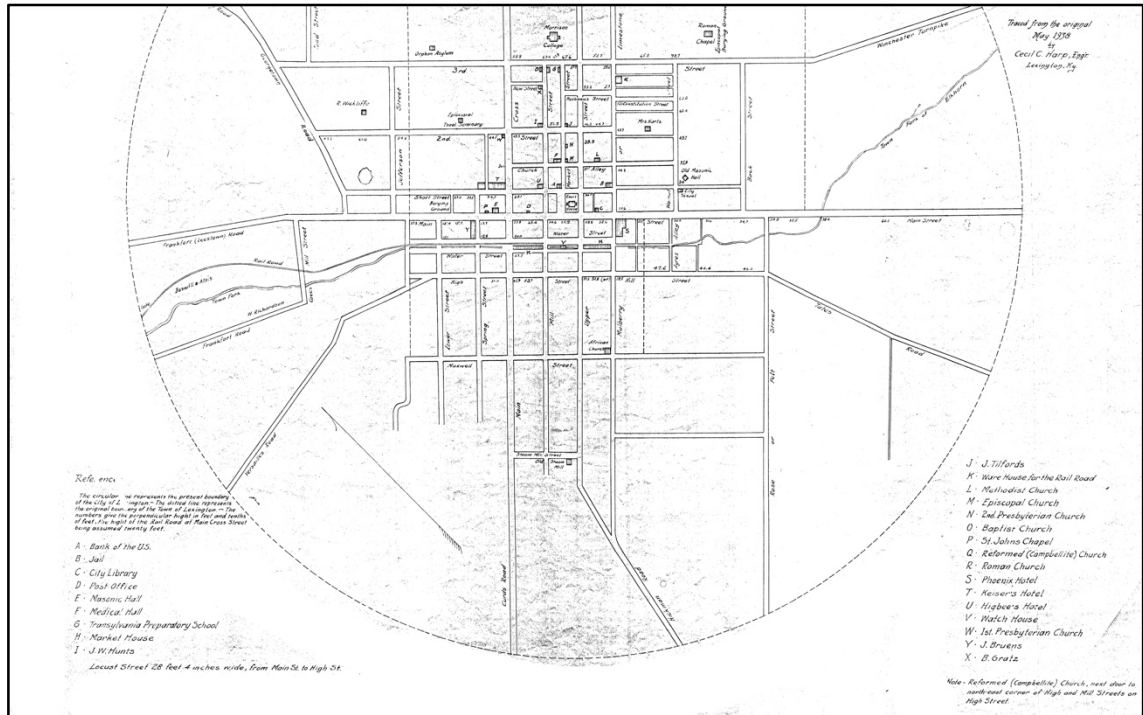
The next section of this chapter will focus on the evolution of the Branch from the mid-1800s until its eventual covering over in the early years of the 20th century.

#### *4.2: Early Industry and the Disappearance of the Town Branch*

As an 1833 map (**Figure 4.6**) of the city shows, the presence of the Town Branch was still quite prominent nearing the middle of the 19th century. Yet, even by this time, the map already depicted certain sections of the Branch as being covered over. Whether the creek was actually enclosed at this point or if this was simply the result of a more general lack of representation on the map is unknown; we do know, however, that despite earlier attempts to contain the waterway the Branch still continued to flood periodically, including a large flooding event in 1846—made worse by the failure of an upstream dam that broke leading to numerous streets and basements being inundated with water from the Branch (Kentucky Leader 1892, p. 1). This event and others like it were perhaps the cause

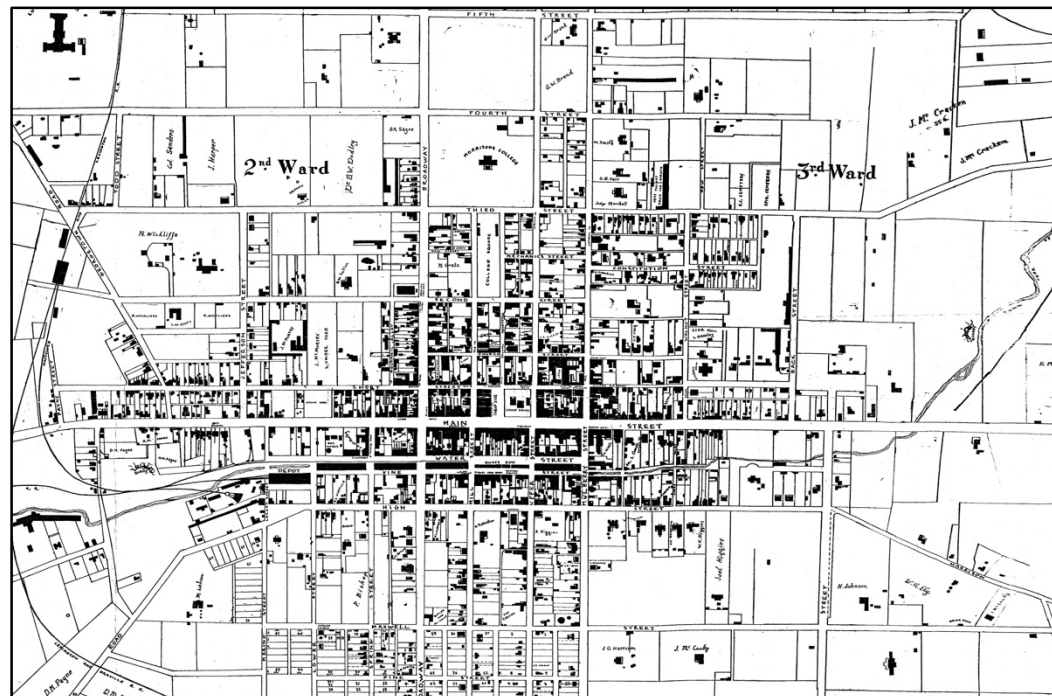


**Figure 4.6: 1833 Map of Lexington**



Source: Town Branch Trail Inc., <https://www.townbranch.org/doc/1833lex.pdf>

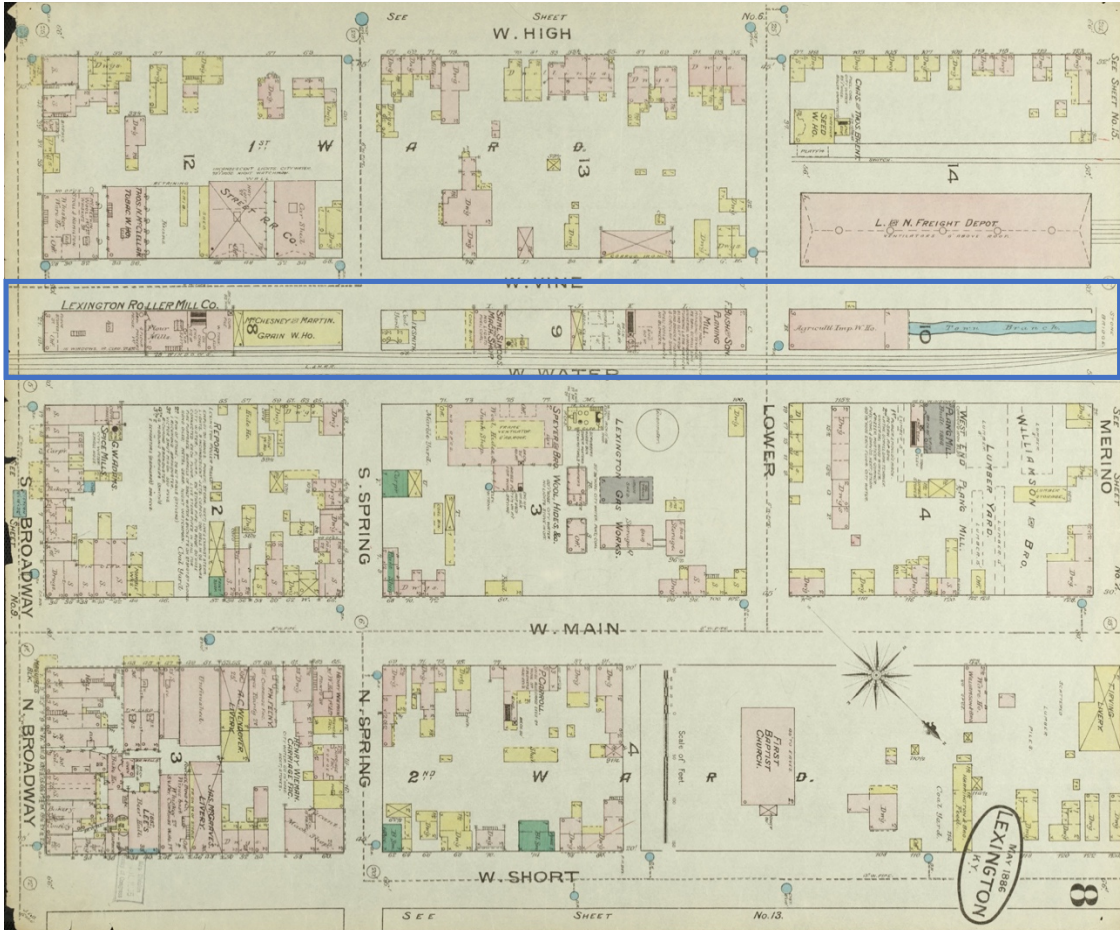
**Figure 4.7: 1855 Map of Lexington**



Source: Town Branch Trail Inc., <https://www.townbranch.org/doc/1855lex.pdf>

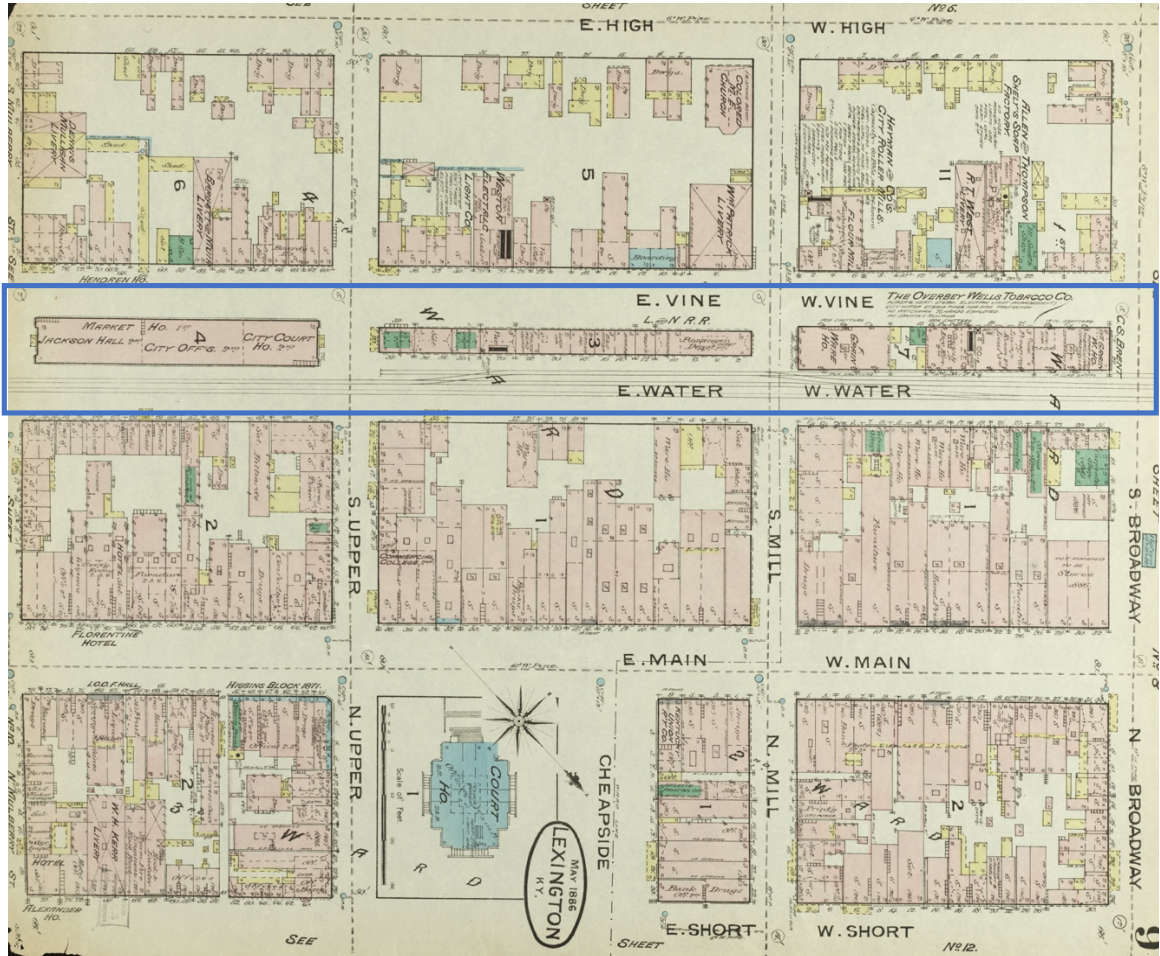
for the first efforts to completely enclose certain sections of the Branch, the earliest instance of which was undertaken sometime “prior to 1855” (Lexington Herald 1968, p.1). Even without extensive formalized work to enclose the branch taking place during this time period, the route of the Town Branch was still being slowly encroached upon by the developing city, most obviously by the rapid growth of industry along its banks throughout the middle of the 19th century. As the map of 1855 (**Figure 4.7**) shows, the area between Water and Vine Streets—the area formerly serving as the town commons—had already been filled in with various buildings, a noticeable change from the early map of 1833. Beginning with the construction of John Cocke’s water-powered mill in 1788 (mentioned above), the industrialization of the Town Branch had continued apace throughout the early 1800s. As shown in the 1886 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (**Figures 4.8, 4.9, 4.10**), the Town Branch now flowed underneath several businesses and industries, including the Lexington Roller Mills, several grain warehouses, a machine shop, and a planing mill, as well as the city’s police headquarters, court house, and market hall. In total, the Branch was by now covered over for a length of five blocks, from Mulberry Street (present-day Limestone) to Lower Street. The Sanborn Map of 1896 (**Figure 4.11**) shows even less of the Branch, with none of its route exposed within the central business district area; instead, the water of the Branch is only visible to west of Merino (Jefferson) Street, similar to its present-day condition. One of the primary reasons for the concentration of industry along the Branch, in addition to the water power it provided to early mills, was that the path of the Branch also became the route of the railroads through the center of the industrializing city. As shown in the 1855 map (**Figure 4.7**), several rail lines had already been built by this time period, with one of those extending along Water Street as far east as Broadway

**Figure 4.8:** 1886 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 8. Location of partially covered Town Branch Indicated.



**Source:** University of Kentucky Archives.

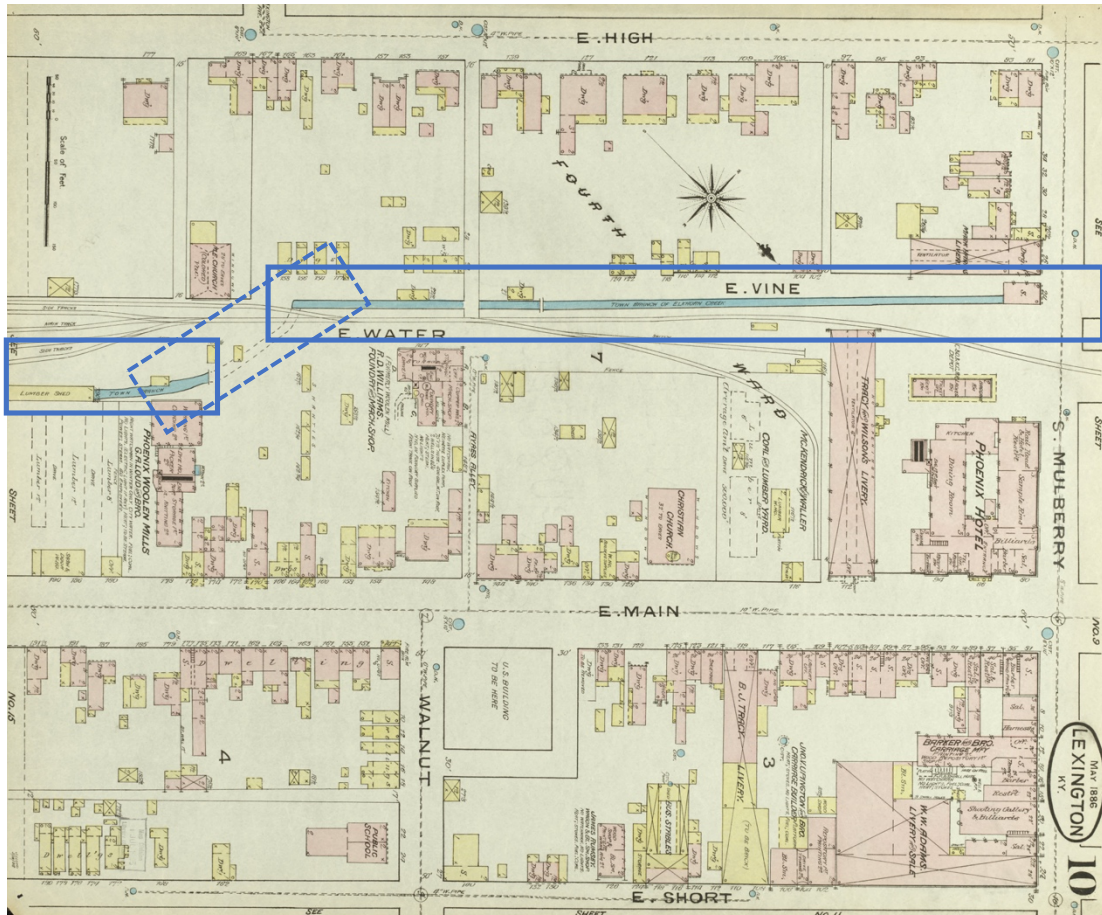
**Figure 4.9:** 1886 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 9. Location of partially covered Town Branch Indicated.



