

“Keeping Down the Underground:” The Underrated Value of Indie Music Scenes as Economic Development Tools for Small American Cities

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EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

“Keeping Down the Underground:” The Underrated Value of Indie Music Scenes as
Economic Development Tools for Small American Cities

Honors Thesis

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By

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“Keeping Down the Underground:” The Underrated Value of Indie Music Scenes as
Economic Development Tools for Small American Cities

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Indie music holds the largest share of the global music market and is a multibillion-dollar industry. On a more local scale, indie music can contribute significant revenue to small American cities through locally owned independent record stores, live venues, and festivals. Each of these elements, with the addition of the people involved in indie music in a variety of capacities, interacts within a centralized location known as an indie music scene. Collectively, these scenes can generate massive amounts of revenue through music sales, ticket sales, tourism, and various other business offerings. To the small cities in which these scenes operate, this income can be imperative. Cities like Athens, Georgia, and Omaha, Nebraska, serve as examples of successful, highly profitable indie rock scenes. Lexington, Kentucky, is a viable location to replicate the success of these cities based on its current economic and social climates, the central place theory, and the creative class theory. By replicating and modifying the methods these cities used to develop working indie scenes, Lexington, Kentucky, can attain similar levels of success that would benefit the scene both culturally and economically. Based on the conclusions drawn, a strategic plan accompanies this thesis to serve as a model for Lexington to follow to best develop a rich, thriving indie music scene.

Keywords and phrases: independent music, indie, economic development, Lexington, music scenes, strategic plan

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The United States music market is among the most profitable industries, bringing in over \$15 billion in 2014 and making it the largest music market in the world (US Department of Commerce). Major label music—produced by music industry giants Sony Music, Universal Music Group, and Warner Brothers—is often acknowledged as an economic asset, but independent music—often produced by independent labels—is more contributive to the overall music market than many realize. Indie music’s impact became evident by 2007, when it accounted for almost twenty-six percent of the entire American music industry; the only company that held a larger portion of the market was Universal Music Group with only a three percent lead (Atkinson). By 2015, independent music had overtaken Universal, accounting for nearly thirty-five percent of the market as compared to Universal’s twenty-six percent share (“U.S. Record Industry”).

While independently produced music brings in significant income through sales, several other factors of its dissemination expand its economic impact. These factors are most often centralized in specific locations referred to as “scenes,” which feature several economic facets that form a network of localized money flow but often go unnoticed for their financial contribution to indie music and local economies. The central purposes of

this paper are to assert that these indie music scenes are undervalued economic assets and to ultimately contend that Lexington, Kentucky's, overall economy would benefit from a revitalized, centralized indie music scene. Independent record stores and venues would be the immediate beneficiaries to such development, but a revived scene would likewise stimulate sales at local restaurants, stores, attractions, and other non-music businesses; improvements to the scene would attract more participants, and locating them in a centralized area of town would encourage participants to visit other nearby stores when attending indie shows, thereby bringing in more money.

To this end, I have organized my paper into three main sections. After providing definitions of and background on indie music and indie scenes, I explore the current climate of indie music scenes in small American cities. Specifically, the cities of Athens and Omaha serve as examples of economically successful scenes, attaining this status through various economic development methods. Second, I assess how Lexington, Kentucky's, indie music scene has developed. In this section, I explore the local music scene's changes over the recent past and determine its current state in comparison with that of other comparable cities. Third, I pose the ways in which targeting Lexington's indie rock scene specifically would generate greater income for Lexington as a whole, detailing the specific aspects of this scene that need improvement or development before economic impact can be maximized. Based on the conclusions reached in these sections, I have developed a strategic plan, which comprises the methods that local businesses and the city of Lexington can impart to bring more money into the scene and, subsequently, into the city as a whole.

BACKGROUND

Independent music eludes a simple definition. While some regard it as a genre with similar sonic elements, it is more widely defined by its production. The “simplest, most benign” definition of indie music is “that which is not produced by a major record label,” music researcher Ryan Hibbett explains (58). Up to eighty percent of the music sold in America is produced by the Big Three major record labels Sony BMG, Universal Music Group, and Warner Music Group (McDonald). Music not produced by these label giants and their subsidiaries are either self-produced or produced by hundreds of independent labels across the United States. Independent artists tend to choose independent labels over major labels because of one of indie culture’s central ideologies: most participants, from label owners to artists to fans, value artistic freedom and expression over monetary gain. This belief allows for some ambiguity in the true definition of indie. Some independent labels are subsidiaries of the Big Three major labels, which detracts from their indie credibility for some fans. Furthermore, the distinction between what can be considered mainstream and what is more underground is often blurred, as there is no distinct line between the two (Suhr 129). Thus, defining true “indie” music becomes convoluted.

Wendy Fonarow, the self-proclaimed “Indie Professor” for *The Guardian*, asserts that indie can be defined by five main criteria: indie as music produced by an independent label, an attitude or “spirit of independence,” an aesthetic (usually including a signature style of dark, thrifted clothes, messy hair, and a “lo-fi sound” laden with guitar riffs and catchy hooks), a high-quality genre curated by self-appointed tastemaker fans, and a direct opposition to anything mainstream (“Ask the Indie Professor”). These

separate criteria of indie may serve to muddle further the foundational definition of indie music, but Fonarow suggests that one should consider a combination of these classifications to best understand indie. I side with Fonarow on this belief; since each category is not indicative of *all* indie music, and often times multiple camps overlap, there cannot be a sole exemplar of indie. For this project, I am defining indie music as that which embodies the ideal of artistic creativity over monetary gain, but not limiting my scope to music produced by an indie label. Doing so would exclude countless local artists who may lack resources to record music or are otherwise more focused on performing than distributing. I am also further narrowing my scope to indie music that falls under the rock or alternative genre. I focus on this genre because it is often overlooked; organizations that promote the health and growth of local music exist, such as LexArts, but such organizations generally assist musical groups like operas, leaving small bands and artists without comparable support.

While all indie artists rarely share any single attribute, they do often have at least one aspect in common: the centrality of location. Many indie bands are immediately connectable to the city they hail from, like the Strokes from New York City or the Killers from Las Vegas. On a smaller scale, local indie artists in a given area are often well known only within their city or town. This is due to the concept of a music scene, which is greatly dependent on a tight-knit community centered around a particular location. Many scholars who study indie music trends agree that one of the scene's quintessential aspects is a "specific geographical location," which is the foundation a local indie scene is built on (Kruse 628). Within this locale, bands form and perform, fans interact with one another, music is recorded and produced, businesses sell and promote this music, and all

participants engage with nearby local businesses, creating “spatially-based cultural agglomerations of human and physical capital” (Seman 33). This localized flow of interpersonal and monetary exchange creates a sense of community and an efficient economic cluster.

