

BLUE GRASS TRUST

# Preservation Matters

Central Kentucky's  
Preservation Magazine

## Gentrification

Differing Viewpoints  
Explore a  
Complex Issue



House Renovation  
On Johnson Avenue

New Branding  
and Website Design

## Contributors

Contributing to this edition of *Preservation Matters* are the following staff writers and board members. This publication would not be possible if it were not for their efforts. Special thanks to our guest writers whose names are listed in boldface print. Thanks to our three board member writers as well. A brief bio for these writers accompanies their articles.

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Cover Photograph:  
Streetscape of  
Rand Avenue in  
Lexington, Kentucky



## Preservation Matters

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## Greetings Blue Grass Trust Friends



As Spring finally arrives in the Bluegrass, 2023 has already become a transformative year for the Blue Grass Trust. Following a lengthy process of Board sessions, interviews with critical stakeholders and long-standing volunteers led by Trek Advancement's Beth Bell, the BGT Board adopted a strategic planning document to guide the Trust through the next three years.

Following the adoption of the strategic plan by the Board in November, Jonathon Coleman and the staff have developed an operational plan to execute the goals of the strategic plan in the coming years. This includes revisions to our by-laws and a plan to move the Pope Villa project forward in the next year. The by-law revisions are being reviewed by the Board for approval in the near future. A professional fundraising firm has been engaged by contract to lead a major gift campaign for funding the restoration of Latrobe's Pope Villa.

With the decline of tourism at Hopemont in recent years, a process to re-envision its future service to the Blue Grass Trust is underway. Thanks to a generous grant secured by Jonathan Coleman, we are also engaged in a refresh of our marketing and branding. This includes a complete overhaul of the Trust's website which will launch on May 1st and other marketing efforts.

We also recently welcomed to the staff our new Office and Development Manager, Missy Pienkowski. This summer we will welcome Dr. Zak Leonard from Cornell University as our new Historic Preservation Manager.

Finally, I am happy to report that our financial position remains solid, and our staff continues to excel at all they do. These are indeed exciting times for our organization!

Respectfully,  
Mike Meuser

## Dear Friends of Blue Grass Trust



### Happy Historic Preservation Month!

Since 1973, preservationists have used each May to increase public awareness of preservation's social, environmental, and economic benefits. As a community-driven nonprofit, the Blue Grass Trust engages in this work all year long, but we always look forward to the national focus May brings to sharing our important mission as a preservation resource.

Historic Preservation can be a powerful tool to address numerous challenges we face in Central Kentucky. But how do we increase the public's awareness of the shared benefits of preservation?

One example is the magazine you hold in your hands. In this issue of *Preservation Matters*, our editors invited community members and our volunteer corps of writers to take a deep dive into the challenges of gentrification. It is a pleasure to present you with various voices and perspectives. As you will read, the tools developed by historic preservation can help mitigate neighborhood displacement and encourage thoughtful community investment. Community investment leads to retaining neighborhood connections and networks built over generations, ensuring neighborhoods remain sustainable and continue to contribute to the unique culture of Central Kentucky.

You may also notice a few visual differences with this edition. Thanks to the generous support of VisitLex and The Brand Thread, the Blue Grass Trust was able to invest in new messaging tools, including a brand-new website, so we can better reach a wider audience with our important mission. Read more about the fascinating process on page 23.

Ultimately, we cannot effectively share our message without you. We need allies to join us in spreading the numerous benefits of and the vital need for preservation in Central Kentucky. Want to learn how you can help? Visit our newly revamped website to find resources, information, and advocacy strategies. We also hope you will consider becoming a Blue Grass Trust member and donor.

As always, thank you for your support of preservation in Kentucky, and thank you for your support of the Blue Grass Trust.

With gratitude,  
Jonathan Coleman, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

### Blue Grass Trust in Brief

As the 14th oldest preservation nonprofit in the country, the Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation is Central Kentucky's resource and guide for historic preservation. The Blue Grass Trust was founded in 1955 by a spirited group of Lexington citizens determined to save Hopemont, an 1814 residence located in Gratz Park, from demolition. Over the years, our iconic symbol has become synonymous with the most celebrated historic places in the Bluegrass, and today we remain a pillar of advocacy, education, and service, ensuring historic preservation is accessible to everyone.

### Our Mission

The Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation is Central Kentucky's resource for protecting, revitalizing, and promoting our historic places, enhancing the quality of life for all.

### Our Values

**Education:** We will share the value of historic preservation with Central Kentucky.

**Service:** We will serve as a resource and guide to help Central Kentuckians in their historic preservation efforts.

**Advocacy:** We will lend our voice to historic preservation efforts in our Central Kentucky communities.

### Our Vision

Our vision is to live in a community that honors its diverse cultural legacies through historic preservation.

Read the **Blue Grass Trust Solidarity Statement** at: [bluegrasstrust.org/our-impact](https://bluegrasstrust.org/our-impact)

STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE BLUE GRASS TRUST IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

[bluegrasstrust.org](https://bluegrasstrust.org)



@bluegrasstrust

# A Close Look at Gentrification

In this issue of *Preservation Matters*, we turn our attention to gentrification, especially the role historic preservation can play, as the National Trust for Historic Preservation recommends, “in bending neighborhood change towards greater justice and equity.” But what is gentrification? A dictionary often defines gentrification as a “process” where poor, mostly urban, areas are changed by “wealthier people moving in, improving housing, and attracting new businesses, typically displacing current inhabitants in the process.”



Yet gentrification is manifested in many ways and in many places, defying simple definitions. A recent article in *The Washington Post*, for example, focused on the wildfires in the western US as accelerants of gentrification. As the fires have tragically destroyed vast numbers of homes, it is the wealthy or the well-insured who can afford to rebuild, while lower income residents are forced to move and seek alternative housing.

In Central Kentucky, the negative effects of gentrification have been felt and vocalized for years, prompting the Lexington Fayette Urban County Government to hold a forum on Race, Class, and Development and authorize a Task Force for Neighborhoods in Transition. Lexington is very aware of the city’s housing troubles and how the negative impacts of gentrification, particularly in historically Black neighborhoods, are part of the problem.



But how can historic preservation help alleviate the negative impacts of gentrification? As one contributor to this issue rightly notes, “Historic preservation has a complicated and sometimes troubled relationship with gentrification.” The National Trust recently sponsored studies of gentrification in five cities, including Louisville’s West End. Their final report recommends an important action step: “As historic preservation becomes more inclusive of diverse histories and places, we need to intentionally consider, through deep listening and collaboration, whether current approaches to preservation adequately serve the needs of diverse communities.” [*Perspectives of Neighborhood Change*, NTHP].

The Blue Grass Trust wants to follow the National Trust’s example of deep listening and collaboration in hope of working within our local communities to save their built fabric along with their distinct cultural vibrancy.

While preserving the built environment is a focus of the Blue Grass Trust, we know sustainable preservation must also consider the residents as well as the buildings — the homes — they inhabit. Preserving structures is only half the equation.

We are fortunate to have been able to elicit essays from community members willing to express their perspectives on gentrification. Several have considerable experience working with these complex issues. We are extremely grateful for their willingness to help us better understand some of the factors inherent in this enigmatic term. Please understand the opinions expressed in the respective pieces are not necessarily those of the Blue Grass Trust. This is an exploration issue, the start of a conversation. We hope you find it beneficial. 🗨️

Learn more by visiting the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s recent report, *Perspectives of Neighborhood Change*.