**Source:** University of Kentucky Archives.

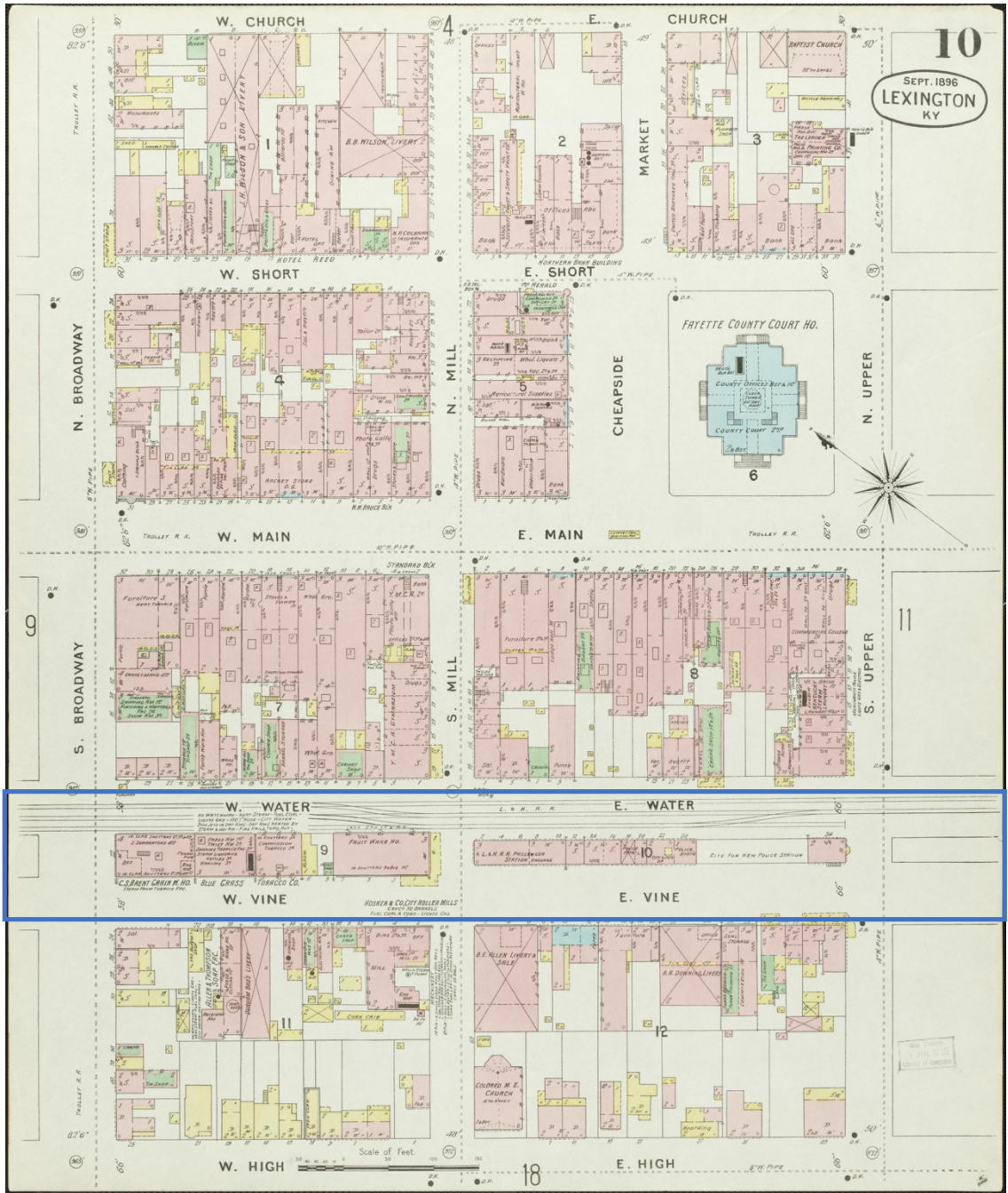


**Figure 4.10:** 1886 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 10. Location of partially covered Town Branch Indicated.



**Source:** University of Kentucky Archives.

**Figure 4.11:** 1896 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 10. Location of partially covered Town Branch Indicated.



Source: University of Kentucky Archives.

(approximately one-third of the way through town). By 1886, however, the railroad extended all the way through the town along Water Street and the now hidden Town Branch (Figures 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10).

#### *4.3: Housing Along the "Stream of Almost Living Filth"*

Yet it was not only these industrial and transportation-related land uses that characterized life along the route of the Branch during this time period. Instead, the flood-prone banks of the Town Branch were also home to the residences of those who could not afford to live anywhere else, including the city's many African American residents as well as its working poor. As John Kellogg has noted, post-bellum Lexington was characterized by a specific "land-rent topography"—based upon the locations of industries, rail lines, and the Town Branch itself—that was essential in the formation of black residential areas and the patterning of the African American population within and around the city from the late 19th century until the present day (Kellogg 1982, p.40). While the practice of constructing black residences within the city's center—that is, in back-alley developments interspersed among the wealthier white population—that was the standard practice before the Civil war did continue after 1865, the largest increase in housing for the city's black population occurred largely along the urban periphery (then still within walking distance of the city's center) and in areas of heavy industrial use, both of which offered the most affordable land (due to its undesirable location) for newly freed, or otherwise poor, blacks (Kellogg 1982, p.40). This residential geography of the city's African American residents was also characteristic of the city's poorer whites as well, who could not afford better locations any more than their African American counterparts.

In describing the workings of this land-rent topography, Kellogg outlines three primary mediating factors in the locational determination of African American enclaves (1982, p.35), these being: (1) the propensity of wealthy whites to settle along the city's more prominent streets (leaving the less visible and more peripheral areas for blacks); (2) "institutional amenity/non-amenity," which typically repelled wealthy whites from areas that included industrial land uses (railroads, slaughterhouses, etc.); and, finally, (3) the relative elevation of a particular area (and its resulting susceptibility to flooding). While much history has been written on the numerous African American enclaves that developed in Lexington's back-alleys and along the early city's periphery (Kellogg 1982; Schein 2012), relatively little has been said regarding the development of black residential clusters that existed in close proximity to areas of non-amenity (i.e., places of industry and areas immediately adjacent to railroad corridors) and areas of low elevation. It should be noted here that it is virtually impossible to disentangle the relationship between low elevations and the location of industrial and railroad facilities. The same flat, low-lying qualities that make an area prone to flooding are the very features that were valued most in the siting of rail lines and early places of industry. In the case of Lexington, this entanglement of railroads, industry, and low elevation was to be found along the route of the Town Branch.

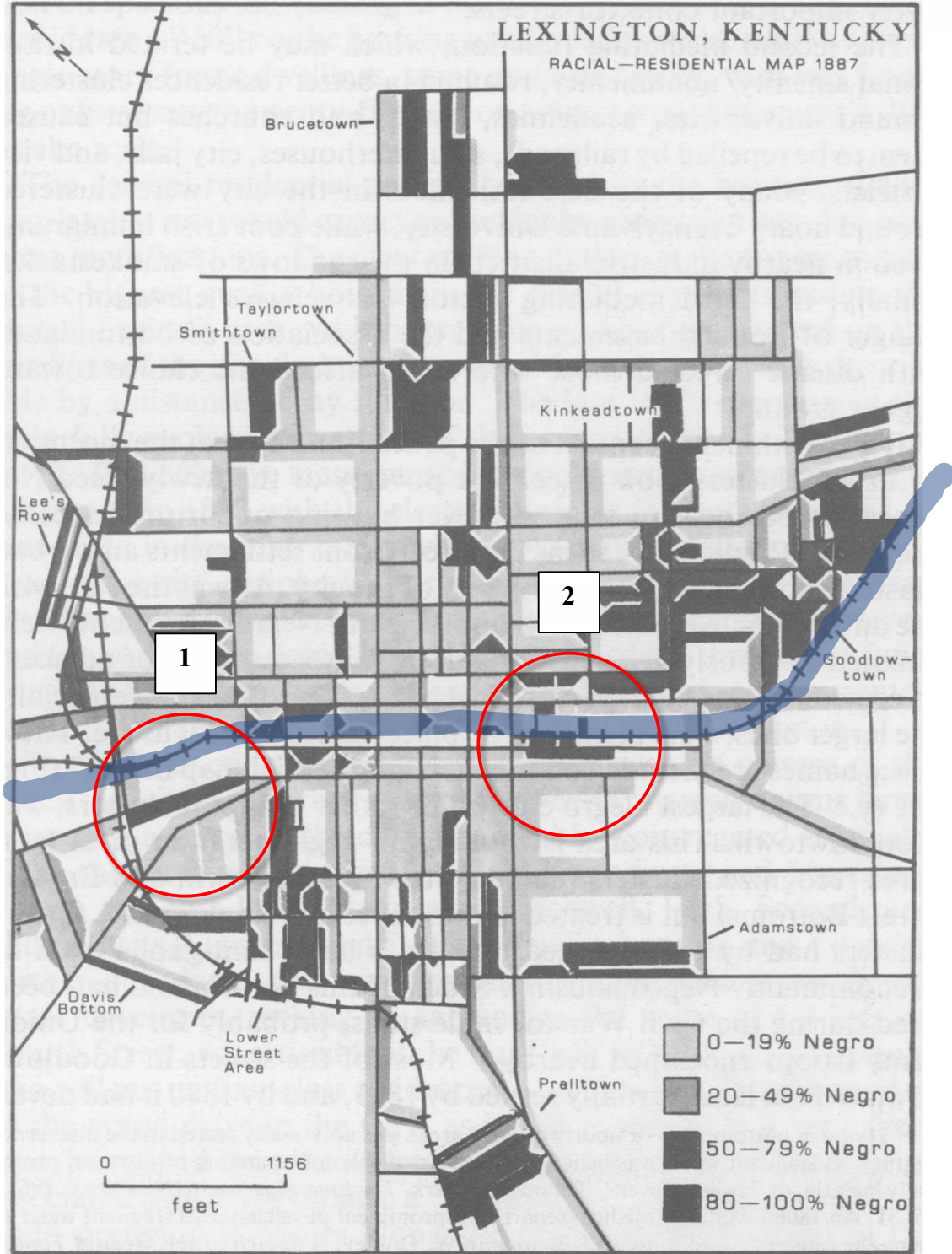
Topographically, the Town Branch represents the lowest point in the city's downtown area, meaning that a large portion of the urban core eventually drains in its direction. Historically, this condition resulted in the areas immediately adjacent to the Branch being especially prone to both seasonal and sporadic flooding, as noted extensively in the previous sections above. As a result, even though the Town Branch occupied a prominent position through the center of town, it was in no way seen as prime residential real estate. As Kellogg suggests, "the danger of flooded basements and the association of



bottomlands with disease directed those who could afford the choice toward higher ground” (Kellogg 1982, p.35). However, as he goes on to note, “the poverty of the newly freed [African Americans] forced them to take whatever housing opportunities came their way... As was the case with the antebellum [African American] enclaves, postbellum [African American] settlements were situated on poorly drained land, along railroad tracks, or adjacent to cemeteries and stockyards” (Kellogg 1982, p.35). In regard to the downtown area of Lexington, this meant that the residences of blacks and poor whites were—more often than not—located in close proximity to the Town Branch and to one another. The remainder of this section will take a closer look at two such areas that existed at the confluence of the city’s rail lines, industry, and the Town Branch Creek: Robinson’s Row and Branch Alley (**Figure 4.12**).

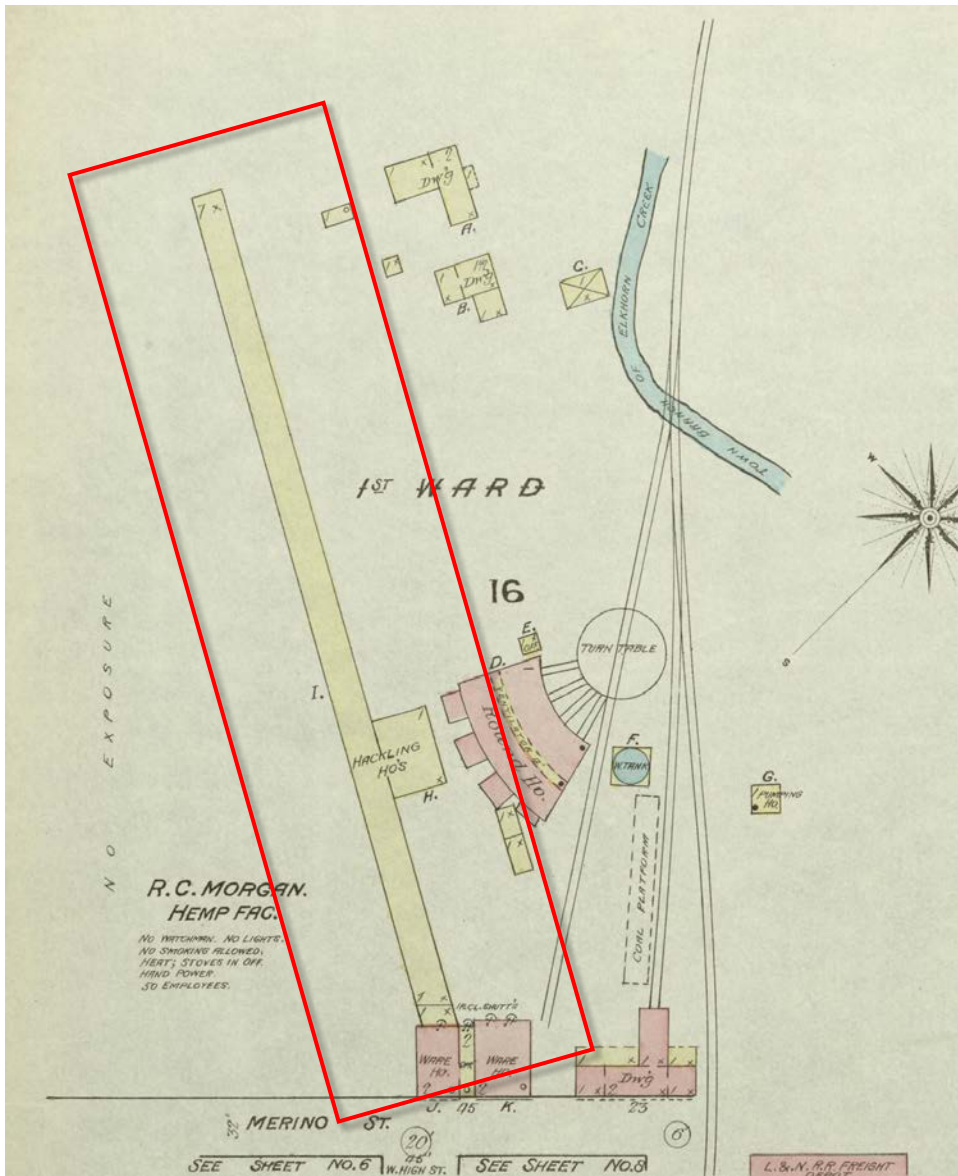
Robinson’s row began its existence not as a residential housing project, but instead as part of the R.C. Morgan hemp factory. Historically, the processing of hemp and its subsequent manufacture into rope was one of the most vital components to early Lexington’s economy. The sprawling R.C. Morgan hemp factory was located on the western periphery of town, where the rail lines running through the city’s center (along the Town Branch) converged with those that circumscribed its southern half. Based on information from the 1886 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of Lexington (**Figure 4.13**), the R.C. Morgan factory featured two large storage warehouses, a series of hackling houses, and an elongated, rectangular building that served as the factory’s ‘ropewalk,’ where the processed hemp fibers were woven into rope. However, by 1890, the factory had been shut down as the result of a fire and the former ropewalk building—which ran parallel to the recently-extended eastern terminus of Manchester Street—had been converted into a series of African American dwellings that would eventually become known as “Robinson’s Row”

**Figure 4.12:** Lexington Kentucky Racial-Residential Map 1887. Location of the Town Branch indicated in blue. Robinsons's Row (1) and Branch Alley (2) indicated in red.



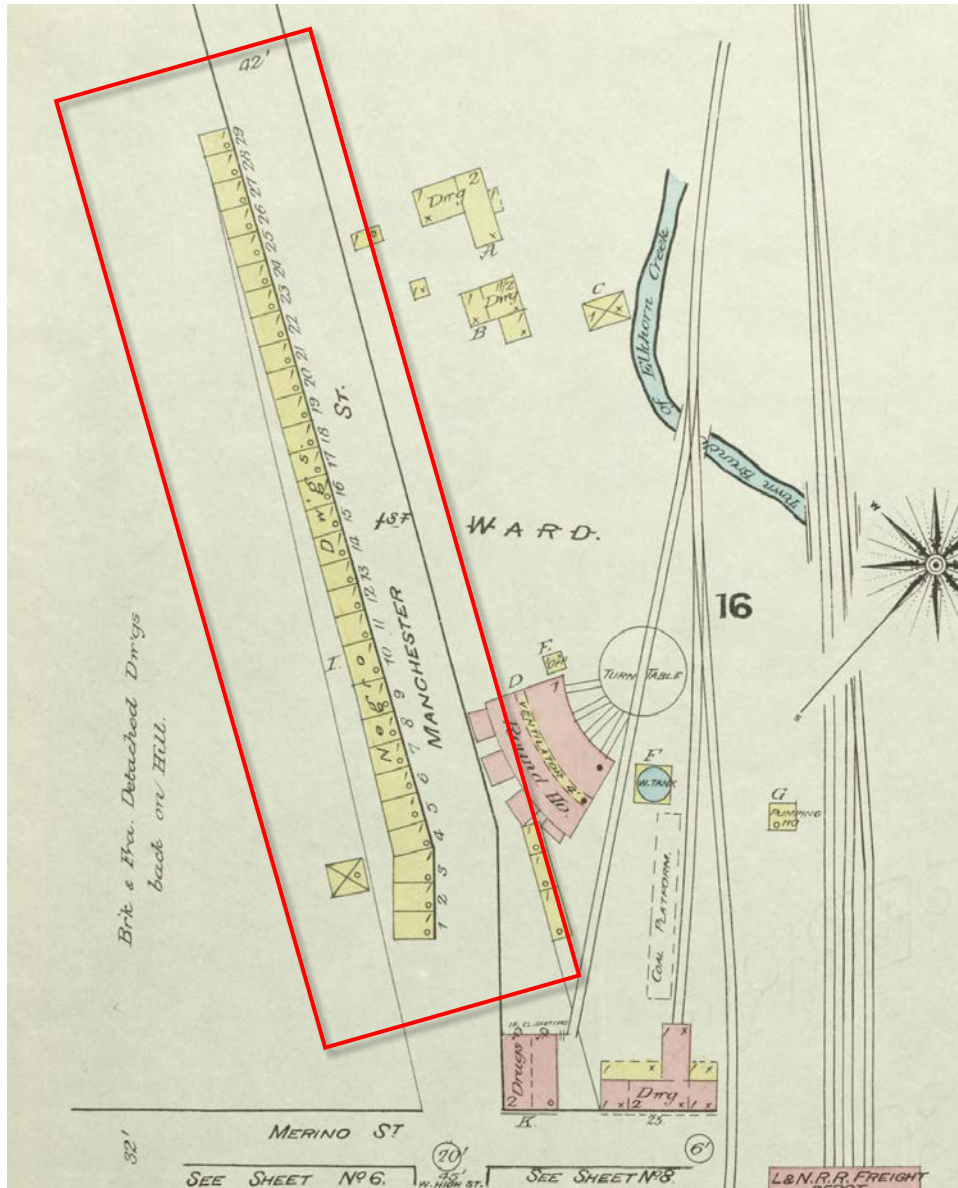
**Source:** Adapted from Kellogg, 1982. (Author's note: use of the word "Negro" [sic] is reflective of the time period during which Kellogg was writing and is not condoned or repeated by this author.)

