

LEARNING

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LEXINGTON

Voices + Visions

Lexington Market: 1800s - 2017

INTRO

Learning from Lexington is an American Studies course at UMBC where students research the history, cultures, and stories of the iconic Lexington Market, a public market located in the westside of downtown Baltimore. There is a proposed plan to build a new market building replacing the current one, built in 1952. Students explored what these changes may mean for the city and asked people what they thought about the Market and its future.

Thanks to those who shared their thoughts and stories with us.

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The Baltimore Traces courses have allowed me to do things I never thought were possible with my academic career. I am able to combine the love I have for my city with my passion to capture meaningful stories from the city's residents and visitors. This has opened up new doors for me and given me a different perspective on parts of the city I've known my whole life.

To me, the Lexington Market isn't just the place you go to hang out and get good food anymore. It's a cornerstone in people's lives. It is a community that's full of good and bad, hope and despair. No matter how I view the market, one thing never changes... the people. The people of Baltimore never give up. They always have hope. The buildings may change but the people of Baltimore won't. We will continue to live, love, fight, laugh, and persevere through all of the city's changes.

-Christina Kwegan
Baltimore Traces fellow
American Studies, UMBC class of 2016
Baltimore City Resident



Pictured above: Christina Kwegan, Adam Droneburg and Miranda Supeno

HIST ORY

Lexington Market is a part of the fabric of Baltimore city. The first building was built in 1805 so that farmers selling produce, fish, and meat could be under cover.

For a century, the market grew until in 1918 there were 1,200 spots for sellers, inside and on the nearby streets. But in the early and mid 20th century, grocery stores emerged, selling food closer to homes in the expanding city. In 1949, Lexington Market burned down and the market building we know today opened in 1952 with 417 stalls, eliminating outdoor vendors. Today there are plans to build a new market building.

Many of today's vendors have been around for decades. The oldest stall is Faidley's seafood, which opened in 1886 and is still run by the same family. Three successive owners have kept the Mary Mervis Delicatessen open for 103 years. Many of the longtime vendors blend with new arrivals and the largest percentage of stalls are run by Korean American vendors.

Customers like Thurston Jennings, who was buying a \$4 breakfast at Joy's, come to Lexington Market for its low prices and for the convenience of finding so many options in one place. But, for Jennings, it is the spirit of the market that is most appealing...

"For me, Lexington Market is kind of like an embodiment of the spirit of Baltimore. In Baltimore, you really have the get up and go attitude. A lot of the residents, as far as I've you know encountered, don't necessarily have the easiest ways of succeeding in life. But it's the will, it's the drive that a person has that makes them go out and get and achieve. Lexington Market you look around at all the business shops and you look around at all the faces, it's that same spirit, that same drive, that same get up and go, and I don't know what the day will bring, but, you know, let's hope for the best."

Timeline

1782-1802

Lexington Market
Bought and Built

1900

Lexington Market
existed for around 100
years, beginning of
discussions of fixing
and changing the market

1949

Lexington
Market caught
on fire

1952

The new Lexington
Market was built
after the tragic
fire.

1982

The Arcade Emerges

2016

Development Plans
Announced for the
new market



Photo: Bill Risen

Baltimore August 12, 1818

To The city commissioners Gentlemen I have made in examination Agreeable
to your Advertisement for Proposals to building An Addition to the Lexington market
50 feet in Length And as wide as the present Market House
with 4 Brick pillars on each side and 4 posts on each side with Lime Sinks
Foot under each post pavement from kerb stone to kerb stone ~~as the former market~~
with good paving Buck each Brick ~~with~~ pillar shall be well built
with good brick and well laid with mortar shingles of the best quality
And All timbers except the Lating And them will be cuttings
And the same shall be done in a workman Like manner For 140000 Dollars
And so on to the Satisfaction of The city commissioners and be commenced as quick
As possible by Me Stephen Waters

Baltimore August 24th 1818

The City commiss^{rs} Gentl^{rs}
Last Monday I proposed to build
an addition to Lexington ^{street} Market House of fifty feet
in the same manner as that already built for the sum
of Thirteen Hundred and twenty five Dollars. I have since
examined the house already built and am willing to
finish fifty feet in the same manner for the sum of
Twelve hundred dollars.