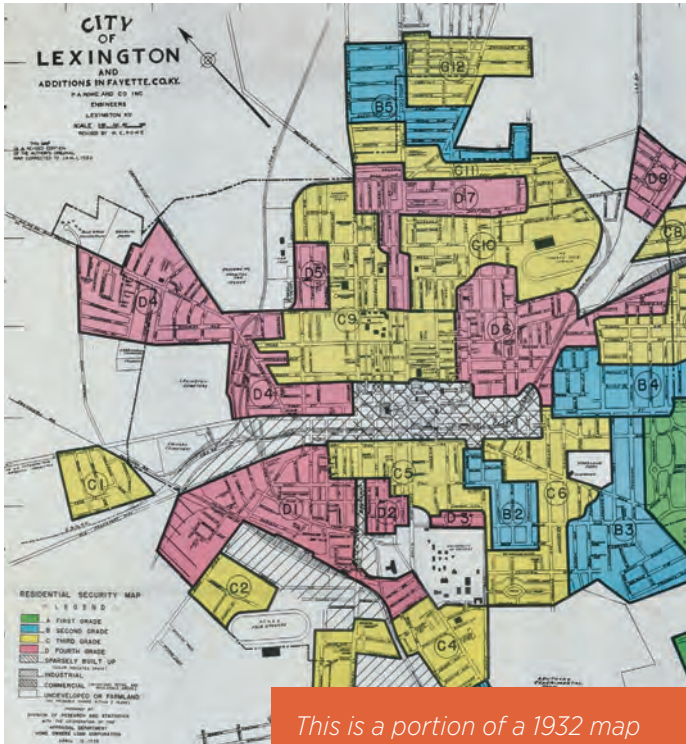
Just scan below.



# Confusions About Gentrification



Steve Kay has lived in Lexington for 52 years. He was elected as an at-large member of LFUCG city council in 2010, and he served as Vice Mayor from 2014 to 2022. Steve and his wife, Rona Roberts, are partners in the consulting firm Roberts & Kay.



*This is a portion of a 1932 map of Lexington, Kentucky, which designates “redlined” areas of the city. The pink areas of intentional under-investment roughly correspond to the areas that are now experiencing gentrification.*

*The map states the following: “Prepared by the Division of Research and Statistics with the cooperation of the Appraisal Department, Home Owners’ Loan Corporation; revised and corrected Jan. 1, 1932 by P.A. Rowe and Co INC, Engineers, Lexington, Kentucky.”*

*Source: Robt. K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., “Mapping Inequality,” American Panorama, ed. (from the National Archives)*

Here is a paradox. I agreed to contribute an article on gentrification for this magazine even though I believe the term “gentrification” often confuses an important issue and hides what should be our focus. Despite that belief, I have placed “gentrification” in the title because it is the term most people use when referring to a complex set of issues challenging low-income, disinvested, or deteriorating neighborhoods in communities, including our own.

The term causes confusion because people using “gentrification” often fail to distinguish between improvements that come at the expense of the existing residents and businesses, and improvements that bring benefits to them. If we fail to make the appropriate distinction, we easily fall into the belief all improvements are “gentrification” and harm those neighborhoods and the people within them. And, if all improvements are harmful, and no improvements are made, neighborhoods are condemned to continue to suffer from disinvestment and all the economic and social ills that accompany it.

Calling all improvements “gentrification” also gives cover, either intentionally or inadvertently, to the worst forces of the market, those giving no thought to—and having no regard for—the impact of their investments on the traditional residents and businesses in fragile low-income neighborhoods. The worst market forces then march behind the same banner as beneficial development, as if their efforts, too, are of benefit to the neighborhood.

The simplest way to determine the effects of improvements on disinvested neighborhoods is to focus on involuntary displacement. If improvements are not causing involuntary displacement, they likely benefit existing residents by improving property and bringing economic opportunity. Some people may still want to label that kind of change “gentrification” and lament that it is happening. Others might want to celebrate those improvements.

The recent Report of the LFUCG Task Force on Neighborhoods in Transition concluded improvements should be encouraged in low-income neighborhoods that historically have suffered from neglect only if those improvements do not end up causing involuntary displacement of the residents and businesses in those neighborhoods. If we believe—as I do—involuntary displacement is harmful not only for the people being displaced and the neighborhoods in which they live, but also for everyone in our community, we can and should seek ways to mitigate the most harmful market forces. The Report contains several recommendations that aim to do just that. Some of the strongest recommendations contributed to creation of the LFUCG Department of Housing Advocacy and Community Development, whose charge is to “develop and implement strategies to build strong and equitable neighborhoods.”

The LFUCG Affordable Housing Fund is one example of a specific program that has the potential—not yet fully realized—to stabilize low-income neighborhoods by keeping rents low enough for residents to continue to afford to live there. Another example is the \$1,000,000 recently allocated by LFUCG to subsidize solar panel installation for low-income homeowners. The intent is to reduce utility costs so they can afford to stay in their homes.

These efforts are helpful. We need to continue to identify and implement ways to offset the damage done to vulnerable neighborhoods by too often thoughtless market forces, whether we call those efforts “gentrification” or any other name. ❸



New homes in Cadentown, a post-Civil War settlement for the formerly enslaved



Gratz Park neighborhood in downtown Lexington



Empty lot on Kenton Street in north Lexington



Freight boxes converted to housing units in Smithtown in north Lexington

# Equitable and Sustainable Preservation

The debate over historic preservation and gentrification is one that continues to divide communities. On one hand, historic preservation aims to conserve and to protect a community’s cultural heritage. By doing so, it can provide valuable insights into an area’s history and help retain important pieces of a neighborhood’s culture and identity. On the other hand, gentrification can change the social composition of a neighborhood by introducing wealthier people, who may or may not be interested in preserving the existing culture.

In some cases, historic preservation may contribute to gentrification by creating attractive features for those with higher incomes and investment interests. When buildings in an area are restored to look like they did when first constructed, it can create a sense of nostalgia for those with enough disposable income to pay for the privilege of living in the newly preserved area with new housing options.

There are many questions to consider when addressing the issue of historic preservation and gentrification. Does gentrification necessarily lead to a loss of a community’s unique cultural heritage? Does historic preservation foster discriminatory behavior by people with money? How can both objectives be achieved at once—protecting local culture while bringing economic and social opportunities?

With nostalgia comes consequences. The ramifications of gentrification are visible to the vulnerable residents in previously disinvested, formerly redlined, neglected neighborhoods. When these areas become trendy due to newcomers seeking “hip” spots close to vibrant social amenities or low property values that allow for potential capital appreciation, there is little acknowledgement of what was already there. The influx of affluence drives up property values and rental prices, improves infrastructure and creates new jobs. These changes



Deidra Dennie is the Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Transylvania University with degrees from University of Louisville and Valdosta State. The ramification of gentrification is a pet project for her and through BGT is learning every day the importance of protecting historic places. Dr. Dennie is serving in her first term on the board of Blue Grass Trust.

create liabilities that last generations: displaced and criminalized residents, forfeiture of cultural identity, erased community connections, decimated neighborhoods, and closing of businesses that provide a social network. When lots remain undeveloped, the spaces left are constant reminders of dispossession.

Historic Preservation can play a role in addressing gentrification by considering the impacts of preservation efforts on the existing community and being intentional in how those efforts are implemented. This can include the following:

- **Community Involvement:** Engage with the existing community to understand their needs and concerns and involve them in the decision-making process for preservation projects to help mitigate the sense of loss of cultural identity.
- **Affordable housing:** Encourage the creation and preservation of affordable housing in gentrifying neighborhoods, so low-income residents are not priced out of their community.
- **Context sensitive design:** Ensure preservation efforts respect the existing character and cultural heritage of the neighborhood and avoid contributing to the gentrification process by creating out-of-scale or inappropriate development.
- **Financial incentives:** Offer financial incentives to developers and property owners to preserve and rehabilitate buildings in a way that is affordable and accessible to low- and moderate-income residents that can help prevent displacement and gentrification.
- **Monitor and evaluate:** Regularly monitor the impact of preservation efforts on the community and evaluate their effectiveness in addressing gentrification.

