

# 1997 Final Report

## **Speak Out Lexington Citizen Symposium**

In December 1996, *Speak Out Lexington* convened a group of interested citizens -- a kind of citizen "think tank" -- to work on ways to understand current thinking about how communities strengthen themselves.

The Citizen Symposium members read and conducted research to see what people in Lexington believe about our own ability to influence our community's big decisions. Symposium members considered ways communities encourage or discourage connections among citizens. And they talked about the virtues of front porches, learning our neighbors' names, and having workable public spaces where both fun and civic work can easily happen. Much of the shape of this year's *Speak Out* came from the Symposium, including the Community Bonds game developed by Buck Ryan, Director of the School of Journalism and Telecommunications at the University of Kentucky, and other Symposium members.

This year's *Speak Out* topic posed a new challenge. Participants were not asked to think about a specific issue facing our community. Rather, they were asked to think about **how** our community goes about making decisions about issues we face. They found the topic -- and the approach that the *Speak Out* format encouraged them to take -- interesting and stimulating. Many people said they wished more people would take the opportunity to participate, and they made numerous suggestions about ways to continue and extend the conversation that these *Speak Out* sessions have begun in our community. The sections that follow present participant responses to the main parts of the *Speak Out 1997* format, which was in three sections: Community Bonds, Public Spaces, and Big Decisions.

**PART 1:           Community Bonds     ~ ~**  
**A Game for People Interested in the Common Wealth**

People had fun playing the Community Bonds game, and quickly saw how much they and their fellow citizens already do that improves our community and our decision-making. Participants reported a grand total of \$119,652 civic dollars during the *Speak Out* season. These dollars represent individual actions that cover a wide range: from neighbor helping neighbor to major volunteer efforts; from one-time efforts to long-term commitments; from simple assistance to building organizations. Participants accumulated “civic dollars” by listing their civic actions in Lexington. The following are activities mentioned most frequently.

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Belonging to or being involved in a religious congregation</li> <li>•Donating money or goods</li> <li>•Voting</li> <li>•Coaching or participating in organized sports</li> <li>•Joining the Boy/Girl Scouts or serving as a leader of a troop</li> <li>•Being involved in a neighborhood association</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Organizing or participating in a neighborhood or park clean-up</li> <li>•Participating in a march or parade</li> <li>•Recycling</li> <li>•Working with Habitat for Humanity</li> <li>•Giving blood</li> <li>•Volunteering for a political campaign</li> <li>•Visiting or volunteering in a hospital or nursing home</li> <li>•Volunteering with God’s Pantry</li> </ul> |
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**PART 2:           Public Spaces**

When asked to identify the public spaces in our community, many participants first thought about libraries, parks, churches, schools, and shopping malls. A variety of activities draws people into these public spaces. People gather to talk about neighborhood and community issues, or to learn about these issues, or to work together on them. The types of spaces and places people mentioned most commonly as “public spaces” are listed below. The numbers indicate how many participants in the sessions had been to the space or place in the past six months.

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Parks — 325</li> <li>•Libraries — 263</li> <li>•Schools — 246</li> <li>•Churches, synagogues, religious institutions — 220</li> <li>•Malls — 177</li> <li>•Government buildings — 156</li> <li>•Sports arenas — 136</li> <li>•Community centers — 95</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Bookstores — 69</li> <li>•Grocery stores — 64</li> <li>•Hospitals — 62</li> <li>•Historic homes — 58</li> <li>•Community service organizations — 49</li> <li>•Art galleries — 44</li> <li>•Restaurants — 40</li> <li>•Sidewalks — 32</li> <li>•Movie theaters — 30</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

Many people gather in their churches, temples, and synagogues to worship and spend time with friends and family, as well as to meet with various volunteer and neighborhood groups. Public spaces such as Rupp Arena, Commonwealth Stadium, Heritage Hall, ArtsPlace and the Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning draw people interested in attending and being involved in local athletic and cultural activities. People interested in exercise run and walk in parks, shopping malls and around their neighborhoods. Libraries draw people wanting to read and learn new information as well as those coming to hear storytelling and poetry readings. Participants gather in parks to picnic and play with their children, at malls to meet friends and shop, and in restaurants to eat meals and talk. Other places people meet to socialize include the various community parades and events happening throughout the year, such as the Fourth of July Parade, the Roots and Heritage Festival, and Thursday Night Live. Listed below are common responses to the question “What happens?” in the public spaces. The numbers represent how frequently the activity was mentioned in sessions.