Though “cultural production is the reward” more often than is financial gain in most indie scenes, many of them nonetheless benefit from the latter as well (Seman 43). Urban economists are increasingly considering music scenes formal economic clusters, or groups of businesses in the same industry that operate in close proximity (“Clustering”). Clustering is multitudinously beneficial to participating businesses, which is likewise true of indie music scenes that are replete with opportunities for economic gain. Three particular sectors of indie scenes tend to be the most profitable to their local economies: independently owned stores that sell indie music, local live music venues and festivals, and non-music related local businesses. While other aspects undoubtedly bring in money, these components are often the most centralized within a location and encourage patrons to participate economically by purchasing goods or experiencing live music, again demonstrating the importance of a specific locale within which to facilitate a scene.

Locally owned and operated music stores contribute to the indie music market’s national success while simultaneously benefitting local economies. Many of these stores remain committed to promoting the sale of local indie music. Some independent retailers come together to form coalitions through which they can combine their successes and thus potentially heighten profits. The Coalition of Independent Music Stores (CIMS), an American group consisting of twenty-nine companies, has found great success in this method of business. Together, the sixty-six individual stores owned by the companies in

this coalition brought in a profit of \$92 million in 1997 (Jeffrey 60). The network created by the coalition allows for increased communication between the individual stores, which could yield higher profits than stores that operate on their own. Ear X-tacy, a popular independent music store in Louisville, Kentucky, was the state's only CIMS participant before its sudden closure in 2011. Owner John Timmons was attracted to the coalition after learning that it was easily gaining "over \$100 million in business," despite the rise of big name music distributing companies like Best Buy (Hill). After joining the coalition, Timmons claims that Ear X-tacy's net income promptly increased. He attributes this to the personal relationships he was able to develop with major labels, allowing him to buy music directly from these labels and thereby cutting distributors' costs. Timmons, who saw sales increase 20% in the first year, and several other indie store owners across America attribute at least some of their success to CIMS (Hill).

Indie stores have also found an advantage in the recent popularity of vinyl, which nearly doubled in sales between 2009 and 2012 (Christman 24). By 2015, after this resurgence, vinyl sales skyrocketed to \$416 million, increasing by thirty-two percent (Morris). Though CD sales are steadily declining, the vinyl revival makes up for the loss of physical music sales. Indie albums are highly popular choices, thanks in part to the annual Record Store Day event. On every third Saturday in April since 2007, independent music stores across the country—including many of those participating in a coalition—promote in-store record sales. The event, which takes place exclusively in independent stores, allows these business to "assert their sustainable existence again" with the added profits from the event each year (Ritter). Many participating American stores claim that Record Store Day is their largest sales day of the entire year. In 2015, average overall

vinyl sales were up over two thousand percent from the previous Saturday on Record Store Day in newly participating stores (Bunnell). For singles vinyl sales alone, these same stores saw an increase of just over thirty-two thousand percent (Bunnell). Record Store Day further heightens vinyl sales for indie stores, especially thanks to the event's promise of special edition releases from indie artists that may only be available to buy on that day, which potentially draws in a wider array of customers and contributes to its high economic success. Record Store Day and the recent popularity of vinyl prove valuable and maybe even essential to independent stores' profits.

Much like the vinyl revival, cassette tapes are making a comeback. American cassette manufacturer National Audio Company saw a thirty-one percent increase in cassette tape sales from 2014 to 2015—garnering a profit of about five million dollars—and claim that their 2016 sales are higher still (Evangelho, Hunt). While major label bands are re-releasing popular albums on cassette tape, indie artists and stores are finding the medium a lucrative option in its early resurgence. Cassette tapes take about two dollars to make, and they sell for under ten dollars, making them much cheaper to produce than vinyl and much more affordable for consumers, who may be more likely to purchase a cassette as an “impulse purchase at a show or online” because of their low price (Evangelho). Cassette tapes are also particularly useful for indie stores because they are easily and quickly produced, taking only a couple weeks to make, allowing stores to profit more quickly (Evangelho). The ease and inexpensiveness of making tapes encourages indie artists to sell their music in local indie record stores, which benefit from the increased sales. Dan Shorr, owner of Pops Resale in Lexington, notes that he has noticed cassette revival and his business has benefitted from the rise in cassette tape

sales; local independent artists, especially R&B artists, have recently released their music on cassette tape, and fans have been receptive to the nostalgia and low price of the cassettes. Pops Resale discontinued sales of CDs recently, so tape sales can replace CD revenue and, according to trends over the last couple of years, will likely become more profitable than CDs. This trend will extend beyond Lexington, benefitting indie stores across the country.

Despite these successful cases, some stores do struggle because of their independent status. They may find it difficult to compete with larger distribution companies or fall upon hard times in the face of a rapidly digitalized music market. Some could not stay afloat even after boosted sales; Other Music in Brooklyn found a temporary sales increase during the first few years of Record Store Day but has since closed its doors because of changes in the music industry, the city, and the times (Gordon). Indie stores across the country are following suit, calling for some to consider record stores an “endangered species” (Gordon). Vinyl only makes up about twelve percent of physical music sales, so for some stores, vinyl revival may not be enough to account for the loss of CD sales (Gordon).

However, many independent stores are maintaining their businesses in a number of ways, with many operating for multiple decades in spite of the above hardships. Stores that weather the tough times do so because they employ a number of modernized methods, like Columbus-based store Used Kids, whose secret to thirty years of successful business is diversification; after an arduous experience with CD sale declines, Used Kids began selling stereo equipment alongside its music options. It also started offering items on eBay in order to increase profit through bidding and attracting a wider audience

(Gordon). Other stores are doing the same, like Amoeba Music's Berkeley store. After facing a disheartening fifty percent decrease in physical music sales over the last ten years, this branch has cleared out a section of the store set to become a marijuana dispensary in early 2017 (Ann). Others still are finding success enough in vinyl popularity, like Lexington's Pops Resale, which recently discontinued selling CDs in favor of vinyl and cassettes. In the age of musical digitization, businesses are having trouble navigating a shifting economy, but independent record stores are working with economic changes and finding increasing hope as they learn how to keep their businesses afloat. As they continue to do so, they will have greater chances of success and longevity.