By taking a holistic and inclusive approach to historic preservation, historic preservation can be a tool for promoting equitable and sustainable community development, rather than a contributor to gentrification. 🌱

# Reflections On Gentrification



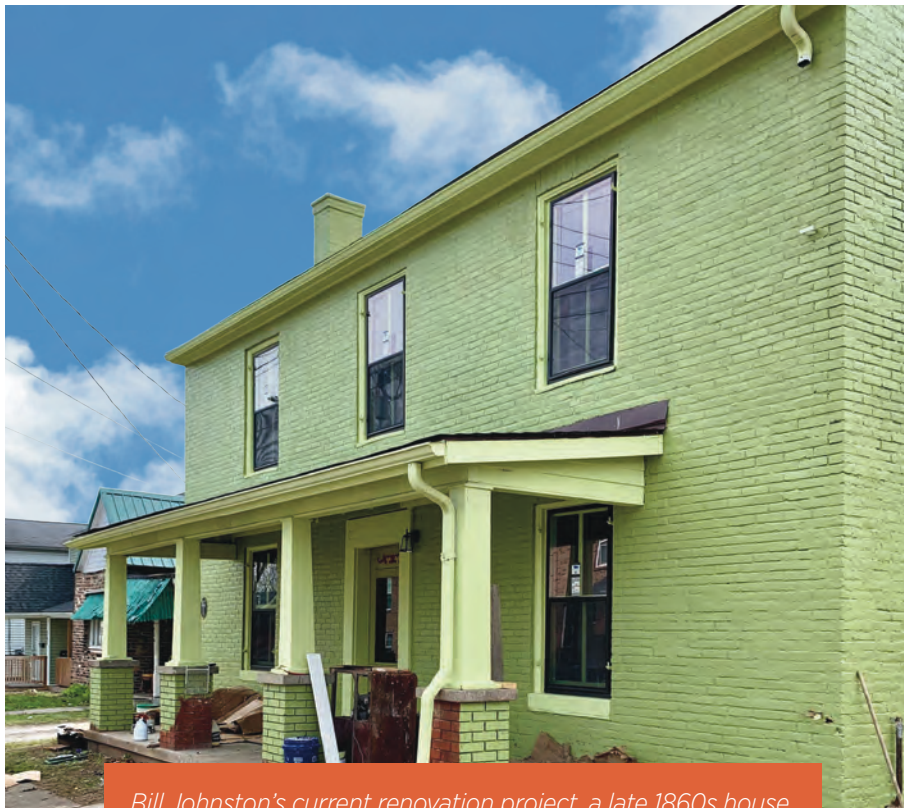
Bill Johnston has been a downtown Lexington resident for 50 years. During that time, he renovated numerous houses in north Lexington. Bill has been active in the Blue Grass Trust for over 15 years, serving as board member and president of the board. He is currently serving on the Community Preservation Committee, the Advisory Board, and is a member of the Blue Grass Trust Heritage Society.

Economic forces are very difficult to deny, ignore, or to control. Gentrification is one example.

New housing developments are often built grouping common architectural styles and price ranges. This results in owners from similar economic levels, who have similar needs, incomes, interests, and cultural histories. This can result in great neighborhoods socially. These developments are often away from a town's commercial center.

Older neighborhoods were built closer to the center of town, closer to the commercial center; their locations are more convenient and thus, potentially more desirable. Being older, the architecture is less standardized and more diverse owing to changing building styles as these neighborhoods evolved through the decades. The result is more variety and uniqueness. This variety is not only reflected in a diversity of architecture, but also in the variety of the residents' economic levels, lifestyles, sexual preferences, races, ethnic backgrounds, and ages. Also, being older, the houses may have significant obsolescence and condition issues, allowing for their purchase at a lower price than required for newer properties.

Historically, as neighborhoods have aged and become functionally obsolete and in poor repair, they fall out of favor, compared to new neighborhoods. Some residents stay, but many houses get subdivided into poorly maintained rentals catering to the poor. Eventually, the desirability of some of these areas declines to the point they can be had for a price so favorable, someone sees the neighborhood's potential and purchases one or more properties to fix up. This has been happening in Central Kentucky – especially in the core of Lexington – for at least



*Bill Johnston's current renovation project, a late 1860s house on Corral Street, which was originally a part of Gunntown in Goodlowtown – post-Civil War African American neighborhoods in Lexington*

the past 50 years and is still occurring. Areas once viewed with general disdain a few years ago are now sought-after properties with prices sometimes exceeding a million dollars. Houses in dilapidated areas, once candidates for demolition, sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars. The very low price of these once out of favor properties allows them to be repaired and updated through renovations using the owner's sweat equity and/or additional funds.

Gentrification occurs in neighborhoods that have a lot of older residences not in the best repair, and whose lower purchase prices reflect their condition. When brought up to current standards, these houses appeal to a potential resident looking for something a little different from the norm, in good up-to-date

condition. The purchase price will reflect the property updates and will be higher than surrounding unrepaired properties. Or maybe a new buyer will buy a non-updated existing residence at low market price, then make improvements, raising its value. Either way, the value of the property increases. If the owner of the improved property decides to sell it, the selling price reflects the increased value. If the owner of the improved property elects to rent it, the rent increases to reflect the improvements and increased desirability of the neighborhood. If the owner continues to stay, he or she will enjoy living in an improved residence.

One way or the other, the surrounding neighborhood is affected, even if it is only that the owner with the newly repaired house - with its improved curb appeal - proves what can be done with similar residences in need of upgrading. Eventually this process continues to the point the whole neighborhood has changed. Property values go up, local tax revenues increase, wealthier people move in, and



the properties are visual showcases; what could be better!? A lot ... maybe.

While architectural diversity remains more or less constant, the economic and - in our current society - racial diversity is greatly and quickly reduced. Eventually, a once diverse neighborhood becomes closer in “feel” to the neighborhood the new residents moved from. This is not conjecture, it is observable here in Central Kentucky and in many other places.

Each neighborhood has its unique characteristics – both before gentrification and after. Before, it may have been a neighborhood where residents lived for decades with a strong sense of community. When, however, the residences have deteriorated and need substantial upgrading, there likely has been a long history of rental and/or ownership by those of limited means. Many traditional African American communities are good examples of this. As some residents achieve hard-won gains, they are not always interested in staying in the old neighborhood, one in which they were historically “strongly” encouraged – if not forced – to live. The neighborhood declines to where the sense of community is lost, crime increases, and living conditions decline along with the cost of purchasing its properties. These neighborhoods may have the location advantage of being closer to the commercial center of the city. That adds to their development potential. New people come in and restore, update or replace very affordable housing. These properties are now worth more, thus cost more.

People with better means and higher expectations move in, and gentrification – for better or worse – is off and running. Long term residents who have not moved become culturally isolated, likely have to pay higher taxes or rents, and eventually they too depart. While it is an economic gain for the now gentrified neighborhood, it can feel like a loss of community for the residents who have remained. For those who have had to leave, it can be a loss of convenience in addition to losing an affordable place to live.

In many other cases, the physical structures have deteriorated to the point only the desperate will live there. Having very limited means, the desperate invariably cannot pay their rent, and move on to yet another decrepit place. Eventually these residences get to the point even the desperate are not interested; squatters maybe, but no one else. When gentrification begins in such a neighborhood, no sense of community is left to destroy; it already died.

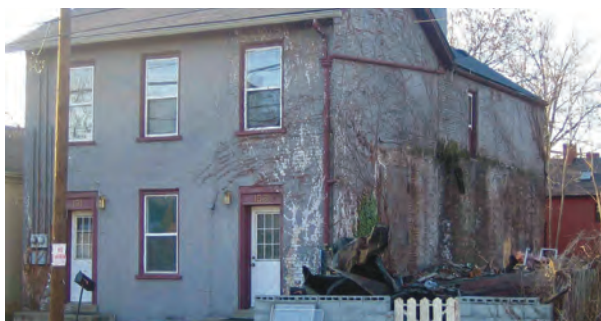
Gentrification can be a gradual process, or a rapid process. Urban Renewal is an example of the rapid gentrification process. With Urban Renewal, residents are

forced by a government entity that wants the properties for development to sell and relocate. An example of this is the rapid destruction of the neighborhoods that used to be where the Civic Center and Rupp Arena now are. The areas around UK, Transylvania, and other large and growing institutions surrounded by residential areas have experienced forced - or at least coerced - displacement.

It is possible the forces that lead to gentrification cannot be stopped, but only slowed to varying degrees. Some ways of slowing these relentless forces are to freeze property tax assessments long-term, for low and medium income, owner-occupied properties. This reduces the property tax burden created by increasing property values. (Lexington already reduces property assessments by \$40,500 for all owner-residents over 65 years of age.) It would also be helpful to have programs to provide subsidized maintenance assistance and maybe even property maintenance training for these same owners. Another program could be for the city or a land trust non-profit to purchase the land on which a house sits for the owner's promise of only renting to qualified subsidized tenants for a period of years, or other means of encouraging long term affordable rents. Stronger enforcement of code violations of rental properties - both inside and out - combined with rental-unit licensing would help all neighborhoods from deteriorating so quickly – slowing the driving out of long-term residents and maintaining housing quality.