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Meetings -- 72</li> <li>•Classes and education -- 60</li> <li>•Parades and community events (M.L. King Day parade, Roots and Heritage Festival, etc.) -- 57</li> <li>•Socializing, fellowship, hanging out, meet friends, gatherings -- 55</li> <li>•Sports (tennis, basketball, baseball, hockey, soccer, both viewing and doing) — 55</li> <li>•Study, research, reading -- 47</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts, theater, exhibitions -- 45</li> <li>•Neighborhood meetings and activities — 45</li> <li>•Exercise, walking, running, walking the dog -- 35</li> <li>•Shopping — 33</li> <li>•LFUCG meetings and council sessions -- 25</li> <li>•Worship, bible study — 25</li> <li>•Talking, conversations, discussions — 20</li> </ul> |
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Participants were asked to think about where “we gather to have conversations about community and neighborhood matters.” People recognized that in many of these spaces they talk and learn about issues happening in our community, in informal conversations and in formal meetings. The types of spaces listed below were the ones most frequently mentioned. The numbers indicate how often participants mentioned this space.

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Church, synagogue, temple, or other religious institution — 14</li> <li>•Private homes — 13</li> <li>•Schools — 13</li> <li>•Social clubs — 13</li> <li>•Parks — 7</li> <li>•Restaurants — 7</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Downtown activities — 6</li> <li>•Parking lots, sidewalks, corners, in the street — 6</li> <li>•Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council meetings — 6</li> <li>•Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government building — 6</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

When asked about spaces where decisions are made about our community, groups typically generated a different list, though often with some overlap with the previous question. They focused more on the formal decision-making places in our community. Participants also suggested that decisions are made in non-public places, and in places

outside our community. Many participants recognized that the places they go to talk about issues are often not where they think decisions are made. The most frequent responses follow, along with the number of times the particular response was mentioned.

- Lexington-Fayette Government Center — 29
- Private offices — 11
- School Board Building — 11
- Courts — 6
- Frankfort — 5
- Washington D.C. — 5
- “Behind closed doors” — 4
- Mayor’s office — 4

### **PART 3: How Can We All Take Part in Making Our Community’s Big Decisions?**

The most frequently cited examples of big decisions -- both recent and future -- that affect our community decisions are listed below, along with an indication of how often the decision was mentioned during the *Speak Out* season.

- Growth and development — 26
- School redistricting — 19
- Reynolds Road development — 18
- Rupp/UK arena — 17
- Airport expansion — 16
- Special session for higher education — 11
- Regulation of “gentleman’s clubs” — 9
- Drainage/sewage systems — 8
- Welfare reform — 8

Note: “School redistricting” was the most commonly selected big decision for use in further discussion by the groups.

Participants identified many actions they could take that would make it possible for more people to be more involved in the decision-making process. Many suggestions called for participants to be more active themselves. The following list of frequent suggestions includes the number of people who made each suggestion.

- Provide more information to the public about decisions, particularly from the major radio, print and television media — 25
- Assure people that public input is heard and seriously considered -- 12
- Increase the diversity of boards by having more people from the community be involved-- 12
- Make council and other decision-making meetings more accessible by varying the schedule of meeting times and places -- 12
- Hold small meetings in the community with council members in attendance -- 11

Below is a list of specific actions individuals could take, followed by the number of times each was mentioned during *Speak Out* sessions.