Daniel Cunningham

NB I wish to commence it in the course of this week if
possible

D.C.

To The Mayor & City Council of Baltimore
Now in session

The subscribers commissioners for erecting
a market house in the Western Precincts, beg leave to propose
that they have paved the public part of Calaw street at
the intersection of Lexington street, out of their funds, they therefore
pray that an appropriation may be made to refund the same
Balt^r March 19th 1805

P.S. The sum required is \$2000

J^o Kennedy
E. Finley
J^o Johnston
Dan Lammitt
J^o S. Horul

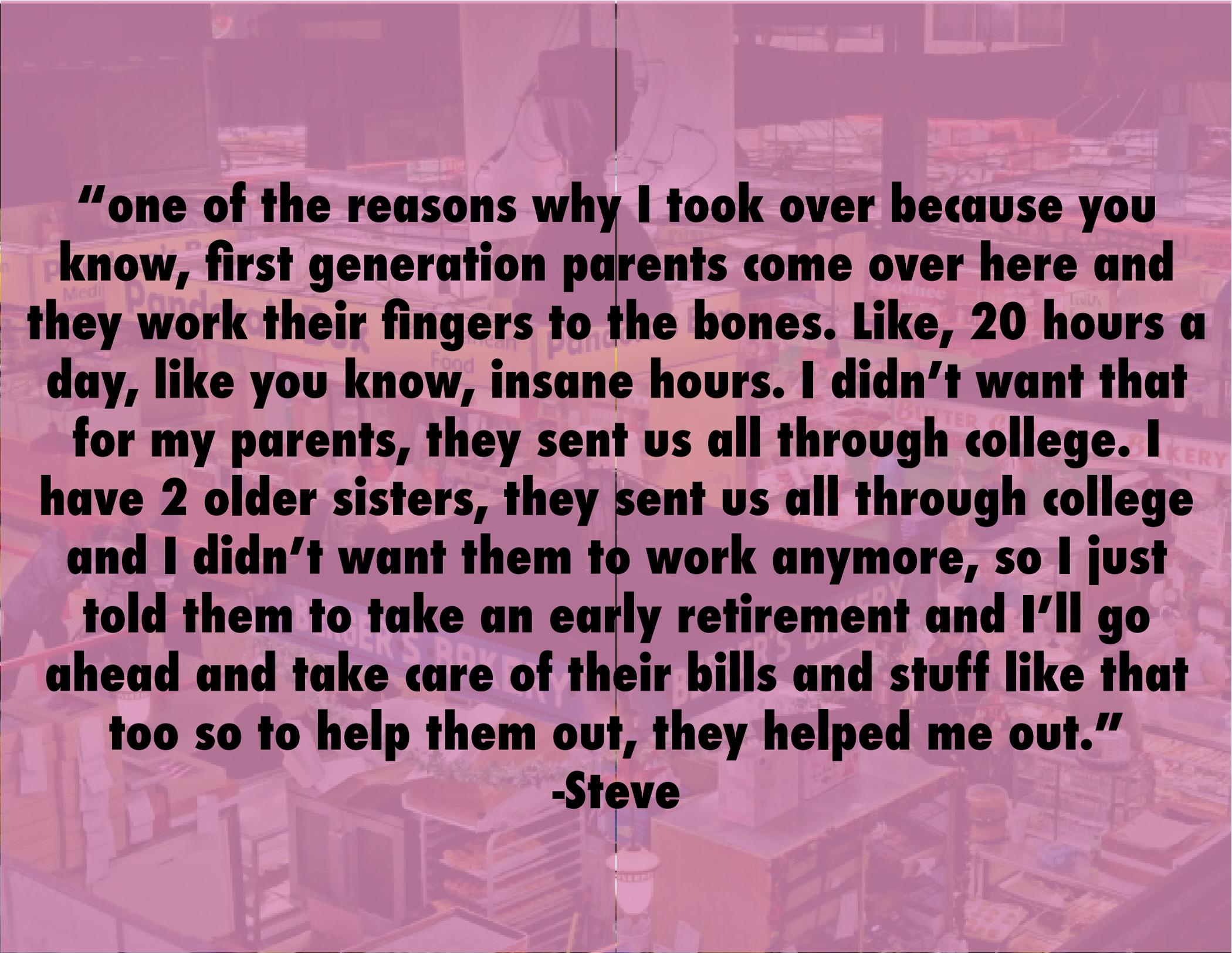
Original Documents for
Lexington Market

Stories of Lexington Market Vendors



Photo: Kenneth K. Lam

With 70% of vendors in Lexington Market being Korean and Korean American, their hard work and dedication is what embodies the American Dream. Grace works towards the American Dream for her children just like Steve's parents, a dream that most people come here to obtain.



