



CASE STUDY

(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE



Building healing and inclusion into a redeveloped public square that was once a slave auction block

WRITTEN BY

Jay Pitter, MES | March 2019



A very special thanks to the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and its Director/Community Foundations Lilly Weinberg. (RE)IMAGINING Cheapside would not have been possible without your support.

knightfoundation.org

LEAD PARTNERS

City of Lexington
Blue Grass Community Foundation
Debra Hensley, Hensley Agency,
State Farm Insurance
Take Back Cheapside

PLACEMAKING CONSULTANT

Jay Pitter, MES

Published March 2019

INTRODUCTION

Katherine McKittrick's reference to the earth as skin¹ evokes the resilient yet delicate characteristic of place. Her discipline-defying scholarship untangles the relationship between Black populations and geography—both physical spaces and the imagination—as an approach for validating the displaced social lives and histories of Black people.

The old Fayette County Courthouse (recently renamed the Historic Lexington Courthouse) and the public square are the focus of **(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE**—a one-year placemaking project, which sought to build inclusion and healing into a former slave auction site, adjacent to a whipping post.

For centuries, enslaved African Americans were human chattel exploited in capital transactions at Cheapside Market, described as the epicentre of the slave trade in Kentucky. It was there that countless individuals—granted first names only—were used to settle their owners' debts, bequeathed to their owners' family members, and leveraged as living mortgage payments. Notwithstanding the details of each human transaction, all enslaved African Americans were fated to forced labor, unspeakable violence, and what poet Langston Hughes would describe as “the dream deferred².”

Much like other cities with Confederate monuments, Lexington has held several discussions about their removal or adding historical context. Most notably, in 2015, a group of local organizers called Take Back Cheapside launched an unrelenting grassroots campaign to not only have the monuments removed but also raise awareness of how the history and attitudes they were tethered to contributed to an overall sense of exclusion—and in some instances emotional and psychological unsafety—in the public square. The organizers led letter-writing campaigns and peaceful public protests while negotiating with city officials.

In the fall of 2017, at the foot of the Historic Lexington Courthouse, where bills of sale of African Americans were once validated, two Confederate monuments were removed. This was a result of the collaborative efforts of organizers who galvanized community members across diverse

¹ McKittrick, K. (2006). *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. University of Minnesota Press.

² Hughes, L. (1990). *Harlem: Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*. Random House Inc.
Retrieved from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46548/harlem>.

+ What is placemaking?

Placemaking is an inclusive, community-based approach to public space design, activation/programming, and policy.

backgrounds, philanthropists who funded the removal of the monuments, and decision-makers intent on responding to petitions of the people. This milestone marked the beginning of **(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE**.

As the selected placemaking consultant, I was acutely aware of the imminent risks associated with this project. This work took place amid extremely polarized Confederate monument debates across the United States and unprecedented political party divisions. Coincidentally, the first **(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE** storytelling commenced on the anniversary of the tragic murder of Heather Heyer, a young woman participating in a public rally related to Confederate monuments in Charlottesville, Virginia. Early on, the project partners articulated a shared commitment to lead a bold yet peaceful process that informed the newly redeveloped site while engendering community connectivity.

The team, with the support of an incredibly responsive and courageous group of community members, achieved many notable milestones:

Reached over
150k
stakeholders

Deeply engaged
750+
stakeholders
through one or more
placemaking initiatives

Fostered
10
informative
and positive
media profiles

Established
additional
partnerships
Lexington Public Library,
Downtown Lexington Partnership,
University of Kentucky, and the
Fayette County Clerk's Office

Additionally, this project is part of a submission that has been shortlisted for the *Creating a Healthy City for All* design award. However, this case study is not intended to solely amplify the project's success. It is meant to share the underpinning placemaking theories and approaches, lessons, and unlikely partnerships that contributed to a productive, and at times inspired, process. It is also an opportunity to highlight some of the people—the true transformative force behind all great places—who dedicated themselves to this challenging and gratifying project. It is our hope that our city-building story may inform the work of others striving to create more just and inclusive cities.



Jay Pitter, MES
Placemaker + Author

Case Study
(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Project Description	1
<hr/>	
More than Monument Removal	2
<hr/>	
Placemaking Initiatives	4
Pre-engagement Trust + Placemaking Capacity Building Session	
Community Consultations	
Children’s Design Charrette	
Storytelling Walks	
Witnessing Circle	
<hr/>	
The Importance of Place-Based Stories	10
<hr/>	
Building Relationships Across Difference	14
Creative Mornings Keynote and Public Walk	
Intimate Dinners	
Podcast	
Building Relationships With Local Businesses	
Historic Lexington Courthouse—Visitors Center	
<hr/>	
Five Key Lessons	32
Cultural Heritage Is Complicated	
Recognize the Power of Intimate, Private Spaces	
Placemaking Is an Ongoing Process	
Embrace Discomfort	
Create Moments of Joy	
<hr/>	
Partners	34
Partners, Volunteers, Friends	
Placemaking Consultant	

BELOW: Main Street + North Limestone
Hundreds of Lexingtonians participate in storytelling walks that explore numerous urban design and social issues.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE, a one-year placemaking project, sought to build inclusion and healing into a former slave auction site, adjacent to a whipping post. The project was generously funded by the Knight Foundation, with additional financial, administrative, and human resource contributions by Blue Grass Community Foundation.

A local philanthropist, Debra Hensley of Hensley Agency, State Farm Insurance, provided additional resources for audio and visual documentation. The lead partnership group included the City of Lexington, Blue Grass Community Foundation, Take Back Cheapside community organizers, and Debra Hensley. Together with internationally recognized placemaking consultant and author Jay Pitter, a series of placemaking initiatives were undertaken. These initiatives, designed by Pitter, included a **site audit, community consultations, place-based storytelling walks, a children’s inclusive-design charrette, community dinners, a podcast, site-specific archival research, and two witnessing circles.**

Building on Take Back Cheapside’s goal to “open up dialogue to make the space more inclusive for everyone,” the project employed a comprehensive placemaking approach with these goals:

- » **Assess** how African Americans and other culturally diverse user-groups perceive and engage with the site;
- » **Explore** how policy and space activation programs could be leveraged to create opportunities for underrepresented groups to lead initiatives at the site;
- » **Explore** the site’s history to foster healing, relationship-building across differences, and reconciliation;
- » **Contribute** input into the newly designed courthouse, public square, and wider city.