**Figure 4.13:** 1886 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 16. Location of R.C. Morgan Hemp Factory 'ropewalk' indicated.



**Source:** University of Kentucky Archives.

**Figure 4.14:** 1890 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 16. Location of Robinson's Row.



Source: University of Kentucky Archives.

(**Figure 4.14**). Like most African American residences at the time, these “dwellings” would have been shoddily constructed out of wood and whatever other materials could be found readily (and cheaply) at hand. However, given their quick transformation from the former ropewalk building into actual residences, the quality of the housing stock along Robinson’s Row is called even more into question. This, combined with the neighborhood’s close proximity to both the city’s rail yard and the Town Branch (which can be seen in the top right of **Figures 4.13** and **4.14**) and its location at the bottom of a particularly steep hill (High Street), resulted in numerous problems for the settlement’s all-black population, including constant flooding and sanitation issues (Lexington Leader 1914, p.12). As described by the *Lexington Leader* in 1914:

The floor of many of the houses which are mostly board shacks, are in some instances below the surface of the ground, causing the surface drainage in a number of instances to flood the living rooms as well as the yards; the [sewage] vaults are so close as to menace the health of the occupants; and the water supply is inadequate, there being only one hydrant available for the twenty-one tenements. (p.12)

As the Leader article went on to note, “all of the houses are occupied by [African Americans] except nine, which have become vacant because of their dilapidated condition and insanitary surroundings” (1914, p.12). In contrast, the wealthier white population that later settled on nearby High Street, which ran atop the hill overlooking Robinson’s Row and the Town Branch, did not experience such difficulties. And, while many of the houses belonging to these white residents remain standing today, the area that was formerly Robinson’s Row is today covered over by the lower Rupp Arena parking lot and the Jefferson Street viaduct.

To the east of Robinson’s Row, along the Town Branch in the heart of Lexington’s central business district, lay another cluster of African American residences known as

“Branch Alley.” By 1886, this row of houses, sited on East Water Street (present-day E. Vine St.) between South Mulberry Street (S. Limestone) and Ayers Alley, was one of the only remaining sections of the city’s downtown where the Town Branch remained exposed (**Figure 4.10**) due to the encroachment of urban infill development. Like Robinson’s Row to the west, Branch Alley was also situated at the bottom of the High Street hill and, as a result, was likewise prone to sporadic flooding from the creek. To make matters worse, the houses along Branch Alley were owned, not by their residents, but by absentee landlords—who were almost always white (Lexington Leader 1914c, p.12). According to an 1888 article in the Lexington Leader, sanitary conditions in Branch Alley were some of the worst in the city. The article described the Town Branch there as being “a stream of almost living filth” and noted that “some of the degraded people who live along its rotting banks are reported to use the stagnant, filthy water for washing purposes” (Lexington Leader 1888, p.2). While the Town Branch had been entirely covered over by at least 1901, it had not yet been made into a proper sewer and Branch Alley’s sanitation and infrastructural problems remained an issue, leading to yet another investigation by the *Leader*, in 1914, in which the area was described as being “as unsanitary as possible” (Lexington Leader 1914b, p.1).

Aside from these issues of health and hygiene, the residents of Branch Alley were also faced with another threat due to their location—that is, the gradual expansion of the city’s rail lines, industrial facilities and the eventual disappearance of Water Street itself. By 1901, the residents of Branch Alley no longer faced a publicly assessable street, but instead a dense network of rail lines that connected the city’s various industries located along the former Town Branch (**Figure 4.15**). What was once a public thoroughfare had



**Figure 4.15:** 1901 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 17. Location of Branch Alley.



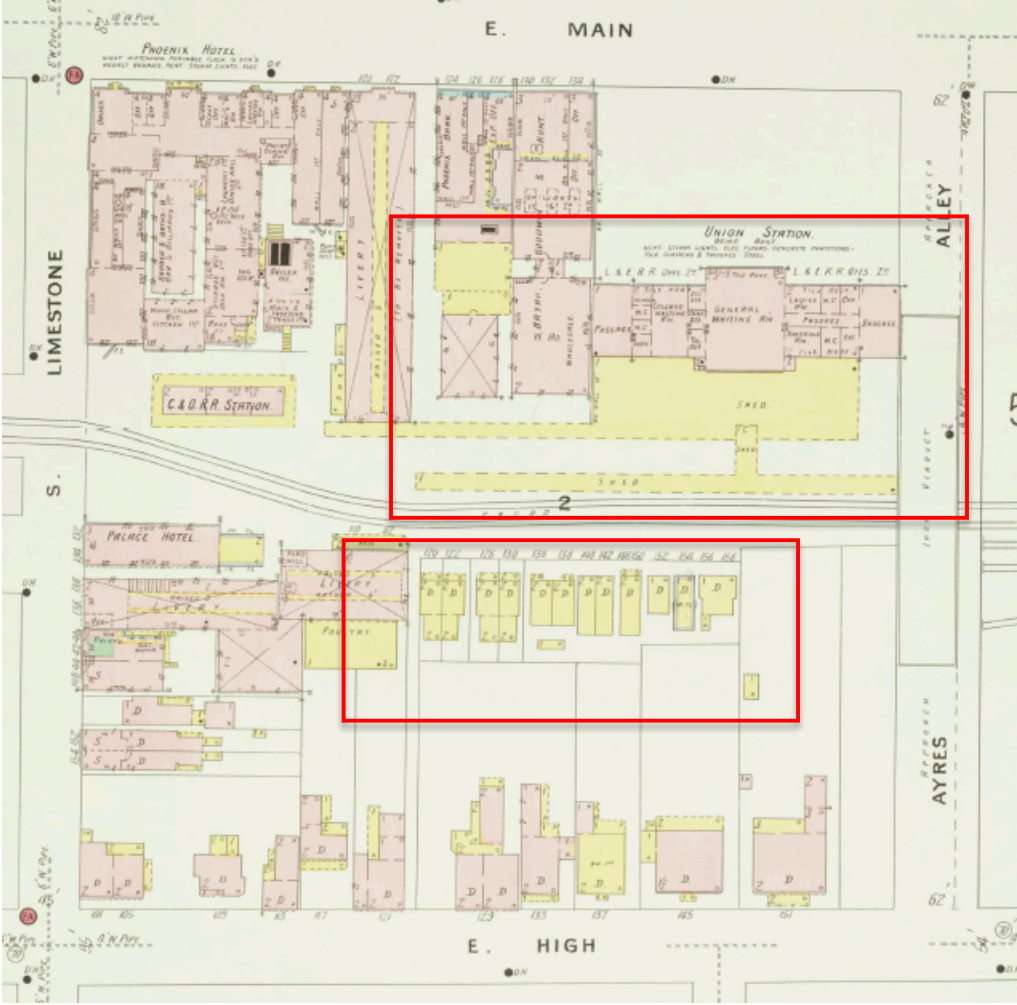
**Source:** University of Kentucky Archives.

now become an enclosed private space dedicated to the transportation of goods and certain classes of people and, by 1906, the city had taken to court the owners of several properties along Branch Alley that it accused of encroaching upon this space (*Leader* 1906, p.5). The grand opening of Lexington's "Union Station" on East Main Street (directly north of Branch Alley) in 1907 further compounded this already complex relationship between public and private spheres (*Leader* 1907, p.7). Because the new train depot fronted Main Street, its back was necessarily turned towards the Town Branch (**Figure 4.16**). As a result, the only way the average citizen might view the houses of Branch Alley now was to catch a passing glimpse as they boarded a train at the new depot. Thus, the poor white and black residents of Branch Alley found themselves occupying the interstices of the city's urban fabric—the city had, for all intents and purposes, turned its back upon them.

By 1914, the problems facing the residents of Branch Alley had only gotten worse and the city was ready to take action against both landlords and residents alike. Using a recent shooting that had taken place in the area as a legal excuse, the authorities rounded up the entire population of Branch alley and charged them all with crimes of various severity (*Leader* 1914a, p.1). While most of the charges were dropped and the residents let go, their temporary incarceration had allowed the city health and building inspectors enough time to investigate the houses of Branch Alley and declare that almost all of them were unfit for habitation. While some landlords did make improvements to their properties and others later took the city to court to fight this ruling, many of the houses were simply demolished. By the time that the Works Progress Administration (WPA) began its work of arching over the Town Branch (section 4.4) to form a proper sanitary sewer in 1934—a process of slum clearance found in cities across the country—the houses of Branch Alley and their poor white and African American occupants had long since disappeared.



**Figure 4.16:** 1906 Sanborn Map of Lexington, Sheet 52. Location of Union Station (top) and Branch Alley (bottom).



**Source:** University of Kentucky Archives.

#### *4.4: From Sewer to Public Park*

As noted above, the Town Branch was subject to an extensive reconfiguration in the early 20th century. Following major flooding events in both 1928 and 1932, it was decided that the Branch would be completely covered over once and for all (Lexington Leader, 1935). Carried out as a component of the New Deal's Work Progress Administration, the conversion of the Town Branch into a regularized sewer system—which began in 1933 and was completed in 1935—employed local laborers to completely channelize the once natural stream (Lexington Leader, 1935). However, as the Lexington Leader noted, the project did not include provisions for fully renovating the previously built-over sections of the Town Branch:

Under the majority of these buildings the stream is enclosed in a stone and brick tunnel with an arched roof. In other places, however, nothing but rotten boards supported by worm-eaten joists and stone pillars separates the sewer from the buildings. The bricks and boards both are in danger of collapsing and have in many places been reinforced. There is not sufficient money now available... to repair the walls and ceiling the whole length of the line. (Lexington Leader, 1935, p.19)

As a result, though the Town Branch was indeed fully covered over at this point, it continued to be a nuisance to the city's residents in the form of occasional floods and other problems, including the collapse of a section of one of the tunnels in 1968 during construction associated with an urban renewal project (Galloway 1968). However, despite such incidents, the Town Branch remained largely out of sight, and thus out of mind, throughout the remainder of the 20th century.

While (as noted earlier) the idea of the of the Town Branch Commons truly emerged in the early 2000s, this is not to say that discussions of resurrecting the creek did not take place sooner than this. One example was an effort by the Woodward Heights Neighborhood Association in 1985 to promote the day-lighting of the stream as an

alternative to a proposed plan to create a large lake to the west of Rupp Arena (the location of the future Town Branch Commons Park) (Lexington Herald Leader, 1985). However, this proposal—unlike the present TBC project—ultimately lacked the support to be realized. Rather, it was initial conversations by a local organization known as the Town Branch Trail, Inc. in the early 2000s that would ultimately lead to the present-day proposal for the Town Branch Commons. Organized around the idea of developing a bike- and pedestrian trail—known as the Town Branch Trail—along the route of the Town Branch Creek downstream from the city (this section was never covered over), Town Branch Trail, Inc.’s interests also included day-lighting a small section of the Town Branch—the Commons—immediately to west of Rupp arena in order to reincorporate the stream into the urban fabric:

This section of the trail goes around and through the Lexington Center before it joins together where the historic creek *daylights* between Jefferson and Cox streets. The existing historic dry laid retaining walls can be restored with an arcade of trees to arch over paths along either side. New commercial and residential development is suggested around this new promenade to create an urban riverwalk experience. (Town Branch Trail, Inc., 2002, p.2).

In addition to serving as the initial inspiration for the Town Branch Commons, the Town Branch (bike) Trail proposal also served to catalyze public interest in and knowledge of the long-buried Town Branch and provided much of the foundation for the future TBC development, including the city’s eventual success in receiving federal funding through the Federal TIGER infrastructure grant program. Town Branch Trail, Inc.’s plans for the Town Branch Trail were included as part of the LFUCG Planning Commission’s Greenway Master Plan in 2002 in its call for a more expansive greenway along the route (LFUCG Planning Commission, 2002). Together, these community-developed plans helped to lay

the foundational groundwork for what would become the presently proposed Town Branch Commons and would also greatly influence the initial work of Space Group and the RAAED task force in their designs for the park.

## CHAPTER 5: CREATING THE TOWN BRANCH COMMONS

While the idea of day-lighting Lexington's Town Branch Creek emerged as a topic of discussion in the early 2000s (Town Branch Trail, Inc., 2001; Lexington-Fayette County Greenway Master Plan, 2002), serious talks of resurfacing the long-buried waterway did not come about until early 2012. In that year, the 47-member Rupp Arena, Arts and Entertainment District (RAAED) Task Force made public the results of its yearlong study of the commercial and cultural district surrounding the city's 23,500-seat basketball arena (Rupp) and convention center in the form of a district masterplan, which included the explicit charge to "revive Town Branch Creek" (RAAED Masterplan, 2012, p.19). The task force, commissioned the previous year by newly-elected mayor Jim Gray, was made up of a collection of local businessmen, developers, politicians and other community leaders—all key actors in Molotch's growth machine—and chaired by Lexington attorney and real estate developer Brent Rice. Rather than relying on funding from the city, which owns and operates both the arena and convention center through the non-profit Lexington Center Corporation, the task force instead relied on the collection of over \$380,000 in private donations from an assortment of individuals, private corporations, and other institutions (**Appendix A**). The largest donors to the task force included the University of Kentucky Athletics Department (\$50,000), Toyota Motor Corporation (\$35,000), local electric utility LG&E and KU Services Co. (\$25,000), local businessman and philanthropist William T. Young (\$20,000), Lexington mayor Jim Gray (\$15,500), Fifth Third Bank (\$10,000), the investment firm Hilliard Lyons (\$10,000), Kentucky American Water (\$10,000) and even some of the members of the task force themselves (Fortune

2012a), including chairman Brent Rice (\$10,000), which is again consistent with both Molotch and Cox.

### *5.1: The Rupp Arena, Arts and Entertainment District Masterplan*

The RAAED task force sought to “create a dynamic, urban entertainment district in and around Rupp Arena... [that could] enliven the entire city of Lexington” (RAAED Executive Summary, 2012, p.3). With its sights set on either renovating the existing facilities or constructing an entirely new arena and convention center complex, the RAAED task force commissioned Norway-based urban designer Gary Bates and his design firm, Space Group Architects, to create a comprehensive plan of the downtown district in question. Described in the local newspaper as being an internationally recognized design firm, “Space Group has tackled several big collaborative projects, including Scandinavia’s largest conference hotel, a redesign of Oslo’s central train station, and master plans for large developments in Sweden, Korea, Norway, and Latvia” (Eblen 2011). In January of 2012, the task force’s findings, along with Space Group’s initial design recommendations, were presented to the public in the form of a final report and masterplan, which included a series of wide-ranging suggestions for transforming not only the Rupp Arena, Arts and Entertainment District, but several adjacent areas of downtown Lexington as well. The masterplan proposed by Space Group focused future urban development on three key areas of the city: (1) the renovation and ‘opening up’ of the city’s basketball arena and convention center; (2) establishing more accessible pedestrian flow between the city and the nearby University of Kentucky; and (3) promoting increased pedestrian and bicycle traffic along the city’s central axis, most notably through the creation of a linear park along



the former route of the now-buried Town Branch Creek (RAAED Executive Summary, 2012) (**Figure 1**). Space Group and the task force imagined the implementation of their plans taking place in multiple phases over the span of several years and to be largely catalyzed by the development of the arena and convention center, which would be funded by a mixture of public and private sources:

This important project will require a mix of local, state and private funding for construction. Possible major funding sources include new revenue from premium seating, advertising, sponsorship, concert/event promotions, concessions and parking associated with proposed plans. It will also likely need local and state funding to create a new economic engine. Private fundraising and federal grants and tax credits should be fully explored. The plan also anticipates the establishment of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District to support needed infrastructure and civic facilities. (RAAED Executive Summary, 2012)

However, despite early public interest in redeveloping Rupp Arena—especially following the hiring of the international architecture firm NBBJ which produced detailed plans and renderings of the re-imagined sports complex (**Figure 5.2**)—tensions between the city and the University over the project and an unwillingness by the state legislature to provide \$80 million in aid have resulted in the erosion of both public and political support for the project (Musgrave 2014). While the renovation of the convention center faced similar challenges early on, now that its fate has largely been untangled from that of the adjacent basketball arena the plans to redevelop it are once again coming into play. In contrast to the sluggishness of both of these projects, it is another of Space Group’s original planning recommendations that has proven to be the most popular—with both the city’s political and economic elite as well as to the more general public—and that has subsequently come the closest to being realized: the creation of a linear park system stretching the length of the city’s downtown core along the original pathway of the historic Town Branch Creek.



**Figure 5.2:** Rendering of proposed Rupp Arena Renovation by NBBJ Architects.



**Source:** Musgrave 2014.

## *5.2: Introducing the Town Branch Commons*

Highlighted in the masterplan for the Rupp Arena, Arts and Entertainment District prepared by Space Group were ten specific projects that the city should implement in order to “improve the quality” of the downtown area and reorient it toward pedestrian usage. Of these ideas, which included the aforementioned plans to “free Rupp” by developing an entirely new convention center as well as the creation of a “CatWalk” connecting downtown Lexington with the nearby University of Kentucky campus, the most prominent proposal featured throughout the masterplan document (in both images and text) was the plan to establish a new town “Commons” to reconnect the currently disparate spaces of the city’s central business district. As the RAAED Executive Summary notes:

The Commons is the idea of a unified thread of public space that runs throughout the district from the Distillery District all the way to East End. The Commons may take on different forms, but will generally follow the Historic Town Branch Creek. (RAAED Executive Summary, 2012, p.17)

It is important here to recognize the use of the name “Commons” as not only a means to describe how the planners envisioned the space being utilized by future generations, but also as a rhetorical device aimed at connecting current development along the Town Branch corridor with the historical commons that once existed beside the creek (Chapter 4), as indicated by the historic maps and language included within the masterplan document:

Historically, the Town Branch Creek was a gathering place for city dwellers. We wish to revive both the physical presence and psychological idea of the Town Branch Commons. (RAAED Masterplan, 2012, p.21)

While this will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections, for now it suffices to say that the idea of the “Town Branch Commons” emerged out of the RAAED master planning process not only as means of creating physical and geographical linkages between isolated projects and spaces within the city’s downtown core, but also as an intentional

rhetorical strategy designed to legitimate current efforts of downtown revitalization through specific historical associations, images, and memories. Putting these concerns aside for the moment, however, and returning to a more general overview of the Town Branch Commons (TBC), we can begin to trace out a more detailed history of the behind-the-scenes conversations and activities that would eventually lead to the proposed design of the future park.