One of the most important and economically advantageous facets is live music. Venues that feature live indie artists are often local, independently owned businesses that contribute directly to local economies. The Green Lantern in Lexington, Kentucky has been in operation for sixty years, today functioning as a bar that showcases local acts every weekend. According to the bar's Facebook page, the owners strive to bring "good times and good music" to Lexington, and claim that at the Green Lantern, "you might find anything... from doom metal to bluegrass, psychedelic to punk, or indie rock to folk." Attracting a slightly different crowd is Lexington's Cosmic Charlie's, where "a mix of pastel-wearing college kids and tatted-out metal heads" can be found checking out the local talent (Van Syckle). The venue relocated in early November 2016 with a revamped appearance and plan to "reinvigorate the Cosmic Charlie's lineup" by adding more shows and daytime events (Patton). These changes are too recent to have demonstrated success yet, but Cosmic Charlie's is on a promising trajectory; the older venue lacked parking and allure and was not in a prime location, but the new venue

features marked improvements in all of these areas. At any rate, small venues like these are essential as they define the scene in which they operate and provide a space of mutual appreciation for the music.

Aside from defining the scene, live venues take advantage of the commercial aspect of music, regarding it as a “consumed product of urban residents” (Gibson and Homan 69). In Australian cities, indie music scenes are highly profitable thanks to live venues. Paired with alcohol sales, these venues have been known to make tens of thousands of dollars from a single show (Gibson and Homan 72). On average, showgoers spend about \$34 on tickets and nearly the same amount on drinks during a night out (Grate). Across income levels, audiences generally spend about twice as much on alcohol as they do on transportation and snacks (“Nightlife Spending”). Small indie venues that double as bars depend on these trends for the majority of their revenue. In Madison, Wisconsin, Scott Leslie owns the venue Majestic Live, a bar-venue that rents out for weddings and other events. Leslie claims that the bar side of his business is not just important, but crucial; without the income from selling alcohol, he “wouldn’t [be able to] make one rent payment” (“Economics of Running a Music Venue”). But with the revenue generated by the bar, Leslie is able to make a significant profit above the “enormous” overhead costs of maintaining Majestic Live (“Economics”).

Equally economically valuable live music can be found outside of local bars and tightly packed venues. Every year, several music festivals across the country showcase dozens of acts, and many promote indie bands. Austin, Texas, a city with a growing indie scene, is home to the annual South by Southwest (SXSW) music festival, which presents numerous indie acts and generates massive profits annually. While SXSW is known for

its music, festivalgoers often throw non-SXSW-affiliated day parties. Though the festival does not host these, brands seek to sponsor them nonetheless. SXSW also has official, big name sponsors, including Pepsi (Harding). Often, big corporations like Pepsi will sponsor an entire stage at festivals and display continuous ads on screens in between performances. Sponsors will pay substantial amounts for such valuable advertising, contributing millions to these festivals. SXSW, like most popular music festivals, charges hundreds to thousands of dollars for tickets, which also brings in great revenue. According to SXSW's 2016 economic analysis, the weeklong festival's "economic impact on the Austin economy totaled \$325.3 million." This amount combined with the revenue from the four years prior puts SXSW's contribution to Austin's economy at well over \$1 billion (Derczo). As the event drew in roughly 376,600 attendees, local hotels, restaurants, and other establishments saw greatly increased business (Derczo). SXSW itself "requires year-round operations," thus generating jobs both seasonally and year-round (Derczo). Ben Loftsgaarden, primary economic advisor for SXSW's yearly economic analysis, contends that while these quantitative benefits are extremely beneficial, the qualitative effects can be equally impactful. The festival, he claims, is primarily responsible for the growth of the hotel industry in Austin, bringing in year-round income and creating jobs (Pagano). Not only does the festival generate millions in revenue each year, but it also contributes as much to the local economy, making it invaluable to the city of Austin.

From Atlanta's Shaky Knees to New York City's Governor's Ball City to Louisville's Forecastle, hundreds of other music festivals have cropped up across the United States, bringing in millions of dollars each year. Of the top ten highest grossing

music festivals around the world in 2013, six were American events. Rounding out the bottom of the list is the Sasquatch Festival, which grossed \$9 million dollars, while the top event, the massive Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, brought in over \$67 million (Currin). In 2016, the festival made over \$84 million and generated a total economic impact of an astonishing \$700 million to the Coachella Valley and surrounding cities (Faughnder). While many of these larger festivals like Coachella and Lollapalooza host several major artists, hundreds of other events focus more on independent artists and generate comparable profits. Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival in Manchester, Tennessee, frequently showcases indie names, from larger acts like Phoenix and the National to much smaller independent artists. Located in south central Tennessee's Coffee County, the event greatly stimulates the small county's economy each year. In 2012, when the most recent economic impact study was conducted, Bonnaroo brought in around \$51.1 million to the state of Tennessee and \$27.2 million to Coffee County alone (Littman). Aside from high profits, the festival also creates valuable jobs and encourages "expansion of businesses" in the area. Many festivalgoers enjoy healthy foods, so farmers from rural Coffee County are able to supply Bonnaroo food vendors with fresh, local produce. Small farm owner Sharon Holmes supplies on-site vendors with organic vegetables and beef, and she claims that thirty percent of her local café's annual profit is generated during this one week of the year (Littman). To further benefit Coffee County, Bonnaroo developed the nonprofit Bonnaroo Works Fund in 2009 to raise money for middle Tennessee businesses that promote "arts, education, and environmental sustainability" as well as community-focused projects ("Bonnaroo Works Fund").

Another unique event that shares Bonnaroo's focus on stimulating local economies by highlighting local culture is Gentlemen of the Road (GOTR). In 2012, British band Mumford & Sons initiated the GOTR Stopovers, which are essentially like intensive tour dates. Stopovers have taken place in "tiny rural towns," "small cities," "places rich with history," and "tiny gems just waiting to be discovered" across America and portions of the UK and Australia ("What is a Stopover?"). They differ from traditional tour dates in that each stopover is like a single-day festival that specifically highlights the local culture and involves much of the town. With the influx of thousands of fans to such rural towns as Bristol, Virginia/Tennessee and Salida, Colorado, tourists are encouraged to peruse local businesses' unique offerings and partake in local fare. Shuttles transport fans from the festival grounds into town, where, in Salida, "streets were blocked off for open consumption and up-and-coming bands played at a nearby stage" (Faubel). Food and beer from area vendors and breweries are offered at the stopover, and afterwards, supporting bands often play smaller shows at local venues. As per Mumford & Sons' intention, the goal of GOTR is to "take the party from the stage to the town" and celebrate the perhaps underappreciated locality ("What is a Stopover?").

