

Criminal Justice Reform

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Category: Platform Policies: Public Safety

Criminal Justice Reform Policy

Dave Biggers for Louisville Mayor 2026

Executive Summary

Louisville's criminal justice system perpetuates injustice while failing to deliver safety. With **over 1,800 people jailed daily** (60-70% unconvicted and awaiting trial), a **two-tier justice system** where wealth determines freedom, and **racial disparities** in every stage from arrest to sentencing, our system embodies the opposite of equal justice under law.

Dave's Vision:

Justice that heals communities rather than destroying them. A system that holds people accountable while providing pathways to redemption. **Alternatives to incarceration** for non-violent offenses. **Treatment instead of punishment** for addiction and mental illness. **Second chances** through expungement and reentry support.

Key Proposals:

1. **Bail Reform & Pretrial Services** – End wealth-based detention, \$5M annually
2. **Diversion Programs** – Treatment and accountability instead of incarceration, \$8M annually
3. **Reentry & Expungement** – Remove barriers to employment and housing, \$4M annually
4. **Legal Aid Expansion** – Equal access to justice regardless of income, \$3M annually
5. **Prosecutorial Accountability** – Data-driven equity in charging decisions, \$2M annually

Budget Impact:

\$22 million annually within \$1.2 billion budget

- Funded through \$40M+ in reduced incarceration costs
 - Creates 150+ jobs (case managers, attorneys, counselors)
 - Saves \$60M+ over 4 years while improving outcomes
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Current Situation: A System That Fails Everyone

The Incarceration Crisis:

Louisville Metro Corrections:

- **1,800 people jailed** on any given day
- **1,100-1,300 are pretrial** (awaiting trial, not convicted)
- **Average pretrial detention:** 45-90 days, some wait over a year
- **Cost:** \$80-100 per person per day = \$50M+ annually for unconvicted people

Wealth-Based Justice:

- Poor defendants jailed because they can't afford \$500-5,000 bail
- Wealthy defendants released immediately regardless of danger
- Pretrial detention causes job loss, eviction, family separation
- Many plead guilty just to end detention—even when innocent

Racial Disparities at Every Stage:

Stage	Disparity
Traffic stops	Black drivers 2x more likely to be stopped
Arrests	Black residents 3x arrest rate vs. white for identical behaviors
Charging	Black defendants receive harsher charges for same crimes
Bail amounts	Black defendants assigned higher bail for identical offenses
Plea offers	Black defendants offered worse deals than white defendants
Sentencing	Black defendants receive 20% longer sentences for same crimes

Failure to Reduce Crime:

- **Recidivism rate:** 50%+ within 3 years
- **Root causes unaddressed:** Addiction, mental illness, poverty, trauma
- **Collateral consequences:** 900+ legal penalties after sentence served
- **Cycle of reincarceration:** Barriers to jobs/housing guarantee return to crime

Who Suffers Most:

Black Men: Incarceration rate 5x higher than white men, facing discrimination at every justice system stage

Families: 15,000+ Louisville children have incarcerated parents, perpetuating generational trauma and poverty

Victims: System focused on punishment rather than accountability, healing, or prevention

Taxpayers: \$150M+ annually on incarceration that doesn't reduce crime or improve safety

Dave's Vision: Justice That Works

Measurable Outcomes (4 Years):

- **50% reduction** in pretrial detention (1,100 → 550 people)
 - **40% reduction** in overall jail population (1,800 → 1,080 people)
 - **30% reduction** in recidivism (50% → 35% within 3 years)
 - **Eliminate racial disparities** in bail, charging, and sentencing
 - **\$40M annual savings** from reduced incarceration
 - **5,000+ people** connected to treatment, jobs, housing instead of jailed
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Detailed Policy Proposals

1. Bail Reform & Pretrial Services

See Glossary Terms: Bail Reform, Pretrial Detention, Pretrial Services, Money Bail, Risk Assessment

End Wealth-Based Detention:

The Problem: Louisville jails 1,100-1,300 unconvicted people daily solely because they can't afford bail. This violates presumption of innocence and due process while costing \$50M+ annually.