In addition to the descriptive language noted above about the role that a linear park system oriented around the historical Town Branch would play in reconnecting the urban fabric of downtown Lexington, the masterplan created by Space Group also introduced several graphic renderings of what such a park system might look like (**Figure 5.3**). As depicted in these drawings and images, the proposed park system would include two major park spaces – one on the east end of downtown and the other immediately west of Rupp Arena in the Cox Street parking lot – connected by a ribbon of greenspace. While the Space Group plan was short on the specifics of how such a park system might be created and what it ought to look like, its defining argument was arguably that such an urban greenway system *should* exist in the first place and that the area directly adjacent to the Rupp Arena, Arts and Entertainment District should serve as its focal point. Specifically, a bird’s eye depiction of the “Central Park” area to the west of Rupp Arena—which incorporates a substantial amount of newly created greenspace and a sizeable length of the newly day-lighted Town Branch Creek—captures the importance the Commons to the more comprehensive plans to redevelop the city’s downtown (**Figure 5.4**). In fact this image was the cover photo for both the RAAED Masterplan and Executive Summary

**Figure 5.3:** Renderings of proposed Town Branch park system.



**Source:** Space Group Architects, 2012b.

**Figure 5.4:** Birds-eye rendering of Town Branch and “Central Park”



**Source:** Space Group Architects, 2012a.

documents as well as the public face of the RAAED redevelopment plans in the local media. As is shown in this and other images and drawings, the new “central park” and day-lighted Town Branch are envisioned to be the focal point for both pedestrian activity and new infill development throughout the western terminus of Lexington’s central business district as well as providing a physical linkage between the RAAED and the burgeoning “Distillery District” to the west. Together with the rest of the Commons park system stretching from the arena district through to the downtown’s East End, this green space project forms the backbone of efforts to reconnect and revitalize what were then (and continue to be) exceedingly disparate elements of the city’s downtown. As such, the masterplan created by Space Group and the RAAED task force heavily emphasized the necessity of future efforts to develop the “Town Branch Commons” and promote development along its borders. Included in the document’s list of six implementation strategies were two that explicitly involved the Town Branch Commons in some way (RAAED Executive Summary, 2012, p.21):

2. Create an advocacy and fundraising organization (the “Town Branch Partnership”) for all projects along the proposed Town Branch Commons, from the Distillery District to East End.
4. Solicit and hire design and construction professionals for Rupp Arena, the Convention Center and Town Branch Park.

### *5.3: A Request for Qualifications*

In response to the second of these suggestions, the Lexington Downtown Development Authority (LDDA)—a quango- (quasi-autonomous non-governmental organization) type private economic development agency—working in partnership with both the Lexington Center Corporation (LCC) and the Lexington-Fayette County Urban

Government (LFUCG), released a request for qualifications (RFQ) notice in September of 2012 seeking: “a consulting firm/team to lead the conceptual design and Master Plan of a visionary public space network called the Town Branch Commons in Lexington, Kentucky (LDDA Press Release, 2012). Additionally, the Downtown Development Authority’s RFQ made it clear that qualified respondents would possess interdisciplinary expertise across five professional fields:

- Landscape architecture
- Urban design and planning
- Environmental sustainability
- Civil engineering
- Multi-media design

Following a brief historical overview of Lexington and the Town Branch Creek, the RFQ document outlined the anticipated development of the Town Branch Commons park system as envisioned by the LDDA, LFUCG, and the LCC:

The Town Branch Commons is seen as a nearly 2-mile stretch of connected public space that follows the historic route of the Town Branch Creek... The plan should utilize sound and innovative landscape architecture, civil engineering and urban design principles that will focus on strengthening Downtown Lexington’s public space network as well as improve the overall livability of Downtown by producing a vibrant, well-connected public space system that attracts visitors and serves as a catalyst for community activities. (LDDA RFQ, 2012b)

In addition to more general suggestions to “emphasize pedestrian experience and connectivity” and create “a blueprint for the improvement and growth of downtown,” the RFQ also includes explicit language concerning the need for the project to include environmental sustainability initiatives that would address several water quality issues that the city was currently facing. Specifically, the RFQ required firms to:

Focus on environmental sustainability practices and specifically address the 2006 EPA Consent Decree to define projects/attributes of the plan that will play a role in the settlement between LFUCG and State/Federal Governments that requires Lexington to fix problems with its stormwater and sanitary sewer systems. (LDDA RFQ, 2012b)

The consent decree in question was an agreement reached by the LFUCG, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Kentucky's Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet (EPPC) in 2008 regarding repeated instances of sewage overflows and pollution in the city's stormwater system. The exact nature of the issues of concern were described in the EPA's press release regarding the consent decree:

LFUCG owns and operates a sanitary sewer system, which includes two major wastewater treatment plants, serving a population of almost 250,000. It also owns and operates a separate storm sewer system that collects urban stormwater. Inadequacies in LFUCG's sewer systems' infrastructure and management programs have resulted in unlawful discharges of millions of gallons of untreated sewage, known as sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs), into streams in the Lexington/Fayette County area and increased pollution levels in urban stormwater. These discharges have adversely affected water quality in area streams, including *Town Branch*, Hickman and Elkhorn Creeks, Cane Run, Wolf Run and Blue Springs Branch. These streams ultimately drain to the Kentucky and Ohio Rivers. (EPA Press Release, 2008)

In an effort to decrease the frequency of SSO events within the city's stormwater system, as well as to address the increasing levels of pollution then being accumulated as stormwater moved through the urban area, the EPA and the Kentucky EPPC mandated a series of key improvements and initiatives to be undertaken by LFUCG, including to:

Identify and quantify recurring discharges of untreated sewage and their causes; evaluate the capacity, design and condition of the components of its sanitary sewer system including pumping stations and treatment plants; develop and implement remedial measures to eliminate recurring SSOs within 11 to 13 years; and improve its management, operation and maintenance programs to prevent future overflows and respond to overflows when they occur. In addition, the consent decree contains provisions requiring LFUCG to substantially upgrade its programs to reduce pollution in its storm sewer system. (EPA Press Release, 2008)



According to the EPA, the combined cost for all of these initiatives was estimated to exceed \$290 million at the time the consent decree was created in 2008. Yet according to more recent estimates, that number has now risen to almost \$600 million, with over \$130 million having already been spent between 2007 and 2015 (Musgrave 2015). However, not all of the improvements to the city's water system that emerged out of the consent decree were quite so capital intensive. Instead, the EPA allowed the LFUCG to undertake two "supplemental environmental projects" to help reduce its amount of penalties to be paid to the federal government as a result of the previous SSO events. The first of these projects to be undertaken was to involve the restoration and preservation of 8/10ths of a mile of the Cane Run Creek near the University of Kentucky's Cold Stream Research Park at a cost of nearly \$1 million (EPA Press Release, 2008); however, as of January 2017, this project had yet to break ground (Musgrave 2017). A second project, one that would become central to the eventual Town Branch Commons, called for an investment of at least \$230,000 in improving the city's network of so-called "green infrastructure" in order to better manage stormwater runoff. As defined by the EPA,

Green infrastructure is an approach to capturing stormwater that maintains or restores natural hydrology and can reduce sewer overflows, the amount of untreated stormwater discharged into surface waters and reliance on traditional stormwater structures (i.e. pipes, channels, and treatment plants) that are expensive to build, operate and maintain. Green infrastructure practices include rain gardens, porous pavements, green roofs, infiltration planters, trees and tree boxes and rainwater harvesting for non-potable uses such as toilet flushing and landscape irrigation. (EPA Press Release, 2008)

As noted previously, the RFQ issued by the LDDA for the Town Branch Commons Master Plan mandated that submitted proposals should "focus on environmental sustainability practices and specifically address the 2006 EPA Consent Decree" (LDDA RFQ, 2012b). The LDDA's intentions of utilizing the Town Branch Commons project to address the



city's various water quality issues and respond directly to the EPA consent decree is further evidenced by the importance of environmental concerns in the selection criteria used to evaluate the firms responding to the RFQ. According to the RFQ document, the ideal firm or team would meet the following set of qualifications which were assigned point values based on their relative importance (LDDA RFQ, 2012b):

- Significant experience with successful large-scale, multi-million-dollar public space projects and the specific personnel assigned to this project (30 points)
- Detailed understanding of environmental sustainability methods and technology (20 points)
- National and international urban design experience that will bring a broader perspective to Lexington's challenges and opportunities (15 points)
- Team experience leading bold visioning and consensus building efforts with multiple stakeholders and the public (15 points)
- Experience in multi-media efforts and relevant technology (10 points)
- Familiarity with Lexington and Kentucky (10 points)

As indicated above, the LDDA's prioritization of "environmental sustainability" qualifications are second only to the desire for firms to have previous experience with large-scale, capital-intensive projects. Together with the third-most important quality listed above—"national and international urban design experience"—these qualifying conditions represent a recent trend in urban design and green space development that increasingly prioritizes the inclusion of so-called "sustainable" practices and that views the development of local parks from a national and even international perspective, as discussed in Chapter 2. The remainder of this chapter, then, will analyze the TBC Master Plan competition, the design proposals made by the competition finalists, and the resulting public discourse surrounding the Town Branch Commons project in relation to the

aforementioned shift toward “sustainability” and “internationalism” in the design of urban park systems, keeping in mind the current state of affairs during the present period of neoliberal governance and urban entrepreneurialism described in chapter 2.

#### *5.4: The Town Branch Commons Master Plan Competition*

Following the public release of the Town Branch Commons RFQ in late September 2012, the LDDA received responses from twenty-three interested firms, including several from firms recognized either nationally or internationally for their work in landscape architecture and urban design. Some of the notable firms that responded to the RFQ included the US firm Hargreaves Associates—which was then under contract for the design of the Queen Elizabeth Park in London being constructed for the 2012 Olympic games—and MVRDV, a Netherlands-based architecture and urban design practice with commissions and completed projects located all across the globe. According to Michael Speaks, dean of the College of Design at the University of Kentucky, the reason behind the number and quality of initial responses to the RFQ was the recent publicizing of the city of Lexington within the “design world” as a result of Space Group’s work on the RAAED redevelopment plans:

There's been a lot of press about [the RAAED Masterplan]... Firms have heard that Lexington is friendly to good design, that the mayor is knowledgeable and wants good design... It was not insignificant that [internationally-recognized architect] Jeanne Gang came to Lexington to do a plan for [the] CentrePointe [development downtown]. She also did our master plan for UK's College of Design... When you have people of that caliber as part of the conversation, it gets to be a small world. These people talk to each other. (Fortune 2012b)

Speaks, together with Ned Crankshaw, the chairman of UK’s department of landscape architecture, and Jeff Fugate, president and COO of the LDDA, formed the committee

responsible for narrowing down the list of submissions to the design competition. As a result of the high quality and overwhelming number of responses to the RFQ, it was decided that the top five finalists were to each take part in a juried design competition to be held in February 2013 (Eblen 2013a; Fortune 2012b). As noted by Bradford McKee, editor of Landscape Architecture Magazine (and future juror for the TBC competition), national and international design competitions are increasingly being utilized by cities to solicit first-rate designs for new and revitalized urban parks:

These sorts of urban landscape competitions are coming up more frequently, and something good is going on. Waller Creek in Austin, the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, the Seattle Waterfront, the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities – all of these recent searches have basically been driven by landscape architecture and won by landscape architects. This is not yesterday, when cities like these, and Lexington, would just call in planners, architects, and engineers to remake their cities with alien, grandiose ideas and, perhaps, bury their creeks. (McKee 2013)

Following their selection by Speaks, Crankshaw, and McKee, each of the design firms representing the top five RFQ submissions was notified by the LDDA of their placement on the finalist list and invited to participate in the forthcoming design competition. As made public by Lexington's Herald Leader, the five national and international firms selected for the design competition were (Fortune 2012b)

- **Civitas** (Denver, CO)
- **Coen + Partners** (Minneapolis, MN)
- **JDS** (Copenhagen, Denmark)
- **Inside/Outside** (Amsterdam, the Netherlands)
- **SCAPE** (New York, NY)

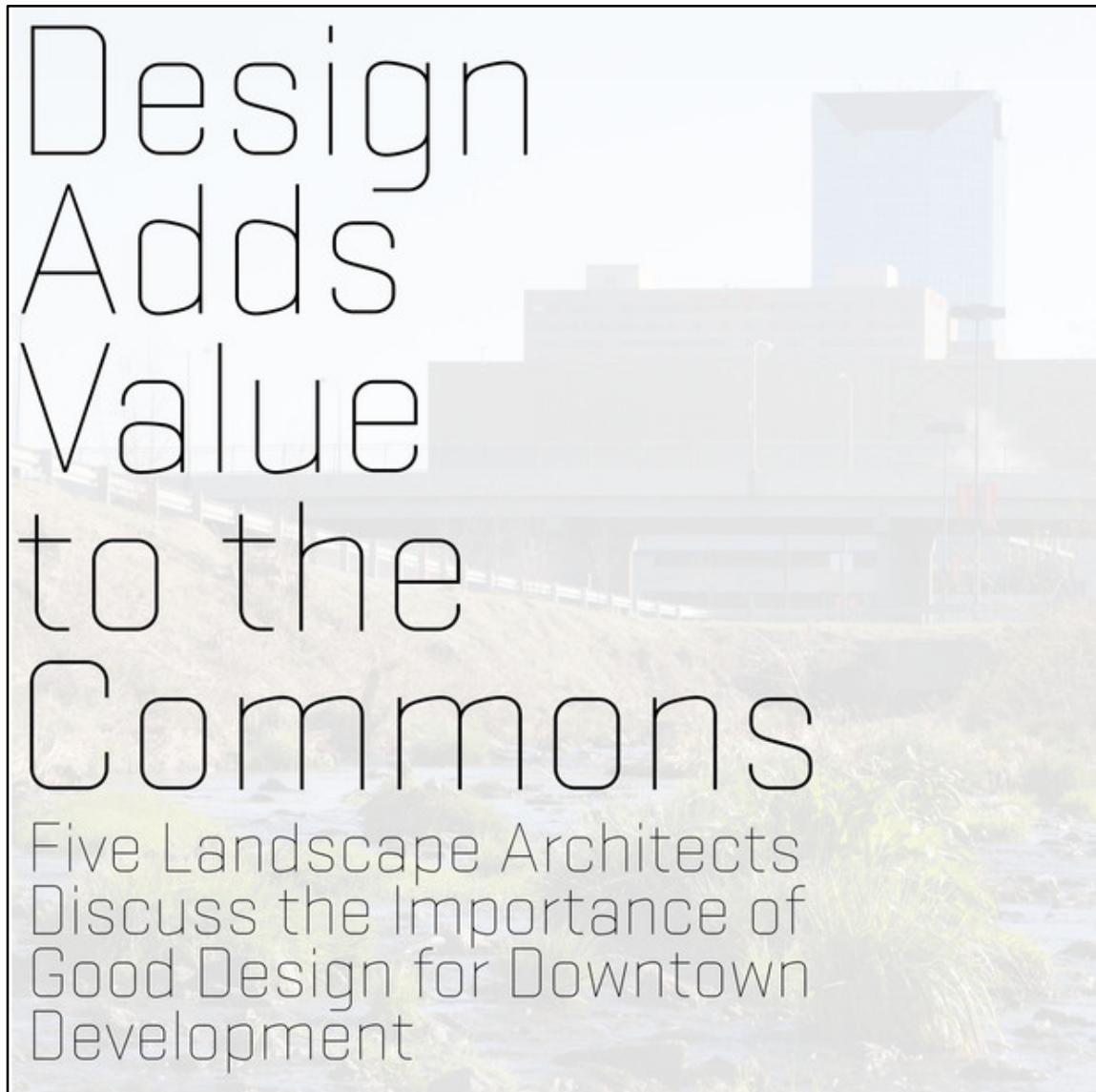
For their involvement in the competition, each firm was promised a \$15,000 honorarium in addition to travel expenses to attend a public symposium to be held in Lexington in February. According to the Herald Leader,

That money was donated by the Nashville family of Lee Ann Ingram, an investor in Shorty's Market on Short Street [in Lexington]... The result was that Lexington got the benefit of having five teams of the world's best landscape architects and urban designers take a deep look at the city's issues and propose detailed solutions — *at no cost to taxpayers*. (Eblen 2013b; emphasis added)

The invited firms were told that the winner of the competition would *potentially* be rewarded with a contract to develop a more detailed masterplan of the TBC project in the future – a contract worth approximately \$200,000 to \$250,000 (LDDA RFQ 2012b).

The competition winner was to be chosen by a jury made up of both locally and nationally recognized design professionals, including Speaks, Crankshaw, and McKee, as well as Aaron Betsky, director of the Cincinnati Art Museum, and Holly Wiedemann, local architect and member of the Lexington Center Corporation's board of directors. The firms were asked to submit their proposals to the DDA by February 1, 2013 and subsequently required to present their work both publicly (via the symposium mentioned above) as well as privately in a closed-session meeting with the members of the competition jury. On Thursday, January 31<sup>st</sup> 2013, the five shortlisted firms joined together for a public symposium in downtown Lexington. It is important to note that the firms were *not* allowed to present on their actual proposals for the TBC competition—those presentations were to be reserved solely for the 5-person jury outlined above—but were instead asked to each deliver a ten-minute presentation on their firm's design “philosophy” and examples of their past work. More broadly, the firms were asked to orient their talks around the established theme of the symposium: “Design Adds Value to the Commons”. In addition to publicizing this title of *Design Adds Value*, the public promotion of the symposium described the event as “five landscape architects discuss[ing] the importance of good design for downtown development” (**Figure 5.5**). The format of this public symposium (academic-style lectures

**Figure 5.5:** ‘Design Adds Value to the Commons’ Symposium promotional flyer



**Source:** UKCoD, 2012.

instead of public presentations on the actual park designs), taken together with the theme of *Design Adds Value*, suggests that the purpose of the symposium was not so much to inform the public of possible design alternatives for the TBC project, but to instead build public support around the idea that the winning design—i.e., the design chosen by the 5-person jury—would be worth investing public dollars into because of its potential to add economic value to the city’s downtown. As stated by Speaks in his public introduction to the symposium, design should be valued “not just for design’s sake, but really for economic development, among other things” (UKCoD, 2012b). Rather than focusing on issues of environmental or social sustainability, elaborating upon the relationship between urban design and economic value became the central theme around which the TBC design competition and the public promotion of the TBC project was framed.