“one of the reasons why I took over because you know, first generation parents come over here and they work their fingers to the bones. Like, 20 hours a day, like you know, insane hours. I didn’t want that for my parents, they sent us all through college. I have 2 older sisters, they sent us all through college and I didn’t want them to work anymore, so I just told them to take an early retirement and I’ll go ahead and take care of their bills and stuff like that too so to help them out, they helped me out.”

-Steve



Photo: Amy Davis

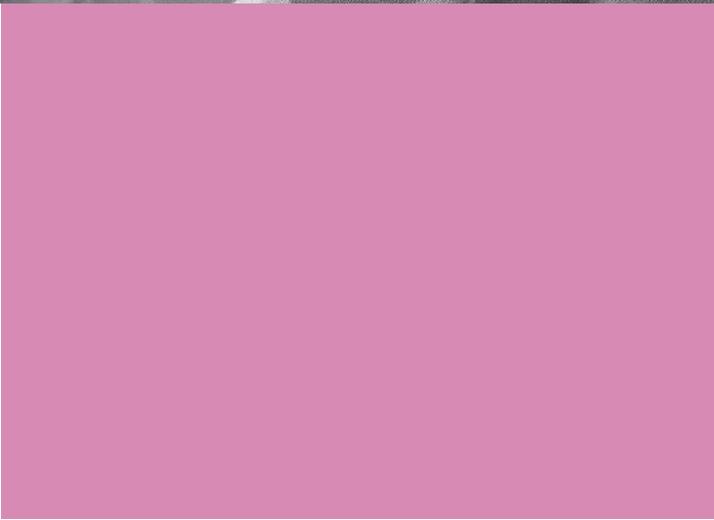
“But we have the dream, kinda what you can say the American Dream. So it is a big part of the children or even my dreams. That is why we work so hard. It’s not for me, I think most immigrants are the same.”
- Grace, JA Reagan

