

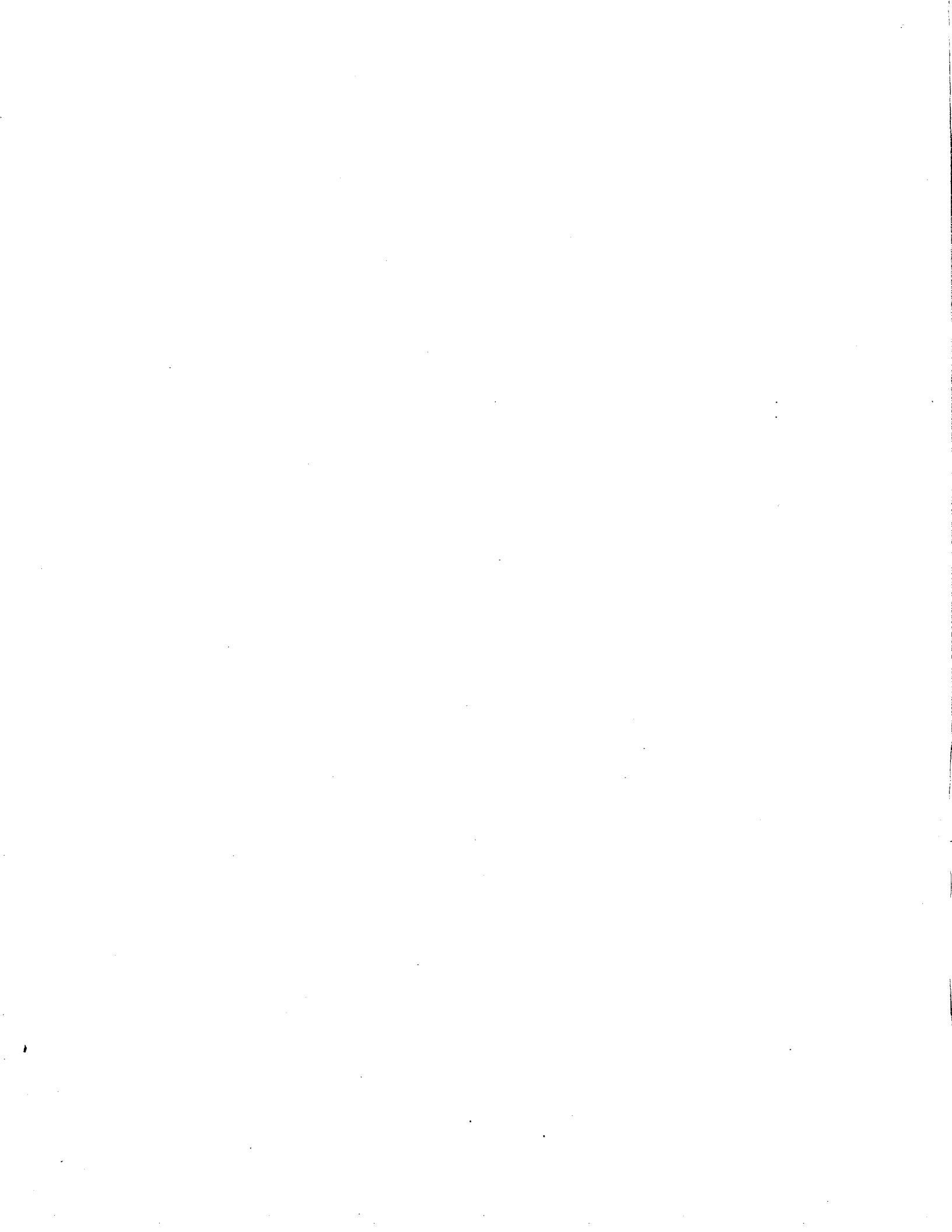
Downtown Building Study

An Assessment of the Urban Characteristics of Downtown
Lexington, Kentucky

Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government
Department of Housing and Community Development
Division of Historic Preservation

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I. Introduction/Overview

Introduction

The physical character of Downtown Lexington, Kentucky is comprised of two very different parts. One part, rooted in the 19th century, shows the physical development of the commercial downtown as a center for business in Central Kentucky. The second part is defined by the presence of the automobile as a major transportation source and is therefore more closely aligned to 20th century development patterns. The Downtown Building Study is an effort to delineate the characteristics of these two important facets of the Downtown community and to draw conclusions about opportunities which exist to further refine the relationship between these two physical environments. The main focus of this report is an assessment of blocks of buildings in the Downtown core. Following this analysis, a number of issues are delineated which impact the potential re-use of historic buildings and the creative use of open spaces in the area. These issues are followed by a number of recommendations to facilitate the re-use of buildings and spaces, as defined appropriate by the Downtown Building Study Committee.

