



Lexington Street, from its western terminus at Main Street to Paynes Mill Road at its eastern end, changes character several times. Further away from Downtown Versailles, it is a rural road with horse farms on either side. Closer to Downtown, it passes a school campus and is more of an urban street. The few blocks that are directly north and south of the bypass have a very different look than the rest of the road, too. These few blocks have developed as a classic 1900s 'taxpayer strip'.

What is a “Taxpayer Strip”?

The term “taxpayer strip” comes from the fact that most of the buildings on Lexington Street date from a time when they were located at the edge of town. They were developed by speculators at an intensity adequate enough to generate sufficient income to pay taxes on the land, while waiting for the town proper to spread to the point where redeveloping to a higher and better use was justified. On many such strips, that evolution was stopped in its tracks, though, as the segment of road was passed by when new speculators, urged on by highway projects, just moved further out onto more cheap land with fewer constraints

Yet three things exacerbate the situation. First, state level transportation entities are charged with making roads efficient for cars, and they have done so well with that limited goal that auto-oriented development is now almost too easy. In the past thirty years, the highway-building subsidy has created a syndrome where location on a newly improved roadway is perceived as a strong market advantage because more cars mean greater ability to capture sales. Second, lending policies have contributed to the problem by making it easier to finance new construction on the urban fringe and harder to renovate and restore within the heart of town. Third, the land development regulations are flawed; given the sprawl-type setbacks, parking ratios, and other details in the zoning rules, a disappointing urban form is going to result even when one follows the rules.

As the taxpayer strip corridors age, their original attractions decline and they lose their identity; they are neither town nor country, neither Main Street, nor state-of-the-art arterial shopping centers, neither new nor historic, neither completely broken but rarely fixed.

Parts of Lexington Street exhibit characteristics of the typical taxpayer strip. Since development spread further out, the taxpayer strips are often now located, ironically, toward the center of town. For years there was little incentive or pressure to redevelop and fill in older parts of the strip while there seemed to be plenty of developable land. Today, however, it is agreed that continual outward sprawl is unacceptable, so a redevelopment strategy for directing growth to recovering corridors like Lexington Street is particularly useful. Redevelopment along this corridor, while less critical than revitalizing Downtown or establishing Uptown, will enhance the character of Versailles and serve as a model for the region.

Transforming the Auto-oriented Strip

The current building and street design of Lexington Street is focused only on meeting the needs of through traffic, with an appalling disregard for pedestrian safety and needs. Even for residents in the immediate area, it is practically unthinkable to walk a few short blocks to get something from one of the stores because the street does not feel adequately safe or attractive for walking. Part of the reason is because these 'blocks' are built in typical strip format. One-story, single use buildings, generally located near the center of their lots, dominate the scene. Buildings are set back somewhat randomly, separated from the road by parking lots. The buildings do not form a defined street edge. Parking generally surrounds them. Curb cuts and driveways are unnecessarily wide, poorly defined, and excessive in number; as a result there is almost no sidewalk and no on-street parking. Cars can enter or exit almost anywhere on the street.

This section of Lexington Street is thus quite hostile to pedestrian-oriented development. But it is also becoming a magnet for the destructive, plastic, tacky development that springs up on such corridors, including boxy office buildings, standard-issue oil-change franchises, and off-the-shelf drive-through fast food places. It was made very plain during the public planning process that the citizen participants do not want this trend to continue. Given that the economic future of the County largely depends on preservation of its character, this trend is also out of sync with any plan for sustainable, long-term success.

Today there is an opportunity to change all three of these factors with coordinated public policy and private initiative. The funds for road projects - the same money that used to make the situation worse in the past - can be redirected to enhance and correct the street. Public financial instruments, coupled with the tools already available to private lending institutions, can make smart growth eminently finance-able. With leadership, public/private initiative can spawn mechanisms like “location-efficient mortgages” that offer attractive financing for

