

A MORNING WITH JOE BREWER IN THE INNOVATION DISTRICT

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On August 1st I had the opportunity to shadow Joe Brewer to gain insight towards a typical morning on the site of the new Gray Design Building. What entailed was proof that there is no such thing. Change is always occurring as workers must address the past, present, and future of a project every day.

It was clear this day would be particularly exceptional when we arrived at the site to find police and coroner vehicles were already on the scene. Energy buzzed within the trailer where the morning's construction meeting had been delayed by the recent developments. Construction was briefly halted when workers found a human femur while digging in the lower-level of the building's basement.

Because of its location beneath the historic substrate, the coroner had no reason to expect foul play and concluded that the bones likely were the product of Lexington's cholera epidemic in the early-mid 1800s. At that time, pre-dating the popularity of caskets, bodies were buried on the site that would become the Reynolds Building before the opening of the Lexington Cemetery on West Main Street.

"I always told them this building had good bones." said Ben Noble, Project Manager, once the construction meeting was able to begin. The team met to share updates on progress and discuss the day's goals. This included changes to the schedule, specification of materials, and responses to unexpected issues.

These were handled through a Request for Information (RFI) presented by the engineer. This document lists any concerns that require additional attention or follow up. One RFI that was

discussed warned a component could not continue until new AV drawings arrived later that month. Another depicted a miscalculated field measurement and the consequences waiting for correction. As these tasks became delegated, they entered the worker's "court."

At the closure of the meeting, Brewer agreed to orchestrate a tour of the site for Jim Gray and his family, acting as a liaison between the donor and facility. He expressed hopes to do the same with the College of Design by integrating students and faculty into the process and encouraging engagement amongst designers, donors, and users.

However, curating interaction at this scale is only one step in a much larger plan to connect the expansion of the University to the Lexington community. After completing a walk-through of the new building Brewer led us along Old Broadway towards Bolivar Street, mapping out what will one day become the new Innovation District. These proposed facilities will become a neighborhood of resources for the arts and technology as they restitch the area to the lively campus community only a few blocks over.

By now, the University has acquired most of the land in the anticipated district and its clearing has already been initiated through the demolition of the historic, yet liable, building on the corner of Bolivar and Broadway. This diffusion of campus will not only change the landscape of Lexington, as urbanization becomes even more dense, but it will create shifts in the city's culture itself. Students will be occupying new spaces at new rates, bringing their needs and livelihoods with them. Considering the proposed site, and the current engagement that does not meet its full potential, this expansion will hopefully materialize as a revitalization that bridges the University with Lexington's community.