Though the stopovers take place in small towns that are not often touring destinations, GOTR generates valuable money flow to these areas. The GOTR stopover in Walla Walla, Washington attracted twenty-two thousand tourists—double the town's population—and the Salida stopover drew twenty thousand tourists to the town of about six thousand residents (Deccio, Faubel). Bristol's 2012 GOTR stopover reportedly yielded nearly \$7 million, and Walla Walla's 2015 stopover generated an economic impact of \$9 million ("Mumford's Gentlemen of the Road," Deccio). This amount may

seem small in comparison to Coachella's \$700 million impact, but for such small towns with relatively few economic opportunities, a few million is perhaps just as significant.

Starting in 2009, Lexington was home to the BoomSlang Festival, an event focused on the "spirit of independent media" and "non-mainstream, non-commercial music" ("About"). The festival was developed out of local music fans' frustration that no similar festival existed nearby and it proved successful—at first. In its five years of operation, the festival hosted a number of indie acts and received "grants and local funding" from LexArts and the Kentucky Arts Council (Schankula). Locals were "highly receptive to a small, well-curated music festival" and patronized the event (Jordan). Despite its local popularity, the festival did not return in 2014. Before its demise, BoomSlang was less than cost efficient, losing money because of its low ticket prices (Jordan). Though the BoomSlang Festival failed economically, it revealed an important ideology in Lexington; area music fans are receptive to and supportive of a local indie music festival, creating the space for a similar festival in the future that learns from BoomSlang's mistakes and adapts to the specific wants and needs of Lexington.

As isolated elements, independent record stores, live venues, and local festivals are lucrative elements. When combined—as all of these are combined within their respective scene—profits are only increased. In the next section, I explore three small American cities that have successfully developed thriving indie music scenes that feature each of the above elements that together benefit the cities' overall economies.

CURRENT TRENDS IN AMERICAN INDIE MUSIC SCENES

Athens. From its "idiosyncratic Southern hospitality" to its "very formidable athletic culture," Athens is the epitome of a Southern college town (Barton; Pattison 38).

This vibe provided a conducive environment in which an indie scene could develop for multiple reasons. For the bands emerging in the 1970s and 80s, “reclaiming their Appalachian roots” was a central form of expression, while other indie artists repudiated the Southern culture; they developed a “counterculture” in rejection of the dominant Southern, football, conservative culture (Pattison 38-39). Both avenues fostered the development of an indie scene. With the counterculture, a slew of alternative artists like REM and the B-52s an “Athens sound” emerged on the scene and set the tone for future Athens artists. As the city had been primarily a house party scene, venues started to sprout up to accommodate the expanding scene. One of the founding indie venues is the 40 Watt Club, which began as a “huge open room that probably held around 100 people, lit by a single 40 watt bulb” (Pattison 42). Artists who played the 40 Watt Club “very much of the ‘new wave’ of music being created at that time” (Pattison 42).

Today, Athens is home to over forty live music venues and a thriving indie music scene that developed fairly naturally, without the need for assistance or incentives. Artists are attracted to Athens for the Southern charm and enticing music scene; “music types” who comprise the indie scene are drawn in by the relatively low cost of living and high quality of life (Aued). Athens has a “tourism-heavy local economy,” and many tourists engage in the plentiful nightlife opportunities, including watching indie musicians at one of the local live venues (Aued). Some tourists come expressly for the music, such as for the AthFest Music & Arts Festival. During this three-day festival, venues such as The Globe often experience significant spikes in revenue, sometimes even doubling their typical weekend earnings (Conway and Young). Other non-music local businesses reap similar benefits from AthFest, too; in 2015, local Athens hotels reached up to ninety-nine

percent occupancy, which is a significant surge compared to their usually occupancy of about sixty-five percent (Conway and Young). AthFest has become an “economic oasis” for several local businesses, especially since the festival takes place in the summer when students are largely absent (Conway and Young). With the combined income from AthFest and the shows at local venues year-round, Athens is not only a cultural hot spot for indie music, but an economic epicenter as well.

Omaha. Like Athens, Omaha is a college town, home to the University of Nebraska, Omaha, and a number of private universities. Unlike Athens, though, Omaha is not typically considered a cultural center, but more of a business hub. The city boasts a history of business prowess, from its “fur trading” days to the current presence of five Fortune 500 companies (Davidson; Paquette). Omaha faced a distinct lack of culture, few music venues, and little sense of community—that is, until local indie acts arose despite the odds in the mid-1990s. Most notably, Conor Oberst formed the band Bright Eyes and was involved in the beginnings of what would later become Saddle Creek Records: the label that would change Omaha’s fate (Stohs-Krause).

Though bands like Bright Eyes and Cursive had formed in Omaha, the lack of culture and general interest in indie music made the city a harsh, unwelcoming climate for an indie scene. As these artists emerged in Omaha, they started to foster a greater sense of community and kinship, which is “when the scene in Omaha really started to come alive” (Stohs-Krause). These bands and others found themselves with no viable venues in which to play, so owners of Saddle Creek Records decided to open their own to provide “a cheap place for bands to play” (Davidson). Saddle Creek owners Robb Nansel and Jason Kulbel invested \$8.5 million, along with \$1.3 million acquired through city

funding, in the development of a venue called Slowdown (Paquette). Slowdown was constructed in North Downtown, an area of Omaha that had fallen into a state of decay and dilapidation; with the Slowdown project, the city aimed to revitalize this sector and exclusively allow development of businesses that maintain an “indie pathos” (Paquette).

Slowdown has been greatly successful, as it now hosts indie artists several nights per week. Other businesses have also relocated to North Downtown, making it “much livelier than before” (Paquette). The neighborhood is currently home to an independent theater, an arts center, a local coffee shop, several stores, local restaurants, and “urban chic” bars (“Things to Do”). Furthermore, the development of Slowdown and a successful indie scene has drawn professionals back into the city. Many architects, web designers, and other such professionals have admitted that they “moved back to Omaha, at least in part, because of this club” (Davidson). Not only is the indie music scene attracting the creative class and young college students, but it is also luring non-music businesspeople, ultimately bringing in even more revenue for the city of Omaha.

Both Athens and Omaha are home to exemplary indie rock scenes, and each city has taken a different approach to developing its scene. Based on the similarities among these cities and Lexington, Kentucky, Lexington has the potential to develop a similarly economically successful indie rock scene. Lexington’s unique attributes further provide a case for the fostering of such a scene.