Dave's Solution:

Risk Assessment, Not Wealth:

- **Judges use validated risk assessment tools** evaluating danger and flight risk
- **Low-risk defendants released** regardless of ability to pay
- **High-risk defendants detained** regardless of wealth
- **Eliminate cash bail** for most misdemeanors and non-violent felonies
- **Transparency:** Publish bail decisions by race, charge, and amount

Expanded Pretrial Services:

- **Triple capacity** from current 300 slots to 1,000 slots
- **Services:** Court date reminders, check-ins, electronic monitoring, treatment connections
- **Staffing:** 40 pretrial services officers (current: 12)
- **Cost:** \$5-10/day vs. \$80-100/day for jail
- **Support services:** Job placement, housing assistance, mental health/substance abuse treatment

Budget: \$5 million annually

- Pretrial services staff and operations: \$4M
- Risk assessment technology: \$500K
- Legal aid for bail hearings: \$500K

Expected Outcomes:

- Release 500+ low-risk defendants from jail
- Save \$20M annually in reduced detention costs
- 95%+ court appearance rate (vs. current 92%)
- Eliminate wealth-based detention disparities

2. Diversion Programs: Treatment Not Incarceration

See Glossary Terms: Diversion Program, Drug Court, Mental Health Court, Pre-Arrest Diversion, Restorative Justice

The Approach: For non-violent offenses driven by addiction, mental illness, or poverty, **treatment and accountability work better than incarceration.**

Pre-Arrest Diversion:

- **Police discretion:** Officers can divert instead of arrest for minor offenses
- **Immediate connection:** To Community Wellness Centers for services
- **No criminal record:** Successful completion means no arrest/prosecution
- **Eligible offenses:** Drug possession, shoplifting, trespassing, prostitution
- **Partnerships:** LMPD, Community Wellness Centers, treatment providers
- **Budget:** \$2M annually

Drug Court Expansion:

- **Current capacity:** 100 participants
- **Expanded capacity:** 500 participants

- **Intensive supervision:** Weekly court appearances, frequent drug testing
- **Treatment:** Inpatient or outpatient based on need
- **Graduated sanctions:** Accountability for non-compliance short of jail
- **Successful completion:** Charges dismissed, record expunged
- **Budget:** \$3M annually (vs. \$15M to incarcerate same people)

Mental Health Court:

- **New specialty court** for defendants with serious mental illness
- **Treatment plans:** Developed by mental health professionals, monitored by court
- **Medication management:** Ensuring compliance with treatment
- **Housing support:** Preventing homelessness that exacerbates mental illness
- **Peer support:** People with lived experience supporting participants
- **Budget:** \$2M annually

Restorative Justice Programs:

- **Victim-offender mediation:** For property crimes and minor assaults
- **Accountability:** Offenders face victims, understand harm, make amends
- **Restitution:** Repay victims rather than just serve time
- **Community service:** Repair harm to community
- **Eligible:** First-time, non-violent offenders
- **Budget:** \$1M annually

Total Diversion Budget: \$8 million annually

Expected Outcomes:

- 2,000+ people diverted from incarceration annually
- 60%+ successful completion rate
- 70% reduction in recidivism vs. incarcerated comparison group
- \$25M annual savings vs. incarceration
- Victims receive restitution and accountability

3. Reentry Support & Expungement

See Glossary Terms: Reentry, Expungement, Collateral Consequences, Second Chances, Fair Chance Hiring, Ban the Box

The Challenge: 100,000+ Jefferson County residents have criminal records creating permanent employment and housing barriers. Without support, 50%+ return to crime within 3 years.