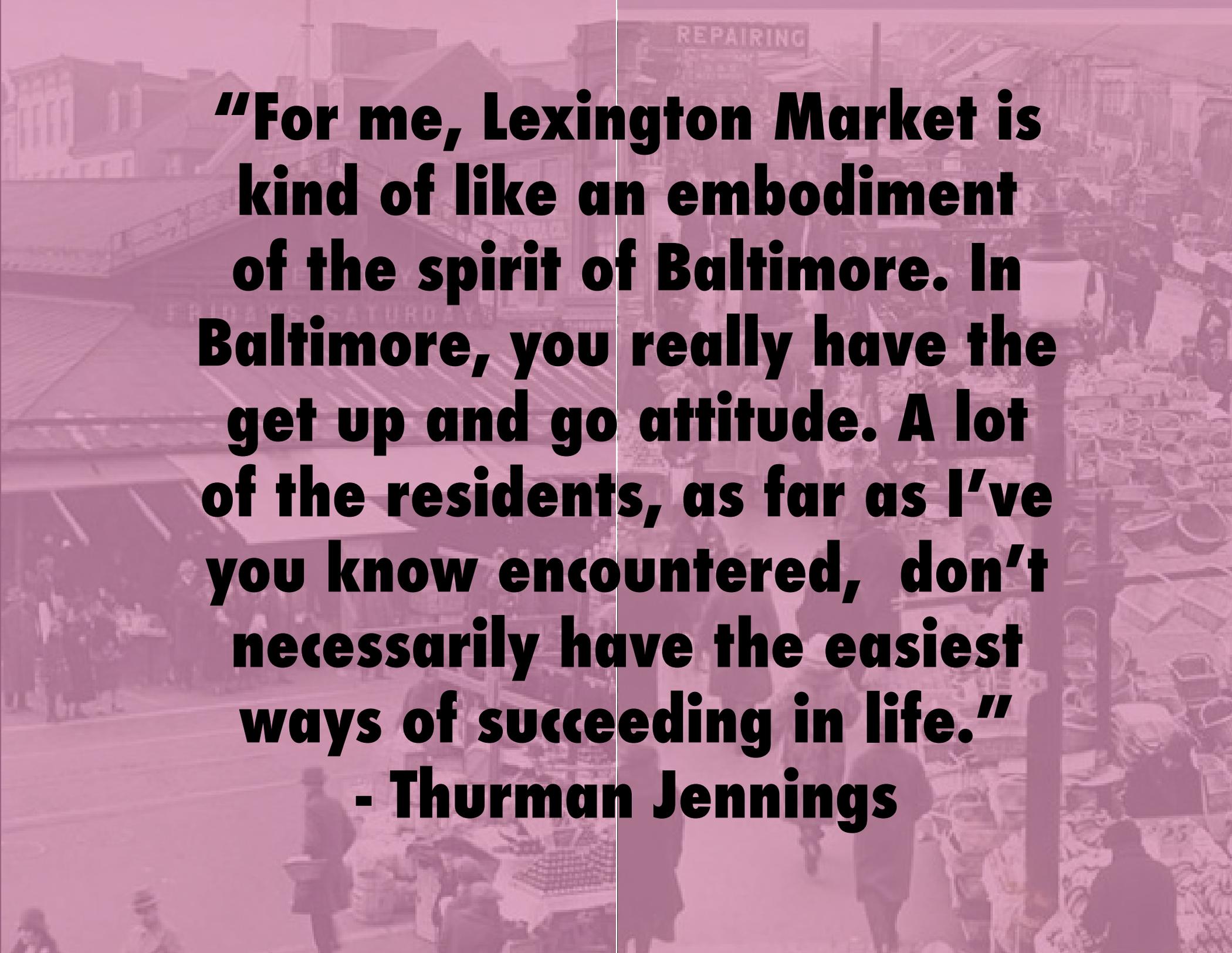
A Baltimore Tradition



First imagined in 1782, Lexington Market has been renovated, expanded, burned down, and put back together again. What has remained are the generations of returning customers. Baltimore residents who once visited the Market as children continue to do so as adults.

"Coming down here, just before me and my mother would go shopping, and getting a shrimp salad sandwich from Mary-Mary's," he says with a laugh. "That's my fondest memory," says 55-year-old Tyrone Spease, who has been visiting the Market since childhood "That's when you had major department stores and such, Hutzler's, stuff like that."
- Carol Harris





“For me, Lexington Market is kind of like an embodiment of the spirit of Baltimore. In Baltimore, you really have the get up and go attitude. A lot of the residents, as far as I’ve you know encountered, don’t necessarily have the easiest ways of succeeding in life.”

- Thurman Jennings



CHANGE

from market managers

In 2016, Lexington Market, Inc., the non-profit that manages the market, released a new master plan for Lexington Market.

The plan calls for erecting an entirely new market building on the surface lot adjacent to the current facility, demolishing the 1952 market shed and 1982 arcade, creating new open space for outdoor uses and re-opening Lexington Street to pedestrians.

Development projects moving forward without input from community members are all too familiar in Baltimore. The destabilizing effects can be seen clearly around the city. To their credit, the executives of Lexington Market seem to acknowledge this reality. Lexington Market & Baltimore Public Markets Corp.

In terms of what the future market offers, Marketing and Communications Manager at Lexington Market Stacey Pack let us know that the market executives “want to get [a] connection back with local farmers and merchants who might not be able to afford a stall six days a week.” She adds that the renovated Market can offer, “a nice outdoor space in central West Baltimore that has outdoor seating and just is a nice friendly type of environment.”

Lexington Market & Baltimore Public Markets Corp. Executive Director Robert Thomas agrees with lifelong customers of Lexington Market:

“I would be cautious too, but I’d also say we want to make sure that the market offers what people need first, and then offers what people want after that.”