The day after the public symposium, the competition jury of Speaks, Crankshaw, McKee, Betsky, and Wiedemann convened to hear 1-hour presentations by each of the five finalists regarding their design proposals for the TBC competition. As noted above, these presentations were held in private without any means for public input or observation, with the only record of them being the notes that each of the jurists recorded. Three days later, the LDDA board of directors convened to hear the jury’s report on the presentations, by which time the jury had already selected the design proposal submitted by SCAPE as the clear winner of the competition. As indicated in the jury’s written comments, their preference for the SCAPE proposal was based largely on a combination of economic and environmental concerns:

**Speaks:** SCAPE produced the most beautiful, comprehensive and powerful project in the competition. It is among the few proposals in the competition to transform the Town Branch into a water filtration system in its own right... [It also] creates the potential for new urban development – new

buildings, cafes, art performance venues, recreation areas – rather than designing each and every one of them. Indeed, the strength of SCAPE’s proposal is ultimately not in what is revealed directly, not in what is designed, but in what it makes possible. SCAPE’s is a proposal that is beautiful, comprehensive and it can be built. (Speaks 2012)

**Wiedemann:** As a small business owner downtown, I have been quite concerned over the EPA decree and the costs we are mandated to expend in order to manage our storm water runoff and fulfill the Remedial Measures Plan. The SCAPE solution provides a means to correct the problems that producing too much impervious surfaces has upon our Bluegrass, while simultaneously creating a series of economic generators that will serve to continue the momentum that coincides with the... rethinking of Rupp [Arena] and the Arts and Entertainment District... It resoundingly galvanizes the notion that Lexington is the Place to Be. (Wiedemann 2012)

Following the jury’s recommendation, the LDDA board voted to select the design proposal by SCAPE / Landscape Architects as the official winner of the Town Branch Commons Master Plan competition and to begin contract negotiations with the firm in regard to the creation of a more detailed masterplan of the TBC. It was only *after* the formal announcement that SCAPE was the winner of the TBC competition that the public was finally allowed to view the design proposals made by each of the five shortlisted firms, reaffirming the above observation that the overall purpose of the public symposium was neither to inform the public of possible design alternatives for the TBC project nor attempt to solicit public attitudes about the proposed designs. Prior to the competition, each of the five firms were asked to create four presentation “boards” to physically showcase their design proposals to the competition jury. Following the end of the competition, each of the design teams’ boards were placed on public display in Lexington’s Downtown Arts Center for a period of three weeks. Additionally, a website ([townbranchcommons.com](http://townbranchcommons.com)) was created to publicize the competition (after it had already ended) and to showcase each firm’s individual design proposals through a mixture of imagery and text. While the following section will analyze the images and text associated specifically with the SCAPE

proposal, it will also make reference to the designs and imagery associated with the other firms and discuss the general similarities between the five competition entries.

### *5.5: Reviving Town Branch*

Following the February 4<sup>th</sup> press release made by the TBC competition jury and the LDDA board of directors announcing the competition winner, Herald Leader columnist Tom Eblen noted that the proposal made by SCAPE was “the clear winner” (Eblen 2013b). Eblen described SCAPE’s proposal as being “the most authentic to Lexington” and noted that while it was “the most practical and affordable” of all the competition entries, SCAPE’s design stood out mostly because it “highlights the role natural ecology can and should play in solving Lexington's storm-water problems, not only downtown but also throughout Fayette County” (Eblen 2013b). According to Eblen, as well as several of the competition jury members, the driving force behind SCAPE’s successful design was the firm’s lead partner, Kate Orff, who was then an assistant professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation in New York City and whom Eblen described as being “a rising star in the world of landscape architecture” (Eblen 2013b). In its write-up of the February 4<sup>th</sup> TBC press release, the Herald Leader made note of the up-and-coming status of both Orff and the young firm that she led during the design competition:

Scape's projects are as varied in size and purpose as a 1,000-square-foot pocket park in Brooklyn, NY, a 100-acre environmental center in Greenville, SC, and a 1,000-acre landfill-regeneration project in Dublin, Ireland... The firm has exhibited work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and in Seoul, South Korea; Lisbon, Portugal; and Hong Kong. (Fortune, 2013)



Like most of the competition entries, SCAPE's proposal for the TBC did not include plans to day-light the Town Branch Creek for the entirety of its length; rather, the firm chose to day-light only certain portions of the creek in order to create a "network of pools, fountains, rain gardens, pocket parks and marshes" along the original pathway of the buried stream (Fortune, 2013). Instead of relying on a ribbon of 'blue' (i.e., the Town Branch) to connect the two ends of the city's downtown core, the firm instead employed a broad swath of 'green' as a means to signify the presence (and prominence) of the Town Branch Commons within the urban fabric of downtown Lexington in their various graphic presentations (**Figure 5.6**). This representational strategy is highly evocative of the New York City High Line, a 1.45-mile-long linear park in Manhattan built on top of an abandoned elevated rail line. Because the High Line is located above street level, its landscaped pathway provides an unbroken green corridor stretching along Manhattan's Lower West Side between 14<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Streets (**Figures 5.7 and 5.8**). Therefore, in both photographs and drawings, the High Line can be realistically portrayed as a ribbon of green running throughout lower Manhattan. In a similar fashion, each of the design proposals for the TBC competition (including SCAPE's) makes use of a similar visual expression in order to represent their plans for the Town Branch Commons park system as being a continuous strip of 'green' running from one end of downtown Lexington to the other (**Figure 5.6**). It should be noted here, however, that in fact only one of the proposals (Inside Outside) would have established a completely continuous linear green space network—uninterrupted by streets and other urban infrastructures—which was to be accomplished by completely day-lighting the Town Branch for the entirety of its length (**Figures 5.9, 5.10**).



In contrast to this plan, the designs of SCAPE and the other competition finalists called instead for only day-lighting the Town Branch in certain areas, resulting in a proposed green space network that is noticeably bisected by city streets at various locations (a problem that was also faced by Inside Outside’s proposal as well). The point here is not to critique these designs on their inability to create a continuous park space—the High Line had the advantage of being constructed atop a rail line that provided a ready-made route through an already built-up area—but to instead draw attention to discrepancies between the images and drawings the firms used to present their proposals to the competition jury (and to the public) and the reality of those same proposals had they actually been built. Such an observation is significant mainly because it helps us to begin reading the images associated with the TBC competition as being pieces of a larger marketing strategy that utilizes certain visual cues—e.g., pictures of vegetation; the color green—to connect urban park design and green infrastructure with more universal notions of environmentalism, sustainability, and the return of ‘nature’ to the city.

As noted above, in each of the proposals for the TBC competition the Town Branch Commons was represented first and foremost as a broad strip of ‘green’ running through the center of downtown. While this was accomplished in some proposals by actually creating new green space within the urban fabric of the city, the most common strategy employed by each of the firms for adding “green” to the city was through the placement of *street trees*. Universally represented by green circles on urban masterplans, rows of densely placed street trees can have the visual effect of completely ‘filling in’ an urban corridor with green (on the masterplan itself), regardless of whether there are in fact parks or other green spaces beneath the trees (see **Figure 5.11**). In this way, most—if not all—

**Figure 5.9:** Inside Outside TBC Rendering: Commons Green



**Source:** Inside Outside / Lexington Downtown Development Authority.

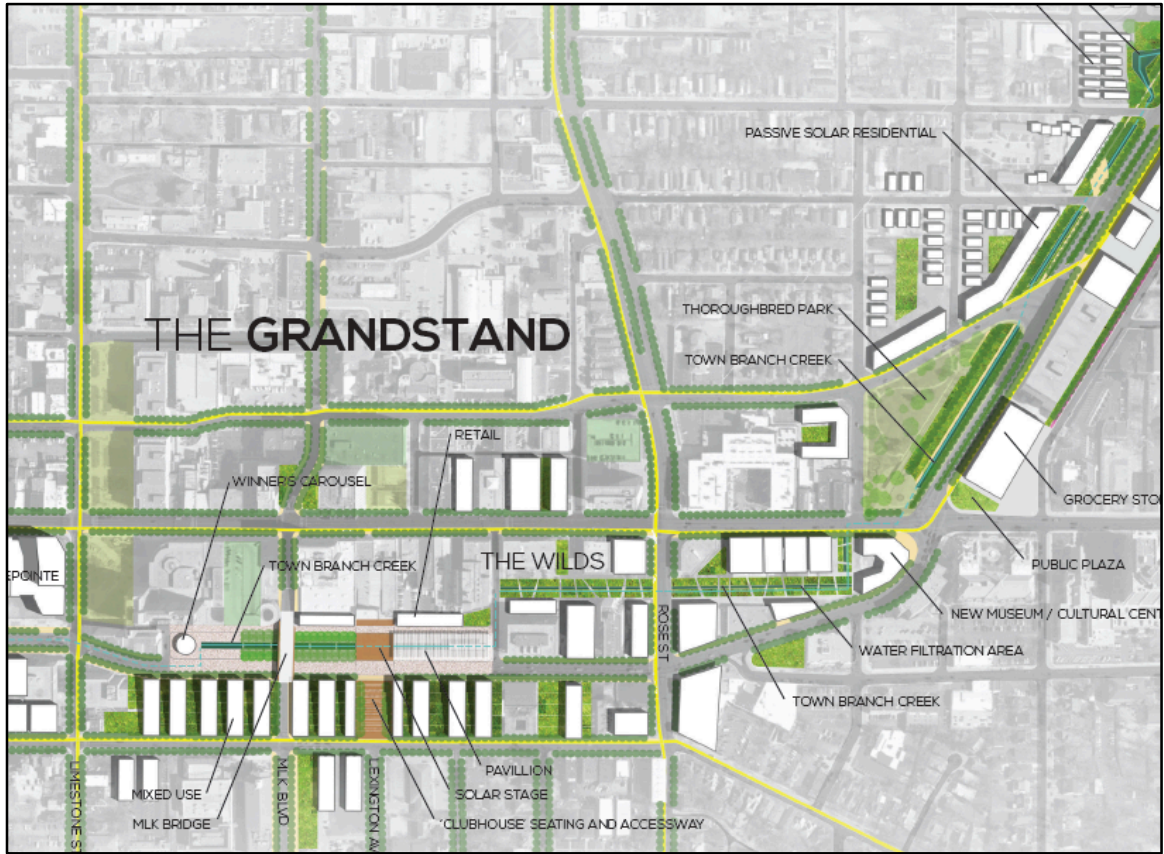
**Figure 5.10:** Inside Outside TBC Rendering: Downtown



**Source:** Inside Outside / Lexington Downtown Development Authority.



**Figure 5.11: Coen Partners TBC Masterplan**



**Source:** Coen Partners / Lexington Downtown Development Authority.

of the masterplan images associated with the TBC competition utilize street trees in such a way as to (whether intentionally or unintentionally) essentially *overrepresent* the amount of useable green space (e.g., parks, bioswales, etc.) in that firm’s plan for the Town Branch Commons system. Again, the point here is not to critique the plans’ lack of actual greenspace—though this certainly deserves to be assessed—but rather to shed light on the disparity between image and reality, as argued above.

While some of these discrepancies between the graphic representations of the TBC and what might ultimately be developed can rightly be blamed on the fact that the firms participating in the competition were asked only to create *conceptual* designs and masterplans (LDDA RFQ, 2012b), the use of those graphics to promote the idea of the Town Branch Commons to the public nevertheless has the potential to produce certain expectations regarding any realized outcomes of the TBC competition. As a result, it is necessary to consider each of the images associated with the TBC competition as possessing the power to do real work—both in the public’s mind and in shaping future planning and policy decisions within the city.

### *5.6: Design Adds Value to the Commons*

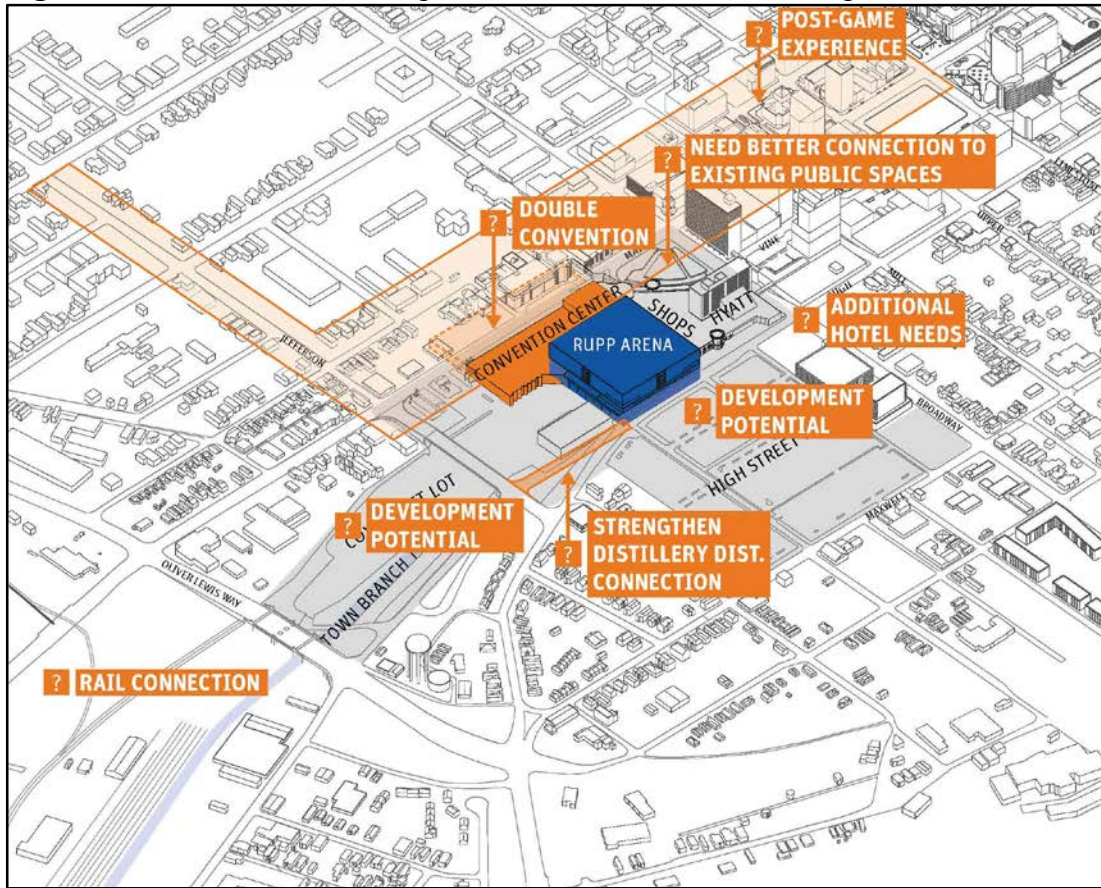
In addition to promoting the environmental sustainability of the park through the deployment of “green” as a visual strategy and the overrepresentation of green space through the use of street trees, each of the TBC competition entries also made numerous references—both visual and written—to the various ways that the Town Branch Commons project would simultaneously incorporate, and encourage new private development projects in the city’s central business district.

A similar focus on private development was also an integral component of the original RAAED masterplan created by Space Group in 2012 that, as noted previously, was described by its authors as being “a framework for future development, not a prescribed building plan” (p.56). Accordingly, the masterplan document indicated by map (**Figure 5.12**) the locations of the RAAED area that had the highest capacity for future development:

Many opportunities are present within the RAAED site. The two large parking lots are essentially blank slates with development potential. That, coupled with several large-scale programmatic needs—Convention Center expansion/ relocation, additional hotel(s), more housing and office spaces, and a new retail strategy for the downtown core—results in a perfectly primed development area. (RAAED Masterplan, 2012, p.30)

In addition to such descriptions, the RAAED masterplan also included numerous visual representations indicating what the new development might potentially look like and where it might be located. Specifically, the cover image for the masterplan document (**Figure 5.4**) discussed in the beginning of this chapter is worthy of discussion given both its substantial circulation in the public realm (through various press releases and newspaper write-ups) as well as its obvious influence on each of the masterplans submitted for the TBC competition (as indicated by their collective incorporation of a large ‘central park’ area to the west of the Rupp Arena district despite this not being explicitly called for in the RFQ). As noted above, the large green space featured in that image (which included a sizeable portion of a day-lit Town Branch Creek) served not only as a proposed focal point for pedestrian activity on the city’s west side, but also as a backdrop for new zones of private development, most noticeably in the areas immediately southwest of Rupp Arena

**Figure 5.12: Downtown Development Potential. RAAED Masterplan. 2012.**



**Source:** Space Group Architects, 2012a.



(currently a parking lot) and the High Street corridor overlooking the future “central park”. It is useful to note here that while the first of these development zones incorporated high density, mixed-use development interventions, the second zone overlooking the proposed park was instead represented by smaller-scale, single- or dual-family housing. While this will be elaborated upon more in the following chapter, for now it is enough to simply make note of the connection between the RAAED Masterplan’s central park space and these zones of proposed private development.

However, the RAAED masterplan is not alone in its depiction of the Town Branch Commons network as being a catalyst for new development opportunities. Rather, each of the TBC Master Plan competition submissions include visual representations of new development along the TBC corridor. While some of the proposals depict new development as being dispersed throughout the downtown area (**Figure 5.4**), they all include heavy development in the areas surrounding the TBC’s central park (**Figures 5.4, 5.9**). While such images are only predictions of what development could potentially occur along the TBC and thus lack any concrete details or designs, they are nonetheless indicative of the economic and developmental goals behind the TBC initiative, especially when they are considered together with the written narratives accompanying each firm’s proposal, as showcased by the following excerpts from the design narrative written by SCAPE (emphasis added):

Our plan’s approach to materials enlivens and synthesizes the landscape of Vine street along its length, culminating in a central plaza at Rupp Arena and the Falls through not only physical connection and landscape spaces, but by integrating night-time lighting and a dynamic projections on the “Hollows” side of Rupp, promoting a greater sense of security, more feet on the street during evening hours, and ultimately *increased economic activity and vitality*. An *investment* in the design and materiality of Town Branch will *unlock value along its edges*. (SCAPE TBC Narrative, 2013, p.3)

*New development sites, including Center Pointe and the southern parcel of Phoenix Park, are designed to connect to and activate the Greenway, while helping fund its development through public-private partnerships. (SCAPE TBC Narrative, 2013, p.3)*

*Greater numbers of pedestrians will move through the downtown district during longer periods of the day and evening, which translates into increased economic activity, more profitable businesses, and over time, higher achievable rents and higher property values. (SCAPE TBC Narrative, 2013, p.3)*

*New water-based public spaces are strategically carved into Lexington's emerging arts and entertainment district, catalyzing development of vacant sites downtown and expanding amenities for urban living. (SCAPE TBC Narrative, 2013, p.3)*

The language of such descriptions, including talk of funding the park through public-private partnerships, “unlocking” value and increased economic activity, bringing about higher rents and higher property values, and “catalyzing” the development of vacant sites downtown, is highly characteristic of local boosters and Molotch’s growth machine logic within the present entrepreneurial moment—a moment when even the creation of urban parks, once seen primarily as a public good provided by a municipal government for the benefit of its citizens, are unquestioningly required to contribute to an overarching agenda of economic growth. In this regard, however, SCAPE’s narrative is far from being alone in its use of such economic-oriented language; rather, each of the other four firms involved in the TBC competition—some more than others—use similar expressions to articulate what effects their proposals would have on increasing the city’s potential for future economic development (emphasis added):

**Civitas:** *“Economic, cultural, entertainment and recreational destinations can drive downtown growth, and key investments in the public realm can create synergies and partnerships with other developments” (Civitas TBC Narrative, 2013, p.4).*

**Coen Partners:** “*Infill development opportunities* for the creation of a cultural core are abundant, where *adjacency of resources* increases their functionality and success... “Let It Grow” recognizes the flows of energy that cross through the Commons every day: the stream of *entrepreneurship* from job-places; ideas from education institutions and citizens; performance from artists and athletes; and flux of cars and people into and out of the downtown core” (Coen Partners TBC Narrative, 2013, p.2).