MORE THAN MONUMENT REMOVAL

“The problem with Confederate monuments is not that they are about the Confederacy, but rather that they overwhelmingly present the Confederacy as a positive aspect of American heritage, promoting the dismissal or embrace of the injustices of slavery.”

– Erich Hatala Matthes, Scholar

To understand the significance of **(RE)IMAGINING** Cheapside and all other Confederate monument-related projects, it’s imperative to understand that even if everyone agreed they glorify values inconsistent with those of just and vibrant cities, there would still be little consensus about what should be done about them.

Interestingly, individuals on the same side of this debate often have a different rationale for their perspectives. For instance, some individuals who want the monuments to remain think of them as perpetuating the legacy of “heroes” who should be honored and viewed through the lens of the prevailing systems and values of a bygone time. Conversely, many staunch human rights activists also think Confederate monuments should remain erected but for a very different reason. This group seeks to amplify the systemic issues the former group often diminishes. They view properly contextualized Confederate monuments as important public markers acknowledging the oppression of African Americans.

Moreover, many thought-leaders in this area warn that removal may spur a kind of collective memory loss. This idea has been thoroughly argued by scholar Paul Connerton, who distinguishes seven types of forgetting, including what he terms “repressive erasure” and “prescriptive forgetting³.” An adjacent example

³ Forest, B. & Johnson, J. (2019). Confederate Monuments and the Problem of Forgetting. *Cultural Geographies in Practice*, 26, 1, 127-131. DOI: 10.1177/1474474018796653

of repressive erasure—the Orwellian rewriting of history—is exemplified by the Soviet practice of airbrushing out of photographs political figures who’ve fallen from the party’s favor. This form of intentional and systemic collective forgetting does indeed run the risk of sanitizing the fraught stories and systemic injustices in cities. There is yet a third predominant argument in this debate. Ryan Andrew Newson, a theology and ethics scholar, asserts that “a more subversive mode of address may include putting other monuments up that fill out the parts of history that Confederate monuments in their current iteration leave untold, forcing us all to tell a more truthful, if more painful, story about our past⁴.”

These and other Confederate monument arguments are complex. However, what is straightforward is the idea that to transform fraught sites, the conversation needs to expand beyond these physical markers to include conversations about healing, belonging, and urban equity overall. For instance, in New Orleans, the removal of monuments was coupled with conversations about failing infrastructure and displacement of residents⁵. Regardless, of the choices cities make about Confederate monuments or other similar markers, it is imperative to focus on what values these symbols are perpetuating and how they shape the experiences of people in the public realm.

⁴ Newson, R. A. (2017). Epistemological Crises Made Stone: Confederate Monuments and the End of Memory. *The Society of Christian Ethics*, 37, 2, 135-151. doi:10.1353/sce.2017.0037

⁵ Duhe, B. J. (2018). Decentering Whiteness and Refocusing on the Local: Reframing Debates on Confederate Monument Removal in New Orleans. *Museum Anthropology*, 41, 2, 120-125. .DOI: 10.1111/muan.12184

PLACEMAKING INITIATIVES

The following is a list of (RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE placemaking initiatives, designed by placemaking consultant Jay Pitter and co-led in partnership with the project leadership team and community members.

INITIATIVE #1

Pre-engagement Trust + Placemaking Capacity Building Session

The project initiation included a professional development process wherein the placemaking consultant encouraged the partnership group members to share their personal stakes and stories related to the site as a way of building trust and mapping intersecting interests and values. Afterward, the placemaking consultant provided the team with inclusive placemaking principles reviewing key ideas pertaining to the history and impact of urban design, spatial entitlement, place-based storytelling, and designing inclusive public spaces. The team also reviewed placemaking approaches from her portfolio and began to narrow down initiatives most aligned with the site and city's character. This process informed the partnership's terms of reference (including the agreed upon decision-making and communications protocols), key placemaking initiatives, and expertise sharing within the group.

IMPACT

- + Increased trust and understanding among the lead partners;

- + Established a terms of reference and partnership agreement;

- + Completed a leadership team asset and resource map.

INITIATIVE #2

Community Consultations

Understanding the deeply political and sensitive underpinnings of **(RE)IMAGINING** Cheapside, several private dinners were organized prior to undertaking public placemaking initiatives. These intimate gatherings created a safe(r) space to acknowledge the fear, shame, personal bias, and hurt required for deeply engaging with the site's direct history and adjacent urban inequity issues. The trauma that emerged during these dinners was often palpable, further underscoring the need for a process nuanced enough to address place and pain.

IMPACT

- + Learned more about the divergent perspectives and tensions within and across cultural communities;

- + Received insights from elders, youth, and other typically under-engaged stakeholders, leading to increasing support to include the most vulnerable and excluded community members;

- + Identified fears related to the project and collectively brainstormed interventions for alleviating or reducing them.

INITIATIVE #3

Children's Design Charrette

Although under-engaged in placemaking processes, children enjoy building things and inherently understand fairness. Working in close partnership with the Lexington Public Library and Downtown Lexington Partnership, the team led a children's design charrette focused on inclusive cities. Children and their caregivers were provided with an overview of Lexington's diverse demographic, cultural heritage, arts scene, iconic buildings, greenspace, and future aspirations. Informed by these themes, professional designers and the partnership group members helped children to create an inclusive city using craft and recycled materials.

IMPACT

- + Engaged a wide range of children from diverse family types—nuclear families, foster families, and intergenerational families—in the city;
- + Created an age-appropriate opportunity for children to explore ideas related to belonging, fairness, sustainability, and accessibility;
- + Provided an environment for children and their caregivers to create buildings with green roofs, community gardens, streets with bike lanes, and accessible play structures.

INITIATIVE #4

Storytelling Walks

Working in close partnership with institutional and grassroots partners galvanized hundreds of community members to participate in four walks—two African American Walks, a Beauty and Sustainability Walk, and a Belonging Walk. The walks created an opportunity to bring the community together on the street level, shoulder-to-shoulder, to map challenges and assets across neighborhoods, amplify public space projects, celebrate resilience, and share stories.