Downtown Building Study Committee Named

In September 1993, Mayor Pam Miller announced a Downtown Building Study to be completed by the Urban County Government. Mayor Miller's intent in providing for this study was to address the very real concern of the preservation of historic resources in Downtown Lexington. Mayor Miller stated that the Downtown Building Study was, in part, to "avoid another Ben Snyder Block situation." This committee was put in place to deliberate upon the various buildings and sites in the Downtown core. The Downtown Building Study Committee has the charge of communicating with the broader Downtown Small Area Plan Committee in providing information regarding buildings and sites, their appropriate uses and the relationship of these buildings and sites in a design sense in the Downtown core.

One purpose of the study is to provide data to the various government agencies and private developers with interest in pursuing rehabilitation or new construction in the Downtown area. The second purpose of the study is to provide a framework for evaluating the various buildings and spaces in the Downtown. A third purpose of the study is to provide the rationale and recommendations for the re-use of existing buildings and for the use of open space within the Downtown area.

Downtown Small Area Plan

Although named as an independent body, the Downtown Building Study Committee is well aware that the important information contained within this report will greatly aid the formulation of issues and actions plans by the Downtown Small Area Plan Committee (DSAPC). The DSAPC addresses much broader issues than the defining of character and the recommendations for re-use of buildings and spaces. In this relationship, the Downtown Building Study Committee will present information to the DSAPC for their consideration. Information garnered from this dialogue will then be incorporated into this document.

Downtown, the Center of the Bluegrass Region

Lexington is located within the heart of the rolling hills of the Bluegrass region of Central Kentucky. Lexington is both the symbol and the physical center for this region -- an idea which is reflected in the physical development of the community, including its radial, umbilical-cord-like roads to surrounding communities in adjoining counties, its focused commercial development along three primary streets Downtown, and the compact nature of the core of commercial buildings located Downtown. The community is further noted for its wealth of historic resources, mostly in an area concentrated inside New Circle Road, although a great number of historic structures stand in what was and what is rural Fayette County. These historic resources are mixed with more modern buildings and with open space throughout the community. The urban built resources are of two types -- commercial and residential.

Commercial

The Lexington community has relatively few historic commercial structures standing, mostly due to rapid growth in the Downtown core in the late 1950s and the resulting Urban Renewal Program demolitions, the subsequent improvements along the Vine Street Corridor and in the Civic Center area, and the demolitions which resulted from private development in the 1970s and 1980s. The resulting commercial core of the Downtown is quite fragmented -- new buildings standing next to old, large buildings next to small, residential buildings next to commercial buildings, etc. This didactic character of the commercial downtown is the most prevalent characteristic in defining the commercial structures within the community. This character of this commercial core is the main purpose of this study.

Residential

The residential areas which surround this commercial core are a very different story -- they are the "glue" which binds together the urban fabric of Lexington. The residential neighborhoods which surround the commercial downtown are greatly diverse -- representing residential development in a variety of patterns for a period of more than two hundred years since the founding of the community. This residential character is more carefully described in section IV of this document.

Downtown Building Study Boundaries

Because the Downtown Building Study Committee recognized the integral relationship between the commercial Downtown core and its adjoining residential areas, the committee opted to include a broader area in the study area. However, recognizing the constraints of time and resources, the DBS Committee worked to develop two levels of study -- a broad brush/overview combined with a block-by-block assessment for specific areas of the study. The Downtown Building Study boundaries are Third Street on the north, Euclid Avenue and Bolivar Street on the south, Woodland Avenue and Midland Avenue on the east, and Newtown Pike and the Southern Railroad line on the west. Correspondingly, the residential areas which received a broad brush evaluation are in the four quadrants -- northeast, northwest, southeast and southwest -- adjacent to the Downtown core. A map delineating these various areas is included in section IV of this document.

II. Evaluating Buildings and Spaces



Evaluating Buildings and Spaces

The Downtown Building Study Committee debated at great length about the mechanism to evaluate buildings and spaces in the Downtown area. Initially, criteria were developed which addressed the historic character of the buildings in the Downtown area. The committee and the consultant concluded that these criteria should be modified to address the character of all buildings and spaces in the Downtown area. The significant issue which becomes apparent is that the assessment of the character of the commercial core necessitated an agreement on the part of the DBS Committee as to the various components of the urban environment and their level of importance in understanding the development of the community and in providing a framework for current and future development in the Downtown.

For purposes of this study, buildings and spaces are categorized as follows:

Outstanding

These properties are of extreme importance architecturally and/or historically. They have undergone relatively little alteration since they were built, or the alterations themselves have gained significance.

Significant

Also of importance architecturally and/or historically. Significant buildings and spaces retain important design features and contribute to either the historic or modern scale of the Downtown. Some significantly altered buildings and spaces were placed in this category because of overriding historical importance.