The government can help in another way. One street in Lexington, a block long, is just in the beginning throes of being gentrified. It is in a historically Black area. It is a mixture of substantial 100+ year old houses, old shotgun houses, newly built rental houses, and Lexington Housing Authority built and owned rental houses. It is in an extremely convenient location – within walking distance of downtown Lexington. The street parallel to it is almost all single and duplex Housing Authority built and owned, well maintained rental properties. Even with renovation and replacement construction, many long-term residents can remain since the mission of the Housing Authority is focused on providing housing for those at lower income levels. In this case, government involvement is the key to mitigating the less desirable effects of gentrification. (One hopes the Housing Authority will continue their evolution of building architecturally interesting and compatible residences. This can enhance the quality of life for all residents.) One downside is long term rentals prevent the development of personal wealth often associated with home ownership.

Gentrification is not going away. But it can be managed if the community's various entities (or stakeholders) develop and fund programs to manage it. 🌱



*This 1815 gray house is adjacent to Distilled Restaurant on Jefferson Street. It had the shotgun house built against it, sharing a common wall. The shotgun was torn down and the old growth poplar siding of the house was repurposed as flooring for the second floor of the gray house as well as several other properties.*

# I Welcome Gentrification



Thomas Tolliver has been a Lexington East End resident since 1994. Because of the work he has done in his neighborhood for the past 29 years, the city of Lexington recognized him as the 2022 Lexington Community Champion. The award is founded by American in Bloom Lexington and awards people who serve their communities, bringing positive news to light. Thomas serves on the Community Preservation Committee of the Blue Grass Trust.

In the fall of 2018, I erected a hand-painted banner in my front yard that read “I WELCOME GENTRIFICATION, I WELCOME CHANGE.” Needless to say, I didn’t make friends with that sentiment and that’s okay; making friends was not my goal. My goal was to give voice to the minority viewpoint that the changes brought by gentrification are sometimes needed and, as in my case, welcomed.

I’ve lived in Lexington’s East End for 29 years and I am keenly aware of its storied history as a predominantly Black neighborhood on the lower socioeconomic scale. But I firmly believe for my neighborhood to rise to its

Like most Lexington downtown neighborhoods, the housing stock in the East End is old and the majority of it is rental. As a homeowner, I’ve often lamented the large, disproportionate number of rental properties that surround me compared to owner-occupied properties. Gentrification seems to be bringing more homeowners to the neighborhood and I think that’s a good thing, regardless of their skin color.

A lesser appreciated benefit of gentrification is a lot of old houses have been given a new lease on life and possibly spared from demolition. And it’s not

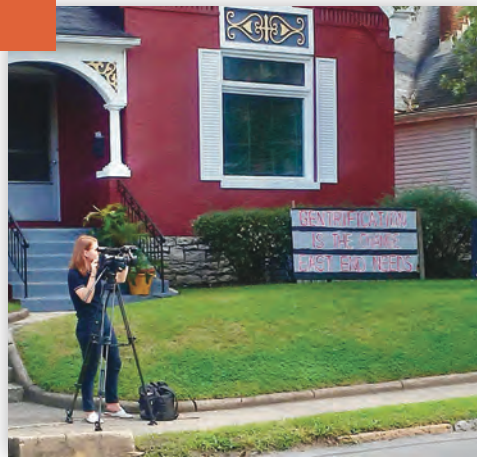


Top: Refurbishment of the two houses on the right greatly improved the curb appeal of these two homes. The blue house, a former three-plex rental, is now owner occupied.

Inset: Signs in front of Thomas Tolliver’s home indicate his approval of gentrification in his neighborhood. The signs even attracted the attention of a local TV reporter.

potential, it needs to become more diverse both economically and racially. This movement we call gentrification is bringing such diversity and I welcome it.

To be clear, I’m not advocating the wholesale displacement of poor and Black residents from the neighborhood to make way for the gentry, but I am saying not every house, apartment, and buildable lot should be reserved for poor Black people. Our history as a black neighborhood should give us a sense of pride. It should not stagnate us.



just houses. Look at how many commercial buildings along East Third Street and North Limestone Street have been saved and repurposed.

I applaud the investors who had the vision to save these commercial buildings. Likewise, I welcome the house flippers who have renovated and resold old houses in my neighborhood, thus helping to make the East End a destination again, just like the reopening of the Lyric Theater did years ago. Perhaps I’m selfish but I want to be surrounded by property owners who have the same vested interest in the neighborhood’s wellbeing as I do.

The last thing I want is to put a fence around the East End, letting only the poor and downtrodden inside. That’s not how we prosper. We prosper when we become a mix of all economic levels and skin colors. Our history as a black neighborhood should not get in the way of that. 🌍

# Everything Old Becomes New Again



Billie Mallory, MA Ed/MSW, is Director of East End Community Development Corporation.

Gentrification can result in the revitalization of a neighborhood, not just restoration of housing but also adaptive reuse of buildings for small businesses. The East End has experienced gentrification several times but most recently with new or relocated businesses,



L: 400 East Third Street when Chad Needham purchased it in 2015

R: 400 East Third transformed into Martine's

particularly along the Third Street corridor and the Legacy Trail. Leading the way was Martine's Pastries at 400 East Third Street at the corner of Eastern Avenue, with its move from Eastland to a restored, historic building that had been vacant many years. Built in 1948, this building had last been a liquor store and previously a small grocery. Purchased by Chad Needham in 2015, the interior had a large hole in the floor with bird droppings covering every surface upstairs and was filled with lots of junk. Everything was cleared out and stripped to the bare walls and studs, including digging out part of the basement now used for storage. Chad said early in the process, "What's not to love about an old building? Just vision it." Martine and Jim Holzman did have a vision of what they wanted, and Chad was able to transform an abysmal eyesore into a stunning eye catcher – by expanding a small French bakery to a full-service coffee shop/café, with a spacious room upstairs for small meetings or intimate conversation and walls covered with artwork. In 2021, Martine and Jim said "yes" and made the commitment to purchase this beautiful building

and make it their new home for everything delicious and decadent, leading the way for other small businesses to follow.



Richmond Brothers Mechanical on East Third Street

A similar transformation at 539 East Third Street is the home of Richmond Brothers HVAC at the corner of Shropshire Avenue.

Built in 1950, again vacant for many years, it previously housed a cabinet business and long-time awning business. Like other vacant buildings, the elements and water leaks did significant damage, and the second floor was ready to collapse. In 2018, William Richmond and his two brothers completely restored this historic building to new life with offices, a conference/training room, and storage



for their heating and air conditioning business's sales and service.

Next door, 549 East Third Street is home to Frank's Donuts, another vacant building, built in 1970 and a former nursing home. It is now a family owned/operated donut shop/ dine in/

drive through purchased/remodeled by Francisco "Frank" Alguera, in 2018. Frank is originally from

Honduras and operates one of many successful donut shops in smaller towns across central Kentucky.

Each of these businesses took a significant risk to move into a vulnerable neighborhood that had no retail life and little activity along Third Street. They, however, led the way for more small businesses to follow, including those at the MET, located at the intersection of Midland and East Third (thus the moniker).

The original red brick MET building facing Winchester Road was built in 1924 as a foundry and once housed an ice cream shop that sat vacant for decades. It was purchased in 2003 by Community Ventures, along with a large, abandoned lot of vacant buildings. It now houses DV8 Kitchen on the first floor and artists' studios on the upper level. This development features six retail businesses, including Crown and Glory Beauty Salon, ArtHouse, Manchester Coffee, The Nail Shop and will welcome the Health First Medical Clinic this Spring, and a men/women's fashion shop on the ground level. Luxury living units on the second and third floors border Town Branch Trail and Legacy Trail and overlook the historic Charles Young Center and park/playground/SPLASH water feature. The MET is also an art destination with many murals inside and outside, as well as artwork displays and sculptures by local artists.



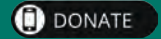
Colorful mural and LexArts horse on Third Street exterior wall of DV8 Kitchen

Truly, everything old can become new again and again....



Below you will find a listing of new memberships to the Blue Grass Trust spanning this past year from April 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023. New recipients of Blue Grass Trust plaques are listed for the same period. (Plaque recipients also receive a membership.) Memorials, honorariums, and specifically designated gifts are also listed for this period.

