COMMUNITY BENEFITS

A COMMUNITY LIVING ROOM
Town Branch Park is envisioned as the community’s living room – a beautiful and dynamic space for people of all ages, backgrounds, and experiences to interact in a comfortable and safe environment.

Town Branch Park will be the crucial link connecting our urban core to Lexington’s iconic countryside. But as important as that is – for our health, for our transportation, for our recreation – Town Branch Park will be connecting something even more meaningful – our people.

Studies show urban parks are one of the most effective ways to build a sense of community. They provide a place for people to interact in a safe, shared environment. In turn, improved community connectivity contributes to lower crime rates, higher educational attainment, and improved health outcomes.

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY
Park planners have assembled a team of internationally known experts in park design, programming, operations and inclusion and have learned from other public-space project arounds the world. But, it will take the community working together to ensure the park’s success. To this end, the park leadership established the Town Branch Park Partners - a diverse group of 29 local leaders - to help guide park planning through the lens of equity, fairness, and inclusion.

“Why I decided to get involved in the Town Branch Park planning process was to ensure that everyone had a voice, that the community was heard and that the park would truly be inclusive to all groups of people. I believe that everyone should be able to enjoy the park, no matter their background or where they come from. This is the essence of the community living room.”

- Town Branch Park Inclusive Park Survey

Building on prior community input, the partners launched the Inclusive Park Survey in May 2018 to examine how the community is currently experiencing public spaces and specifically explore Lexintonians’ hopes and expectations for an inclusive Town Branch Park.

In addition to several in-person gatherings to discuss these ideas in more depth, there were over 2,000 survey responses from a wide cross-section of the community. The Park Partners and staff carefully studied the community input and considered ways to meaningfully translate it into strategies and recommendations for Town Branch Park. In June 2019, Town Branch Park released the Town Branch Park Inclusion Plan: Final Report + Recommendations (townbranchpark.org/s/Inclusion-Plan-Report.pdf) Outlining 12 specific recommendations and 72 strategies, the report is a deliberate step toward ensuring that inclusion is considered throughout the planning process.

The report has been adopted by the Board of Directors of Town Branch Park and will be used to inform the work of park leadership, staff and consultants. With this report, coupled with our ongoing work with the Park Parters and commitment to meaningful opportunities for community engagement, we believe Town Branch Park will not only be an extraordinarily beautiful space, but will contribute to the vitality of all of Lexington.
Findings for the Town Branch Park Inclusion Survey show 43 percent of people identify learning about different people, groups, and cultures as a benefit they have experienced in public places.