Contributing

Buildings and spaces which contribute to the character of the Downtown and which contribute to the context and development themes, but which may lack individual distinction. Buildings and spaces were placed in this category when alterations diminished their architectural integrity without altering the overall character of the building or space, nor compromising its major significant design features. In most cases, when altered, alterations have been major.

Non-Contributing

Buildings and spaces which do not contribute to the character of the Downtown.

The following additional questions are useful in assessing the significance of each resource:

If the property is significant for its architectural or aesthetic qualities, what are those qualities and why are they significant? Does the property retain enough of its significant design to convey these qualities? If not, how have additions or alterations contributed to or detracted from the significance of the resource?

If the property is significant for its association with historic events, what are the historically significant events or patterns of activity associated with the property? Does the existing building reflect in a tangible way these important historical associations? How have alterations or additions contributed to or detracted from the resource's ability to convey the feeling and association of the significant historic period?

If the property is significant because of its association with an individual, how long and when was the individual associated with the property and during what period in the individual's life? What are the significant contributions of the individual? Are there other resources in the vicinity also have strong associations with the individual?

How does the property compare with other resources in Lexington, the region and the state?

Additional Criteria

Following this initial assessment of significance for individual structures and sites, the committee and the consultant determined that various buildings and open spaces in the Downtown should be subject to an additional level of evaluation on a block-by-block basis. This second level of evaluation is to help the committee assess these various buildings and sites in the broader physical context of Downtown. These evaluation criteria also touch on the type of building and its ability to be re-used.

These additional criteria are:

Type

Is the building/block a commercial, industrial, institutional, residential, mixed, or other type of structure?

Relationship

How does the building/block relate to adjacent and surrounding buildings/blocks? Is there pedestrian and vehicular access? Do these coordinate or are the types of access in conflict? Is the building/block in proximity to amenities or to other facilities? Is the building/block in proximity to open spaces, surface parking areas or development sites?

Re-Use

Is the building/block capable of sustaining adaptive uses? If so, what types of uses are appropriate?

Condition

Is the building/block currently occupied and in sound condition? If not currently occupied, is the building/block in sound condition?

The Planning Context

Downtown Lexington has been an environment in which relatively little regulation has been imposed. The Downtown area is primarily zoned B-2A, an extremely permissive business zone with the important concept that parking requirements are much less stringent than in other zones throughout the community. The Downtown itself has been excluded from the Comprehensive Planning process in the last two decades. Instead, the Downtown area has been a "free for all" development opportunity. This lack of regulation has resulted in a greatly diverse physical character. Throughout the Downtown are 20+ story high rise buildings, 2-1/2 story residential buildings, large surface parking lots, old and new institutional buildings on a grand scale, and 19th century commercial buildings with empty upper stories. While the diversity of the physical environment of Downtown is viewed by some as a strength in the community, there are many disadvantages of a poorly defined center city. The current administration of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government, its various departments, divisions and programs, as well as the Mayor and Urban County Council, have initiated planning efforts and discussions about the Downtown to insure that the future growth of this highly visible and symbolic portion of the community is well thought out and responds to the needs of the community.

Character -- More than a Sum of It's Parts

The tone of some streets within the Downtown is set by the historic buildings which are located there. This is primarily the case around the Courthouse Square area north to Gratz Park, along Limestone from Short to Third Streets and along Main Street west of Limestone Street to the Courthouse. Outside of these areas, buildings heights and sizes vary considerably throughout the Downtown.

Historic Buildings

Most of the historic buildings (pre-1950) include structural divisions and decorative elements which break up their scale into smaller "human scale" components. There is a remarkable consistency in the architectural character of the facades of both older and newer buildings, whether large or small. The historic buildings have large storefront windows on the first floor facing the sidewalk. Above the first floor, windows of consistent size punctuate the facade, with masonry or cast-iron piers and columns separating them. These buildings have a highly decorative facade, fronting the main thoroughfare on which the building is located. These buildings also have a special base which distinguishes the lower floors from the upper floors. Many historic buildings have handsome ornamentation -- columns, column capitals, detailed cornices, stone or metal trim around windows and doors, carved decorative flowers, animals, human faces, etc. In block is where historic buildings remain intact, the rhythms of sun and shadow are consistent throughout the length of the street. As all of these older buildings are built up the sidewalk edge, the street has a consistent feeling of enclosure.

Modern Buildings

The modern buildings, ca. 1950 and later, are of a much larger scale. From six stories to more than thirty stories, these buildings incorporate windows of consistent size, often in strips at each floor level. Materials tend to be fairly monochromatic with most buildings including just a few building materials. Most modern buildings have little distinction between the base of the building and its upper floors. The buildings tend to be viewed in three dimensions--not just a facade adjacent to the sidewalk. There is little to no ornamentation incorporated into the design. Buildings are not built to the edge of the sidewalk. Often, parking garages or other types of pedestrian/vehicular conflicts exist in conjunction with these modern buildings.