IMPACT

- + Engaged 35-plus local storytellers and 12-plus volunteers;
- + Created an opportunity for local residents to map their routes in the city during Jim Crow laws, visit graveyards and front porches, experience a sidewalk performance of a scene from *A Raisin in the Sun*, participate in a creative movement activity on the front lawn of a bookstore, audit areas in need of tree canopies and public transit, learn about urban food gardens, etc.;
- + Trained local city-builders on storytelling approaches for engaging communities, mapping walk routes, and developing short place-based stories.

INITIATIVE #5

Witnessing Circle

During the process of the project, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of handwritten records documenting capital transactions involving enslaved African Americans were unearthed. This kind of archived memory and trauma is enmeshed in urban landscapes throughout the world. Indigenous residential schools, and streets stained with mass gun violence also bear witness to painful, often unresolved, histories. Increasingly, cities are initiating a wide range of creative placemaking interventions to acknowledge these histories while creating a greater sense of belonging and safety in the public realm. The Witnessing Circle—a cross between ritual and public performance—featured the sacred readings of names recovered from the Fayette County Clerk's office archives. Lexingtonians from all cultural backgrounds participated in reading handwritten entries related to the site, dating back as far as 200 years, aloud.

IMPACT

- + Created a safe(r) space for community members to reflect and express grief;
- + Provided a diverse range of community members with an educational experience to contemplate the history of the site and implications for the new design and social planning;
- + Humanized the individuals fated to the indignity and tragedy related to the transactions that took place at the site.



John P Aldridge doth sell and convey to Elizabeth B Dickerson her, her heirs and assigns forever, the property herein after described viz. one set dining tables, a half dozen windsor chairs, three feather beds with all the sheets, two washstands, school room furniture, one clock, one female slave named Cassey about thirty years of age, one female slave named Garnet about twenty years of age, one female slave named Louisa about fifteen years of age, one girl slave named Ann about six years of age, one other girl slave Rachel about five years of age, one boy slave named John about ten years of age, one boy slave named Luke about 8 years of age, one male child slave named Ned about 4 months old, by estimation of the value of three thousand dollars.

*Deed Book, Volume T, Page 460
May 16, 1820
Fayette County, Kentucky*

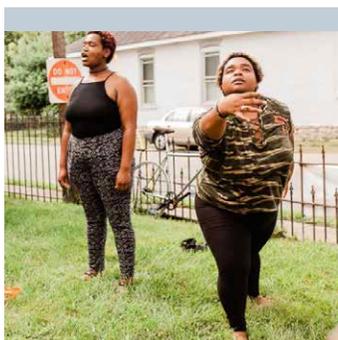
Community members commented that reading out the names and ages of the enslaved African Americans in these transactions created a deeper sense of empathy and understanding. Also, many individuals were startled to learn that these humans were included in transactions alongside inanimate objects such as sheets and clocks. Reading from the archival records humanized the individuals fated to the indignity and hardship of the transactions related to the site. Equally important, doing so created a greater understanding of the tension and lack of representation of African Americans in the newly developed public square.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE-BASED STORIES

According to urban planning scholar Leonie Sandercock, the way we narrate cities informs our choices and behaviors, shaping urban reality. However, stories are not equally valued. Sandercock underscores the ways power informs which stories are told, listened to, and assigned importance.⁶ Throughout the **(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE** placemaking project, considerable effort was made to include many voices—especially those that had been historically silenced or invalidated—across numerous storytelling interventions. Through personal narration, the team hoped to learn more about how the site’s history impacted current use and perception while encouraging local residents to reimagine a new narrative inclusive of the site’s painful history and an aspirational vision for a truly inclusive public space. The storytelling walks, which galvanized hundreds of local residents, exemplified the viability of achieving both goals, often viewed as conflicting, while creating space for local leaders and city-builders to be celebrated.

⁶ As cited in Throgmorton, J. (2003). Planning as Persuasive Storytelling in a Global-Scale Web of Relationships. *Planning Theory*, 2,2, 125- 151. [1473-0952(200307) 2:2;125–151;035448]

+ Would you like to take a walk with us?



Shanita Jackson and Kutu Hall

While Shanita recited a powerful poem about her family's experiences of housing vulnerability and adoration for her single mother, fellow Berea College student Kutu accompanied her with riveting creative movement. This multi-disciplinary narrative concluded with 45-plus participants fanning out on the front lawn of the Wild Fig bookstore with outstretched fingers grasping the sun and twirling in unison.



Patrick J. Mitchell and Message Theatre

After a long-term hiatus, accomplished multi-disciplinary artist Patrick Mitchell revived Message Theater. Weeks before their production of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, they transformed the sidewalk at Elm Tree Lane and Third Street into a grand stage. Walkers created a circle around the actors as they performed this still-relevant play about belonging, discrimination, and place.



Kurt Gohde, Kremena Todorova, and Hoda Shalash

While working on their award-winning Unlearn Fear and Hate project, Kremena Todorova and Kurt Gohde opened themselves up to personal growth within the process. When they met University of Kentucky student and community organizer Hoda Shalash, the trio began to explore issues of religious bias over coffee. These conversations have led to a close-knit and collaboration.



Chester Grundy

Starting in the 1970s, beloved elder and leader Chester Grundy headed numerous initiatives to engage and retain Black University of Kentucky students. While seated on the back porch of the Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning, Mr. Grundy shared anecdotes from his forthcoming memoir. Through vivid and insightful prose, he recounted on-campus talks and performances given by his fellow luminaries, such as Alex Haley, Ruby Dee, and Amiri Baraka. He spoke about how exposing Black students to high-quality artists expanded their sense of self and worldview while opening up their potential.



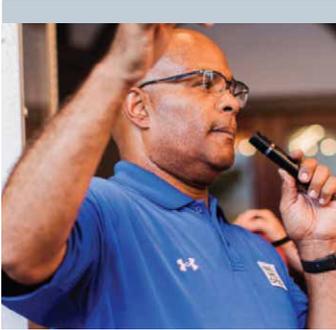
Vanessa Grossl

Vanessa, an unassuming and open-hearted professional working with Lexington's newcomer population, traces her career choice back to Eastern Kentucky, where she befriended an exchange student. This special relationship helped foster a genuine curiosity to learn more about people who were different than her. She gently challenged us to embrace an active practice of cultural curiosity rather than strictly seeking tolerance or competence.