- Write letters to decision-makers and editors of local newspapers -- 22
- Attend meetings where decisions are made — 18
- Voice your opinion and interest — 15
- Be involved in your neighborhood association — 12
- Educate ourselves and each other about issues -- 10
- Get involved -- 8
- Belong to local civic organizations -- 8
- Vote -- 7
- Encourage others to be active -- 6
- Encourage churches, synagogues, and temples in their community involvement -- 6
- Talk to Councilpersons and encourage them to attend meetings -- 5
- Raise money for causes — 4
- Volunteer -- 4

One theme common to many groups was that citizens would be more encouraged to participate if they felt that decision-makers would listen to and care about their opinions, and that their participation would make a difference. Some participants reported feeling that their ideas and opinions are not actively sought, or feeling actively discouraged from voicing their opinions, or feeling that their ideas are ignored.

### ***Conclusion: Civic Connections***

Many *Speak Out* participants recognized that the activities they and their fellow participants listed during the first part of the *Speak Out*, and the places they go to connect with their fellow citizens listed in the second part of the *Speak Out*, all contribute to their capacity to be involved in the decision-making process. They are interested in ways to turn that capacity -- developed through the ordinary and ongoing civic involvement they experience through these efforts -- into the feeling and reality of being contributors to considering and making the big decisions that affect them and everyone else in our community.

Few *Speak Out Lexington 1997* participants are content with their own present involvement in making our community's big decisions. Some expressed serious frustration; all see room for improvement.

As the final event for Speak Out Lexington 1997, we invite all participants, along with families and friends to meet on June 12 for Thursday Night Live at Cheapside Park, Downtown. The party will take place from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Please see the enclosed letter for more details.

**PARTICIPANT STATISTICS**

Total Number of People Attending ..... 478  
 Total Groups Reporting ..... 43  
 Total Civic Dollars Reported ..... 119,652

**A G E**

14 or under ..... 13	35-44 ..... 73	65-74 ..... 53
15-17 ..... 72	45-54 ..... 78	75-84 ..... 48
18-24 ..... 29	55-64 ..... 61	85 or older ..... 8
25-34 ..... 36		

**G E N D E R**

Male ..... 174                      Female ..... 299

**R A C E**

White ..... 355	Asian ..... 19
African-American ..... 91	Other ..... 5
American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut ..... 4	

**NUMBER OF YEARS LIVED IN LEXINGTON-FAYETTE COUNTY**

0-5 ..... 87	11-20 ..... 148
6-10 ..... 46	21 or more ..... 197

**ZIP CODE OF RESIDENCE**

40502 ..... 69	40508 ..... 64	40514 ..... 8
40503 ..... 113	40509 ..... 11	40515 ..... 18
40504 ..... 35	40510 ..... 0	40516 ..... 4
40505 ..... 51	40511 ..... 30	40517 ..... 45
40506 ..... 1	40512 ..... 0	Outside ..... 11
40507 ..... 4	40513 ..... 9	

*Members of the Citizen Symposium*

Laurie Bottoms	Richard Greissman	Lee Meyer	Buck Ryan
Karen Campbell	Susan Stokes Hill	Richard Mitchell	Barbara Sutherland
Pat Cooper	Tisa Fontaine Hill	David Mohny	Chetan Talwalkar
Amanda Elliott	Larry Johnson	Liz Natter	Gail Taylor
Becky Ewalt	Steve Kay	Wolfgang Natter	Will Warner
Robert Fleming	Marjorie Keller	Tom Parsons	Sue Weant
Lillian Gentry	Annette Mayer	Michaele Pride-Wells	
Jake Gibbs	Ted McCormick	Rona Roberts	