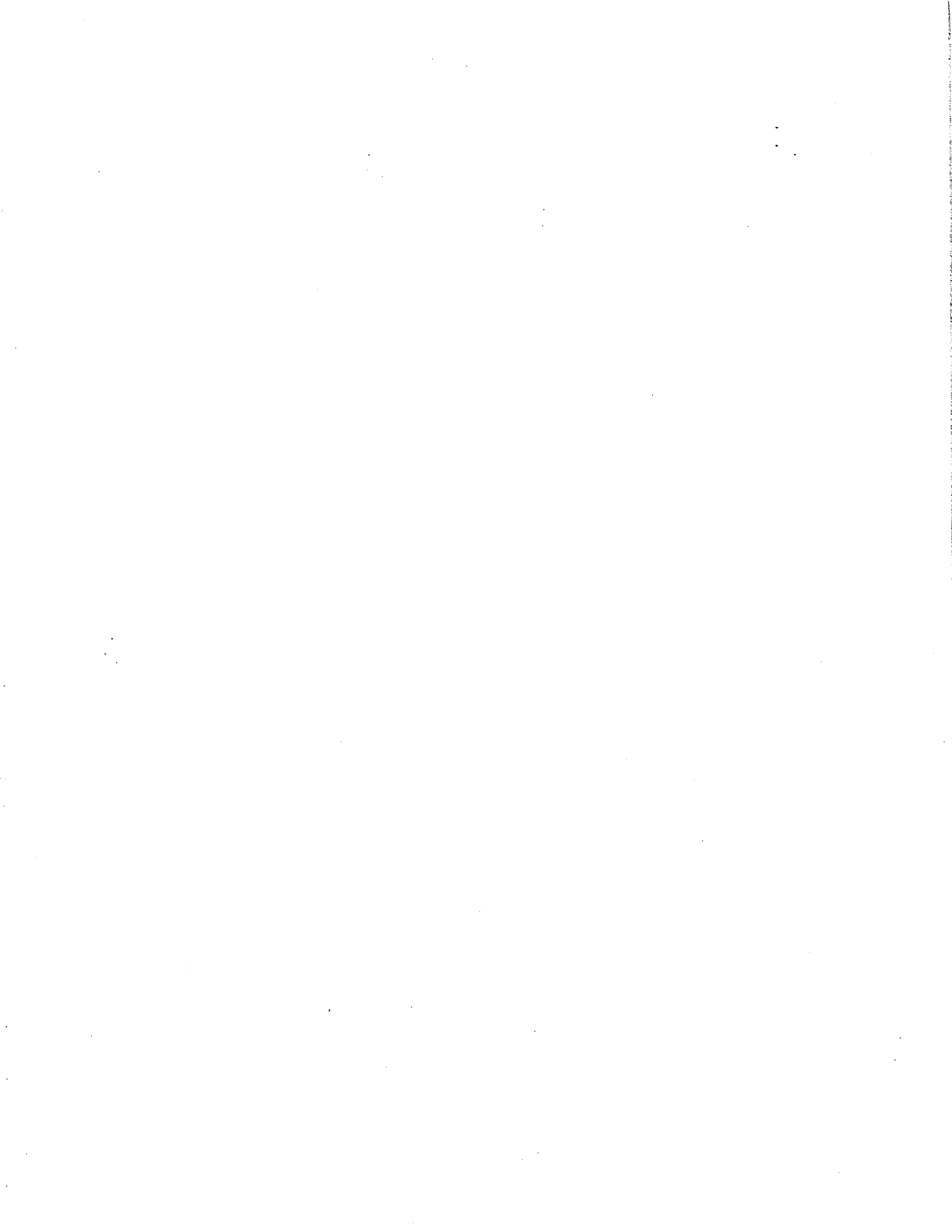
Open Spaces

There are a number of open areas within the Downtown area. Some are the result of government or private business intervention to provide parks in the urban environment. Examples include Thoroughbred Park, Phoenix Park, "Ben Snyder" Block Park, the Courthouse Square, and Triangle Park. To a lesser extent, pocket parks are included as part of larger building development. One example of this type of open space exists on the east and west sides of the Bank One building.

The majority of open space in the Downtown is comprised of surface parking areas and vacant development sites. Although found throughout the Downtown, the surface parking tends to be north of Short Street from Midland Avenue west to Broadway. Both large and small development sites are scattered throughout the Downtown. Both of these types of open spaces are extremely detrimental to the understanding of the community as an urban center. These vacant areas are gaps within the Downtown and should receive concerted study for appropriate infill construction.

The combination of historic buildings, new buildings, parks, surface parking lots, and empty development sites define the current character of Downtown Lexington. It is important to understand that it is the relationship among these various components which truly characterizes the physical environment -- the whole of the downtown is greater than the sum of its parts.

III. History of the Built Environment



How are "Historic Resources" Defined?