**Inside Outside:** “Lexington is a rich, cultural city, with emphasis in sport, leisure, and creative culture from Keeneland to UK basketball... We have positioned the park to unify the downtown, enhance the qualities that define the city and speak its identity... This project of remaking the city center is the ultimate act of creativity and *smart economic innovation*” (Inside Outside TBC Narrative, 2013, p.3).

**JDS:** “The appearance and feel of downtown and the quality of its public realm and building stock can have a significant effect on choice decisions made by *prospective and existing businesses, residents, students and visitors*. While hard to quantify in terms of a precise *return on investment*, downtown enhancements programs elsewhere nationally that have focused on the quality of the public realm experience have demonstrated their *value* in terms of *improving the performance, competitiveness and economic vitality* of these urban centers” (JDS TBC Narrative, 2013, p.3).

The last of these excerpts is particularly telling in its focus on prospective businesses, residents, students and visitors; (economic) competitiveness; and the (economic) success of other downtown enhancement programs across the country. Such narratives unquestionably tie the TBC competition and the project itself to a larger practice involving the mobility—and, ultimately, the transferability—of certain policy prescriptions from one (or several) location(s) to another through a process of generalization and replication (or, at least, recognition) that tends to call attention to highly successful urban interventions and subsequently attempts to replicate their successes elsewhere (McCann 2013).

### *5.7: The Search for a Model Park*

With this in mind, the resemblance of the various TBC proposals to the New York High Line project mentioned above is unsurprising given that park's level of publicity in various national and international press outlets and the widespread public interest in the project at the time. This was due in large part to fact that 'section 2' of the High Line had only recently been opened to the public (June 2011) and the third and final section was just beginning to undergo construction (April-September 2012) at the same time as the Town Branch Commons RFQ was being released ([thehighline.org](http://thehighline.org)). In fact, the High Line project was one of several case studies drawn upon by the LDDA both in its preliminary research on the TBC project and in its promotion of the idea to the LFUCG and the public. Specifically, the LDDA focused on the economic benefits that a park such as the High Line could produce, noting that "urban parks can act as catalysts for community development and enhancement and are essential in transforming and enriching cities" (LDDA Case Studies Presentation). According to the LDDA's presentation on the economic effects of the High Line,

- Within 5 years of construction starting, 30 new projects had been built or were underway in the area around the High Line, generating \$2 billion in private investment.
- The park has become a draw for start-ups and creative companies.
- Between 2003 and 2011 property values near the park increased 103%.
- More than 2,500 new residential units and 1,000 hotel rooms were added.
- 500,000 square feet of office and gallery space developed.
- Over 12,000 jobs were added in the area around the park.
- There were 3.7 million visitors to the park in 2011 alone, with half of them living in New York.

In addition to the High Line, the LDDA also researched and provided similar economic data about other well-known urban park case studies, including (LDDA Case Studies Presentation):

- **The Saw Mill River** (Yonkers, NY)
- **The Beltline** (Atlanta, GA)
- **Discovery Green** (Dallas, TX)
- **Falls Park** (Greenville, SC)

The common theme that the LDDA used to link these examples of urban parks together was their recognized ability to promote downtown redevelopment. While the imagery associated with each park in the LDDA presentation was that of lush green spaces populated by crowds of people, the data itself focused on the economic potential of developing such urban parks and, in particular, their capacity to attract and leverage the investment of private capital. Such a recognition of the economic benefits of urban parks, and the High Line in particular, in other cities was later echoed by Eblen writing in the Herald Leader:

The compelling argument for Town Branch Commons is not esthetic, but economic. This sort of urban public space has been an effective way to attract people and investment dollars to cities of all sizes, from Seoul, South Korea to Yonkers, N.Y... New York's High Line project turned an abandoned elevated rail line into a linear park that has transformed a once-decaying section of lower Manhattan. Despite huge cost overruns, the Millennium Park that Chicago built over an urban rail yard has more than paid for itself with the private development it has attracted. (Eblen 2013a)

Eblen goes on to describe the success of several projects similar to the TBC that he and other members of the Lexington community were able to witness firsthand during recent trips to other US cities sponsored by Lexington's chamber of commerce:

People who have attended recent Commerce Lexington trips have seen [such park projects] work in Greenville, SC, where a long-neglected riverbank became Falls Park; and in San Antonio, where a once-buried

stream similar to Town Branch became the Riverwalk, now Texas' second-largest tourist attraction after the Alamo. (Eblen 2013a)

The trips to Greenville and San Antonio that Eblen references were part of Commerce Lexington's annual "Leadership Visit" in which the city's top "business, education, government and community leaders" —i.e., the growth machine—are invited to travel as a group to a chosen location each year in order to "study other cities and to apply the best of what they see and hear to the Bluegrass Region" (commercelexington.com). It is important to note that the two cities that Eblen mentions—each of which features a prominent urban waterway redevelopment project—were the focus of the Leadership Visits that took place in the two years immediately preceding the TBC competition, with the visit to Greenville occurring in 2011 and the visit to San Antonio in 2012. In each of these instances, waterway-centered redevelopment was a prominent focus of the Leadership Visit itself, as demonstrated by Commerce Lexington's literature on each of the two destination cities:

**Greenville:** A downtown visit would not be complete without a visit to Falls Park! Stop by to discover the centerpiece of the City's RiverWalk park system and to view the spectacular river falls from the sweeping Liberty Bridge, a world-class pedestrian bridge that spans 355 feet across the falls. The \$13 million project includes beautiful public gardens and two amphitheatres for gatherings and events... A partnership between the City of Greenville and the Carolina Foothills Garden Club made the park possible in 2004. Numerous new businesses have opened as a result of the park and revitalization of the river area. (Commerce Lexington, 2011a, p.6)

**San Antonio:** With pedestrian traffic assured by the new hotels, River Walk development increased after HemisFair to the point that too much success grew into an issue... Construction of a lock in 2009 enabled boats to continue along a newly landscaped 1.3 mile stretch of the San Antonio River to open to the north. Construction got under way to the south to erase the effects of a concrete flood control channel and return the river to a natural state. Hike-and-bike trails reaching to the most distant of the city's five Spanish missions will incorporate the River Walk into what is becoming an overall 13-mile linear park—unique in the nation—to be completed in 2013. (Commerce Lexington, 2012a, p.4)

The importance of the annual Leadership Visits, including those to Greenville and San Antonio, is evident in Commerce Lexington's description of the various impacts that the yearly visits have helped to produce:

Over the years, the Leadership Visits have resulted in a variety of direct impacts on Lexington, such as the creation of Commerce Lexington's minority business development division and its Access Loan Program, the Fayette Education Foundation, LFUCG's Herbie and Rosie garbage and recycling programs, downtown pedways, Coldstream Research Park, Thursday Night Live, and more. (*Impact*, [commercelexington.com](http://commercelexington.com))

Commerce Lexington's website also notes that the group's 1971 trip to Jacksonville, FL was partially responsible for the merging of the Lexington and Fayette County governments into the Lexington Fayette County Urban Government in 1974, which was the first merged city-county government in the state of Kentucky (Commerce Lexington, *Impact*). In light of these observed impacts, the Leadership Visits should be viewed as an important tool used by the members of the local growth coalition for researching the urban policies and practices of other successful US cities in order to replicate in some form those same ideas and successes.

At the conclusion of the visit to Greenville, the trip participants from Lexington were split into groups and asked to discuss and answer several questions based on their visit (Commerce Lexington, 2011b, p.2):

1. List 3 things that you discovered about HOW Greenville has been successful.
2. What attitudes and aptitudes do we, as a community, need to embrace to reach our potential?
3. What is the "coolest" thing you saw in Greenville?

The answers to these questions are useful for understanding potential outcomes of the Leadership Visit on urban governance and policy in Lexington and, more importantly, the TBC project. Specifically, 8 out of 12 groups mentioned the importance of public-private

partnerships, either in response to question **1** or **2** above (Commerce Lexington, 2011b, pp.4-15). Additionally, each group made at least some reference to Greenville’s parks, greenspace, trees, pedestrian bridge, or water features when answering question **3**, indicating a noticeable interest in the presence of both greenspace and pedestrian-oriented public spaces downtown (Commerce Lexington, 2011b, pp.4-15). From these answers, it can be argued that two outcomes of the Leadership Visit to Greenville were an interest in pursuing public-private partnerships and a heightened awareness of the importance of downtown public/green space. A similar follow-up was conducted with the participants of the 2012 Leadership Visit to San Antonio, with individual groups tasked with thinking about and answering questions on four specific themes, which included (Commerce Lexington, 2012a):

1. Public Private Partnerships – Developing a More Lively Downtown Business Climate (4 groups).
2. Public Private Partnerships – Rupp Arena District (4 groups).
3. Philanthropy, Arts & Culture (2 groups).
4. Regional Economic Development (3 groups).

The names of themes **1** and **2** alone point to the significant focus on the role of public-private partnerships in downtown redevelopment during the 2012 Leadership Visit. Theme number **3**, *Philanthropy, Arts, & Culture*, also included a prioritization of securing private funds for public use, as each of the two groups specifically noted the need for “entrepreneurial spirit” (Commerce Lexington, 2012a, p. 1). Furthermore, several groups’ responses mention the importance of pursuing the Town Branch Commons project—which had only been introduced six months before the June 2012 visit to San Antonio—for increasing the livability of downtown Lexington:



“Water-hard to do, but everyone wants something.” (Commerce Lexington, 2012a, p. 1)

“Water feature-open the creek.” (Commerce Lexington, 2012a, p.1)

“Create the water feature.” (Commerce Lexington, 2012a, p.1)

Together, the Commerce Lexington Leadership Visits to Greenville and San Antonio can be viewed as helping to orient conversations between Lexington’s elite and other members of the local growth coalition around issues of urban greenspace, downtown water features, public-private partnerships, and other means of financing entrepreneurial redevelopment, as well as—at least in regard to the 2012 Leadership Visit—the necessity of pursuing the TBC project in an effort to replicate the successes of downtown Greenville and San Antonio. The 2011 and 2012 Leadership visits, as well as the follow-up Q&As with trip participants, also indicate a conscious linking together of urban greenspace and water-based development—and thus by extension the TBC project—with the need for attracting and leveraging private capital in order to fund such downtown redevelopment initiatives. The final section of this chapter will examine the various funding strategies envisioned for governing and financing the Town Branch Commons project as well as the discourses used to promote public support of, as well as private investment in, the project.

### *5.8: Governing, Financing, and Operating the Town Branch Commons*

In early 2014, the LDDA engaged the consulting firm of 21st Century Parks to collaborate on a strategic masterplan for the Town Branch Commons Park system. The Louisville, Kentucky-based firm was then in the midst of completing development of The Parklands of Floyds Fork, a \$120 million, 26-mile linear public/private park project that, at over 4,000 acres, was “the largest public parks project currently underway in the nation”

(21st Century Parks, 2015, p.39). According to 21st Century Parks, their masterplan for the Town Branch Commons would help to:

Lay the foundations for a world-class planning, design, and construction project that will create both a core central park and connective linear park system that extends through the heart of downtown Lexington, linking the eastern and western edges of the city, and bringing the classic bluegrass landscape into the heart of Lexington. (21st Century Parks, 2015, p.3)

As part of this effort, 21st Century Parks organized a work session with members of the Town Branch Commons leadership team to discuss ideas related to park governance and financial sustainability. During this meeting 21st Century Park staff briefed the TBC team on the most common strategies for park management (21st Century Parks, 2015, p.32):

1. Single-Agency public operation
2. Multi-Agency/MOU (memorandum of understanding)
3. Public/Private non-profit conservancy
4. Private

Together, the TBC team and the staff of 21st Century Parks analyzed the various strengths and weaknesses of each governance model as they pertained to the TBC project and to the greater Lexington community (21st Century Parks, 2015, p.32). While at the time of this writing a final governance model for the Town Branch Commons project has yet to be publically announced, it was the recommendation of the 21st Century Parks Strategic Master Plan that the city “should begin incubating a Non-Profit Conservancy to manage and maintain the park upon completion,” indicating its preference for the non-profit conservancy model over the multi-agency/MOU option (21st Century Parks, 2015, p.5).

Another recommendation made by 21st Century Parks in the Strategic Master Plan was that “the Mayor, the Urban County Council, and the Leadership Council [of the TBC] pledge to pursue a \$75 million funding target for the design, construction and completion

of the park system, including underwriting the first ten years of park operating expenses” (21st Century Parks, 2015, p.5), which—when combined with the firm’s recommendation for utilizing a non-profit conservancy model of park governance—indicates that while the TBC park system might be governed and controlled by a private entity, it will still be reliant upon the city for long-term support. This sentiment is echoed elsewhere in the Strategic Master Plan, which notes in its budget modelling an assumption that “the park is operated under the nonprofit conservancy model with a significant level of partnership support from city agencies and community stakeholders,” including “storm-water management, mowing, and basic core maintenance” provided by the city (21st Century Parks, 2015, p.21). This plan for the park to rely on a mixture of public and private funding and support has been confirmed by Lexington’s mayor Jim Gray—most recently in his 2016 State of the City address, in which he began to outline the funding breakdown of the park project:

It will be another public-private partnership, where we will leverage private dollars to build and maintain one of the city’s most significant civic projects. And we will appoint the Town Branch Task Force to bridge the gap between public infrastructure and private investment, creating a conservancy to ensure the park is properly maintained. (Gray 2016, p.9)

As indicated by Gray, public funds for the TBC project would largely be earmarked for infrastructure development along the proposed route of the Commons, while private funding would be used to create the parks and greenspaces featured in the masterplan by SCAPE, including the large Town Branch Park to the west of Rupp Arena. In his Herald Leader article about the economic benefits of urban parks and the influence of the Commerce Lexington trips to Greenville and San Antonio mentioned above, Eblen also argued for the need for private investment in the Town Branch Commons, noting that the project “will require public money and even more private money,” and pointed out the success of private investment in other urban park projects similar to Lexington’s TBC:

The kind of public-private partnership envisioned with Town Branch Commons is under way in Atlanta, which is turning an abandoned rail line around the city into 1,300 acres of parks and 33 miles of trails, and in Louisville, which has raised more than \$60 million in private money for the 21st Century Parks project that is creating 4,000 acres of linear parkland and 100 miles of trails around that city. (Eblen 2013a)

Such a public/private approach was also endorsed by the Lexington Herald Leader Editorial Board in a 2015 editorial, in which it noted:

Lexington is close to creating a public-private partnership to build and maintain a park through downtown that links to the suburbs. Cities from Louisville and Indianapolis to New York and Chicago have used this approach to revive neglected urban parks—Central Park in New York is a prime example—and to build iconic new parks such as Chicago's Millennium Park and the High Line in Manhattan... The idea has arisen in Lexington as a way to help fund the proposed Town Branch Commons linear park, connecting smaller ones, through the city's urban core. A public partnership—including \$10 million from the city, a \$13 million federal grant and \$1 million from LexTran—would build the infrastructure while the foundation would raise money to build, equip and maintain the parks. (Herald Leader Editorial Board, 2015)

To date, the city has received over \$20 million in federal and state grants to help fund the infrastructural components of the TBC project (Gray 2017, p.8). The largest portion of this amount—\$14.1 million—was in the form of a federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER, grant that the city received in 2016 after it failed to do so the previous year (Musgrave 2016b). While the city had initially asked for \$15.9 million in federal funding, it will make up the difference—approximately \$1.8 million—from its own municipal funds in the 2018 fiscal year (Musgrave 2016b). According to the grant application, funds from the TIGER grant are to be used for general infrastructure improvements along the TBC corridor and, more specifically, for completing the last section of the larger Town Branch Trail bikeway (Chapter 4, Section 4.4) and connect it to another regional bike trail—The Legacy Trail—to the north, a project that the city estimated would cost nearly \$20 million:

The Town Branch Commons Corridor (TBCC) is an innovative multimodal greenway that provides the last missing segments needed to join two existing trail systems, the Legacy Trail and Town Branch Trail, into one integrated region-wide network of bike and pedestrian trails. The existing trails are the result of a series of sustained incremental investments made by a state/local/non-profit partnership committed to establishing a region-wide network of paths and trails that are separated from vehicular traffic to serve bike and pedestrian travelers. TBCC seeks to leverage these important partnerships to transform Lexington's existing auto-centric transportation network into several distinct and connected multi-modal transportation zones that unite the city. Once complete, the network will connect Lexington's urban core and Downtown Transit Center to the rural Bluegrass Region that is at the heart of Lexington's cultural identity and helps anchor the local economy. (TIGER 2016: Town Branch Commons Corridor, p.1)

As part of its acceptance of the TIGER funds, the city must also provide a 20 percent match of the \$14.1 million awarded by the Federal Department of Transportation. This amount, approximately \$3.5 million, will come from bond revenue as approved by the Urban County Council (Gooding 2016, p.1). Beyond the \$14.1 million provided by the 2016 TIGER grant, the city has also received approximately \$7 million in other state and federal transportation grants and has set aside an additional \$10 million in city bond money to fund the remaining infrastructural components of the TBC project (Musgrave, 2016b).

However, while the securing of public funds for the TBC project is on schedule, private fundraising for the Town Branch Commons Park and other greenspace improvements associated with SCAPE's masterplan have proved elusive. In September 2015, the LFUCG Urban County Council voted 13-1 to approve resolution R-553-2015:

A Resolution authorizing the Mayor, on behalf of the Urban County Government, to execute a Memorandum of Agreement with the Blue Grass Community Foundation for services related to the provision of fundraising for The Town Branch Commons Project, at a cost not to exceed \$180,000. (LFUCG Urban County Council Minutes, September 2015, p.13)

According to documentation provided at the council meeting, the responsibilities of the Blue Grass Community Foundation (BGCF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, would

include spearheading the private fundraising initiative for the TBC project as well as helping to plan the long-term financing and governing of the TBC park system:

The work of the Community foundation will initially be spent developing a robust fundraising effort and then managing the implementation. The Community Foundation will engage the community in these activities at the appropriate stage of development. After the fundraising effort is implemented, the Community Foundation will finalize a plan for governance, sustainable fundraising infrastructure and strategies, and maintenance and operation of the Commons, while broadening the effort by engaging the public in on-going fundraising efforts. The Community Foundations work will be aimed at assisting in the development of a significant capital improvement, a sustainable infrastructure for Town Branch Commons and a new model for collaborative fundraising. (LFUCG, 2015a, p.1)

Initially, the city charged the BGCF with raising approximately \$50 million in private funds for the TBC project, with \$30 million earmarked for constructing the Town Branch Commons Park, \$8 million for operating expenses for the first 5 years, and \$12 million for establishing an endowment for funding park operations and maintenance beyond the 5-year mark (Trek Advancement, 2016, p.7). However, in accordance with a fundraising opportunity assessment conducted by Trek Investment—which had been contracted by the BGCF for the purpose of conducting such a study—this goal was reduced by \$19 million to a total of \$31 million in 2016 based on a more accurate forecast of the private funding opportunities available (Musgrave 2016c; Trek Advancement, 2016, p.3). To establish this number, Trek Investment worked with the BGCF staff to facilitate 86 individual interviews regarding the feasibility of private fundraising. According to the firm’s report, a majority of interview participants were highly favorable toward funding the project (Trek Advancement, 2016, p.3):

- The majority of participants felt the Project was consistent with their vision for Lexington, and many felt the project had significant opportunity to boost economic development.