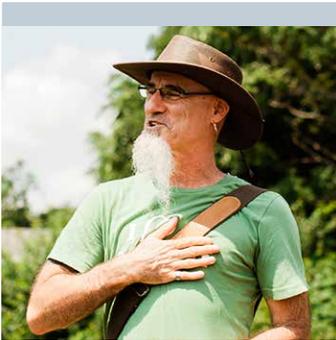
Rebecca Webb

After losing a young family member to local gun violence, Miss Webb noticed that her granddaughter Malia was especially shaken. Although she'd recently retired, Miss Webb sought to restore a sense of safety and hope in the neighborhood by co-founding Community Inspired Solutions. This organization provides young people with academic and life-skills support while exposing them to public spaces throughout the city. Walk participants wept as this beautiful intergenerational story, predicated on a love for family and the wider community, unfolded at the front entrance of Shiloh Baptist Church.



Glenn Brown

Walk participants were riveted as they retraced Glenn Brown's tiny childhood footsteps to the back entrance of a popular downtown theater. Glenn recounted how Jim Crow laws shaped his early experiences in the city's downtown, including the movie theater. When he asked his mother why they were forced to use a separate entrance, he didn't get a clear answer but felt something wasn't quite right. Glenn's curiosity and determination to create pathways for himself and others led him to groundbreaking municipal leadership roles and many contributions to Lexington at large.



Sean Gladding

A few years ago, Geoff and Sherry Maddock looked out the window of their East End home at an unkempt plot of grass and weeds. Rather than calling city officials to resolve the issue, they decided to reach out to their neighbors to transform the site. Together, they planted figs, cherries, and native perennial flowers, which provided everyone with access to delicious fresh fruit and beauty. After the Maddocks moved back to Melbourne, Australia, Sean Gladding a nationally recognized spiritual leader and author, assumed a key leadership role in maintaining the site. He shared many observations of schoolchildren picking fruit at the site and local residents pitching in to keep the plot blooming for three seasons out of every year. In sharing this powerful story of community cooperation and pride Sean explained, *"Most people can see what's right in front of them. Some people who are more observant see what's missing. And then there are a few, like the Maddocks, who can see what could be."*

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS DIFFERENCE

Urban development projects are only successful when we attend to building relationships along with infrastructure. The entire partnership team, along with local residents, placed a significant value on developing relationships outside of place-based, cultural, and affinity groups. This deep and courageous work of fostering relationships across differences was paramount to the far-reaching positive impact of this project. The following are a few examples of the responsive and informal relationship-building initiatives undertaken throughout the process.

BELOW: Nancy Barnett and Rebecca Webb get to know each other while participating in **(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE**. Today, Ms. Barnett is a passionate volunteer and supporter of Community Inspired Solutions, led by Miss Webb.



+ Creative Morning Keynote and Public Walk

Throughout the process, the placemaking consultant met with local decision-makers to share her inclusive placemaking principles and lessons emanating from the project. One of the many places where this sharing occurred was at Creative Mornings—an event hosted in cities throughout the world to celebrate creative talent and provide an open space for individuals to connect. The theme of the keynote was Cities and Chaos. Using **(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE** as a case study, the placemaking consultant highlighted how numerous relationship-building approaches helped to mitigate chaos and bring the community together. Afterward, she hosted a walk and sidewalk Q&A session.

+ Intimate Dinners

Throughout the process, the placemaking consultant, alongside the partnership team and local community members, hosted numerous informal conversations over a shared meal. As with all the placemaking initiatives, these smaller, more intimate convenings included elders, single mothers, and young children. Dinner guests shared personal experiences of the public square (and other sites with Jim Crow symbols), and their vulnerability and courage were met with support and open-mindedness.

+ Podcast

Generously funded by Debra Hensley, the **(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE** podcast reveals personal stories and insights pertaining to the redevelopment of the public square. Through conversation, performance, and real-time engagement audio footage, the project is brought to life. This podcast gives listeners an intimate glimpse into the process of healing a historically fraught site. It is a profoundly intimate and local narrative, exploring how cities might bring people together to create public spaces where everyone thrives.

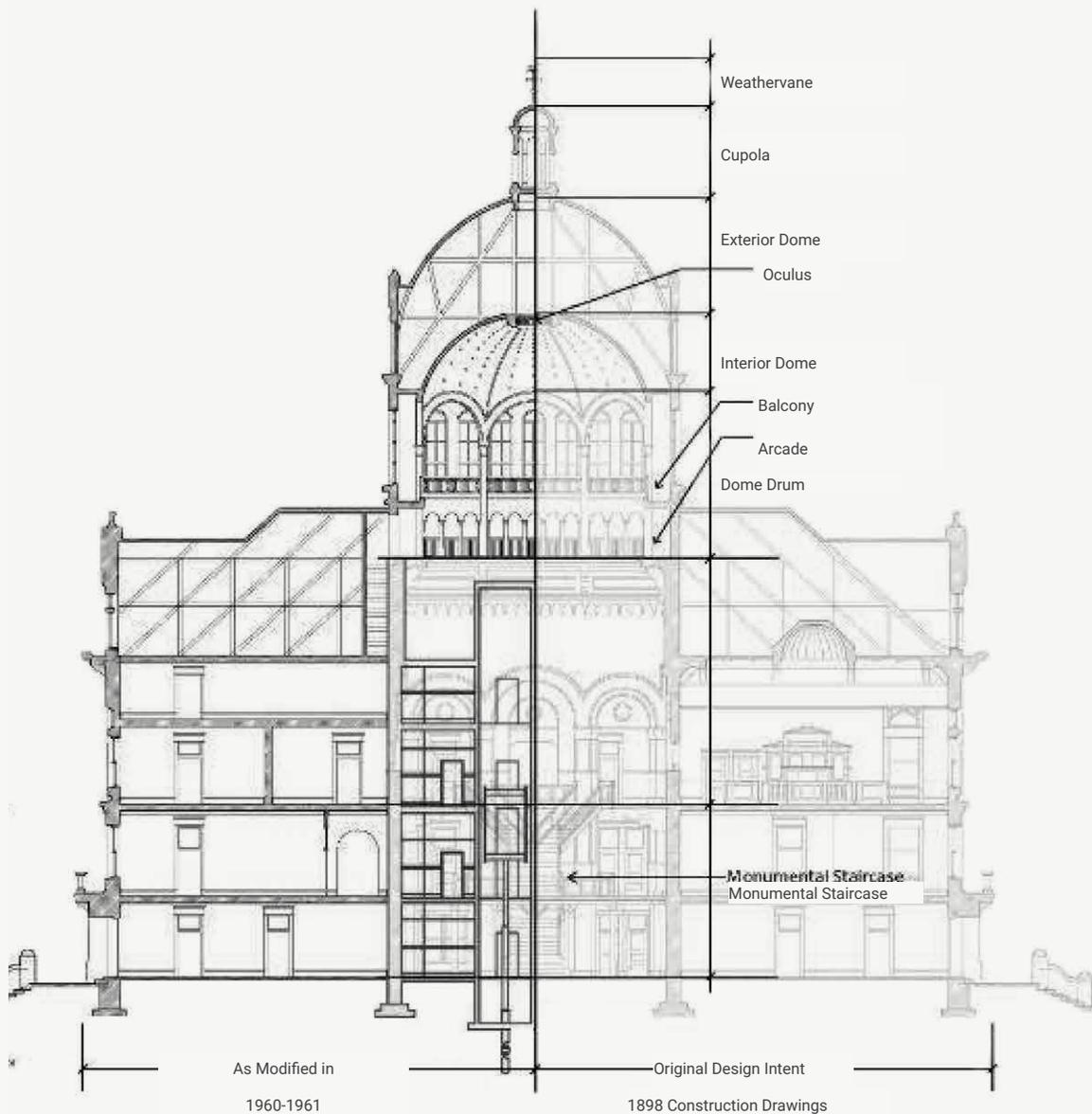
+ Building Relationship With Local Businesses