Comprehensive Reentry Services:**Louisville Reentry Center:**

- **One-stop hub** for people leaving incarceration
- **Case management:** Personalized support for 18 months post-release

- **Services:** ID/documents, housing assistance, job placement, benefits enrollment
- **Peer support:** People with successful reentry experiences as mentors
- **Family reunification:** Parenting classes, family therapy
- **Budget:** \$2M annually

Employment Pathways:

- **Job training:** Skilled trades, healthcare, technology (6-12 week programs)
- **Job placement:** Partnerships with fair chance employers
- **Transitional jobs:** 6-month paid work experience for hardest-to-employ
- **Entrepreneurship:** Small business development support
- **Incentives:** Tax credits for employers hiring people with records
- **Budget:** \$3M annually (through Workforce Development coordination)

Housing First for Reentry:

- **Immediate housing:** 100 housing vouchers for people leaving jail/prison
- **Supportive services:** Case management preventing homelessness
- **Partnerships:** Housing Authority, nonprofits, landlords
- **Success metric:** 80%+ housed 12 months post-release
- **Budget:** \$1.5M annually

Expungement Clinics:

- **Monthly clinics** at Community Wellness Centers and libraries
- **Free legal help:** Volunteer attorneys guide eligible people through process
- **Eliminate fees:** Metro covers \$500+ cost per expungement
- **Automated expungement:** For eligible offenses, automatic after waiting period
- **Goal:** 2,000+ expungements annually
- **Budget:** \$500K annually

Ban the Box:

- **Metro employment:** Remove conviction history from initial applications
- **Delay inquiry:** Consider criminal record only after interview
- **Individualized assessment:** Evaluate relevance to specific job
- **Private employer incentives:** Encourage fair chance hiring practices
- **No cost** (policy change)

Total Reentry Budget: \$4 million annually

Expected Outcomes:

- 70% of participants employed 12 months post-release (vs. current 40%)
- 30% recidivism rate (vs. current 50%)
- 2,000 criminal records expunged annually
- \$15M saved annually from reduced reincarceration

4. Legal Aid Expansion: Equal Access to Justice

See Glossary Terms: Legal Aid, Public Defender, Access to Justice, Indigent Defense, Civil Legal Services

The Crisis: Louisville has only enough legal aid capacity to serve 10-15% of eligible residents. Low-income people face eviction, custody loss, domestic violence, and consumer fraud without attorneys while opposing parties have lawyers.

Criminal Defense:

- **Strengthen Public Defender support:** While state-run, Metro can supplement
- **Holistic defense:** Social workers, investigators, mitigation specialists
- **Early representation:** Attorneys at first appearance, not days later
- **Budget:** \$1M annually Metro contribution

Civil Legal Aid:

- **Partnership expansion:** With Legal Aid Society, Access to Justice Foundation
- **Weekly clinics:** At Community Wellness Centers in underserved neighborhoods
- **Focus areas:** Eviction defense, expungement, custody, domestic violence, benefits
- **Lawyer capacity:** Fund 10 additional legal aid attorneys citywide
- **Budget:** \$2M annually

Total Legal Aid Budget: \$3 million annually

Expected Outcomes:

- Serve 5,000+ additional people annually
- Prevent 1,000+ evictions
- Obtain 2,000+ expungements
- Win 500+ custody/domestic violence cases
- Every \$1 invested returns \$10+ in eviction prevention, housing stability

5. Prosecutorial Accountability & Equity

See Glossary Terms: Commonwealth Attorney, Prosecutorial Discretion, Plea Bargain, Charging Decisions, Racial Disparities

The Problem: Commonwealth Attorney is independently elected, limiting mayoral control. But data transparency and advocacy can drive reform.