In the upcoming Fall/Winter issue of *Preservation Matters*, this year's ongoing Annual Fund donors will be listed in giving categories. The Annual Fund is singularly important in supporting the Blue Grass Trust's ongoing expenses. The Annual Fund closes on June 30, 2023. If you have not made your contribution, please do so by using the donor envelope enclosed in this magazine. Donations can also be made online at [www.bluegrasstrust.org](http://www.bluegrasstrust.org) or by using the QR code to the right. *Thank you.*



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have made special provisions in their will, a life insurance policy, real estate, or some other financial conveyance to include the Blue Grass Trust in their estate planning. If you would like more information, contact the BGT at (859) 253-0362 or [info@bluegrasstrust.org](mailto:info@bluegrasstrust.org).

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# Gentrifying the Countryside: *The View from the Old Farmhouse*



Janie-Rice Brother is an architectural historian with degrees from Centre College and the University of Kentucky. Her first job in historic preservation was at the Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation; she later worked for the Kentucky Heritage Council and the Kentucky Archaeological Survey. In her free time, she maintains her blog, *Gardens to Gables*. Ms. Brother is currently serving on the board of the Blue Grass Trust.

Gentrification is a phenomenon that seems to belong to the urban world, yet its roots are anything but urban. Since there is no getting the farm out of the girl, I cannot help pondering the root of gentrification and how this process of a poor area becoming more affluent, leading to displacement and a sea change in social character, has strayed from the word of its birth. I am not going to belabor the etymology, but I am curious about the reaches of gentrification across Kentucky, which is more rural than urban.



*The rolling hills of this former farm in Clark County now provide views of the subdivision built there, just minutes from Interstate 64.*

The root of gentrification is “gentry,” a British term with broad meanings over the centuries, but usually referring to well-off landowners who were not part of the aristocracy or peerage. These landowners often lived off the rent received from tenant farmers, but in their agricultural social hierarchy, were responsible for the welfare of those same tenants and played a pivotal role in community life and government of the local area. While the gentry may have been wealthier than the tenants or other members of the agricultural community, their connections to and within that community were deep and multilayered. Gentry is a word grounded in class, culture, economic conditions, and population surges.

If you think of gentrification in the above terms, it is easier to visualize how our countryside is being impacted by these same forces. While urban gentrification focuses on making low-income neighborhoods more attractive to the middle class, displacing low-income residents in the process, gentrification of rural Kentucky displaces farmers as farmland sprouts houses for a workforce that cannot find affordable housing in larger urban areas like Lexington, or farms are carved up into mini-estates for a class of buyers who want to acquire a certain lifestyle.

I am perhaps not the best person to discuss rural gentrification. A cousin of mine once labeled me “the last of the local gentry” in our community, and indeed, my relationship to the land is as part of a family that has lived in the same three mile stretch of road for the past 200+ years. I don’t have much objectivity.

I moved back to our family land because I longed for space, for trees, for the rhythms of the seasons as I experienced them growing up. Spring is calving time, and the preparation of the garden with spinach, broccoli, and English peas. Summer brings hay cutting, putting the bulls in with the heifers and cows, and planting tomatoes, corn, beans, and annual flowers.

As summer ends, the 4-H kids (I was one) get ready for the state fair, and afternoons were spent in the corn field, riding on top of a gravity wagon full of ear corn. Fall was calf weaning time, and the mournful sound of parted cows and calves echoed throughout the night. When we still grew burley tobacco, the housing of that crop was the signal winter was approaching, and plumes of



*A family outing on our farm in years past.*

smoke would soon waft from the pot-bellied stoves in the stripping rooms. Every farm I passed on the way into town belonged to one cousin or another. Then, the rural environment began to change. The children of farming families moved away. Not everyone wants to be a farmer – and there were many sons (and at this time, farming was male-dominated) in the mid-20th century who were pressured to return and take up the mantle of agriculture, but their hearts were never in it. Farming changed too, as the burley tobacco quota program was dismantled – a structure that supported many families and their life in the countryside.

At first, it was the land closest to the interstate that caved to development pressure. Townhouses, large single-family homes, lots of cul-de-sacs – subdi-

visions promised easy commuting times and lower taxes than Lexington. Plus, new development filled county coffers. In most areas of rural Kentucky, “zoning” is a word only used in town – there is no such thing as zoning rules or planning outside of the city limits.

And when the first wave of folks seeking their own piece of rural heaven came



*Neighbors seeking the rural idyll*

into the area, the astronomical sum they offered landowners per acre was astounding. At first it was just a piece of land that never drained well that was sold. It went for \$10,000 an acre, at a time when comparable farmland was valued at \$2,000 an acre for quality soil.



*A mini-estate, complete with board fencing*

There was no way any working farmer could pay \$10,000 an acre, especially when you consider the price of fertilizer, farm machinery, and the disparity between the price of finished livestock (what you pay for your steak at a restaurant or ground beef at the grocery) and what the farmer earns for raising those animals. As prices rose, any hope held by the small family farm to compete with corporate farms fell, because additional land simply could not be purchased for a reasonable price. The land was now valued for its development potential. The first McMansions went up, surrounded by acres and acres and acres of manicured lawn.

This version of “rural gentrifier” possesses no rural experience let alone farming experience, but comes from urban or suburban areas, with the wish (and the will) to project their vision onto a raw canvas and embrace the solitude of rural living. Their pastoral experience is limited only by their funds.

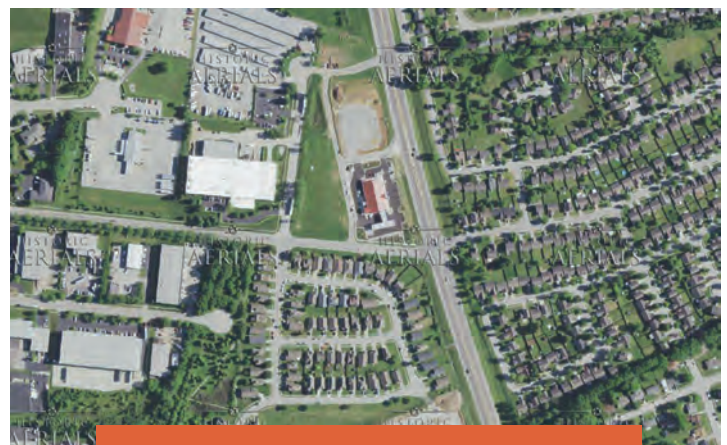
Much like the gentleman farmers of the 19th century Bluegrass, the rural gentrifier builds a statement house with as many roof lines as electric outlets. This house announces their status and wealth to anyone who drives past. These edifices of modern construction are like islands among former fields. These mini-estates change the rural character irrevocably, an ironic twist to the property owner’s desire to immerse themselves “into” the country. But from a local government perspective, the value of the land is higher, and more property taxes can be collected from the owners of these large sprawling domiciles than from the farmer.

Subdivisions and McMansions are not to blame for the erasure of the rural community – they are but one part of a more insidious issue. We are not making new land, and we are not taking care of the land we have. The gentrification of rural Kentucky not only erodes the rural character so many people enjoy experiencing from their car, their bicycle or motorcycle, but it severs the connections people have with the land and with the agricultural sector.

Meanwhile, on my farm, in my old farmhouse, I tell stories. I tell my children stories as they dig in the dirt. As the light grows hazy at dusk, I wonder if there are ghosts flitting about, and I think about connections over the generations. 🍷



*Sandersville Road and Georgetown Road, 1949*



*Sandersville Road and Georgetown Road, 2020*

# How Do You Balance Neighborhood Change?

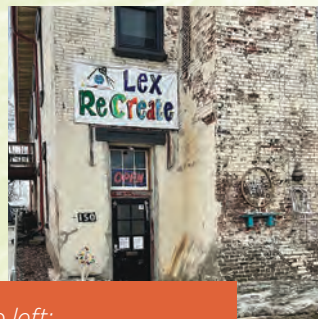


By Elizabeth Kostrub, University of Kentucky graduate program in Historic Preservation



The North Limestone area of Lexington has been undergoing considerable change for the last few years, leading to varied opinions and feelings. While some consider it community revitalization and a breath of fresh air, others cry “gentrification,” and others feel pushed out due to the limited affordability and accessibility of businesses and residences in the area. To further signify this transformation, the appellation “NoLi” has been adopted - following similar trends as seen in SoHo New York and Louisville’s NuLu neighborhoods. It will be interesting to note what other changes come with this new moniker.

