

# **The Road that Rebuilt a Neighborhood**

## **The Newtown Pike Extension Project**



## **Enhancing Quality of Life for the Davis Park Community in Lexington, Kentucky**



*This pamphlet was developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to show how transportation planning, project development, and design can enhance quality of life in a community. The project illustrates the effective implementation of the community impact assessment (CIA) process; collaboration among federal, state, and local agencies; working with affected communities to understand their needs; and integration of quality of life considerations in transportation projects.*

## About the Newtown Pike Extension Project

The Newtown Pike Extension Project was proposed to address transportation needs near downtown Lexington, Kentucky. The project also leveraged the quality, location, and type of transportation facilities and services in a way that achieves community goals and fosters quality of life. The project is an example of how a transportation investment can support mobility, quality of life, and community goals.

While the Newtown Pike Extension Project was first conceived in 1931, the project did not move forward until the 1970s. Potential impacts to low-income and minority communities, publicly owned properties, and historic resources, presented challenges to project implementation. By the 1990s, traffic congestion in the downtown area was severe, and the effort to find a solution was renewed.

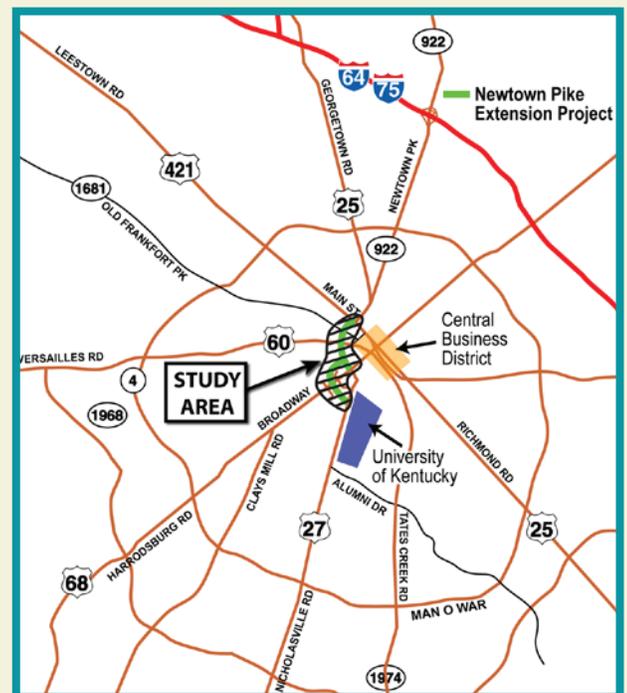
After approval was provided by FHWA to proceed with environmental studies under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), substantial efforts were made to move the project forward in a manner that considered and protected surrounding communities. Ultimately, an urban village plan and Community Land Trust were implemented to address the environmental justice impacts associated with the project, provide equitable and affordable housing, and preserve community cohesion.

## Project Purpose & Need

The purpose of the project is to extend and upgrade the Newtown Pike in Lexington, in order to improve the flow of through traffic, draw traffic away from downtown, and improve access to the University of Kentucky central campus.

### Highlighted Goals of the Newtown Pike Extension Project:

- Reduce automobile congestion
- Improve traffic flow by drawing through traffic out of downtown
- Provide more efficient vehicle routing to and near the University of Kentucky
- Improve the pedestrian and bicycle environment
- Improve safety for vehicle occupants, pedestrians, and bicyclists
- Provide an opportunity for redefining and improving the attractiveness of downtown and surrounding areas, without imposing an undue burden on other areas



## Project Timeline

**1931:** The Newtown Pike Extension Project was first conceptualized.

**1931-1974:** Between the 1930s and 1974, many alternatives for the extension were proposed, but none were carried forward.