LEXINGTON’S SOCIOECONOMIC CLIMATE

In 2015, the population of Lexington rose just above three hundred thousand, situating it between Omaha’s population of around four hundred thousand and Athens’s one hundred and twenty thousand (Kocher). As a small city, Lexington maintains the

elements of both Southern culture and a business city. Jeff Fugate, president and COO of the Lexington Downtown Development Authority, claims that culture is one of Lexington's most valuable economic assets, especially the food and bourbon (Fugate). Like Athens, Lexington is a southeastern city and with a fair amount of Southern charm. It is considered the horse capital of the world with nearly twenty-five thousand horses in Lexington alone and total sales of \$485.8 million at Lexington's Keeneland in 2015 (Commerce Lexington 5). Bourbon culture is also prevalent, given the high concentration of area distilleries and bourbon bars. Both of these industries draw in tourists from across the country that stimulate the local economy. Several other industries in Lexington are even more profitable, including education, healthcare, and manufacturing. From 2001 to 2014, the GDP of the Bluegrass Region that encompasses Lexington grew fifty-four percent, making Lexington's GDP over \$26 billion (Commerce Lexington 15). The city is becoming an increasingly business-fueled one, as affirmed by its rapid climb up the Milken Institute's list of American cities that are best "creating and sustaining jobs and economic growth" ("Lexington Rises"). With its combination of culture and business, Lexington can emulate the success of both Athens and Omaha and perhaps use these elements to cultivate an indie rock scene.

Several of Lexington's other features suggest that the city would be a suitable location in which to grow an indie music scene that could become both culturally significant to the city and stimulate the local economy. The people who would likely participate in the indie scene are already in Lexington; several colleges, including the University of Kentucky and Transylvania University are located in the city, and several surrounding towns are home to numerous other colleges, like Eastern Kentucky

University in Richmond and Midway College in Midway. While people from all age groups can and do consume live music, people of the college age range and slightly older are the most likely to frequent shows. In 2014, Ticketmaster found that millennials accounted for thirty-five percent of concert-goers and middle-aged (ages 35-54) attendees accounted for forty-three percent (Peoples). Over half of music festival attendees fell between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four (“Music Festival Study” 14). Thousands of people within this age range live in and around Lexington, especially thanks to the universities, so a viable indie show-going audience is likely already present in the city.

Compared to the rest of the United States, Lexington boasts a relatively low cost of living as well, at six percent below the national average. The cost of housing in Lexington is about ten percent lower than the U.S. average (“Cost of Living Index”). Low housing costs are particularly enticing to musicians, as they generally do not make living wages in the music industry. Because indie artists usually charge less for concert tickets, do not embark on extensive tours, and make only small profits from internet streaming services and digital sales, they are especially prone to low income. Thus, many indie artists seek affordable housing within cities. Aside from financial benefits, low housing costs can actually contribute to the social health of an indie scene. Michael Seman, an economic researcher who specifically studies indie music scenes, claims that affordable housing for musicians can be “beneficial in terms of networking” by allowing musicians and indie fans alike to save money on rent and spend more on social experiences like live shows and higher quality musical equipment (41). Since indie scenes are particularly dependent on maintaining a strong sense of community, this is an

invaluable benefit. Overall, Lexington's affordability makes the city an alluring destination for indie musicians.

Luckily, Lexington does not have to start anew to develop an indie rock scene. The city is already home to multiple independent record stores and venues, including CD Central, Pops Resale, Cosmic Charlie's, the Green Lantern, and the newly added Manchester Music Hall and The Burl. Cosmic Charlie's, a successful and well-known venue in Lexington, recently relocated to National Avenue with a new vibe to increase business opportunities. With the intention of developing a classic "neighborhood bar feel," the new venue has outdoor seating and earlier hours; with these daytime hours, co-owners Mark Evans and John Tresaloni intend to have food trucks around the venue during meal times and host events during the day (Patton). Manchester Music Hall, a recent addition to the Distillery District, takes a similar approach by renting out space for daytime events, weddings, and an array of other outings.

Though Lexington has an existing scene, it is far from perfect; many seasoned musicians and scene participants are acutely cognizant of the pitfalls of Lexington's current indie scene. CD Central, an indie record store on South Limestone, has remained open for over twenty years but not without its hardships. Owner Steve Baron reports that declining CD sales and the introduction of digital music have impeded the success of his business in recent years, much like the experiences of similar indie stores across the country. CD Central remains successful nonetheless because of Baron's passion for the industry and, in part, vinyl revival and Record Store Day. Aside from his own store, Baron asserts that Lexington's indie rock scene is not as successful as it could be because it lacks necessary elements of city cooperation and support for local indie bands.

Specifically, venues are imperative to the health of scenes and Lexington's indie venues are slowed by governmental "roadblocks" like difficult liquor licensing and fire hazard laws (Baron). Baron believes that for the scene to survive, the city of Lexington must work with local venues to create more reasonable laws. Lexington Downtown Development Authority's Jeff Fugate agrees that "small policy changes" would make the scene's development much easier, and Dr. Scott Whiddon, a seasoned musician in the Lexington scene, believes the city should offer tax breaks, especially for venues. He notes that "the live experience" is central to building a successful entertainment industry, so he supports investing in venues to improve this experience for Lexington live music patrons. Aside from funding, Dr. Whiddon also believes "systemic" offerings from the city would be influential to the artists in the indie scene; during his time in New Orleans, Dr. Whiddon utilized a "city-supported practice space" in an old hotel. He suggests that similar opportunities for artists in Lexington, perhaps also including tax breaks for local independent recording studios, could help foster the indie scene by "trickling down to the consumer" and improving the overall experience (Whiddon).

Many other participants in Lexington's music scene have called for similar reforms as well as more intensive ones. Dr. Jim Gleason is a musician in multiple local bands and a co-founder of the Lexington Area Music Alliance, an organization focused on making the city a notable music town. He and Tom Martin, editor of Lexington's cultural affairs news outlet *Undermain*, agree that Lexington's scene is a "troubled landscape" (Martin). This is the effect of many factors, but especially the perceived recent lack of interest in live music. Gleason believes "younger generations don't care about [live] music in the same way younger generations did in the 70s and 80s." Dr.