Recognizing the important role that small local businesses play in the prosperity of cities and providing welcoming informal hubs, the project endeavored to both economically support and foster positive relationships with local businesses. This included hosting the community-mapping sessions at Wild Fig Coffee & Books and Chocolate Holler.

Wild Fig is Kentucky's only Black-owned bookstore and has recently transformed into a cooperatively owned business. This thriving book store-coffee shop and community event space is located on North Limestone in a diverse and vibrant neighborhood. Chocolate Holler, located near downtown, is a chocolate and coffee bar with a mission to embrace community, serve others, and create culture. Entrepreneur and founder Salvador Sanchez is committed to providing hospitality and an environment to further the spirit and well-being of Lexington's artistically and culturally diverse community.

Additionally, project meetings were held in locations like Third Street Stuff and Fida's Caribbean Café. Located between Lexington's downtown and northside, Third Street Stuff, owned by Pat Gerhard, is a beloved café and coffee shop that happily does its part to serve the community and the world, one cup at a time. Fida's Caribbean Café was opened in the fall of 2017 by Haitian native Fida Noel after several successful pop-up events and catering experiences. Small-business owners were not only vendors but also engaged in contributing their insights to the process.

BELOW: The Historic Lexington Courthouse renovation recently won the Ida Lee Willis Award for excellence in historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings from the Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).



Development Agent: Holly Wiedemann, AU Associates
Architects: K Norman Berry Associates and Deborah Berke Partners
Construction Manager at Risk: Messer Construction
Public Funder: City of Lexington
Tax Credit Investor: Old National Bank
Building Operator: Historic Courthouse, LLLP Board of Directors
Property Manager: CRM Companies
Total Project Budget: \$32M—\$22M City of Lexington; \$10M State and Federal Historic Tax Credits

+ Historic Lexington Courthouse—Visitors Center

(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE was a part of a larger placemaking initiative to create more inclusion and belonging into the public square, anchored by the Historic Lexington Courthouse. Constructed in 1899, the Historic Lexington Courthouse has historically dominated its immediate vicinity, becoming a visual, architectural, and cultural landmark in the heart of Lexington, Kentucky. The building has been vacant for much of the past decade. In 2015 the decision was made to rehabilitate the structure, transforming it into a hub of public and private market-driven activity.

Blue Grass Community Foundation President/CEO Lisa Adkins, along with the placemaking consultant, forged a relationship and engaged in open conversation with Mary Quinn Ramer, president of VisitLEX, Lexington’s Visitor and Convention Bureau. VisitLEX recently relocated its administrative offices and Visitors Center to the Historic Lexington Courthouse. Through a series of meetings, community priorities pertaining to including a more robust history of African Americans in the new Visitors Center were articulated and embraced.

As a result, VisitLEX added a dedicated African American history kiosk to its new Visitors Center. The kiosk complemented its ongoing efforts to recognize the contributions of Henry A. Tandy by installing a wall panel with his portrait and story in the Historic Lexington Courthouse, across from the entrance to the Visitors Center. Tandy, a former enslaved person, became one of Kentucky’s most successful Black entrepreneurs. Tandy’s masonry company built the original infrastructure of the Historic Lexington Courthouse in 1899.

On February 20, 2019, the African American history kiosk and Tandy display were formally unveiled to the public, following a dedication ceremony and witnessing circle held inside the Historic Lexington Courthouse.

BELOW

Kiptoo Tarus, an acclaimed artist known for his large-scale wooden sculptures, shares the story behind a recent public art piece.





ABOVE

A packed house at Wild Fig, where Lexingtonians across a wide range of backgrounds and neighbourhoods gathered to share ideas, that helped to shape (RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE.



ABOVE

An enthusiastic crowd of walkers express appreciation for one of the many street-based performances integrated into the public storytelling walks.

RIGHT

Spiritual and community leader Sean Gladding shares the story of the community garden he is stewarding. He receives a warm embrace from April Taylor, a fellow local leader and invaluable contributor to (RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE.





LEFT

Jay Pitter, Placemaking Consultant, converses with Elizabeth Lawson, an actress and researcher who dramatically revived plantation narratives.