The Greyline Station, an excellent example of adaptive reuse, is the focus of the “NoLi” controversy. Greyline Station was created out of an abandoned Greyline Bus Station. It appeared a non-profit called the NoLi CDC (North Limestone Community Development Corporation once heavily involved and now completely dissolved) was stepping in to help bring life to the North Limestone area by revitalizing the sleeping giant structure. Many residents watched as transitions began. Greyline Station is advertised as having permanent stores around the perimeter and a transitional centerpiece called Julietta Market.



*Clockwise from top left: Greyline Station Main Entrance | Pay what you can | Entry to LexRecreate | New Home for Rent in North Limestone Neighborhood*

The Julietta Market is a non-profit entity run as a mini market, allowing a variety of vendors who typically have jobs outside of Julietta Market to pursue dreams of entrepreneurship during set hours on the weekends. It is quite an impressive creation. On weekends, the stalls are filled with vendors and frequent events are held. The smell of food cooking often wafts through the air and the ever-popular North Lime Donuts frequently has a line outside its door in the morning hours.

As a non-local looking in, it is delightful and well thought out. Those who have lived there for quite some time give it mixed reviews. One person told me they liked the idea of Greyline but once they started visiting the shops, they realized they couldn’t afford anything there. It was boutique donuts and specialty treats, places that they could splurge on occasionally if they had

the funds. There used to be a grocery store at Greyline, but it had to close because the owners couldn’t afford the rent. Simultaneously, other small neighborhood markets have closed because they are being priced out by the rent prices.

In the residential area of North Limestone, people are being hit with unexpected rent hikes just like within Greyline. Years ago, this neighborhood used to be a great option for blue-collar workers, young adults, or low-income families to buy their first home. Today, however, it has become an area primed for real estate flipping: 750 square foot shotgun homes (originally marketed as affordable housing for artists) are now being marketed as 2 bedroom rentals and rent for roughly \$1250 (dropped at the time of viewing to \$1150 due to length of time listed) – excluding other associated costs. Worse yet, some renters currently living around the area are being asked to accept a \$400 rent increase once their lease is up or face a 3-month eviction grace period. Those living in neighboring areas say they are growing nervous watching what is happening in North Limestone because they fear their neighborhood could become the next targeted for community revitalization.

Not all change has been met with complaint and heartache. Lex ReCreate (The Lex Center for Creative Reuse) is a community craft shop filled with donated supplies that opened in August 2022. The concept behind Lex ReCreate is to give back to the community and prevent items that are still usable from being thrown into the landfill. As of December 2022, they have prevented 10,000 pounds of materials from being tossed into landfills. They have a recommended pay scale, but it operates on a pay-what-you-can basis. They accept cards, cash, and Venmo. Lex ReCreate also runs a variety of workshops and frequently invites schools to bring students to have class at their studio. In an area that seems to be outpricing its inhabitants quickly, this is a welcomed addition.

Overall, the culture and the makeup of North Limestone are shifting. The aesthetic is changing, and people are taking notice. 🍵



# Working Toward a More Just Landscape



L: 1887; R: 1939;  
Lexington residence by race,  
Photos from John Kellogg  
Collection in author's  
personal collection

Historic Preservation has a complicated and sometimes troubled relationship with Gentrification. The appearance of a plaque celebrating Historic Preservation in certain neighborhoods of any city can signal more than individual support for historic preservation. It also can be a harbinger of neighborhood change. Gentrification as coined in the 1960s described the changing class structure of London's Victorian residential quarters, first abandoned by the middle class (Gentry) to working class residents, and then re-claimed a hundred years later, resulting in displaced poorer residents. Changing neighborhood class structure and physical displacement were its defining characteristics.

When gentrification “came” to the USA shortly after that, its class nature was complicated by race. Many US cities’ old central residential areas have been abandoned by white suburban flight, economically marginalized by disinvestment, cordoned off by real estate manifestations of Jim Crow through redlining and steering, and targeted for destruction by the public health movement, the Interstate Highway act, and Urban Renewal. Many of those old downtowns had a Black majority in a residential pattern that cut across race and class boundaries. Their eventual re-discovery for “upscale” residential redevelopment also meant a cultural or social displacement as neighborhoods changed and communities were dissolved.

And Lexington complicates that maelstrom of disinvestment and displacement. The historical geography of Lexington’s urban core displays shifting micro-apartments of class and race, almost on a block-by-block basis. This pattern is evident in maps of Black and White residents in the currently-being-redeveloped North Limestone corridor from 1887 and 1939. Here yellow/pink indicate majority White residents; purple/gray majority Black residents. This pattern raises interesting questions about what “neighborhood” and “community” meant then as well as now. And it helps to explain the mix of architectural styles – from grand Federal, Greek revival, and Victorian houses to more modest shotguns and bungalows. Gentrification ultimately is about power, and power dynamics have been complicated in Lexington’s urban landscape for a long time.

We will continue to celebrate the richness of our national architectural archive

Richard Schein is a Professor of Geography at the University of Kentucky specializing in US historical geography and the American Landscape, including racialized landscapes. A member of the Blue Grass Trust Board of Directors, Dr. Schein regularly writes the “Featured Plaque House” articles for this magazine.



Midway House built by Harry Anderson

as we have in Midway where Harry Anderson, a Black carpenter, built several houses despite being blind. Or on Fifth Street in Lexington where Zirl Palmer, a Black pharmacist, operated a pharmacy and thrived even when he and his business were deemed “out of place.” But addressing Gentrification is a complicated task that requires more than simply acknowledging and redressing absence and racism in our preservation practices.

At this moment the Bluegrass Trust joins the National Trust in the quest to define a historic preservation that works for more equitable neighborhoods. For us that includes knowledge and education. We remind you to visit, for example, our website “East End Walking Tour” that includes stories about the post-Civil War Black enclaves of Gunntown, Kinkeadtown, and Goodloetown; or the story of Edward Dudley Brown, a once-enslaved horseman whose business acumen eventually produced Kentucky Derby winners. And by telling the stories we hope to also hear all the voices of Central Kentucky and the ways in which historic preservation might work toward a more just landscape. 🌱

# Metamorphosis on Johnson Avenue

In 2004, Travis Robinson lived in what he described as a “super contemporary house” in suburban Lexington. He rented, and knew the owner wanted to sell at some point, so he figured he had better start looking for another place to live.

He was young, unmarried, and worked for LexArts on North Mill Street and the idea of living in the up and coming downtown was exciting. Travis had a friend who lived on Johnson Avenue, between Fourth and Fifth streets.

“A notorious drug dealer lived across the street, in this house,” Travis said. “We watched drug deals happen all the time. A car would drive up, rev the engine; somebody would come out, then go back in. The car would roar off and there would come another one. It was like a drive-through.”

The drug house was a rental, came up for sale, and Travis bought it in 2005. It was owned by Laurella Lederer, a downtown developer who had done some work on the property. The drug dealer, who was renting, refused to leave until Travis got the city to issue an order requiring him to move.

Johnson Avenue was lined with vacant houses and rental properties lived in by vagrants, drug dealers and drug users, prostitutes, and criminals. More than once, Travis saw a major police event occur with police cars racing to the street, lights flashing, sirens screaming.

Travis said he bought 425 Johnson Avenue because “It was affordable. I could actually purchase it. It was close to downtown where everything was walkable. And it was solid brick, so I thought, this house has good



*Travis Robinson bought 425 Johnson Avenue in 2005. The street was developed in the early 1900s. Robinson's house was built in 1910. He lived in an extremely contemporary house in the suburbs before buying this historic house near downtown.*



*Travis Robinson in the living room with his dog. Travis took down walls and opened up the left half of the downstairs into a spacious, sunny living room and kitchen.*

bones.” He was skilled at making repairs and knew he could do much of the work himself.

Jennifer, his girlfriend at the time (now his wife) could only roll her eyes. “Travis thought this was a really cool house and a cool street. I thought it was insane. But we weren’t married at the time, so I thought, go for it,” she said.