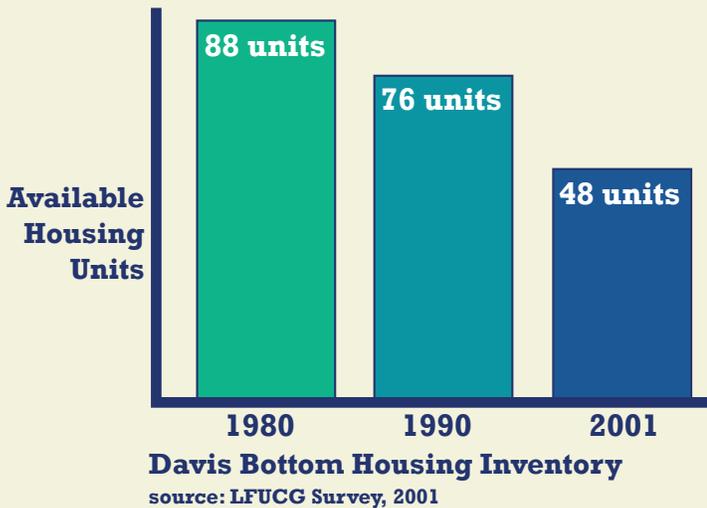
## Community Context

The community of Davis Bottom was studied in detail beginning in the early planning stages of the project. The Community Impact Assessment (CIA) and Socio-economic Baseline Analysis brought together findings from earlier studies and more recent trends and analysis to describe the context of the community. A Social Needs Assessment was completed in 2006 to help identify residents' needs for assistance and services.

Davis Bottom first developed in the late 1800s and the neighborhood grew as a community for workers on Lexington's railway system. While described as one of the lowest income communities in Lexington, it is also considered highly cohesive. Davis Bottom has been impacted by development associated with its proximity to downtown. When construction of the Lexington Civic Center and associated facilities began in 1974, approximately 145 dwelling units, 50 apartment buildings, and 20 commercial buildings (including a church) were demolished. A continued decline in population and housing has been attributed to the uncertainties associated with the proposed Newtown Pike Extension project.

*"Many residents of the city are skeptical regarding construction of the proposed NPE, and uncertainty regarding the final location of the project's centerline has deterred property owners, as well as city agencies, from investing in the...neighborhood. Absentee landlords have allowed their properties to decline into varying stages of disrepair, and the city has been reluctant to initiate major infrastructure improvements that might prove duplicative once the proposed roadway [is] built. While this situation is obvious today, it was just as much so in 1975... Conditions reported in many sources 20 to 30 years ago remain essentially unchanged."*

Community Impact Assessment with Socioeconomic Analysis, February 2004



**1971:** A neighborhood study considered an alignment for the project that went through most of Davis Bottom and would require demolition of 140 homes.

**1974:** The Newtown Pike Extension project was canceled by Governor Wendell Ford.

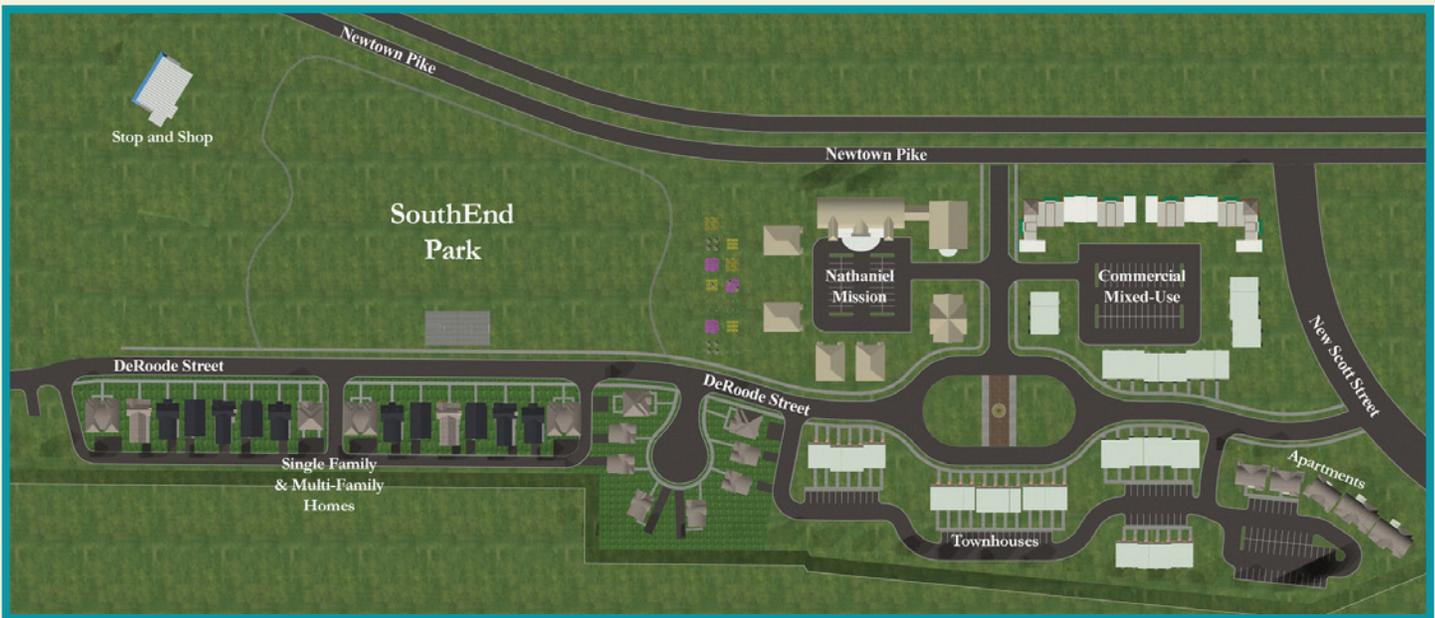
**1974:** A Housing Coalition Task Force reviewed the Neighborhood Study and recommended that the cost of replacement housing be included as part of the total cost of the project.