Whiddon also notes that one of the major changes in Lexington's scene is that "people have streaming audio and internet at home, and they don't go out as much." This is not necessarily true, but these young adults express their passion for music in different ways than fans in previous decades did. The internet has afforded music fans the ease of accessing their favorite artists from home, which some find preferable to hearing the songs live. Many of these younger fans are in fact passionate about music, but in a way that needs no in-person community in the way a live show does. Because of this, Gleason believes, the vast majority of people in Lexington are apathetic about improving a physical scene in which they do not interact. He suggests that the indie scene can improve when people are "convinced that developing an indie scene is necessary" (Gleason). Appealing to Lexington's preoccupation with college sports, he ultimately asserts that "we need to get people to care about live music like they do UK basketball."

Martin proposes a more reconstructive approach, citing Austin, Texas's, 6th Street success as a model for Lexington. On this street in Austin, music venues and businesses have agglomerated, following the clustering economic theory. Martin believes this would benefit Lexington but would require serious restructuring. Currently, Lexington has no such "density," since indie venues and stores are scattered throughout town, so the city should "be intentional about forming a scene by clustering venues geographically" (Martin). Once achieved, the current "struggle to get an audience" at live indie shows may cease to be an issue (Martin).

Though it has its flaws, an indie music scene exists in Lexington. The presence of reputable venues and stores makes the case for developing a thriving indie scene much

more plausible than if Lexington had no such businesses. It will be easier for the city to expound upon existing foundational elements of a scene than to start anew.

Socioeconomic Theories. The economic clustering theory supports the concept and success of an indie music scene, as does the similar theory of agglomeration economies. Economies of agglomeration form when businesses and “people locate near one another together in cities and industrial clusters” (Glaeser 1). The proximity in these economies helps consumers decrease transportation costs and reduce the “difficulties in exchanging goods” (Glaeser 1). Agglomeration economies also typically result in higher wages for workers, perhaps due to successful competition between local businesses (Glaeser 3-4). While large industries like hospitals and banks often comprise agglomeration economies, some are comprised of smaller firms, which can be of great benefit to the small businesses. Small enterprises “facilitate a culture of entrepreneurship,” encouraging more small businesses to develop in an area (Glaeser 10). More importantly, though, small businesses promote easier flow of ideas between themselves in an agglomeration economy, thereby fostering innovation and greater creativity that can spread easily among the economy (Glaeser 11). As most businesses in an indie music scene are small and locally owned, locating within a central location could make each of the firms more individually successful, contribute to the creative culture of an indie scene, and facilitate easy interactions between scene participants. Agglomeration economies also include businesses from various industries rather than from a singular trade, so both music businesses and non-music businesses would benefit from an agglomeration economy in Lexington.

All local businesses would likewise benefit from an indie music scene based on the central place theory. German geographer Walter Christaller developed a geographical theory in the 1930s to explain the patterns he noticed in city developments (“Central Place Theory”). His model has since been adapted to an economic theory that seeks to explain market activity in city systems. According to this theory, a hierarchy is developed, starting with a city or metropolitan area in the highest position followed by surrounding towns and rural areas in order from largest to smallest. At the lower levels, consumers seek goods and services from their own town, but they must eventually seek products from the next highest town on the hierarchy. The residents of each level do the same until ultimately reaching the main city, known as the central place. The central place ideally “maximizes accessibility” to goods and services and benefits the lower orders, while the money flow within and between localized levels is distributed throughout the area and benefits the entire region economically (“Central Place Theory”; Mulligan et al.). In the case of an indie scene in Lexington, musicians and music fans in surrounding towns and rural areas would seek out slightly larger towns in which they could go to bars to perform or see bands perform. Artists and fans in these towns would seek out larger towns to buy equipment or see larger bands. Eventually, indie participants around the Bluegrass Region would end up in Lexington for access to recording studios, high-quality equipment, or even larger artists. In this case, Lexington reaps the benefits of increased tourism, profits at local businesses, and interaction to develop the sense of community central to indie scenes. An indie music scene would organically develop in Lexington and surrounding areas would share in the economic impact.

Economic aspects are integral in developing a functional, financially successful indie scene, but social factors are equally important. Urban studies theorist Richard Florida's creative class theory combines the two. The creative class of workers includes people from all fields and industries who are innovative and creative in the workplace, sharing a "common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference, and merit" (Florida 17). Members are attracted to "creative centers" or urban areas that offer enticing culture and creative endeavors (Florida 20). The creative class is an economic asset for cities, allowing them to innovate businesses and potentially modernize them to make them more profitable. Florida claims that "having an effective people climate" is even more important than having a solid business climate (24). Musicians are part of the creative class, so developing an indie scene in Lexington would attract these creative people. This could easily benefit local businesses, as musicians—especially indie musicians—rarely make their entire income from music. Therefore, most would seek employment at businesses in Lexington where they could employ their creativity to benefit local businesses.

Lexington's current climate proves perfect for the location of an indie rock scene. The theories of agglomeration economies, central place, and the creative class all support this as well and demonstrate how developing a scene in the city would be substantially advantageous in a number of ways. To enact these benefits, I have developed a strategic plan for Lexington to follow over the next five years; if enacted, the indie music scene will undoubtedly prove a valuable economic asset to the city.

STRONGER SCENE, INCREASED IMPACT: STRATEGIC PLAN

Based on how Lexington has developed thus far, the indie rock scene poses a suitable opportunity for the city to further its current growth. First, though, the city must provide some much needed attention to the indie rock scene and assist its future development. In this section, I outline the ways in which Lexington might best develop a scene that attributes greater income—and a better social experience—to the collective city. The ideas in this section coalesce to create a strategic plan for Lexington to follow over the course of the next five years. To make this plan more widely accessible, I have adapted it into the form of a website.

Mission. This strategic plan is intended to develop Lexington, Kentucky's local indie music scene to make it more economically stimulating for the local economy by centralizing the scene, involving non-music businesses, and enquiring city assistance. Indie music scholars have theorized that centrality is essential to the success of indie music scenes and Lexington would benefit from a more centralized indie scene as well. As demonstrated by the examples of other successful American scenes, indie music scenes can generate substantial revenue as an independent entity, but incorporating other local, non-music businesses can serve to increase economic benefits. Doing so would also allow these businesses to benefit from the increased income within the scene, as participants would also patronize these businesses and effectively spur revenue within and around the scene. This would increase the economic impact of the scene and, concurrently, foster the community aspect that is equally—perhaps even more—central to an indie scene.

Furthermore, when cities offer financial incentives and tax breaks to foster the businesses involved in an indie music scene, these businesses can develop much more

effectively than if left to their own devices. Independent businesses have an especially difficult time with this, since they are generally small businesses in an industry with a relatively low following. Improvements allowed by city assistance leads to greater success for these businesses and, subsequently, the city, much like in the case of the Omaha Slowdown Project.