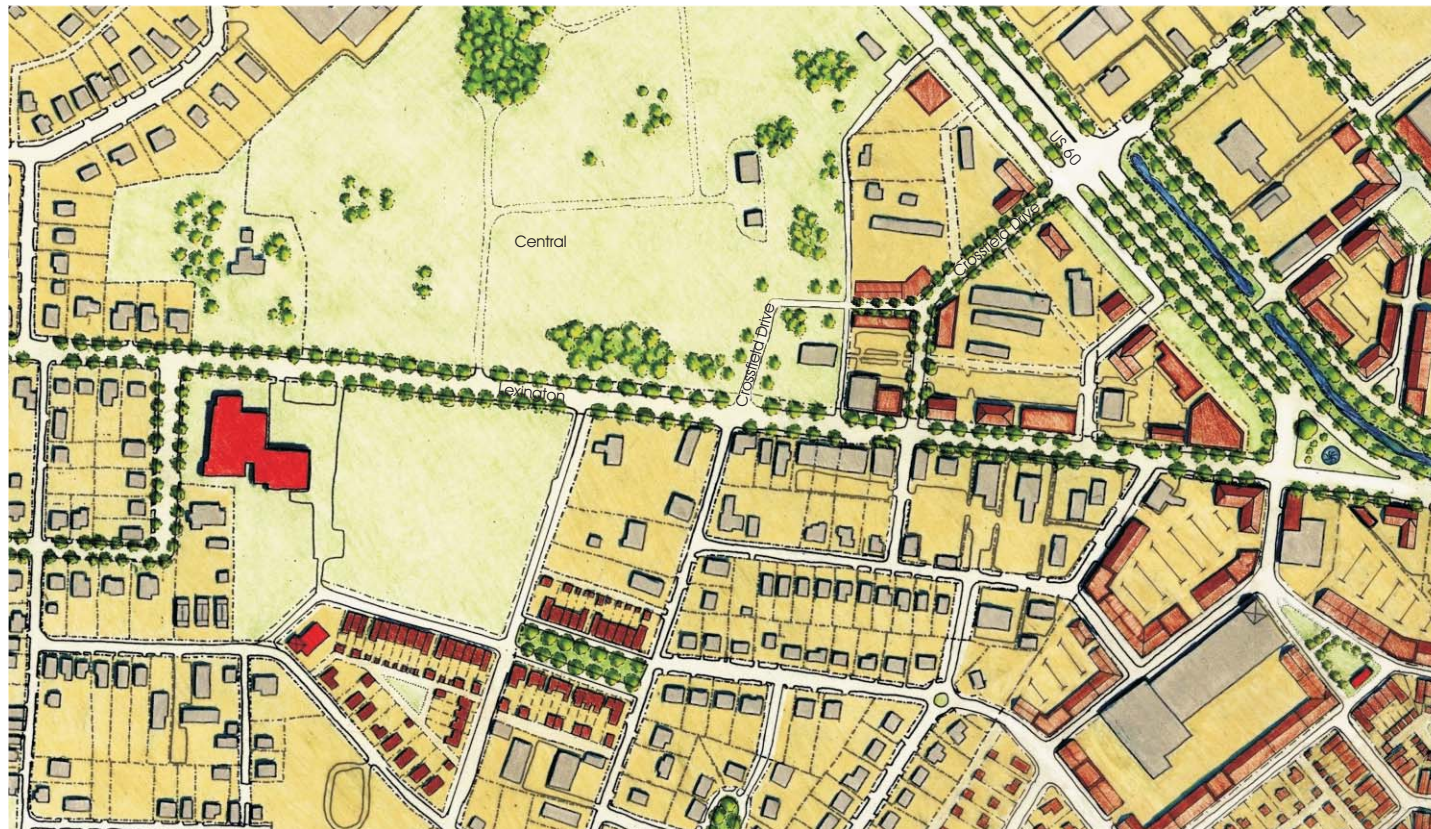
Central Park

redevelopment that occurs where it is most needed. Last, the new Woodford Code will correct the shortcomings of the land development regulations.

Fixing Lexington Street through Public-Private Revitalization

The ultimate goal is to make Lexington Street an economically viable, pedestrian-friendly part of Versailles.

While many parts of Lexington Street serve the automobile, one section has remained undeveloped. This urban greenspace was an important topic to many community members, who marked its preservation as one of their priorities. The preservation of the long views across the landscape is part of what makes Woodford County special. The proximity to both Downtown and the US 60 Bypass make preservation of this piece of land especially tricky. The likelihood of it remaining under private ownership for an extended period of time may wane as surrounding property values rise. Buying the property outright and putting it in public control to use as passive open space would be exceedingly worthwhile. Public purchasing of the land for storm water management is possible. If private ownership is necessary, then a passive, but revenue generating, use such as a horse farm museum or other eco-tourist venture would be a viable compromise.