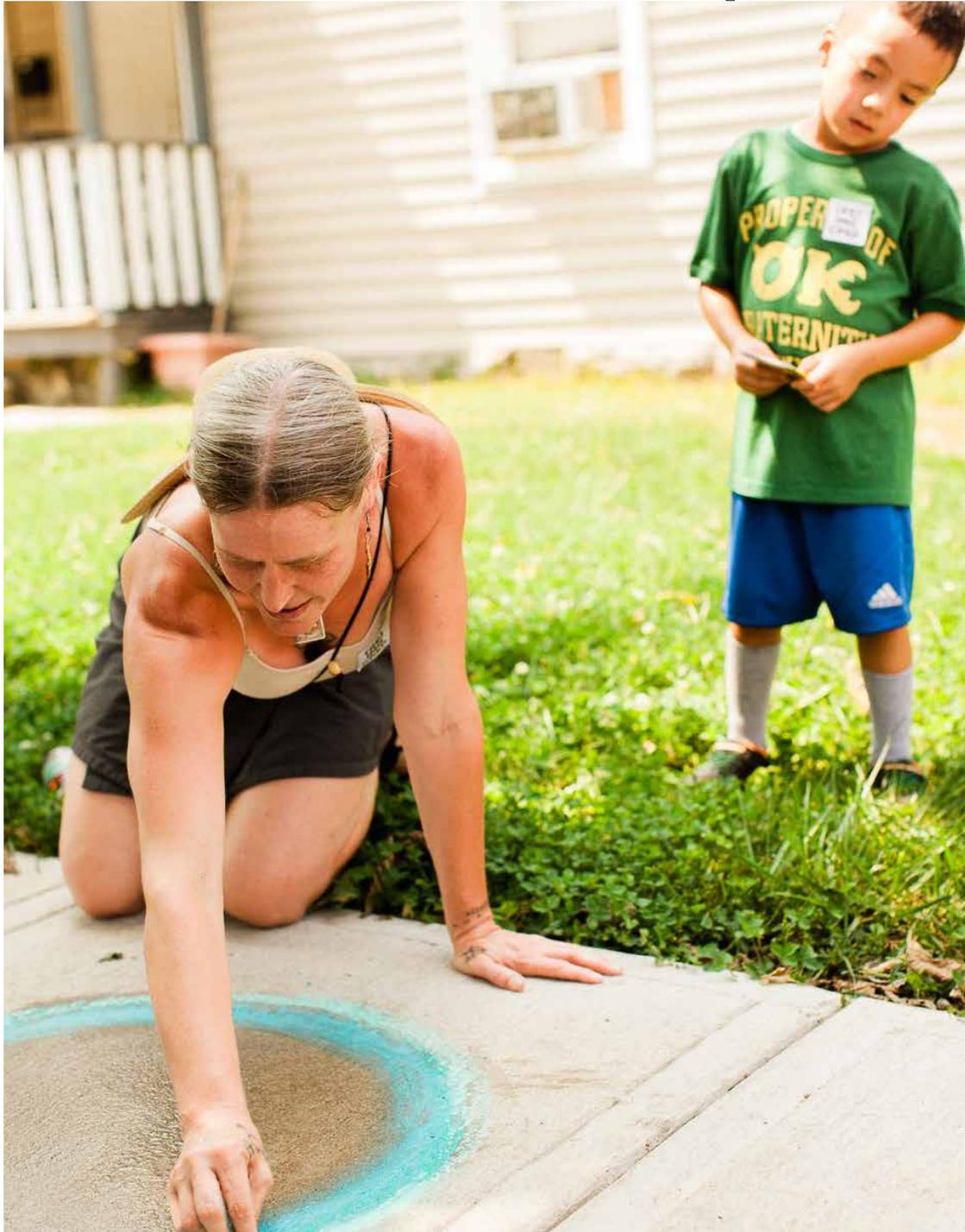
BELOW

Anthony Beatty, Lexington's first African American Chief of Police shares insights on breaking barriers in both his personal and professional lives. The inset photo depicts Mr. Beatty at his beautiful home shared with his wife, Dr. Eunice Beatty, a respected scholar and community-builder. The pair are distinguished mentors and philanthropists.



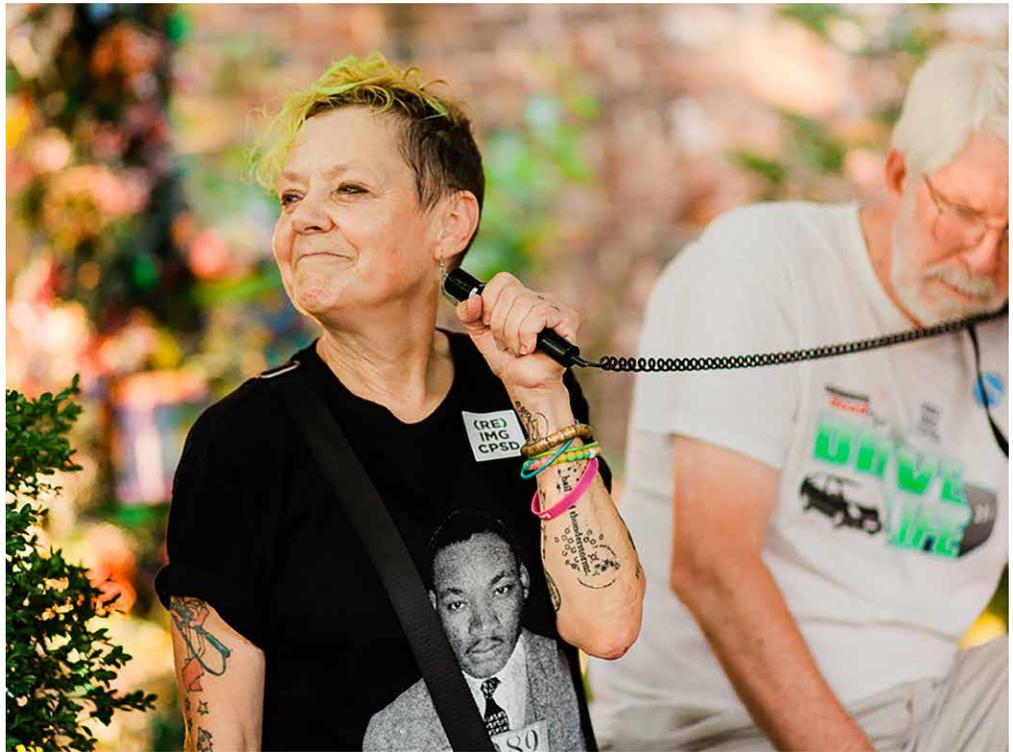
BELOW

Gretchen Lee Collins, a local artist and activist, explains the power of public art while creating what becomes a striking sidewalk masterpiece.