Criteria used in making determinations regarding the importance of buildings and groups of buildings were established nearly 30 years ago in the field of historic preservation and are generally accepted in communities throughout the United States. Most historic buildings of 50 years of age or more are eligible either individually, or more commonly as part of a larger district, for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of the nation's historical, architectural, archaeological and cultural resources. Lexington-Fayette County's criteria for local designation are very similar to these National Register criteria.

Because Downtown Lexington is an equal combination of old and new buildings, it is impossible to evaluate only the historic buildings and have the same sense of the Downtown area. As a result, the National Register or local designation criteria are only a benchmark for older buildings. Indeed the problem is how to extend the same evaluation to both historic and modern buildings so that there is a more consistent and logical approach to the definition of urban design characteristics in the community. It is possible to use the "historic" criteria by modifying the wording of these criteria so that they address both old and new construction. All structures in the study area have been evaluated by assessing:

- 1) the **design integrity** of the building --
 - a) the building is in original location of construction;
 - b) the building is an example of design in a style associated with development in Lexington;
 - c) the building is in its setting from the time of construction or if the setting has changed, the setting remains in character with the building;
 - d) the building is constructed of materials which define it as the product of a particular period of development in Lexington and those materials have been retained;
 - e) the building is well constructed and is a good example of construction industry techniques at the time of its construction.
- 2) the **association** of the building with important local events or persons;
- 3) the **architectural style, building type and construction period** of the building.

In understanding each structure and block of structures within the study areas, one must understand the development themes noted throughout these criteria. These themes -- are developed through research of an area's background and history -- its design and development context. A theme is a means of organizing and grouping properties based on elements such as environment, technology, development patterns and influences, or political activities that have influenced the evolution of an area through various periods of history. The styles of the buildings and the character of the Downtown area as a whole result from association with particular development patterns and influences. The following history outlines the major periods of growth and development in Downtown Lexington.

Institutions, Retailers Forge the 19th Century City -- 1770 to 1860

Lexington was a rural outpost of western Virginia at its founding in 1775. As a primary fort for the area, Lexington was quickly identified as the center of a thriving hunting and trading industry. It served as a destination for travelers from the east over the Allegheny mountains and later through the Ohio Valley. As the center settlement in rural Kentucky, a number of religious, educational and cultural institutions were founded in the community's settlement years. Lexington was officially established as a community by

act of the Virginia Assembly in 1782. The 710 acres within the town limits were a patchwork of grants, mostly made to servicemen who fought in the French and Indian War. The parcelling out of in-lots and out-lots within the community shaped the physical character of the city and continues to affect development and transportation routes throughout the Downtown today.

Buildings in the settlement period were constructed first of timber -- both log and frame structures were prevalent as buildings which clustered around the garrison along the Town Branch (today the site of the Radisson Plaza Hotel). Because of the readily available clay soil, Lexingtonians quickly turned to masonry as the main construction material in Lexington. Many buildings of the period 1790 to 1850 are constructed exclusively of this material. Remnants of these late 18th century and early 19th century structures are in evidence throughout the study area. Buildings rarely were above three stories in height and modest in scale due to the limitations of the builders and the building industry. An exception to these restrictions are the numerous pre-1850 church buildings concentrated in the Downtown. These church spires provide benchmarks against which the ever changing Downtown community can be measured -- first as both vantage points and landmarks for the community and now as a reminder of the scale of the community in the early 19th century.

Open space, in a planned sense, was uncommon in these years. It is only with the disastrous fire on the campus of Transylvania University (then between Third and Second Streets along Market Street) and the subsequent decision of the university to locate new headquarters at its current location, that the first park is developed. Gratz Park, as it is now known is a fortunate unplanned event. It is to be the only open space within the community serving in park use until the development of Woodland Park in the 1880s.

Development continues in a somewhat rectilinear pattern which resulted from the establishment of the in-lot/out-lot system. Crossing this rectilinear grid are a number of diagonal and somewhat diagonal roadways leading directly to satellite communities in the counties adjacent to Fayette County. These roadways gain significant importance as thoroughfares to and from the community and as lines dividing residential, commercial and industrial development throughout the community.

The Coming of the "Skyscraper" -- 1860 to 1920

Up until the time of the Civil War, Lexington experienced a slowing growth rate. Correspondingly, buildings were built in the same Federal-style, brick tradition. With the conclusion of the war, merchants in the Downtown area senses a need for redeveloping the community and, while retaining brick as a major building material, looked to the advent of steel and iron as a mechanism for increasing the capacity of brick to be employed in taller buildings. Thus, a number of early "skyscrapers" rising to some five stories in height were developed. These buildings served mostly mercantile uses, with shop spaces on the first floor and storage/office spaces combined with living quarters above. The buildings in this time period are mostly articulated in the Italianate style. This style is noted for highly decorative metal- and brick-work, usually surrounding doors, windows and at the tops and bottoms of buildings. As was the tradition in the founding years of the community, highly decorative facades sit directly along the sidewalk and front major thoroughfares. This building front is contrasted with a much plainer rear facade, where much of the unloading and service is concentrated.

