The Nexus of Community Development: Arts, Creativity and the Future

Lexington, Missouri
MU Extension Team

Presenters:

Lee Ann Woolery,  
State Community Arts Specialist

Mary Simon Leuci,  
Community Development Program Director

Creative Team:

• Mark Porth,  former Regional Community Arts Specialist in Lexington
• Lisa Overholser,  Urban Regional Community Arts Specialist
Goals for today are to learn how:

- Lexington, a small rural community engaged with MU Extension CAP in a process of visioning, mapping cultural and historic assets, determining strengths and interests, and cultivating leadership and skill sets.

- An arts-based community development project has the potential to draw communities together in big and small ways, diversify the economy, and help preserve the way of life.
Standing issues for rural communities

- Out-migration
- Brain drain
- Dying elderly population
- Retail leakage
- Loss of Main Street
- Volunteer burn-out
Finding solutions today

Diversify the economy by:

• Integrating the arts in community development to strengthen cultural and economic vibrancy in rural communities

• Adding imagination, innovation and creativity in all that we do

• Building on the assets and strengths of the community
Lexington, Missouri

- Project developed by building on the assets and strengths of the Lexington community, adding arts and culture and innovation and creativity
- Working together, Lexington, MO, MU Extension and University of Missouri created a vibrant and economically diverse community using the arts
- A product that promotes and fosters the artistic, cultural and historical qualities of their town, the skills and talents of their populace
The City of Lexington

1st Community Arts Pilot Project
University of Missouri Extension
2012
Where is it?

45 minutes east of Kansas City

Situated alongside the Missouri River
Why Lexington?

• Demonstrated interest on part of community:
  o The community values the arts.
  o Strong sense of community.
  o Pride of place.
  o Evidence of community leadership.
  o Commitment and ability to galvanize the community around an idea including the youth.

• Willingness to provide some funding
• Willingness to provide assistance in fundraising
• Proximity to MU campus – approx. 60-90 miles
• Evidence to become a long-term, sustainable project
What MU brought to the table

• Visioning, strategic project development, asset mapping, proposal development, committee development & job descriptions
• 1 full-time regional community art specialist
• Educational trainings and workshops:
  – Development & fundraising technique workshops
  – Artist entrepreneurial development
  – Cultural Heritage Tourism & Arts workshops
• Mizzou New Music Initiative Residency
  – Faculty & student, new music composition, audio engineering
Community Capitals

Image Credit: North Central Regional Center for Rural Development Iowa State University
Flora & Flora, 2006
What Lexington brought to the table

• Expertise and support
• In-kind—office space and administrative support
• Mayor’s good seal of approval
• City Council provided funding
• 1000’s of hours of volunteer time
• Space to hold events and programs
Community Arts Pilot Project

The goals are to:

• Inspire and promote area artists
• Empower and educate youth through the arts
• Showcase Lexington’s arts, architecture, wineries and agri-tourism
• Create a culturally vibrant community
• Create a not-for-profit arts council to sustain the project
The Lexington Auditorium “The LEX”
Proposed Rendering
Wentworth Military Academy & College

Fahrmeier Family Farms
“The Audio Tour”

Lexington, MO
Walking and Driving
Architectural and History Tour
Tour Overview

---

A Cannonball, A Calaboose and Count Basie
Lexington's Downtown Commercial Historic District
This tour highlights the history and architecture of Lexington's commercial district, from the steamboat era, to the Civil War, to the days when coal miners filled the saloons of Block 42. Walking or driving, length is approximately one mile.

Mule Trains, Merchants & Miners
Highland Avenue Historic District
Highland Avenue was once part of the Santa Fe Trail. Merchants and business leaders built elaborate homes here that have been preserved and restored. The walking tour is a little less than a mile. The driving tour also takes you to Riverfront Park.

Bullets, Buglers & Bales of Hemp
Battle of Lexington State Historic Site & Wentworth Historic District
This driving tour highlights Lexington's military heritage, from the 1861 Battle of Lexington to Wentworth Military Academy, the oldest west of the Mississippi River. Walking tours through the Battlefield and Wentworth campus.

Towers, Turrets & Tombstones
Old Neighborhoods Historic District & Machpelah Cemetery
Homes dating from the 1830s to the early 1900s in styles from Greek Revival to Queen Anne line the streets here. Machpelah Cemetery was the last resting place for many Lexington notables. A driving tour with portions ideal for walking.
Audio Portion of Tour

New Music Residency

Partnership between the University of Missouri School of Music, Mizzou New Music Initiative, MU Extension and the Lexington community consisting of:

- 4 Mini Residencies and 1 Extended Residency
- Providing Original Music and Audio Production for Lexington’s MU Extension CAPP—The Architectural/History Audio Tour
Billy Lackey, professor
Recording
Hughston Walkinshaw- community
Liz Fenner- CAPP president
Jerry Brown- Mayor
Mark Porth, CA regional specialist
Project Success

- Mutual expertise and support
- Focus on innovation and creativity
- Strategize and leverage local assets
- Create collaborative learning
- Build for sustainable future
- Plan and implement evaluation & measures
Mutual expertise and support

• Focus on the local
• Experts sit on both sides of the table

• Lexington
  — Was a new initiative, Extension built project from ground up in collaboration with the community and University of Missouri
  — Had lots of capacity going in, Old Trails Tourism Partnership, Healthy Life Styles . . .
Focus on innovation and creativity

- Use arts to foster community engagement
- Artists on board and engaged in early development
- Youth component
- Multi-generational aspects
Strategize and leverage assets

• Place-based
• **Strong volunteer base**
• Local financial investment

• Lexington
  — Easier for volunteer and leadership burnout (because of size)
  — Hard to maintain momentum for innovation once Extension support ended
Create collaborative learning

• MU Extension/MU learns as much as community
• Key role of local advisory councils
• Opportunities to work with MU faculty & students as co-learners
• Engagement of community members in professional presentations
Build for a sustainable future

• Long term planning for programs and sustainable funding that involved community

• Lexington—
  • Creation of 501(c)3 arts council & local gifts fund
  • Capacity building for fund development
  • Requires marketing outside of local area to succeed
Plan and implement impact measures

• Initial question to community: *What would success look like?*

• Community economic development indicators: # of new businesses created, # of jobs created, # of programs created and retained.

• Mid-project survey (20) 35% 2-yrs, 35% 1-yr

• Ripple effects map showed the connections and overall value of project to community
Practices to Carry Forward

• Start with campus faculty, local extension faculty and communities as co-equals from beginning.
• Provide training for fundraising, develop and pursue sources of funding with the community.
• Build community capacity, viable & sustainable relationships.
For more information contact:

Lee Ann Woolery
Community Arts State Specialist
University of Missouri Extension
wooleryl@missouri.edu

Mary Simon Leuci
Community Development Program Director
University of Missouri Extension
leucim@missouri.edu

MU Extension Community Arts Program

http://extension.missouri.edu/communityarts