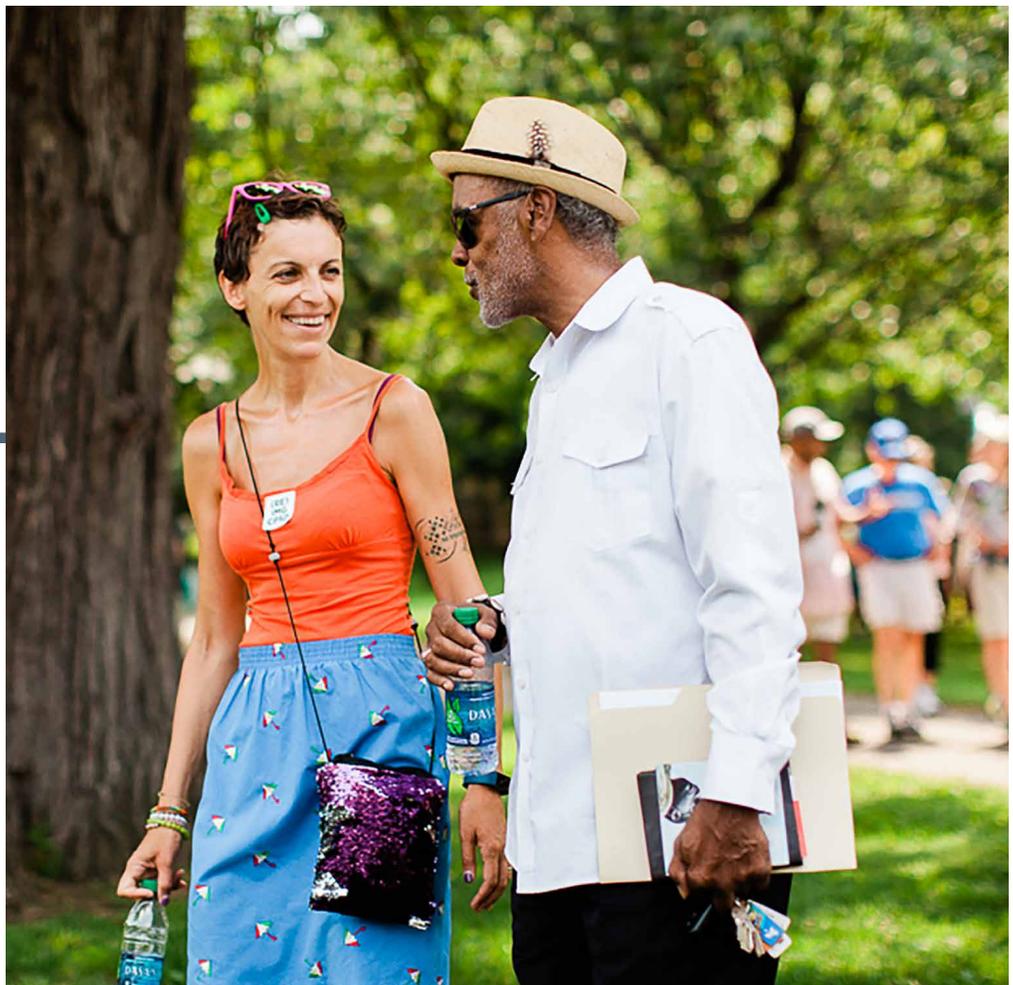
RIGHT

Pat Gerhard, an artist and owner of Third Street Stuff and Coffee, shares the importance of safe and vibrant local hubs.



RIGHT

Chester Grundy, a revered senior University of Kentucky administrator and local arts programmer, exchanges ideas with Kremena Todorova, following a reading of his upcoming book.



BELOW

Ethan Howard, Director of Placemaking and Economic Development at Downtown Lexington Partnership, attends the Children's Design Charrette with his family. Also, Mr. Howard and his organization generously sponsored this initiative.



BELOW

Lisa Adkins, President and CEO of the Blue Grass Community Foundation, speaks to media about the positive impact of (RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE.



BELOW

Pam Dorrel, an accounting clerk with the Blue Grass Community Foundation, supports the archival research and collection process.



BELOW

Elder Jim Embry, a distinguished sustainability thought leader and community-builder, huddles with the Beauty and Sustainability Walk storytellers prior to this public engagement.





FIVE KEY LESSONS

1. Cultural Heritage Is Complicated.

Increasingly, cities are recognizing the economic and social importance of cultural heritage, primarily the preservation of historic buildings and monuments. However, the intangible heritage of these structures and sites—meaning the stories, local rituals, memory, and “practice” of community, adds complexity to their redevelopment. While infrastructure lasts for several generations, our notion of heroism, ethical behavior, and place-based laws are rapidly evolving. For every site, there are hundreds of conflicting meanings and desires for its transformation. Employing a holistic placemaking approach is paramount to creating a collective vision and values for public spaces. A paper focused on heritage and community engagement refers to this work as a political act with tensions and negotiations between and within stakeholder groups⁷.

2. Recognize the Power of Intimate, Private Spaces.

Public spaces like the site of Confederate monuments are tethered to people’s identities, family histories, intergenerational trauma, and sense of alienation. These complicated place attachments—the emotional bond between people and places informed by personal experiences, memories, and spatial interpretation—cannot always be safely explored in large-group settings. During the **(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE** process, exchanges around dining room tables, small-group walks, and one-on-one conversations helped to create a safe(r) process for local residents while providing important insights for shaping the large-scale public placemaking initiatives. This approach created multiple pathways for participation, not only accommodating individuals most impacted by the site’s history but also those with a wide range of communication styles.

⁷ Shackel, P. A. (2011). Pursuing Heritage, Engaging Communities. *Historical Archaeology*, 45 (1), 1-9.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23070199>

3. Placemaking Is an Ongoing Process.

Although **(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE** was a rigorous, in-depth process, the work is just beginning. Creating healing and inclusion around Confederate monument sites (and other historically fraught public places) is a significant undertaking. This work requires a robust social plan that enables historically marginalized and other excluded user groups to actively shape the space. It is important to always ask, Who's Not Here? Additionally, tangible ongoing placemaking strategies include providing public space activation grants, inviting informal neighborhood groups and non-profit organizations to use the site for programming, expand all ages programming, conduct annual audits to review spatial and social accessibility, and launch programs that foster equitable participation in the local economy.