## Impacts of the Project

The build alternatives for the Newtown Pike Extension project would result in relocations in the low-income community of Davis Bottom caused by the direct impact of the roadway project and by the indirect impact of market forces resulting from increased land values near the new roadway. The CIA noted the absence of affordable replacement housing. It was expected that the no-action alternative would also result in a decline of Davis Bottom, continuing the trend begun by years of uncertainty around the project.

Through a survey and public engagement opportunities, the community expressed interest in remaining in the area. The CIA documented that the build alternatives and the no-action alternative would disrupt family and community ties, that residents would lose the opportunity to walk to major service-job providers in the downtown area, and that residents would be forced to move from a location where many families had resided for generations.

The CIA concluded that since none of the residential relocation or community disruption impacts would affect the other neighborhoods bordering the proposed roadway corridor to the same degree, impacts to Davis Bottom met the 'disproportionate' requirement of the Environmental Justice Executive Order (E.O. 12898).



*"It was recognized early in the project planning stages that the [Davis Bottom] neighborhood community... would receive a disproportionate share of impacts as a result of the project. Construction of the roadway through this neighborhood will cause community disruption and directly impact residents. This impact will result in relocations caused by two conditions: (i) directly by the roadway project itself, and (ii) indirectly by the market forces resulting from land value increases near the new major boulevard."*

Newtown Pike Extension Project, Lexington, Fayette County, Kentucky Record of Decision, 2007.

**1975:** A Draft Environmental Statement, Administrative Action for Newtown Pike Extension from the Newtown Pike-Main Street to the Limestone Street-Euclid Avenue Intersection (FHWA-KY-EIS-75) was completed but never signed. Another report, The Psychological Effects of Forced Relocation was written for Lexington's Planning Commission about the impacts the proposed project already had on area communities.

**Early 1990s:** The need for relief of traffic congestion in downtown Lexington led to renewed efforts to find a feasible solution for the Newtown Pike Extension project.

# Integrated Project Design & Mitigation

To avoid disruption to community cohesion, mitigate environmental justice impacts, and support the Purpose and Need objective to avoid undue burdens to communities, a variety of mitigation strategies were incorporated into the Newtown Pike Extension Project.



## Mitigation Strategies:

- **Urban Village Plan and Community Land Trust**
- **Redevelopment of a neighborhood park**
- **Improvements to the Carver Neighborhood Center**
- **New space for non-profit, service-oriented agencies**
- **Funding incentives to keep residents in the community**

The Southend Park Urban Village Plan was developed to provide the framework for mitigation of environmental justice impacts. The plan was designed to provide housing that would allow residents of the Davis Bottom community to remain in the area. What was proposed as a new “Southend Park” neighborhood was later renamed “Davis Park.” Under the plan, 25 acres of the Davis Bottom neighborhood would be reconstructed to provide homes, rental units, and new or renovated community facilities. A Community Land Trust (CLT) was created to implement the plan.

## Community Land Trusts

- Land is held by the trust
- Homes are owned by individuals
- Funding used for the housing remains with the homes as “retained subsidy”
- Buyers sign a Land Lease upon purchase that includes a resale formula to keep the home price affordable

## According to its Articles of Incorporation, the CLT was established to:

- **Protect the integrity and viability of Davis Park**
- **Provide quality and affordable housing**
- **Deter community deterioration in area neighborhoods**
- **Protect relationships between neighbors and between people and place**
- **Promote sound use of land, including residential and commercial uses that enhance local neighborhoods**
- **Contribute to the long-term vitality of the community**

## According to the Record of Decision:

*“The Southend Park Urban Village Plan, through this Urban Village concept, is about improving the quality of life by building a better neighborhood. It is about having a mix of housing types, retail, offices, local employment opportunities, community and social service facilities, safe and attractive public spaces, and a good transportation network. The premise of the Southend Park Urban Village Plan is to create a livable environment for those residents who currently reside in the neighborhood and to create a sustainable neighborhood by encouraging new residents to relocate into the area as well. Thus the Southend Park Urban Village Plan will reverse decades-old neglect endured by this community and mitigate the environmental justice impacts to this community over the past 50 years from the proposed NPE.”*



**1995:** A two-day workshop for the project is held involving the KYTC, LFUCG, and a consultant team.

**1997:** What would become the purpose statement of the project was developed by the Lexington Area Metropolitan Planning Organization.