- 75% ranked giving to the Project as a “medium” to “high” priority in relation to their personal philanthropic goals.
- 78% identified a “medium” to “high” likelihood they will financially contribute to the project.

In fact, from the interviewed participants alone—which included representatives of corporate firms as well as private individuals—Trek Advancement was able to identify \$12,311,000 in potential gifts, an amount representing approximately 40% of the total campaign goal of \$31 million (Trek Advancement, 2016, p.10). A breakdown of these private donations, which included potential gifts ranging from \$100 to \$3,000,000 and included “52 individuals indicating gift capacity of \$10,000 or more over a five-year period” (Trek Advancement, 2016, pp.10-11), can be seen in **Appendix B**.

Yet, as the Herald Leader noted as recently as June 2016, the BGCF has so far failed to raise any of the \$31 million in private funds needed for the development of the Town Branch Commons Park and for its future operation and endowment, despite receiving \$180,000 from the LFUCG in both 2015 and 2016 for such efforts (Musgrave 2016a). According to BGCF officials, the absence of private fundraising so far results from the lack of initial financial investment in the project by its public stakeholders, including LFUCG:

Because the [TBC] project is still in its planning stages, donors wanted to see more assurances the ambitious project was moving forward and would be appropriately managed before giving money, said Allison Lankford, senior vice president and general counsel for the [Blue Grass Community] Foundation. “We got a lot of feedback that more needed to be in place before they were ready to commit,” Lankford said. (Musgrave 2016a)

However, the Herald Leader Editorial Board has suggested in an editorial entitled *Donors’ turn to invest in city commons* [sic], such concerns should begin to diminish now that the city has secured the more than \$20 million in state and federal infrastructure grants noted above (Herald Leader Editorial Board, 2016). As the Editorial Board went on to argue,

private funding should be seen as a necessary response to the public funding that the TBC project has received so-far:

Funding for [the Town Branch and Legacy] trails has been pieced together through state, federal and local grants and loans and tremendous volunteer effort over more than a decade. Now it's time for private donors to step up. Private contributions will be key to the long-term success of Town Branch Trail and Commons and the amenities along the way... Great cities invest in ambitious public works. Lexington and U.S. taxpayers have invested in this great project, providing the assurance private donors needed to join them. (Lexington Herald-Leader, 2016)

However, as of this writing, neither the BGCF nor the LFUCG has released updated information about private fundraising efforts for funding the Town Branch Commons Park system. According to the 5-year timeline for the private capital campaign laid out by Trek Investment (Trek Advancement, 2016, p.14), 2016 was to be primarily focused on laying the groundwork for future fundraising efforts, including:

- Finalizing the campaign plan, budget, and timeline
- Recruiting and training the Fund's Advisory Board
- Establishing naming levels and donor recognition and stewardship protocols
- Beginning the solicitation of key leadership roles

Trek Investment recommended that in year one (2017) of the campaign, BGCF should secure "100% financial participation" from the Fund's advisory board and begin "cultivating" the top-50 potential donors (Trek Advancement, 2016, p.14). Together, Trek Investment and BGCF agreed upon a target number of 566 private donors based on the goal of \$31 million for the TBC campaign:

Having a robust pool of individual prospects for any campaign is critical. Campaigns are also governed by the 80-20 rule where 80 percent of the campaign goal will come from 20 percent of the available donors in the



pool... Because of this concentration of opportunity within the top tier of the prospect pool, the Advisory Board must focus its early investment of time, energy, and resources on the top 20 percent of potential donors. In other words, significant effort must be put into qualifying approximately 566 prospects in order to secure roughly 136 gifts to bring in 80 percent of the dollar goal. (Trek Advancement, 2016, pp.10-11)

The campaign timeline calls for the “cultivation and solicitation” of these 566 prospective donors beginning in 2018 and continuing into 2019, with a goal of raising 60% of the campaign total—or \$18,600,000—by the end of that year (Trek Advancement, 2016, p.14). Subsequently, the “public phase” of the capital campaign would begin in 2020 with the goal of securing the remaining 40% (\$12,400,000) by the end of 2021:

The public announcement of the campaign happens only when three milestones are reached: 1) full completion of planning functions; 2) 100 percent Advisory Board participation; and 3) 60 percent of the dollar goal is obtained. It is acknowledged that there already exists a certain amount of public interest in the Project. In this case, the use of the term “public phase” of the campaign refers to an orchestrated effort to draw public attention to the Project and actively solicit donations from any and all interested parties. (Trek Advancement, 2016, pp.13-14)

However, as was noted above, neither the Blue Grass Community Foundation nor the LFUCG has yet to release any updated information about the current status of private fundraising efforts for funding the Town Branch Commons park system.

One element of the future park’s funding strategy that has been clear since the original masterplan competition, however, is an interest in having the TBC park system itself generate a portion of the revenue necessary for its own operation and upkeep. Part of this strategy of self-sufficiency would rely upon the incorporation of revenue-generating features into the park system. As SCAPE, noting the linear nature of the proposed park, explained in its competition narrative:

The design of [the park] accommodates opportunities to imbed revenue-generating concessions like a café, bike rental shop that can vary by season,

time of day, special event, and location. These concessions can provide new sources of sustained revenue to support appropriate levels of maintenance, operations, and capital replacement for the park's long-term success. (SCAPE, 2012, p. 3)

This strategy of financial entrepreneurialism was later echoed by 21st Century Parks in its Strategic Master Plan, where it noted the many opportunities available for funding the park system, including “earned income” and “gating fees”:

There are many ways to fund the operations of a park. Advertising revenue, fees, sales or property tax levy, government general funds or agency funds, donations, earned income, memberships, gating fees, land leases, outsourcing of costs to partners and many more ways should all be considered as one of the biggest challenges after construction is determining and preserving the funding of the annual operations. (21<sup>st</sup> Century Parks, RFP Response, 2014, pp.5-6)

The necessity of revenue generation and management was also taken into account as a part of 21st Century Parks' creation of a “conceptual 5-year operations budget” for the TBC.

As the Strategic Master Plan argues,

High quality park services require not only high quality design, but also professional management. Additionally, the non-profit conservancy model will have expenses in areas the public sector does not need to-budget (e.g. enhanced risk management, fundraising, donor relations, in-park revenue development, lifespan replacement). (21st Century Parks, 2015, p.21)

According to 21st Century Parks' conceptual budget, total operating expenses for the TBC park system were estimated to cost \$1 million annually. While the report suggested that \$500,000 of this would initially come from the city for several years before eventually being sourced from the park's endowment fund and that an additional \$250,000 would be raised through annual capital campaigns and membership drives, the remaining \$250,000 would be derived from “in-park revenue” sources, with most coming from “events” and other programming (21st Century Parks, 2015, p.22). As the report notes elsewhere, it is assumed that “most [of this] event/programming is revenue-based and requires very little

in the way of support from the [leadership] organization” (21st Century Parks, 2015, p.21). These two factors—the park’s reliance on wealthy donors for financial support and the proposed use of revenue-generating features to support future operating expenses—are characteristic of the entrepreneurial nature of both the development process surrounding the TBC and the proposed park itself, as has been discussed throughout the present chapter. More specific to the concerns of this project, however, is the connection between this tendency towards entrepreneurialism and the TBC project’s use of a discourse of environmental sustainability to promote the project—both to potential funders and to the general public.

#### *5.9: The Town Branch Commons Today*

The primary difficulty in researching these questions is, at present, the relative lack of progress—in regards to both design and construction—on completing the project. As of this writing, a project management consultant—AECOM—has been selected by the LDDA and LFUCG to oversee the TBC project and take responsibility for its eventual completion (Fortune 2016), though no announcements about AECOM’s selection or its current progress on the project have been released by the LFUCG or the LDDA. According to AECOM’s response “package” to the city’s request for proposals (RFP) for project management services,

AECOM is one of the world’s premier full service firms offering environmental, architecture, engineering, construction, operations and maintenance services. [They] provide single source responsibility and fully integrated service delivery that takes projects from initial investigation through construction and operations management. (AECOM, 2015, p.5)

The response package also includes numerous examples of AECOM’s previous work, including several nationally recognized projects such as Millennium Park in Chicago, Forest Park in St. Louis, and Liberty Park at the World Trade Center Memorial in New York City (AECOM, 2015). More locally, AECOM was also the project management firm responsible for the completion of the new \$23 million headquarters for LexTran (i.e., the Lexington Transit Authority) in late 2016 (AECOM, 2015). According the LFUCG’s RFP document, the selected project management consultant—AECOM—will:

Function as an extension of and supplement to the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government staff by providing specialized management expertise as required to successfully complete the development and implementation of the Town Branch Commons projects... [Which] consist of four (4) complementary and integrated design and construction packages with a combined total implementation cost of approximately \$55,000,000, consisting of \$25,000,000 for the transportation infrastructure and \$30,000,000 for park construction. (LFUCG, 2015b, p.35)

As noted in the RFP, the projects that make up the TBC, and which AECOM will be responsible for, are as follows (LFUCG, 2015b, p.35):

1. **Town Branch Commons Corridor Project**, which consists of the transportation infrastructure components of the overall project. The infrastructure components consist of separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities, sustainable stormwater infrastructure, enhanced pedestrian crossings, intersection safety improvements and transit center improvements.
2. **Town Branch Commons – Town Branch Park project**, which consists of the transformation of a surface parking lot into a large, world-class public park space at the western edge of the project.
3. **Town Branch Commons – Vine Street Park project**, which consists of the transformation of a surface parking lot into a linear public park along Vine Street situated across from the Transit Center.
4. **Town Branch Commons – Existing Parks upgrade project**, which consists of reinvestment and upgrades to five (5) existing parks along the Corridor (Triangle Park, Phoenix Park, Thoroughbred Park, Charles Young Park, and the Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden).

While few details have been made public regarding the current state of these individual projects, a scope of work (SOW) agreement between AECOM and the LFUCG reveals that SCAPE will remain involved in the project as a landscape architecture and urban design consultant (AECOM, 2016). Specifically, SCAPE will be responsible for the design of the TBC Corridor Project masterplan as well as producing detailed designs for both the Town Branch- and Vine Street Park projects. While no specifics have been given regarding the park projects, renderings of the TBC Corridor Project have been made public and were presented on in person by SCAPE and the LFUCG during a March, 2017 public meeting (Musgrave 2017). Construction of the 3.2-mile corridor project—which will include the addition of bike lanes, street trees, and several water features and bioswales as well as improvements to pedestrian walkways and crossings is set to begin in 2017, with the bulk of the work taking place in 2018 and 2019 and with a completion date of 2020 (Musgrave, 2017). Though, with the exception of Eblen’s note that “the Town Branch Fund, a private fundraising effort led by businesswoman Ann Bakhaus, is working to raise \$31 million more to create two parks and amenities along the commons” (Eblen 2017b), no new information has been released on the two park projects outlined above or in regards to the planned improvements of the downtown area’s existing parks.

However, as noted in the SOW, one of the goals of the TBC Corridor Project to be carried out by AECOM is to “ensure that the design vision established during the Town Branch Commons Competition and the subsequent Feasibility Study is maintained and implemented within the block-by-block Corridor Design Masterplan” (AECOM, 2016). While such a statement is not particularly informative with regard to what the future of the park projects will be, it does—when combined with the continued involvement of SCAPE—indicate that both the parks and the larger corridor project will likely remain

consistent with the imagery and narrative associated with SCAPE's winning proposal for the TBC Design Competition that was described in detail in the sections above.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

As has been argued throughout this thesis, the Town Branch Commons project has—from its very beginning—closely aligned with Molotch’s growth machine thesis as well as Cox, Harvey, and others’ writings on the New Urban Politics and entrepreneurialism characteristic of the present period. Beginning with the Rupp Arena, Arts & Entertainment task force in 2012, the conception of and undertakings on the TBC has been heavily dominated by the city’s elites—those which Cox described as having certain *landed* economic interests in the city itself and therefore highly concerned with its continued success and profitability (Cox 1993). As was discussed in Chapter 2, the list of donors (**Appendix A**) to the RAAED task force initiative reads as a who’s who of Cox’s landed elites—including banks, hotels, local utilities, and property owners (Cox 1993; 1995)—indicating the understood importance of the goals of the RAAED task force to the overall financial wellbeing of the city and, by extension, to its economic elites. Together, these elites help to make up a significant part of Lexington’s local growth machine that is, as Molotch (1976) argued, concerned above all else with promoting the financial and physical growth of the city in order to ensure its own continued survival and prosperity.

The tools utilized to help stimulate economic growth in this particular case—both the initial RAAED plans for a renovated Rupp Arena and convention center and, later, the idea of the Town Branch Commons—are characteristically entrepreneurial in form and function. Each of these endeavors was intended by its creators—as well as its wealthy benefactors—to solicit and attract (hyper)mobile global capital (Cox 1993; Harvey 1989b) to the city of Lexington in the form of new jobs and residents, corporate investments and

relocations, and even through the spending of national and international tourists. While the plans to redevelop the basketball arena and convention center more closely resemble traditional entrepreneurial flagship projects—i.e., consumer- and entertainment-based developments—plans for the Town Branch Commons are instead indicative of a more recent trend in urban redevelopment: that is, *sustainable* urban development.

Since its inception, the TBC project has consistently been promoted—to both potential investors and to the general public alike—through various discourses of sustainability as an achievable means to improve upon the environmental quality of the city and to increase the overall livability of its downtown. However, the degree to which these sustainable outcomes might ultimately be realized has been repeatedly called into question throughout this thesis on the basis that the use of these sustainability discourses in relation to the Town Branch Commons project serve an ideological purpose beyond merely enabling Lexington to become a more environmentally sustainable city; rather, it is argued here that the TBC project can be readily understood as working towards the production of an *urban sustainability fix* (While et al. 2004). As noted earlier, the increasing recognition of global climate change and environmental degradation as serious issues that must be addressed by society at all scales has thoroughly penetrated much public, political, and economic discourse. Importantly, these environmental concerns have become an integral component of the politics surrounding local economic development, where the challenge of urban sustainability is increasingly viewed—not as a hindrance to profit-making—but as an entirely new frontier of development potential. Lexington’s Town Branch Commons project is highly representative of While et al.’s concept of the urban sustainability fix, helping to shed light on how such a ‘fix’ is able to resolve the contradictions between continued economic growth and mounting calls for increased



environmental sustainability, as evidenced by TBC project's selective incorporation of sustainable goals and practices in order to entrepreneurially compete for and attract external investment.

While the Town Branch Commons is certain to produce numerous economic, environmental, and social benefits—even in light of its ulterior entrepreneurial motives (the *sustainability fix*)—for the city and its residents, this author argues that the distribution of those benefits will most likely be unevenly distributed among the city's population in favor of those who conceived of and carried out the plans to create the Town Branch Commons system in the first place: that is, the city's cultural, economic, and political elites. As a result, those members of the city's population who exist at the opposite end of the cultural and economic spectrum are expected to receive far fewer benefits from the creation of the TBC, which characterizes the process of *environmental gentrification* that has been described by Checker (2011), Cucca (2012), Dooling (2009) and others. While the research project described above has been concerned mainly with the initial conception and development of the Town Branch Commons project and its use of discourses of sustainability to promote economic development, and therefore has not dealt explicitly with the present and future outcomes of the TBC, it does open up the possibility of pursuing such research.

To this end, recent events involving the Town Branch Commons would seem to indicate that the project will in fact result in several instances of environmental gentrification. In particular, the recent announcement—before the design and construction details of the TBC Park have even been finalized—that four \$1.5 million townhomes (**Figure 6.1**) are to be built overlooking the future “Central Park” (Eblen 2017a) suggests that the TBC system is, and will continue to be, largely a means of attracting and facilitating

primarily upscale investment in the city's downtown core that caters to the urban elite—a hallmark of urban entrepreneurialism in the present neoliberal era. Aligning with this narrative of the city as a growth machine and the dominance of local elites that has been argued throughout this project, the developer of these townhomes was himself a member of the original RAAED task force that initially conceived of the Town Branch Commons idea over five years ago. In a sequence of events that perfectly illustrates the concept of While et al.'s sustainability fix, the mere *idea* of the Town Branch Commons, a park system publicly promoted through discourses of environmental sustainability, has been leveraged to create a new, observable frontier of development potential within the city along the future route of the TBC itself. In this way, a proposal initially promoted as a means to address both local (e.g., the EPA consent decree) and global (e.g., climate change) environmental concerns has now effectively begun to open up new areas of the city for future economic investment and capital accumulation (**Figure 6.2**).

**Figure 6.1:** Rendering of the future West High Park Townhomes (overlooking what is now a parking lot but will soon be the Town Branch Commons Park).



**Source:** Eblen 2017a.

**Figure 6.2:** The location of the proposed West High Park Townhomes (circled) in relation to the future Town Branch Commons Park.



**Source:** www.westhighpark.com.

APPENDIX

**Appendix A: Donors to RAAED Task Force**

***The Rupp Arena Arts & Entertainment District  
Task Force Donors***

Alltech, Inc.	\$10,000	
American Water (KY American Water)	\$10,000	
Kevin R. Atkins	\$250	
Ball Homes	\$4,500	In-Kind
Julian Beard	\$1,000	
Billings Law Firm, PLLC	\$1,000	
William & Wanda Bishop	\$1,000	
Blue Grass Community Foundation	\$5,000	
Bluegrass Trust for Historic Preservation	\$1,000	
Brown-Forman	\$15,000	
James M. Clark	\$100	
Commercial Property Assoc of Lexington	\$1,000	
Calvin D. Cranfill	\$500	
Cundiff Real Estate Consultants, LLC	\$500	
Dinsmore & Shohl, LLP	\$10,000	
Distillery Hotel Associates, LLC	\$5,000	
Dudley's on Short	\$2,000	In-Kind
Cecil & Judy Dunn	\$250	
Fifth Third Bank	\$10,000	
333 East Main, LLC	1,000	
Thomas Gaines	\$2,000	
Global Fitness Holdings, LLC	\$10,000	
Global Aviation	\$6,000	In-Kind
Jim Gray	\$15,500	
Gray Construction	\$4,500	In-Kind
HDC Holdings, LLC	\$7,000	
J.J.B. Hilliard, W.L. Lyons, LLC	\$10,000	
Stephen Huffman	\$250	
Renee S. Jackson	\$100	

Source: Fortune 2012a.