The city boundaries increase in this period with the development of both a trolley and interurban system to transport passengers from nearby neighborhoods and nearby communities to the Downtown. The commercial and retail activity along Main Street

remains the heart of the thriving community and of the Central Kentucky area. A number of new institutions, particularly theatre and other entertainment venues are located within the Downtown in this time period. These cultural facilities complement the earlier cultural institutions of the settlement period of the community which earned Lexington the title "Athens of the West."

Following the introduction of the elevator and the skeletal steel frame to the building industry, taller and taller buildings were constructed throughout the nation. Lexington attempted to keep pace with this trend with the introduction of eight to fifteen story buildings, mostly concentrated in the Courthouse area. These buildings were built by banking concerns as evidence of the success of the community and as a symbol for each bank as a progressive institution of the new 20th century. These skyscrapers remained in Lexington, and in Kentucky, as its tallest buildings. At the same time, the remainder of the commercial core of the Downtown is characterized by the same 2-1/2 story to 3 story commercial structures along main roads. Residential development takes on a decidedly suburban flavor with the subdivision of farms and large tracts of land along the southern and eastern edge of the study area (i.e Ashland Park, Aylesford, Bell Court).

A Sleepy Town -- 1920 to 1955

Between the World Wars, Lexington's physical environment remained substantially unchanged. The characteristics of the previous period remain for the Downtown area -- with one important exception. As early as the late 1930s, the introduction of the automobile was affecting the physical environment of the community. Great energy and effort was expended in the widening of streets to accommodate travel and parking lanes. By the end of this period, a number of buildings were sacrificed to provide surface parking in the Downtown core. And by the end of this period, the public transportation system was all but defunct, leaving the automobile as the major source of transport throughout the community. At the end of World War II, suburban expansion continued in the community to the east and south. At this time, there was great effort expended to attract industry to the community to help balance the economy. City and county officials were successful in their search and by the late 1950's, Lexington had attracted major industry. This influx of people and business, combined with the growth of the community east and south, began to impact the Downtown as a physical environment.

Expansion and the Changing Downtown -- 1955 to present

Relatively few new buildings were constructed in the 1950s in the Downtown area, although many improvements were made to the historic buildings in the Downtown core. In the 1960s, \$9,500,000 was invested by the city government in improving the Downtown through the Urban Renewal program. This investment was made to remove the train tracks and to re-align the Vine Street corridor, opening this portion of the Downtown to development. In 1966, the Lexington Urban Renewal and Community Development Agency began operations in the area bounded by Midland Avenue, Patterson Street, Main Street and High Street. A number of structures were razed, several were rehabilitated and the way was paved for private development to submit plans for the long-awaited civic auditorium. By the mid-1970s, plans were officially underway for the construction of the 22 story Kincaid Towers and what was to become the Lexington Civic Center complex. Running apace with the development of modern skyscrapers and smaller contemporary buildings was the continued destruction of historic buildings as sites for surface parking.

The 1980s brought four significant building programs in the Downtown -- one historic preservation project, a small-scale specialty retail complex, an ambitious 30+ story skyscraper and a modern public library. These buildings are representative of the

various mechanisms which result in the built environment in Downtown. Victorian Square, a \$22 million rehabilitation project, incorporated 16 buildings on the block west of Broadway and bounded by Short, Main and Spring Streets. This project preserved original facades and some portions of the historic buildings in the block and provided retail, office and institutional space. Its sister project, adjacent to the east, Festival Market (The Market Place) was developed by the Webb Companies as a specialty retail complex to serve the convention and visitor trade in the Downtown. This building was constructed with an eye toward historicism, incorporating traditional horse barn elements into an urban setting. Brick again is used as the major building material. This is complemented with the use of large expanses of glass and the re-introduction of metal building elements. The Lexington Financial Center was constructed fronting both Main Street and Vine Street and is of a scale synonymous with the Vine Center, Radisson Plaza Hotel, Hyatt Regency Hotel and Kincaid Towers. Incorporating an all glass and metal facade, the blue-tinted building provides great contrast to the 1902 Fayette County Courthouse, located across Main Street to the north. Perhaps the most contextual of new buildings constructed in the Downtown in the 1980s, the Lexington Public Library is located adjacent to Phoenix Park east of Limestone Street. The Library is modestly scaled at five stories and echoes the building types, styles and decoration patterns found in the historic Downtown.

As Lexington continues to grow, and as the focus and purpose of the Downtown area changes, buildings will continue to be rehabilitated, demolished and new buildings will continue to be built. With the relatively open-ended development pattern in the community over the last 20 years, this development is likely to continue in a variety of patterns.