**MODERATORS                      AND                      REPORTERS**

Tonya Beatty Adams	Amanda Ferguson	Marge Keller	Helen Reed
Michael Adelstein	Marsha Fields	Dianne Kreeger	Gloria Rie
Charles Baesler	Helen Fleming	Gerry Lamothe	Esther Rigby
Mildred Bailey	Robert E. Fleming	Betsy Larson	Karen Rudisell
Heather Barron	Marguerite Floyd	Kara Lawrence	AliceAnn Sanders
Dottie Bean	Michael Fogler	Amy Lawson	Fred Shafer
Don Beile	Dorothy Friend	Bobby Jean Looper	Samuel Shafer
Joan Bishop	Lillian B. Gentry	Rashad Majeed	Billy Sharp
Laurie Bottoms	Gwendolyn Godfrey	Abby Marlatt	Charity Sirkle
Jim Carroll	Julie Gray	Annette Mayer	Bernice Smith
Regina Clark	Elizabeth Halleron	Maitland McCollum	Barbara Sutherland
Ken Colebank	Edwin Hanna	Ted McCormick	Gail Taylor
Betty Trapp Coleman	Naquishia Haydan	Lee Meyer	Bernice Thomas
Elizabeth Craft	Roger Hemken	Ellen Mills	Della Y. Thomas
Sue Crone	Kim Henderson	Terry Naydan	Gloria Tompkins
Rochelle Davis	Adela Hernandez	Stephanie Page	Charlotte Wallace
Debra Dixon	Susan Stokes Hill	Ellen Rice Parks	Will Warner
Judy Downey	Tisa Fontaine Hill	Gayle Plank	Sue Weant
Darlene Easterwood	Ron Hustedde	Michaele Pride-Wells	Alayne White
James Elkins	Linda C. Jackson	Michelle Purnell	Leland Williams
Suzanne Elkins	Andrea Johnson	Carol Graham Yunker	Judy Worth
Amanda Elliott	Larry Johnson	Robin Ramey	
Elizabeth Enright	Ronald "Adrian" Jones	Sally Ramsdell	
Karen Faulkner	William M. Kay	Diana Rast	

**GROUPS                                      PARTICIPATING**

Arlington Head Start Parent Group	The Lafayette at Country Place
Bell House Senior Citizen Center	League of Women Voters of Lexington
Bluegrass Chapter of Prof. Secretaries Int'l	Kentucky League of Cities
Bluegrass Chapter -- NOW	Lexington Arts and Cultural Council
Bluegrass Business and Women's Prof. Org.	Lexington Breakfast Optimist Club
Bryan Station H.S. Student Council	Lexington Citizen Summit III
Chinese Culture and Education Org. of Lex.	Meadow Creek Neighborhood Association
Claymont Drive Neighborhood	Mother to Mother & Picadome Family Res. Ctr.
Crestwood Christian Church	Ohavay Zion Synagogue
Downtown Lexington Corporation	Robin Reid's classes at Lafayette H.S.
Eldercrafters and CRAL	Second Presbyterian Church
Epworth Head Start Parent Group	Southeast Lexington Head Start Parent Group
First District Meeting	Southern Hills Methodist Church
Friends of Abby Marlatt and Esther Rigby	Speak Out Lexington Training Sessions
Friends of Lee and Victoria Meyer	Televised Speak Out Session
Gainesway Neighborhood Association	Twin Pines Christian Church
Gardenside Kiwanis	Unitarian Universalist Church
Golden K Kiwanis	United Way of the Bluegrass
Good Shepherd Christian Church	West End Community Empowerment, Inc.
The Greater Lexington Dem. Women's Club	Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
H.H. Greene Head Start Parent Group	

See you at Thursday Night Live on June 12 to celebrate *Speak Out Lexington 1997!!*

*Speak Out Lexington*  
Mayor's Office  
200 East Main Street  
Lexington, Kentucky 40507

### *Acknowledgements*

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Mayor Pam Miller

Fred V. Brown  
George A. Brown, Jr.  
Dick DeCamp  
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Bill Farmer, Jr.

Willy Fogle  
Teresa Ann Isaac  
Robert R. Jefferson  
Gloria Martin  
Albert S. Mitchell

Richard P. Moloney  
Jennifer Mossotti  
Sandy Shafer  
David B. Stevens, M.D.  
Isabel Yates

***Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Staff:***

Project Coordinator:  
Staff assistance:

Barbara Sutherland  
Terra Stamper

***Speak Out Lexington 1997 Consultants:***

Project design, training, report writing:  
Administrative support, publicity, coordination:  
Staff assistance:

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Tisa Hill  
William M. Kay

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