No Access



8 points of entry and exit onto Lexington Street - each one a source of potential traffic conflict.

With Access Management



With only 2 points of entry and exit onto Lexington Street and shared parking, space is created for pedestrian access and street trees, and traffic conflicts are reduced.

Fixing Lexington Street through Public-Private Cooperation

Confidence to reinvest in the street begins with a capital improvement project. The rights-of-way can be rebuilt through state and county transportation funds. Redevelopment can also begin, through the coordination of businesses and property owners.

The ultimate goal is to make Lexington Street an economically viable, pedestrian-friendly part of Versailles. Redeveloping the street with mixed-use buildings that allow for a variety of uses will help the street adapt gracefully to the market. Whether these buildings have retail, office, restaurants, workshops, or apartments is not as critical as rebuilding in a coherent manner that creates a well defined street edge.

The first step is to shift the focus from meeting the needs of the automobile to creating an attractive, pedestrian-friendly street. A consistent sidewalk with on-street parking can be created within the public right-of-way. This can be accomplished through access management, consolidating the number driveway entrances and their widths. This will reduce the number of turns on and off the roadway, making a more continuous sidewalk and allowing for the addition of on-street parking.

Once sidewalks, landscaping, and on-street parking are added the street is perceived as an asset to the community and a desirable location. The public support for redevelopment will create investor confidence within the business community.

Existing conditions are dominated by the automobile because of wide travel lanes and



No sidewalk, no shade, and no shelter creates a hostile environment for pedestrians.

On street parking is an important first step as it creates a buffer between the pedestrian and the traffic.

Adding a sidewalk with shade trees provides shade and shelter for the pedestrian.



With this public initiative, the street serves both cars and people, but the buildings are still set back from the street. The area is still not

Colonnades, awnings and balconies create more shade and shelter for the pedestrian.



Constructing buildings at the street will encourage more pedestrian activity, creating a potential market for outdoor dining and cafes.

The Required Steps

1. Create an access management program. Reduce the number of curb cuts, by consolidating the number of driveway entrances to each business from the roadway. This will create a more defined place for automobiles. In addition to allowing the creation of a sidewalk, traffic will actually flow more efficiently, too.

2. Include Lexington Street on the project list of the Transportation Improvement Program. Make clear to all state agencies that improving Lexington Street is a priority.

3. Share the parking, and interconnect it. Businesses that have different peak times (e.g. a medical office and a movie theater) can then utilize the same parking spaces and reduce the total number of parking spaces needed. Create shared parking regulations. Shared parking will allow the land to be used more efficiently; more of the land can be used for income-producing buildings rather than parking. Consolidated driveways will also allow business to share parking spaces. Interconnecting the parking lots and assembling a network of alleys will allow motorists to circulate between nearby businesses without necessarily re-entering the traffic on Lexington Street.

4. Build a sidewalk. Add a sidewalk with street trees and other landscaping. The sidewalk should allow for safe and pleasant pedestrian access to the stores.

5. Add on-street parking. On-street parking will create a buffer between the pedestrians and motorists as well as providing easily accessible parking spaces for retail, restaurants and offices.

6. Nurture public-private confidence. Create a public improvement program that would construct sidewalks, repave lanes for on-street parking, and consolidate entrances. Showing private developers that improvements are being made will generate a sense of commitment and stability necessary to stir investment.

Who pays for redeveloping streets?

Streets are improved and redeveloped through a range of financial resources. The spectrum includes public monies, bonds and self-taxing districts, to a totally privately financed undertaking. Quite often more than one revenue source will be used jointly to redevelop a street. As a hypothetical example, the community decides on a design that reduces curb cuts, and includes drainage and sidewalk improvements. The design of the street also includes trees, light posts, benches and bicycle racks. State Funding may only provide for the infrastructure improvements and minimal landscaping. A bond is created to pay for larger trees, a developer donates the light posts, and members of the community donate benches with memorial plaques. There is more than one solution.



Before



After

Sunset Drive, South Miami Florida. A travel lane was removed, sidewalks widened and drainage improved. The redevelopment of the street was paid for by the developer who was building new mixed use buildings on



Before



After

Park Avenue, Winter Park Florida. Travel lanes was narrowed, sidewalks widened, sewer lines replaced, and communication lines added. The redevelopment of the street was paid with by a combination City Funds