IV. Neighborhood Descriptions



Northwest

The Northside neighborhood is the main core of residential buildings to the northwest quadrant of the Downtown Building Study. The Northside includes a number of important residential streets, several early 20th century street-car suburbs and developments and Gratz Park. Portions of the Western Suburb neighborhood are also found in this quadrant.

Northside

The Northside neighborhood consists of most of the area within the northwest quadrant of the 19th century mile radius circular city limits of Lexington. Divided by natural, historic and visual barriers on all sides, the Northside is an entity of neighborhoods within a neighborhood with many characteristics of a self-contained town, yet interconnected with the city around it. The Northside consists almost entirely of juxtaposed blocks, many based on subdivisions of the original town outlots. These blocks vary greatly and show contrasting socio-economic, architectural, racial and urban character. Arranged in a recognizable pattern reflecting the continuing evolution of a primarily 19th century residential area, these diverse ingredients comprise a remarkably integrated whole. The Northside has a unique integrity and socio-economic range within a large and identifiable district. In the Northside, the primary streets form the major grid of the neighborhood, with secondary streets further subdividing large blocks. This two-layered street system is complemented by a series of alleys and byways, historically constructed for service access, some remaining in that use today. From these three thoroughfares, on a observer is able to see many facets of the neighborhood -- front door, back door, side door.

The Northside has been the home to many outstanding figures in Lexington's history and has been the home to a number of major institutions that earned Lexington the title "Athens of the West" in its settlement years. Several of these institutions, including Transylvania University and Sayre School, as well as some of the earliest established churches in the city survive in the Northside, most housed in 19th century structures of considerable architectural significance. The residential buildings similarly reflect the sequence of 19th and 20th century architectural styles, with representation of different stylistic fashions and of local variants of nationwide fads. Residential structures represent a complete range of residential scales and types, including fine local examples of Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Romanesque, Arts & Crafts structures, along with other species of mansions, middle class residences, shotgun styles houses, T-plan cottages, row and double row houses, and early apartment blocks. Retail buildings, corner stores, institutional buildings and other residential buildings in business use are sprinkled liberally throughout the neighborhood.

Within the neighborhood there are major examples of the work of nearly all of Lexington 19th century and early 20th century architects and designers. That there are no known examples of the work of non-Lexington architects in the Northside is notable, for it shows the community's preference for the employment of local designers. These designers combined several fashionable styles and produced architectural work in a distinctive manner which influenced much of Lexington and the Bluegrass region. It is the architecturally and historically significant key structures in the neighborhood, combined with the highly diverse range of housing styles and types, which so characteristically defines the Northside neighborhood of Lexington.

Gratz Park

Gratz Park has its beginnings in 1781 as Out Lot No. 6 when the town plat of Lexington was prepared at the order of the Virginia Assembly. In 1793, a group of Lexingtonians purchased Out Lot 6 for a seminary, later to become Transylvania University. On the land, they erected a two story building. In 1818, a handsome three story structure was built, replacing the older two story building. The 1818 building was designed by prominent early architect Matthew Kennedy. This building burned in 1829 and in 1833 the University moved across "The Lane" (now Third Street) where the majestic Greek Revival Morrison Hall was erected as its administrative headquarters. This building, still a prominent symbol in the community because of its history and location, is one of three National Historic Landmarks in Fayette County.

Howard Gratz leased Transylvania's old campus from the University in 1875 as a centennial park for the city of Lexington. He later had the park named for his father, Benjamin Gratz, who came to Lexington in the early 1800's and bought the house at the corner of New Street and Mill Street, adjacent to the park, as his residence. Benjamin Gratz was a member of a prominent Philadelphia family and was the patriarch of a long line of Gratz descendants who served the community as businessmen and women and in public service. The Gratz House, from 1824 until 1982, served as the Gratz family home for more than five generations. This Federal style structure is an imposing presence in the Gratz Park area. Several other Federal style houses face the park, including the Hunt-Morgan House, the Bodley-Bullock House, the Wickliffe House, and numerous Federal-style row houses along Market Street

Gratz Park is much more than the location of these three important Federal structures. It contains a wide variety of other buildings dating from the 1790s through the 1970s. When viewed as a whole, Gratz Park is very much a microcosm of the development of the Downtown area. Early Federal-style residential structures are located in the area. These structures are often, but not always, accompanied by walled gardens and yards. In subsequent years, the properties in the area were subdivided and mid- to late-19th century structures were constructed on this subdivided land. Remnants of University buildings are found in the park proper -- the "Old Kitchen" near the north end. The Lexington Public Library building was constructed ca. 1902 with funds from Andrew Carnegie and is reflective of the boosterism on the part of local office-holders at the turn of the century who ensured the construction of this library facility.

Holding the center of attention is the open space of the Park itself. Often the site of important activities and public events both past and present, Gratz Park provides a rare open space which has been enjoyed by many and which gives this sub-neighborhood a unique character in context with the Lexington community.