Vision. In the case that these proposed changes take place in Lexington, the ideal effects would include greater community involvement in the indie music scene, collaboration between local businesses, increased traffic at local indie businesses and shows, an influx of touring indie bands, improved conditions for indie artists, and increased interaction between the various scene participants. Each result would benefit Lexington in multitudinous way; all would create a healthier sense of community for fans, artists, business owners, and community members alike, and at the same time draw in greater income. In the following sections, I propose the specific methods through which these goals can be achieved.

Objectives and Strategies. To achieve the proposed mission, I have developed five central objectives and strategies by which each can be most effectively achieved. First, the existing indie rock scene in Lexington should be improved. Venues like Cosmic Charlie's, The Green Lantern, and Al's Bar, among the most popular indie venues, should create a more conducive environment for artists who perform at these locations. The Green Lantern has recently updated its PA systems, but all of these venues would benefit from providing green rooms for bands, more defined and enforced equipment loading zones, and ticket prices that will allow artists to receive adequate payment and at the same time keep prices low for fans. In the case of fans, offering more all-ages show

would expand the show-going population to many indie enthusiasts who are underage. Promoting shows at places that are highly populated with people who are most interested in indie rock music would attract even larger audiences and more income. All of these would create a scene in which bands would be more encouraged to perform and fans would be more likely to enjoy themselves and participate more in the scene, which would contribute to several aspects on this plan's vision.

Second, Lexington should work towards becoming a touring destination for nationwide indie acts. Many bands neglect to include Lexington on U.S. tours, instead opting for larger nearby destinations like Nashville, Indianapolis, and Cincinnati. Popular and wide-touring indie bands like Vampire Weekend, Modest Mouse, Arctic Monkeys, Bloc Party, and The Kills each have toured in at least one of these cities but not Lexington. Some, like Modest Mouse, The White Stripes, Alabama Shakes, and Glass Animals have played in Louisville, Kentucky, but not Lexington. Live music is a lucrative industry, especially when such largely popular bands are on the bill and charge higher ticket prices than do less popular local bands. Larger indie acts like these generally also draw in greater numbers of fans to shows, so making Lexington a destination for popular touring indie artists would attract even more show-goers and income. Live indie rock music is a neglected sector of tourism in Lexington, where horses, bourbon, and college basketball reign supreme, but becoming a touring destination would be of great benefit to the city as a whole. This can be achieved through better venues that would attract renowned bands, generating more income in Lexington and making the local scene even more successful.

Third, the indie rock scene in Lexington should be centralized around a specific location. As outlined by the clustering theory and economies of agglomeration, this encourages money flow within the localized area, as participants can more easily peruse the local offerings and are encouraged to patronize more than one business because of proximity and ease. The concept of indie scenes and the central place theory support this idea as well. For Lexington's indie scene, the Distillery District along Manchester Street would be an ideal location to centralize. The city is working to revitalize this previously quiet part of town with the addition of new businesses, including Manchester Music Hall, a venue that has thus far hosted several local and indie acts. Jeff Fugate determines that downtown may be an ideal place to foster music scenes for other cities like Omaha, but Lexington's best option is the Distillery District, which offers "exactly the right kind of environment" to "bolster the local music scene" (Fugate). The area includes businesses like Middle Fork Kitchen Bar, craft brewery Ethereal Brewing, and Crank & Boom Ice Cream Lounge, all of which display a modern, rustic aesthetic that is increasingly popular among indie fans. Given the existing businesses and the space for more, Manchester Street would be a perfect area to develop Lexington's indie rock scene.

Fourth, other local, non-music businesses should be encouraged to open and operate in the indie scene. Many scenes are not exclusively populated by music venues and record stores, often also including an array of other businesses such as restaurants, bars, coffee shops, and clothing stores. This creates a mutually beneficial system, as patrons of both the music and non-music businesses are encouraged to visit both one trip because of proximity, propagating income for both.

Finally, city and community support for the scene should be increased. Currently, Lexington does not offer adequate tax breaks or incentives for small, local businesses to develop and thrive. Many of the available incentives exclude arts industries like music. The 2016 Lexington Business Prospectus outlines several available economic incentives, like the Kentucky Business Investment Program (KBI), which is a “streamlined” amalgamation of three previous incentive programs and is restricted to businesses in “manufacturing, agribusiness, or regional and national headquarters” (32). The Kentucky Revitalization Act (KRA), an incentive that would be suitable for developing the indie rock scene in the Distillery District, likewise limits eligible businesses to those in manufacturing (Business Prospectus 33). Other incentives include small businesses with less than fifty employees but only offer assistance after the business offers one year of full-time employment and pays at least “150 percent the federal minimum wage,” in addition to the business’s investment of at least \$5,000 on relevant equipment *after* the one year full time employment period (ThinkKentucky 1). This could be incredibly difficult for small independent businesses to achieve, especially in a city like Lexington where comparatively few indie music-focused businesses have been able to stay in business for extended periods of time. With better incentive programs—and ones that encompass the music industry—these businesses will be better able to operate and nurture a successful indie music scene.

Community support is also essential to the success of the indie scene, as local community members comprise the show-goers. Businesses within the scene rely on income from these locals, so their involvement is imperative in the longevity of such

businesses. It is also central to the development of a sense of community in the scene, one of the most valued aspects of indie scenes.

Action Plan. The above objectives and strategies require specific allocations of responsibilities and resources, which are outlined in my action plan (Appendix). Here, I will elaborate on and justify the included items. Many of the actions contribute to multiple objectives of this strategic plan, so they are not ascribed to a specific objective.

Adding adequate green rooms to existing venues is one of the most important improvements that can be made both to develop the existing scene and to attract larger touring bands to Lexington; the addition of green rooms in existing venues will encourage indie artists, local and touring, to perform at these more accommodating venues. Many artists, even popular indie artists like Jack White, have specific requirements for venues they perform in, often including refreshments and green rooms. Jack White's list of requirements includes a "large room with enough space to accommodate 18 people comfortably," and other artists have similar needs ("Jack White"). Lesser-known artists may not have such high demands, but they are often appreciative of accommodations like green rooms; touring artists generally arrive at venues in the morning, requiring a place to lounge privately in the venue for perhaps several hours before playing (Braunschweig). Whether artists demand green room space or not, they often need private accommodations and highly appreciate them. Some venues in Lexington already have green rooms, like Manchester Music Hall, but others should invest in the construction of one. As green rooms are generally fairly small, they should not be excessively expensive; Bill Millholland, the executive vice president of a Washington D.C. remodeling company, estimates that adding small rooms costs around

“\$200 to \$600 per square foot,” but since Lexington is much smaller than Washington D.C., costs may be even lower (Williams). This price may be off-putting to small venue owners, so financial support from Lexington would be greatly beneficial. More economic incentives should be available to businesses in the music industry to offset costs like those of building green rooms, which would ultimately make venues more desirable to artists and therefore more profitable.