**Appendix A: Donors to RAAED Task Force (cont.)**

***The Rupp Arena Arts & Entertainment District  
Task Force Donors***

Keeneland	\$5,000
Kentucky High School Athletics Association	\$1,000
Lexington Trot Breeders Association, LLC	\$1,000
LG&E And KY Services Company	\$25,000
Deirdre Lyons	\$10,000
McBrayer, McGinnis, Leslie & Kirkland	\$10,000
Ann Bakhaus McBrayer	\$11,000
John P. McCartney	\$250
Medpro Safety Products, Inc.	\$10,000
Morgan Worldwide Consultants, Inc.	\$1,000
MPVF Lexington Partner, LLC (Hilton Downtown)	\$10,000
The Mt. Brilliant Family Foundation	\$10,000
PKYI, LLC (Hyatt Regency Lexington)	\$10,000
Republic Bank	\$2,500
W. Brent & Linda Rice	\$10,000
Alan Marcus Stein	\$250
Stidham Commercial Partners, Inc.	\$500
Stoll, Keenon & Ogden, PLLC	\$10,000
Chris T. Sullivan	\$1,000
J. Jude & Harper Shawn Thompson	\$2,000
Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing North America, Inc.	\$35,000
University of Kentucky Athletics	\$50,000
Robert E. Wagoner	\$1,000
The Webb Companies	\$10,000
W.T. Young, LLC	\$20,000

**Source:** Fortune 2012a.

## Appendix B: Pages from Fundraising Opportunity Assessment

### Financial Support

Total potential gifts identified from participants totaled \$12,311,000. Therefore, Counsel recommends the Foundation and the City move forward with an amended campaign goal of \$31 million. Best practice projections recommend the total amount of potential gifts identified (\$12,311,000) in the Assessment process should represent 40 percent<sup>4</sup> of the campaign goal. Therefore, the dollar goal is based on the total indications being 40 percent of what is potentially available to be raised.

Gift Levels Identified	# of Gifts Identified	Gift Totals
\$3,000,000	2	\$6,000,000
\$1,000,000	3	\$3,000,000
\$600,000	1	\$600,000
\$500,000	1	\$500,000
\$400,000	1	\$400,000
\$250,000	3	\$750,000
\$100,000	3	\$300,000
\$50,000	5	\$250,000
\$36,000	1	\$36,000
\$25,000	13	\$325,000
\$10,000	14	\$140,000
<\$10,000	5	\$10,000
<b>Total Identified</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>\$12,311,000</b>

Note: The above chart does not reflect the potential gift amount of one participant who would only say their gift would be significant.

Assessment participants responded favorably regarding the availability of a \$10 million lead gift in this community. However, counsel was unable to identify a gift at the \$10 million level through the Assessment. Two potential gifts of \$3 million were identified.

According to national data<sup>5</sup>, the majority of charitable gifts made in the United States (96 percent) come from individuals, foundations and bequests; a trend that is likely to extend to this campaign effort. Having a robust pool of individual prospects for any campaign is critical. Campaigns are also governed by the 80-20 rule<sup>6</sup> where 80 percent of the campaign goal will come from 20 percent of the available donors in the pool. In this environment, some campaigns even go as far as to require a 90-10

<sup>4</sup> 40 percent is mostly a function of the size of the organization relative to the size of the goal, and is considered best a practice in the field. *The Fundraising Feasibility Study: It's Not About the Money*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Edited by Martin L. Novom, CFRE

<sup>5</sup> *Giving USA 2015*

<sup>6</sup> Otherwise known as the Pareto Principle, which states that for many events, roughly 80% of the effects come from 20% of the causes.

Source: Trek Advancement, 2016, p.10



## Appendix B: Pages from Fundraising Opportunity Assessment (cont.)

rule. Because of this concentration of opportunity within the top tier of the prospect pool, the Advisory Board must focus its early investment of time, energy and resources on the top 20 percent of potential donors. In other words, significant effort must be put into qualifying approximately 566 prospects in order to secure roughly 136 gifts to bring in 80 percent of the dollar goal. The Assessment process has already qualified 68 prospects with gifting potential ranging from \$100 to \$3,000,000, with 52 individuals indicating gift capacity of \$10,000 or more over a five-year period.

Trek Advancement, LLC

11

**Source:** Trek Advancement, 2016, p.11

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 21st Century Parks. 2014. *Town Branch Commons: Strategic Planning Consultant Services*. (RFP Response). June 2014.
- 21st Century Parks. 2015. *Town Branch Commons: A Strategic Masterplan*. May 2015.
- AECOM. 2015. *Town Branch Commons, Request for Proposal*. (Response). October 29.
- AECOM. 2016. *Scope of AECOM work (SOW)*. September 16.
- Birge - Liberman, P. 2010. (Re) Greening the City: Urban Park Restoration as a Spatial Fix. *Geography Compass* 4(9): 1392-1407.
- Bowd, D., et al. 2015. Urban greening: environmentalism or marketable aesthetics. *AIMS Environ Sci* 2 (2015): 935-949.
- Brenner, N., & Theodore, N., eds. 2002. *Spaces of neoliberalism: urban restructuring in Western Europe and North America*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing
- Brownlow, A. 2006. An archaeology of fear and environmental change in Philadelphia. *Geoforum* 37(2): 227-245.
- Brundtland, G., et al. 1987. *Our common future*. Oxford University Press, New York, New York, USA.
- Campbell, S., 1996. Green cities, growing cities, just cities?: Urban planning and the contradictions of sustainable development. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 62(3), pp.296-312.
- Checker, M. 2011. Wiped out by the “greenwave”: Environmental gentrification and the paradoxical politics of urban sustainability. *City & Society* 23(2): 210-229.
- Civitas. 2012. TBC Narrative: *Revival: Bring back the creek, bring back the people*.
- Coen + Partners. 2012. TBC Narrative: *Town Branch Commons: Let it grow*.
- Commerce Lexington. No Date. Impact. [Commercelexington.com](http://www.commercelexington.com). Access at: <http://www.commercelexington.com/impact.html>



- Commerce Lexington. 2011a. About Greenville, South Carolina. Access at:  
<http://www.commercelexington.com/uploads/4/6/5/2/46529867/aboutgreenville.pdf>
- Commerce Lexington. 2011b. *Discovering Priorities*. (Presentation).
- Commerce Lexington. 2012a. *Building Change*. (Presentation)
- Commerce Lexington. 2012b. About San Antonio, Texas. Access at:  
<http://www.commercelexington.com/uploads/4/6/5/2/46529867/aboutsanantonio.pdf>
- Cox, K. R. 1993. The local and the global in the new urban politics: a critical view. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 11(4): 433-448.
- Cox, K. R. 1995. Globalisation, competition and the politics of local economic development. *Urban studies* 32(2): 213-224.
- Cranz, G. and Boland, M. 2004. Defining the sustainable park: a fifth model for urban parks. *Landscape Journal*, 23(2): pp.102-120.
- Cucca, R. 2012. The unexpected consequences of sustainability. Green cities between innovation and ecogentrification. *Sociologica* 6(2), 1-17
- Davidson, M. 2010. Sustainability as ideological praxis: The acting out of planning's master - signifier. *City*, 14(4): pp.390-405.
- Davidson, M. 2013. The Sustainable and Entrepreneurial Park? Contradictions and Persistent Antagonisms at Sydney's Olympic Park. *Urban Geography* 34(5): 657-676.
- Dooling, S. 2009. Ecological gentrification: A research agenda exploring justice in the city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 33(3): 621-639.
- Eblen, T. 2013a. Tom Eblen: Town Branch Commons could bring special open space to downtown. *Lexington Herald-Leader*. February 2.
- Eblen, T. 2013b. New York firm chosen to design Town Branch project through Lexington. *Lexington Herald-Leader*. February 4.
- Eblen, T. 2017a. Four \$1.5 million townhouses planned beside Rupp Arena — and they're already sold. *Lexington Herald-Leader*. March 20.

- Eblen, T. 2017b. Town Branch Commons design an elegant compromise to meet many needs. *Lexington Herald-Leader*. March 28.
- Elliott, J., 2012. *An Introduction to Sustainable Development*. Routledge.
- Fairclough, N., 1989. Language and power. *London and New York: Longman Group*.
- Fairclough, N., 2009. A dialectical-relational approach to critical discourse analysis in social research. *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, 2, pp.162-187.
- Farr, D., 2011. *Sustainable Urbanism: Urban Design with Nature*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Fortune, B. 2012a. UK athletics, Toyota are biggest contributors to Rupp Arena task force. *Lexington Herald-Leader*. April 25.
- Fortune, B. 2012b. 5 firms vying to design Town Branch Commons. *Lexington Herald-Leader*. November 17.
- Fortune, B. 2013. New York firm chosen to design Town Branch project through Lexington. *Lexington Herald-Leader*. February 4.
- Fortune, W. 2016. Authorization to enter into an agreement with AECOM Technical Services. (Email memo). January 4.
- Galloway, J. 1968. Town Branch Sewer Gets Weekly Inspection. *Lexington Herald*. April 23. p.1.
- Gooding, I. 2016. Accept TIGER award for Town Branch Commons. (Email memo). November 1.
- Goodling, E., Green, J., & McClintock, N. 2015. Uneven development of the sustainable city: Shifting capital in Portland, Oregon. *Urban Geography* 36(4): 504-527.
- Gray, J. 2016. State of the City Address. January 19.
- Gray, J. 2017. State of the City Address. January 24.
- Gunder, M. 2006. Sustainability: planning's saving grace or road to perdition? *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 26(2): 208–221.
- Gunder, M. & Hillier, J. 2009. *Planning in Ten Words or Less: A Lacanian Entanglement with Spatial Planning*. Farnham. Ashgate.

- Harvey, D., 1989a. The condition of postmodernity: An enquiry into the origins of social change. *Malden, MA: Blackwell.*
- Harvey, D. 1989b. From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: the transformation in urban governance in late capitalism. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B. Human Geography* 71B: 3-17.
- Hubbard, P., 1996. Urban design and city regeneration: social representations of entrepreneurial landscapes. *Urban studies*, 33(8), pp.1441-1461.
- Inside Outside. 2012. TBC Narrative: *Current Beautiful and Blue.*
- JDS. 2012. TBC Narrative: *Lex is more.*
- Jonas, A. E., & Wilson, D. 1999. *The urban growth machine: Critical perspectives, two decades later.* Albany: State University of New York Press
- Kellogg, J., 1982. The formation of black residential areas in Lexington, Kentucky, 1865-1887. *The Journal of Southern History*, pp.21-52.
- Krueger, R. and Agyeman, J. 2005. Sustainability schizophrenia or “actually existing sustainabilities?” toward a broader understanding of the politics and promise of local sustainability in the US. *Geoforum*, 36(4), pp.410-417.
- Lafferty, M.W., 1917. *The Town Branch.* Woman’s Club of Central Kentucky.
- Lancaster, C., 1978. *Vestiges of the Venerable City: A Chronicle of Lexington, Kentucky, Its Architectural Development and Survey of Its Early Streets and Antiquities.* Lexington-Fayette County Historic Commission.
- Lexington Downtown Development Authority. No Date. Urban Parks: Catalysts for Development. (Case Study Presentation).
- Lexington Downtown Development Authority. 2012a. Firm List: Town Branch Commons Master Plan competition. October 18.
- Lexington Downtown Development Authority. 2012b. Request for Qualifications: Town Branch Commons Master Plan. September 15.
- Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council. 2015a. *About the Blue Grass Community Foundation and Town Branch Commons.* September.
- Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council. 2015b. *Urban County Council: Minutes.* September.

- Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government. 2016. *TIGER 2016: Town Branch Commons Corridor*. (Grant application).
- Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government. 2016. *Town Branch Commons: Program Management Services Request for Proposal* (RFP).
- Lexington-Fayette Urban County Planning Commission. 2002. *Lexington-Fayette County Greenway Master Plan: An Element of the 2001 Comprehensive plan*.
- Lexington Herald-Leader. 1985. *Group suggests alternative to Lake Lexington*. p.B-1. January 26.
- Lexington Herald-Leader. 2015. *Private fund-raising best for urban park*. (Editorial). August 26.
- Lexington Herald-Leader. 2016. *Donors' turn to invest in city commons*. (Editorial). August 2.
- Lexington Leader. 1888. *The City's Shame: Town Branch a Mass of Corruption and Filth*. October 13. p.2.
- Lexington Leader. 1906. *Town Branch*. April 1. p.5.
- Lexington Leader. 1907. *New Union Depot*. August 5. p.7.
- Lexington Leader. 1914a. *Police raid cleans Branch Alley houses*. July 23. p.1.
- Lexington Leader. 1914b. *Branch Alley may well have been 'Death Alley'*. July 24. p.1.
- Lexington Leader. 1914c. *Robinson's Row inspected*. August 13. p.12.
- Lexington Leader, 1935. *Historic Town Branch Now Flows in Parallel, Underground Tunnels*. pp.1, 19.
- Long, J., 2016. Constructing the narrative of the sustainability fix: Sustainability, social justice and representation in Austin, TX. *Urban Studies*, 53(1), pp.149-172.
- Loughran, K. 2014. Parks for profit: The high line, growth machines, and the uneven development of urban public spaces. *City & Community* 13(1): 49-68.
- Madden, D. J. 2010. Revisiting the end of public space: assembling the public in an urban park. *City & Community* 9(2): 187-207.

- McCann, E., 2013. Policy boosterism, policy mobilities, and the extrospective city. *Urban Geography*, 34(1), pp.5-29.
- McKee, B. 2013. Land Matters: We Have a Winner. *American Society of Landscape Architects LAND Newsletter*. March 5.
- Musgrave, B. 2014. Lexington Mayor Jim Gray unveils designs for renovated Rupp Arena. *Lexington Herald-Leader*. February 10.
- Musgrave, B. 2016a. Town Branch Commons private funding lags. *Kentucky Herald-Leader*. June 19.
- Musgrave, B. 2016b. Lexington receives \$14 million federal grant to pay for Town Branch Trail. *Lexington Herald-Leader*. July 26.
- Musgrave, B. 2017. New renderings of Town Branch Commons show trail, trees, bike paths. *Lexington Herald-Leader*. March 28.
- O'Dell, G.A., 1993. Water Supply and the Early Development of Lexington, Kentucky. *Filson Club History Quarterly*, 67(4), pp.431-461.
- Peck, J., & Tickell, A. 2002. Neoliberalizing space. *Antipode* 34(3): 380-404.
- Polk, M. and Kain, J.H., 2015. Co-producing knowledge for sustainable urban futures. *Co-Producing Knowledge for Sustainable Cities: Joining Forces for Change*. Routledge, London, pp.1-22.
- Portney, K.E., 2002. Taking sustainable cities seriously: A comparative analysis of twenty-four US cities. *Local Environment*, 7(4), pp.363-380.
- Redclift, M., 2005. Sustainable development (1987–2005): an oxymoron comes of age. *Sustainable development*, 13(4), pp.212-227.
- Roseland, M., 1997. Dimensions of the eco-city. *Cities*, 14(4), pp.197-202.
- SCAPE. 2012. TBC Narrative: *Reviving Town Branch*.
- SCAPE. 2013. Town Branch Commons. [www.scapestudio.com](http://www.scapestudio.com). Access at: <http://www.scapestudio.com/projects/reviving-town-branch/>
- Schein, R.H., 2012. Urban form and racial order. *Urban Geography*, 33(7), pp.942-960.
- Smith, N. 2010. *Uneven development: Nature, capital, and the production of space*. University of Georgia Press.

- Sneddon, C., Howarth, R.B. and Norgaard, R.B., 2006. Sustainable development in a post-Brundtland world. *Ecological economics*, 57(2), pp.253-268.
- Space Group Architects. 2012a. *Rupp Arena, Arts & Entertainment District (RAAED) Masterplan*.
- Space Group Architects. 2012b. *Rupp Arena, Arts & Entertainment District (RAAED) Executive Summary*.
- Speaks, M. 2012. Design Adds Value to the Commons. (Video of Symposium Introduction). January 31.
- Speaks, M. 2012. Jury Notes: Town Branch Design Master Plan Competition.
- Spirn, A.W., et al., 2005. Ecological Urbanism: A Framework for the Design of Resilient Cities. *Landscape Research*, 30, pp.359-377.
- Staples, C.R., 2015. *The History of Pioneer Lexington, 1779-1806*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Steiner, F., 2011. Landscape ecological urbanism: Origins and trajectories. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 100(4), pp.333-337.
- Stone, C.N., 1993. Urban regimes and the capacity to govern: A political economy approach. *Journal of urban affairs*, 15(1), pp.1-28.
- Sustainable. *English Oxford Dictionary*. Available at: <http://www.oed.com>
- Town Branch Trail Inc. 2002. *Town Branch Trail Newsletter*. February.
- Trek Advancement. 2016. *Town Branch Commons: Fundraising Opportunity Assessment*.
- UKCoD. 2012a. Design Adds Value to the Commons. *Archinect*. January 28. Access at: <http://archinect.com/schools/release/11064/design-adds-value-to-the-commons/65223635>
- UKCoD. 2012b. Design Adds Value to the Commons: Introduction by Dean Michael Speaks. *Vimeo*. Access at: <https://vimeo.com/channels/designaddsvale>
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2014. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, Highlights*.

- United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2008. *Lexington, KY, Agrees to Major Sewer System Upgrades*. (Press Release). March 14.
- Ward, K. 2016. Policy Transfer in Space: Entrepreneurial Urbanism and the Making Up of 'Urban' Politics. In *Territory, the State and Urban Politics: A Critical Appreciation of the Selected Writings of Kevin R. Cox*, ed. A. Wood and A. E. Jonas, 131. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
- While, A., et al. 2004. The environment and the entrepreneurial city: searching for the urban 'sustainability fix' in Manchester and Leeds. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28(3): 549-569.
- Wiedemann, H. 2012. Jury Notes: Town Branch Design Master Plan Competition.

## VITA

**Thomas Edward Grubbs**

Glasgow, Kentucky

### **Education**

**Master of Arts, Geography | (expected) Fall 2017**

University of Kentucky

Advisor: Dr. Andrew Wood

**Bachelor of Arts, Architecture + Environmental and Sustainability Studies | 2014**

University of Kentucky