Western Suburb

The area west of Lexington's commercial core was called the Western Suburb when it was opened for development in the early 19th century. There are two log structures within the neighborhood remaining from the early days of development. There are a large number of Greek revival town houses, which are highly indicative of "suburban" residential development of the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s. As a result of the Western Suburb neighborhood's proximity to the Downtown, many tradesmen built or bought houses in the area in order to live close to their businesses. Samuel McMeekin who resided at 592 West Short Street operated a machine shop and carding factory on Short Street in the 1840s. Abraham Drake owned a rope-walk just west of his property in this area and Peter Elliot had a wagon maker's shop on property at the northwest corner of Main and Georgetown Streets directly behind his residence.

Names of distinguished local citizens are found in the deeds to Western Suburb properties. Mary Todd Lincoln's family was associated with the property at 501 and 511 West Short Street. The outstanding Italianate villa style house built at 511 West Short Street for Mr. Asa Wilgus was the site of Mary Todd's grandmother's house.

Two important church buildings are located within the Western Suburb neighborhood -- the First Baptist Church, built in 1913 in the Collegiate Gothic style on the site of Lexington's early burying grounds, and St. Paul Roman Catholic Church, built in 1868 in the Gothic Revival style. These two church buildings punctuate the residential character of the neighborhood.

The Western Suburb neighborhood contains a wide array of architectural styles, including log structures, Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic, Italianate, Queen Anne and modern structures. With its consistent scale and row house lined streets, Western Suburb is a readily identifiable neighborhood on the west end of the Downtown. New construction has been prevalent on two large sites in the neighborhood. The Opera House Square apartments, a substantially sized series of town house apartments located on the site of a former Coca-Cola factory and the more modestly scaled town house development undertaken by the neighborhood association itself on the former Municipal Parking Lot at Georgetown and Short Streets. Both of these residential developments give a sense for the neighborhood's commitment to retaining the physical characteristics of this important part of the community.

Northeast

The northeast quadrant of neighborhoods in the Downtown Building Study are referred to in many planning documents as the east end. Historically, the northeast quadrant shares many of the same characteristics as the northeast neighborhoods. The northeast quadrant includes a number of important residential streets, several early 20th century street-car suburbs and developments. The Constitution neighborhood is located on the southern portion of this quadrant.

The northeast quadrant is north of Main Street and a few blocks from the Downtown commercial area. This neighborhood is isolated from the Downtown by the location of several institutional buildings (i.e Detention Center). The western half of the neighborhood was divided into "outlots" when the boundaries of Lexington were created in 1791. During the 19th century, the land of several large estates comprised what is now this neighborhood. It was the development of these estate lands around the turn of the twentieth century which resulted in the large percentage of the building stock which remains. In the center of the neighborhood, at the corner of ML King Boulevard and Fourth Street are three imposing large residential structures associated with the Kinkead family. Just east of this cluster is a large tract of residential land subdivided by the Kinkead family following the Civil War to house freed African-American slaves. Kinkeadtown has been demolished within recent years, after many years of decay, and will be the site of the expansion of Rose Street north between Fourth and Fifth Streets.

The opening up of this neighborhood with the expansion of Rose Street north of Main Street is the most significant factor affecting the neighborhood within the last two decades. With this expansion came a large onslaught of demolition and clearing of neighborhood sites for future development. East of Rose Street are a number of modest cottages and shotgun style houses which still function as a major portion of low to moderate income housing near the Downtown. New construction is prevalent along the Rose Street corridor, with the development of these adjacent sites into a variety of housing types.

A number of architectural styles and building types are located within the northeast quadrant, including Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Colonial Revival, Queen Anne, Arts and Crafts, Richardsonian, T-plan cottages and Neo-Classical structures. Most of these residences were constructed within the period between 1880 and 1915 and are architecturally intact even though many of the structures have been converted into multi-residential units. As a result of the short period of development, there is no other neighborhood which better exhibits a concentration of the representative styles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Constitution

The Constitution neighborhood, historically known as the Eastern Suburb, is immediately north of the commercial Downtown and was developed from the 1820s through the 1920s. The houses in the area include a variety of architectural styles including Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Eastlake, Richardsonian and Neo-Classical. A half-timber house, constructed by Matthew Kennedy and James W. Brand, ca. 1813, is located at 112-114 Constitution Street. Adjacent to the west is the large transitional Federal to Greek Revival style residence of Matthew Kennedy. This structure is located at 216 North Limestone Street and occupies the land adjacent to Sayre School to the south. The majority of houses in the district are Greek revival, with some excellent examples of Italianate style houses as well. The large Greek Revival house built by James Weir at 312 North Limestone Street is the most elaborate of the Greek Revival style houses, most being simple town houses of three bays. These town houses were constructed by primarily middle class Lexingtonians with some of the