Loading zones are another feature that would directly benefit indie artists. While mainstream artists often have roadies to unload equipment, most small indie bands do the work themselves and appreciate specific loading zones at venues rather than hauling large, heavy instruments and equipment through venues’ front doors. Loading zones can be easily added, especially at venues that have back entrances. On days of shows, the venues can block off areas of the parking lot with barriers to accommodate bands and allow them to easily load equipment into the venue. For those venues that have larger parking lots and spare space, permanent loading zones can be demarcated with painted sections.

To further improve existing venues for both artists and show-goers, venues should also update their PA systems. Newer venues, like Manchester Music Hall and the newly relocated Cosmic Charlie’s, have updated, adequate sound systems. Others, especially smaller venues whose primary focus is on food or drinks, feature less satisfactory PA systems. Much like green rooms, better sound equipment will attract artists and create a better musical experience for fans, which will draw more people in and again contribute to the scene’s profitability. For those venues who have not updated their sound systems recently should invest in doing so, especially with high-quality speakers, microphones,

and equalizers or signal processors that increase the sound quality. This too can be an expensive renovation, so city economic incentives are imperative.

Once these measures are instated, fans and musicians alike will benefit from increased promotion of indie rock shows. Lexington is home to many universities and colleges, and most indie fans are around college age. Promoting shows at and around these colleges can expand the current indie crowd and draw in more money, as well as contribute to the sense of community in the scene by attracting students who are potentially already invested in indie music. Furthermore, the venues and scene would greatly benefit from wider promotion to all potential audiences; community members would gain an opportunity to revive the live music scene in Lexington, the Distillery District would see increased business and progress towards its goal of revitalization, and indie rock could thrive in Lexington. To reap these benefits, venues should promote shows beyond flyers at indie music stores, reaching farther to colleges, businesses in the Distillery District, and other popular local forums. To reach a target audience of college students, wider internet promotion may be necessary as well. Print advertisements, though formerly effective, are now too expensive and ineffective for many small venues to use. Majestic Live's Scott Leslie, who has been involved in Madison, Wisconsin's, scene long enough to witness the downfall of print ads, claims that "justify[ing] spending money on print" ads to promote shows at his venue is becoming increasingly difficult for him ("Economics"). According to Leslie, most show-goers hear about shows foremost by word of mouth, followed by artists' websites and the venue's mailing list Facebook ("Economics"). Most of the current indie venues in Lexington are present on social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, so the shift to digital advertising would be fairly

uncomplicated. However, these businesses have scant followings. Since social media is an easy way to spread information and reach countless people at once—and especially since indie is increasingly becoming an internet-based scene—these venues should consider promoting their social media accounts and using them to reach out to wider audiences than merely current followers who likely already know about the shows.

As Omaha and many other small American cities have demonstrated, indie music scenes are great economic tools for revitalizing previously dead parts of town, which is the precise mission of the Distillery District in Lexington. The area along Manchester Street is close to the exceedingly popular Rupp Arena, but garners considerably less traffic. The Lexington Distillery District Foundation has developed a strategic plan to develop this sector of Lexington, specifically noting goals of “attracting the creative class” and bringing “active and artistic people to the District” (4, 18). Developing the indie rock scene would accomplish these goals. Furthermore, this development would be mutually beneficial, as the indie scene would breathe new life into Manchester Street and the Distillery District would provide a well-suited area for the indie scene. Businesses that have already opened along Manchester Street embody the aesthetics that many indie fans prefer, especially a balance of rustic and modern decor accompanied by a low-key, hip atmosphere. The restaurants in this area, like Middle Fork Kitchen Bar and Crank & Boom Ice Cream Lounge, offer unique, modernized, locally sourced food options, which indie fans are fond of. Aside from the existing businesses, the Distillery District contains thousands of square feet of vacant space in which indie music businesses could open and create a centralized physical scene. The area also offers about seven hundred parking spots, which is an improvement over many other Lexington indie businesses and venues

that offer limited parking. Overall, this area provides a suitable location in which to locate Lexington's indie rock scene to benefit the development of both the scene and the Distillery District.

CONCLUSION

Lexington is home to countless talented musicians and passionate music fans. Inside of the rich local bars exists a potential to expand this passion and make it an asset to all of Lexington. To make this idea a reality, Dr. Jim Gleason suggested two necessities: someone must "compile enough information to frame a strong case" and someone must "deliver the message and call for institutional changes with a solid plan" (Gleason). This strategic plan offers that tangible proposition and serves as the case for its necessity. All that remains is to deliver the message; the responsibility to do so lies in the hands of the community in and around Lexington to support the scene, support its development, and care about live music like Lexingtonians care about UK basketball.

Appendix

Action	Person/Group Responsible	Necessary Resources	Potential Barriers	Collaborators
Add adequate green rooms to venues	Venues that host indie rock artists (Al's Bar, Cosmic Charlie's, Green Lantern, etc.)	About \$400/square foot	Inadequate space in existing venues	Contractor; City of Lexington (financial support through economic incentives for music businesses)
Improve PA systems in venues	Venues that have not updated PA systems or sound equipment in last 10 years	\$3,000; quality microphones, speakers, mixers, monitors, and equalizers/signal processors	Expensive equipment, inadequate space, renovation time	City of Lexington (financial support through economic incentives for music businesses)
Create better loading zones at venues	Venues that host indie rock artists	Existing parking area, paint, barriers	—	—
Wider promotion of indie shows	Venues	About \$100/show; graphic designer	Added cost of hiring graphic designer	Schools, businesses, other areas where shows are advertised
Centralize the indie rock scene in the Distillery District	New or relocating indie music businesses	\$5,000-\$100,000, depending on business	Lack of availability of open spots in Distillery District	—
Entice non-music businesses to open in the indie scene (Distillery District)	New or relocating businesses, bars, restaurants, etc.	\$5,000-\$100,000, depending on business	Lack of availability of open spots in Distillery District	—

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