The historic brick house built in 1910 looked charming, but much had to be done before they could move in. Travis rented a house three doors away, making it convenient for him to work on his new house when he had time, and to act as general contractor overseeing work he had to hire out.

The south side of the bungalow bowed out and had to be taken down from top to bottom, brick-by-brick, work Travis did himself, but brick masons were hired for the rebuild. Two-thirds of the girders supporting the floor and the central part of the house were rotted and had to be replaced. Ceiling joists needed replacing.

Jennifer and Travis married and lived in the house he was renting. As he worked on 425 Johnson, Travis was finishing his master’s thesis in art history at the University of Kentucky and had started a new job as registrar and curator of exhibits at the International Museum of the Horse at the

Kentucky Horse Park. Jennifer became pregnant and they pushed to make their new house livable, moving on July 1, 2007.

Over the past 20 years the quality of life on Johnson Avenue has completely changed as individuals and young couples bought and restored houses. Houses are brightly painted. Yards tidy. Lederer and her daughter bought numerous houses, restored and sold them. With one or two exceptions, all the houses are owner occupied. The street feels safe even at night when neighbors are out walking, stopping to talk with each other; kids ride their bikes.

After almost two decades of non-stop projects, the Robinsons remain enthusiastic about their historic house, Johnson Avenue, and downtown life. "This house feels very much a part of me at this point," Travis said. "If there's a problem, I know the 'why' and what the solution is."

Inside walls were taken down and windows added to create a spacious, sunny, contemporary living room and kitchen. The attic was finished into two bedrooms and a bath for their daughters Lila, a junior at Bryan Station High School, and Hazel, a freshman at the STEAM Academy. Asphalt that paved over the backyard has been dug up, replaced by raised vegetable beds and a beautiful coop Travis built for their 25 chickens.



Today, Jennifer works for the Veterans Administration. Travis is an exhibit designer working for Phoenix

Rising and has a business called The Happy Farmer that sells chick-keeping supplies.

"I can't imagine moving into a house already redone. I would be so bored," he said, laughing. What he has learned is "If your heart is in it, any house, no matter how bad the condition, can be saved." 🌱



*Top R: The house originally had only a pulldown staircase that accessed the unfinished attic. Travis built stairs so workmen and materials could get to the second floor as they finished the former attic. Original pine floors in the front part of the house were saved and refinished.*



*Middle R: The kitchen has original brick walls. Kitchen cabinets came from Travis's parents' house.*



*Bottom R: The living room is furnished in mid-century modern.*

*Top L: The house is heated with geothermal heat and a wood burning stove in the living room.*

*Bottom L: Travis made this hanging light using the drum from a washing machine.*



“In November 2022, The Blue Grass Trust adopted six crucial goals as part of the strategic plan. Over the next three years, these goals will be used to guide our advocacy, outreach, service, as well as the use of our resources.”

### MISSION

The Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation is Central Kentucky’s resource for protecting, revitalizing, and promoting our historic places, enhancing the quality of life for all.

### VISION

Our vision is to live in a community that honors its diverse cultural legacies through historic preservation.

### VALUES

**Education:** We will share the value of historic preservation with Central Kentucky.

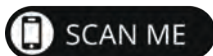
**Service:** We will serve as a resource and guide to help Central Kentuckians in their historic preservation efforts.

**Advocacy:** We will lend our voice to historic preservation efforts in our Central Kentucky communities.

### GOALS

- 1) Be a trusted resource for historic preservation in Central Kentucky, widely recognized for our expertise, professionalism, and innovation.
- 2) Be an effective catalyst in helping Central Kentuckians understand, value, and engage in historic preservation.
- 3) Be equitable and just in all aspects of our work.
- 4) Be excellent stewards of our limited resources.
- 5) Protect Latrobe’s Pope Villa.
- 6) Reimagine the use of Hopemont.

Read *A Toolbox for Saving Ourselves: The Kentucky State Historic Preservation Plan 2023-2027* by scanning here.



# Preservation Planning in the Bluegrass




*Beth Bell of Trek Advancement works with the Board of Directors in a strategic planning session.*

The past few months have been important times of preservation planning in Kentucky. The Blue Grass Trust and the Kentucky Heritage Council have both recently adopted new directional documents to help navigate preservation efforts in our Commonwealth.

After numerous work sessions and interviews with critical stakeholders, the Blue Grass Trust Board of Directors recently adopted a new organization-wide strategic plan to help guide and focus our important work as preservation facilitators in Central Kentucky. Building on the Blue Grass Trust’s legacy of innovation and impact, we are committed to being Central Kentucky’s resource for protecting, revitalizing, and promoting our historic places, enhancing the quality of life for all.

In November 2022, The Blue Grass Trust adopted six crucial goals as part of the strategic plan. Over the next three years, these goals will be used to guide our advocacy, outreach, service, as well as the use of our resources.

Dovetailing beautifully with our focus on preservation in Central Kentucky, the Kentucky Heritage Council also released its latest statewide preservation plan, giving preservation organizations a great new toolbox of information and recommendations. The statewide preservation plan is, to use the words of Craig Potts, State Historic Preservation Officer and Advisory Board member of the Blue Grass Trust, “meant to be a practical toolbox for Kentuckians to rely upon as they undertake preservation activities locally.”

Together, both plans will help the Blue Grass Trust better reach that ultimate goal of all preservationists, to ensure the tangible and intangible benefits of preservation are accessible to everyone. 

# A Successful Season for the Hopemont Lecture Series

In the last issue of *Preservation Matters*, we reported on the kickoff lecture “Benjamin Gratz and the Soul of Lexington” by Dr. Jeremy Popkin of the 2022-23 Hopemont Lecture Series. This lecture series highlights the diverse stories and innovative storytellers who make Kentucky History so exciting, and Dr. Popkin did not disappoint.

In November, actor, author, and theater historian Kevin Dearing took to the stage with his lecture “The Best One Night Stand in America: The Rich Theatrical History of Lexington, Kentucky, 1808-1918.” Through his abundant knowledge and humorous wit, Dearing shared the history of how Lexington, Kentucky became home to the first professional theatre west of the Alleghenies in 1808. With railroads expanding, Lexington was a convenient stop on “the road” for many of the great actors and actresses of the century. Its theatres survived economic downturns, threats of censorship, outcries in the name of morality, crooked managers, epidemics, and the Civil War, but then came motion pictures. With their advent, Lexington’s fame as the “Best One Night Stand” on the touring circuit faded into the footlights.

Of course, new venues and new actors came to town, but Lexington’s glorious theatrical ghosts hover in history.



*Kevin Dearing discussing his own family's theatrical past*



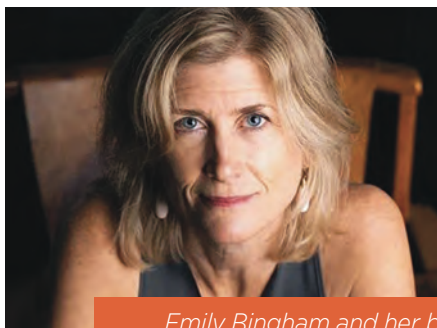
In February, in cooperation with the University of Kentucky Preservation Program, we were joined by Dr. Maegen Rochner, assistant professor of Geographic and Environmental Sciences at the University of Louisville, for the lecture “Exploring Kentucky History Through Tree Rings.” Rochner explored Kentucky history through patterns in tree rings hidden in local forests, structures, and artifacts. During this interactive lecture, Dr. Rochner discussed the basics of tree-ring science and its various applications, with examples and case studies from Kentucky. This lecture introduced many to the field of tree-ring science and its impact on local human and environmental history, leaving the audience with a deeper understanding of how trees inform the past.



*Dr. Maegen Rochner explaining Kentucky history through tree rings*



The 2022-23 Hopemont Lecture Series wrapped in April with Dr. Emily Bingham’s presentation of her new book *My Old Kentucky Home* where she shared the context of her research work for her personal and incisive biography of one of America’s most iconic melodies. Casting an unflinching eye on our cultural heritage could lead to the promise of a reckoning for denying the realities of slavery.