## Community Outreach & Engagement

Involving the Davis Bottom community throughout planning, project development, and the design of mitigation strategies was a critical element of the Newtown Pike Extension project. The Record of Decision notes that this engagement allowed residents to work with the project team to find solutions to concerns.

- **Corridor Advisory Committee:** A committee of State and regional agencies, neighborhood representatives, the Nathaniel Mission and other organizations helped to gather public input and provided project guidance.
- **Neighborhood Liaison:** Community leaders recommended that a neighborhood liaison be hired for the project. The liaison, hired in 2002, served as a link between the project team and affected residents working closely with neighborhood associations, residents, and community-based agencies.
- **Communications:** Information about the project was spread through news releases to local media, mailings, newsletters, and a project website.
- **Driving Tours:** The project team provided driving tours to orient participants to the project route.
- **Community Meetings:** Several meetings were held in Davis Bottom to discuss the project and invite residents to talk to the project team.
- **Surveys:** Two survey efforts were undertaken to reach residents and businesses throughout the project area. The surveys included canvassing of neighborhoods and circulation by mail.



**1998:** A multi-agency Stakeholders Committee was formed to determine a course of action that would reactivate the project. The LFUCG receives concurrence from the FHWA to proceed to the environmental studies.

**2004-2006:** Additional studies are conducted to support implementation and design of the mitigation program including The Southend Park Housing Finance Analysis, final revisions to the CIA, and a Social Needs Assessment.

## Davis Park Today

The former Davis Bottom neighborhood is now known as Davis Park. In 2008, temporary homes for residents wishing to move into the new village were constructed. Site preparation for Davis Park began in 2012 and the CLT held a ground-breaking ceremony for the first new rental complex, Davis Park View, in June of 2014. A grand opening ceremony was held on November 20, 2014 to celebrate the completion of 14 affordable rental homes in Davis Park.

- **4 of the 14 units are being rented by displaced residents from the original neighborhood**
- **10 of the 14 units are being rented by residents from adjoining neighborhoods**

Home construction is planned to be complete in fall 2015. Right-of-way acquisition and construction of the Newtown Pike Extension Project are currently underway (as of January 2015). Community information meetings and a project website keep interested parties informed on the overall project. In addition, the Community Land Trust maintains a website to keep residents and other stakeholders up to date on Davis Park activities and events.



## Effective Practices Supporting Community Quality of Life

The individuals, agencies, and organizations that collaborated on the Newtown Pike Extension Project and the development of the urban village plan had a road to build; but they were determined to do it in a way that did not adversely affect the community involved. The creative partnerships and innovative solutions resulted from this determination to do things the best way possible for both the road project and the community.

**Some of the effective practices implemented through the Newtown Pike Extension project were to:**

- **Build projects that build communities through public and private partnerships.** The Department of Housing and Urban Development, Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC), FHWA, and other partners worked together, leveraging resources to address impacts to Davis Bottom through unique and effective mitigation strategies.
- **Use early planning studies to identify critical issues and inform the project development process.** The potential impacts to the Davis Bottom community were identified in the earliest studies conducted in the planning stages for the project. This early identification of critical issues guided the process and decisions for the rest of the project.
- **Create a purpose and need statement that addresses transportation and community needs.** The importance of valuing existing communities was written into the project purpose. Thus alternatives had to address impacts to communities to meet the purpose and need. Similarly, improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian environment were included in the project purpose and build alternatives.
- **Use analysis and a collaborative process to understand the detailed context of impacted communities.** The CIA, Social Needs Assessment, surveys, and many public engagement strategies and opportunities for public engagement allowed the project team to create mitigation solutions that worked for the project and the community.

**2007 – 2010:** The CLT begins meeting, becomes incorporated, and establishes bylaws.

**2007 - 2008:** The Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision are issued by FHWA in consultation with the KYTC and with cooperation from LFUCC and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Site construction for temporary homes begins and residents are moved into temporary housing.

**2014:** Grand opening of 14 completed affordable rental homes in Davis Park.



**For More Information, Contact:**

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