4. Embrace Discomfort.

When leading placemaking projects focused on historically fraught sites, it is important to plan for and prepare stakeholders for discomfort. First, discomfort should be framed as an opportunity for learning and growth rather than a precursor for conflict and/or public shaming. Emphasizing the function and potential positive impact of discomfort helps people to remain respectful and attentive during difficult conversations and decision-making processes. It is also important to provide people with helpful strategies for embracing personal discomfort such as breathing deeply, asking clarifying questions, taking a journaling break, and verbalizing feelings without detracting from difficult conversations. Remembering that we've all inherited complicated histories is also a way to focus on acknowledgment and productive action.

5. Create Moments of Joy!

PARTNERS



LEXINGTON

Lexington is a diverse city of approximately 320,000. As the work around the Historic Courthouse + Cheapside Park demonstrates, the city welcomes everyone. In addition to being the right thing to do, it gives Lexington a competitive advantage as it seeks to attract employers and new jobs.

BLUE GRASS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Blue Grass Community Foundation (BGCF) is the region's go-to resource for charitable giving and engagement, working to create more generosity, vibrancy, and engagement in Lexington and all the communities it serves across Central Kentucky and Appalachia Kentucky. BGCF partners with the community to identify key community projects that will have lasting value and provides the leadership to accomplish them. BGCF also partners with individuals, families, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to help them establish charitable funds, guide their resources to support causes they care about, meet community needs, and make a difference. From one charitable giving fund established in 1967, BGCF has grown to over 650 funds, each with its own charitable purpose. Since its inception, BGCF and its generous donors have awarded over \$91 million in grants to nonprofits, with 95 percent of all grant dollars staying in Kentucky.



Debra Hensley

Debra Hensley is the owner of the Hensley Agency of State Farm Insurance Companies in Lexington. She has worked in insurance and financial services since 1974. Debra is a community builder and socially responsible civic servant.



Take Back Cheapside started in Lexington, Kentucky, in 2015. Led by DeBraun Thomas and Russell Allen, the grassroots movement sought the removal and relocation of two confederate monuments from Cheapside Park, the site of the city's antebellum auction block, where countless African Americans had been bought and sold. The movement successfully galvanized Lexington residents, who placed significant pressure on public officials to move the statues away from sacred ground. On August 17, 2017, hundreds of residents made their case in person at Lexington's City Hall. Public officials voted unanimously to relocate the statues, and they were removed from Cheapside Park on October 17, 2017.

+ Special thanks to our partners, volunteers, and friends:

Lead Partners

City of Lexington
Blue Grass Community Foundation
Debra Hensley, Hensley Agency,
State Farm Insurance
Take Back Cheapside

Placemaking Initiative Partners

Downtown Lexington Partnership
Lexington Public Library
University of Kentucky, Dr. Sonja Feist-Price, Office of Institutional Diversity, and Rebekah Radtke, College of Design
Fayette County Clerk’s Office, Shea Brown, Deputy Clerk
VisitLEX

Local Business Partners

Chocolate Holler
Fida’s Caribbean Café
Third Street Stuff
Wild Fig Coffee & Books

Dinner Partners

Michelle and Dan Hollingshead
Nancy Barnett and Michael Potapov
Reva Russell English
and Andrew English

Media Partner

Lexington Community Radio

Photography

Brian Campbell
Emily Moseley
Matthew Preston

Local Storytellers + Experts

Alexis Meza de los Santos
Andrew English
Anthony Beatty
April Taylor
Chester Grundy
Cubaka N. Mutayong
Dabney E. Parker
DeBraun Thomas
Elizabeth Lawson
Dr. Eunice Beatty
Felice Salmon
Glenn Brown
Gretchen Lee Collins
Hoda Shalash
Jeremy Porter
Jim Embry
Kiptoo Tarus
Kremena Todorova
Kurt Gohde
Kutu Hall

Malia Franklin
Meredith Frankie Crutcher
Nieta Wiggington
Pat Gerhard
Patrick J. Mitchell
Rebecca Webb
Robert West
Russell Allen
Sean Gladding
Shanita Jackson
Shawn Reeves
Soreyda Benedit-Begley
Tanya Torp
Vanessa Grossl

Witnessing Circle Readers

Alexis Meza de los Santos
Anthony Beatty
April Taylor
DeBraun Thomas
Donald Mason
Dr. Eunice Beatty
Dr. Sonja Feist-Price
Glenn Brown
Hoda Shalash
Kremena Todorova
Kurt Gohde
Malia Franklin
Michelle Hollingshead
Nadia Ramlagan
Nancy Barnett
Patrick J. Mitchell
P.G. Peebles
Rebecca Webb
Rory Barron
Russell Allen
Sean Gladding



Placemaking Consultant

Jay Pitter is an international placemaker and author whose practice mitigates growing divides in urban centers. She spearheads institutional city-building projects, rooted in neighbourhood knowledge, focused on cultural heritage interpretive planning, gender-based mapping, inclusive public engagement, safe streets, and healing fraught sites. She shapes urgent city-building conversations through media platforms such as the Agenda and Canadian Architect (as a keynote speaker for organizations like the UN Women and Massachusetts Institute of Technology [MIT]) and as lecturer and knowledge producer in urban planning faculties across North America. Recently, Jay consulted on Edmonton's new heritage plan; hosted a professional development luncheon for women city-builders in Detroit; shared her placemaking principles with Memphis River Parks Partnership; initiated a safe and connected streets engagement following the mass shooting in Toronto; and led **(RE)IMAGINING CHEAPSIDE**, a Confederate monument placemaking process in Lexington. She is currently working on the first phase of HER City and writing *Where We Live*, which will be published by McClelland & Stewart at Penguin Random House.

For more information, presentation inquiries,
or to explore a potential collaboration contact:

JAY PITTER

Placemaker + Author

+1 (647) 964-5095



jaypitter.com

For additional inquiries contact:

BLUE GRASS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Lisa Adkins, President & CEO

499 E High Street #112

Lexington, KY 40507, USA

+1 (859) 225-3343

www.bgcf.org