*Emily Bingham and her book, which was the topic of April's Hopemont Lecture*



The 2022-2023 Hopemont Lecture Series had quite a run, featuring important and diverse histories we were proud to help share with at-capacity audiences. The Hopemont Lecture returns in September, and we hope you will join us. 🎓

# Highlights of Another deTours Season



*The December deTour met in the 2nd Christian Church in Midway.*

The Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation's deTours program is perhaps the organization's most visible program. The Trust organizes events to bring people into important spaces and places they usually do not have the opportunity to explore. BGT's deTours are held the first Wednesday of every month and are always free and open to the public.

Since BGT deTours formed in 2011, we have opened the doors to more than 100 deTour experiences, sharing what makes our part of Kentucky interesting and unique. 2022 - 2023 has been an exceptional year. Since our last issue of

*Preservation Matters*, we have been to the following sites.

In December, the Blue Grass Trust held an in-person deTour of Midway's Historic African American Churches, including Second Christian Church, Pilgrim Baptist Church, and St. Matthew A.M.E. Church. We learned about their congregations' rich histories within the town and their current efforts to preserve these landmarks by forming the Midway African American Churches Preservation Fund, which you can learn about by visiting their webpage at <https://bgcf.givingfuel.com/>.

Kicking off 2023, we returned to the virtual deTour format for winter and explored the grounds of Mt. Brilliant Farm in January. It was established in 1774 as a land grant

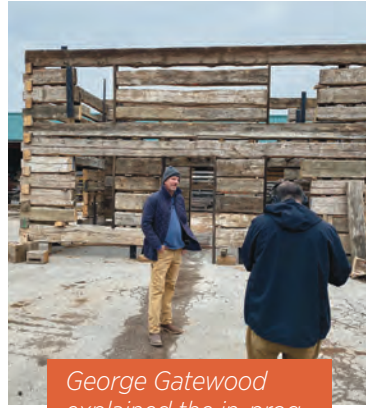


*The January virtual deTour explored the grounds of historic Mt. Brilliant Farm, including Russell Cave.*

from then-Gov. Thomas Jefferson, when Kentucky was still part of Virginia. The farm has a long and storied history that includes breeding champion racehorses such as the legendary Man O'War, serving as a stop on the underground railroad, and even being the location of an assassination attempt against Cassius Clay.

For the February deTour, we revisited our friends at Longwood Antique Woods for an in-depth virtual deTour. Owner George Gatewood took us through the company's shop to show us the business of reclaiming and recycling old wood for floors, doors, bars, beams, furniture art, and much more.

The antique wood in Longwood Antique Woods collections is salvaged from historic barns, warehouses, and cabins slated for destruction throughout the Bluegrass



*George Gatewood explained the in-progress construction of a cabin using salvaged material gathered from dilapidated cabins.*

region. During this particular deTour, we got a sneak peek of one of George's projects, building a cabin for one of his clients using salvaged material gathered from dilapidated cabins around Central Kentucky.

In March, we went to Old Morrison Hall at Transylvania University to visit Rafinesque's crypt. We learned the history of one of Kentucky's oldest colleges and the legacy of Prof. Constantine Samuel Rafinesque, whose tomb rests beneath the steps of the building.

For April, we made our way to the great outdoors, Floracliff Nature Sanctuary, to learn more about their mission to care for the sanctuary property, to ensure its protection as a nature preserve and to promote public education about the natural history of the Inner Bluegrass region. We also were fortunate enough to enjoy a short Golden Hour hike to their education center, which has undergone adaptive reuse from what once was Camp Trail's End Lodge, a girl's camp that operated from 1913-1921.



*The crowd for the March deTour at Old Morrison on the Transylvania campus learning about the building's history from Rhyann Conyers from Transy*

We are excited for deTours to come and hope you will join both in-person and virtually as we continue to explore and learn about places that make the Bluegrass special. 🌿



*The Trail's End Lodge was part of the April deTour to Floracliff Nature Sanctuary. The mission of the sanctuary is to promote public education about the natural history of the Inner Bluegrass region.*

# Style and Substance

You may have noticed some aesthetic changes to this edition of *Preservation Matters*, but the visual changes are more than just a new look.

Since September 2022, the Blue Grass Trust has worked with The Brand Thread, a brand marketing and business consulting agency in Lexington, to envision ways we can better communicate our important mission to all of Central Kentucky.



*The Brand Thread staff members meet with the Blue Grass Trust staff in Jonathan Coleman's office.*

“Half the battle of historic preservation is simply making people aware of preservation’s benefits and that the Blue Grass Trust is here to make preservation an easy, feasible, achievable outcome, no matter the challenges,” said Executive Director Jonathan Coleman. “We wanted to build on the great legacy of the Blue Grass Trust, especially our quintessential BGT Plaques, while also emphasizing our warm, modern, welcoming, teamwork-driven culture and dedication to service. The Brand Thread really helped us hit the mark!”

Caroline Cassin, Founder and President of The Brand Thread, explains how the branding process works and why it is important: “For the Blue Grass Trust, we developed contemporary branding and website designs that embody the organization’s inviting warmth and proven strength, anchored in its mission, vision, and values. From there, we created the visual components, such as the logo, color

**“We wanted to build on the great legacy of the Blue Grass Trust, especially our quintessential BGT Plaques, while also emphasizing our warm, modern, welcoming, teamwork-driven culture and dedication to service. The Brand Thread really helped us hit the mark!”**

scheme, typography, and website, that showcase the Blue Grass Trust’s core attributes and bring its personality to life.

Working closely with the Blue Grass Trust team and Board has deepened my understanding, appreciation, and advocacy for preservation. I am grateful for their commitment to this work and the positive impact they have on Central Kentucky.”

The branding work began with a series of workshops that helped the staff and volunteer

leadership determine how to best convey our mission to the public through both written and visual elements. For example, the new logo places the name of the organization in a circle around our famous BGT emblem, evoking how the Blue Grass Trust strives to connect Central Kentuckians to their past and the future possibilities preservation provides. This new brand direction is especially important as the Blue Grass Trust increases its digital presence with its new website. Having a user-friendly digital home allows us to share our mission better than ever before.



*Jackson and Missy work with Kari Carroll of The Brand Thread prioritizing ideas during a branding exercise.*

Such in-depth, sophisticated work takes serious investment, and the Blue Grass Trust is grateful to VisitLex for their generous underwriting of the branding work and website build. Their investment made this exercise possible. 🌟

## Blue Grass Trust Advisory Board

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## The Blue Grass Trust welcomes Missy Pienkowski as Office and Development Manager.

Missy joined the Blue Grass Trust in January and has quickly become an essential part of the BGT team, filling the position with energy and commitment. Her administrative background prepares her for the position, which puts her in contact with old and new members, her face and voice often being the first connection for people seeking information about the Blue Grass Trust.

With a bachelor's degree in business communication from the University of Kentucky and a licensure from the Certified Nonprofit Professional program at UK, Missy has worked with other nonprofits, including God's Pantry and Refuge for Women, and appreciates the work such organizations do. She is excited at the opportunity to learn more about historic Lexington, preservation, and to help the Blue Grass Trust grow its membership.

A Lexington native and graduate of the University of Kentucky, where her father is a professor, Missy is familiar with Lexington and its history and is becoming more knowledgeable of the importance of preserving that history through her work with the Blue Grass Trust. "I really do have an interest in history. I feel like I'm always learning something new here. What I'm learning is challenging me to do my own research. That's exciting for me."

Missy has put her Spanish minor degree from UK to use during three mission trips to Colombia, where she was involved in a program serving orphans. In her university studies, she not only wanted to learn the language, but also was interested in Spanish literature and culture. She realizes the Blue Grass Trust audience is certainly different from the audience she served in her mission work, but she is developing an appreciation for the Blue Grass Trust's mission. She appreciates Jackson Osborne's role, calling him a "walking

history book." She also enjoys working with Jon Coleman, the executive director, citing his "passion for his field and his great ability to share that knowledge."

Missy and her husband, Brandon, are Lexington residents, along with their pound rescue dog named Zephyr. The water bottle on Missy's desk labeled "Dog Mom" is proof of her commitment to rescuing and caring for Zephyr. She confesses she would adopt every dog in the pound if she could!

Welcome to Missy – a great addition to the Blue Grass Trust team! 🍷