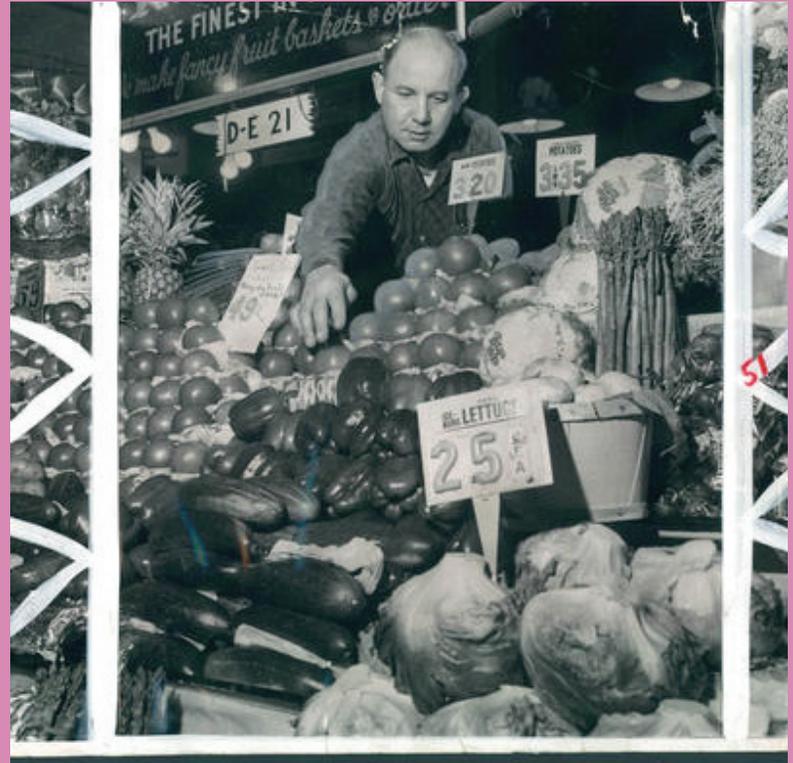


Photo: Cook



Photo: Amy Davis

“All voices will be heard. The tricky piece is figuring out the best way to move forward . . . making it a space that really does welcome all people and make it . . . a place where merchants can thrive, and customers can come and that can really be a special place for the city of Baltimore and carry on that tradition that it has had for over 200 years.”

- Stacey Pack

The Future Of Lexington Market



“To be honest, it looks like the Harbor. If I wanted to go to the Harbor then I would go to the Harbor. You hear what I’m saying? I would go to The Gallery or something of that sort. I don’t want a Harbor for Lexington Market. I think Lexington Market has a rustic feel. But, you know, everyone wants to clean up and modernize or upscale it. And it doesn’t really need that. Sometimes old and dirty is good. You know, we don’t wanna think of it like that. But it is.”

– Thurman Jennings

Reactions



During our interviews, the public was often surprised to hear of the upcoming changes to the Lexington Market, especially tearing down the current market and arcade. Many visitors want a change, but hope that the essence of the Market itself will stay the same.

"I don't think they can change Lexington Market, cause it's a staple... even with the new building you still have the same atmosphere and the same people that are gonna be here; people make Lexington Market; the people, the customers, the vendors make Lexington the market that it is today"

- Carol Harris

"I would like to see a better food offerings and I'd like to see us stay open later, so when people got off their jobs, they can come get dinner here."

-Larry from Konstant's

**“Oh yeah, put a mall in there. I think there should be a shopping center where people can buy clothes and make a whole Baltimore experience. There should be a museum to give you the education of Baltimore and Lexington Market and how it is world famous. They should have everything, a learning center. Lexington Market is world famous.” –
Sounds of a Millionaire**



Photos: Bill Risen

"I am kinda concerned. I am very concerned. I don't want it to lose its soul. Oftentimes when you come across any business really, you have to consider whether or not it has its natural original personality. As time goes forward you lose a lot out of the homestyle feeling that you would have. It goes commercial. I wouldn't want Lexington Market to go commercial. But, I mean, you gotta think about business, and, who cares about homestyle when dollars are concerned?"

- Thurman Jennings

What Do you
Think about The
Future of
Lexington ?

Write your
thoughts
down below