Data Transparency:

- **Publish charging data:** By race, charge severity, offense type
- **Plea offer tracking:** Document disparities in plea bargains offered
- **Conviction rates:** Track outcomes by prosecutor and case type
- **Racial equity audit:** Annual independent analysis of prosecutorial decisions
- **Budget:** \$500K annually (data systems, analysis)

Advocacy for Prosecutorial Reform:

- **Decline low-level charges:** Possession, trespassing, quality-of-life offenses

- **Expand diversion eligibility:** Treatment over incarceration when appropriate
- **Eliminate charge stacking:** Prosecute actual conduct, not maximum possible charges
- **Sentence recommendations:** Advocate for treatment, alternatives to incarceration
- **Youth diversion:** Expand options for juvenile offenders

Support Progressive Prosecution:

- **Public advocacy:** Use mayoral platform to support reforms
- **Community organizing:** Build grassroots pressure for change
- **Electoral support:** Endorse reform-minded Commonwealth Attorney candidates
- **Budget:** \$1.5M annually (organizing, data, advocacy)

Total Prosecutorial Accountability Budget: \$2 million annually

Budget Summary

Total Annual Criminal Justice Reform Budget: \$22 Million

Initiative	Annual Cost	4-Year Total	People Served
Bail Reform & Pretrial Services	\$5M	\$20M	500+ released
Diversion Programs	\$8M	\$32M	2,000+ diverted
Reentry & Expungement	\$4M	\$16M	5,000+ supported
Legal Aid Expansion	\$3M	\$12M	5,000+ served
Prosecutorial Accountability	\$2M	\$8M	System-wide impact
TOTAL	\$22M	\$88M	10,000+ annually

Funding Sources (Budget-Neutral):

Reduced Incarceration Costs:

- 500 fewer pretrial detainees: \$20M annually saved
- 300 fewer sentenced inmates: \$15M annually saved
- Reduced recidivism: \$10M annually saved
- **Total savings: \$45M annually** (includes \$36.5M from bail/pretrial reform + \$8.5M from diversion programs and reduced recidivism)

Net Savings: \$23M annually (\$45M saved - \$22M invested)

Return on Investment:

- Every \$1 invested saves \$2+ in incarceration costs
- Every person diverted from jail saves \$30K-50K annually
- Every expungement enables employment generating tax revenue
- Reduced recidivism prevents future crime costs

Implementation Timeline

First 100 Days:

1. Appoint Criminal Justice Reform Director
2. Convene judges, prosecutors, defenders, community for reform planning
3. Launch pretrial services expansion
4. Begin expungement clinics at 3 locations
5. Publish first prosecutorial data transparency report

Year 1:

- Triple pretrial services capacity (300 → 900 slots)
- Launch pre-arrest diversion pilot
- Expand drug court to 300 participants
- Open Louisville Reentry Center
- Conduct 1,000 expungements
- Reduce pretrial jail population 30%

Years 2-4:

- Reach full pretrial services capacity (1,000 slots)
 - Mental health court operational
 - Drug court serves 500 participants annually
 - 2,000 expungements annually
 - 50% reduction in pretrial detention
 - 40% reduction in overall jail population
 - 30% reduction in recidivism
-

Success Metrics

Jail Population (Quarterly):

- Pretrial detention: 1,100 → 550 (-50%)

- Overall jail population: 1,800 → 1,080 (-40%)
- Length of stay: 45 days → 20 days average

Diversion & Alternatives (Annual):

- People diverted: 2,000+
- Successful completion: 60%+
- Recidivism: 30% vs. 50% for incarcerated

Equity (Annual):

- Eliminate racial disparities in bail amounts
- Equal plea offers for equal charges regardless of race
- Equal sentencing outcomes for same offenses

Economic (Annual):

- Cost savings: \$45M from reduced incarceration
- People employed post-reentry: 70%+
- Expungements: 2,000+
- Tax revenue from employment: \$5M+

Related Glossary Terms

Core Criminal Justice: Bail Reform, Pretrial Detention, Pretrial Services, Diversion Program, Drug Court, Mental Health Court, Restorative Justice, Plea Bargain

Reentry & Records: Expungement, Reentry, Collateral Consequences, Fair Chance Hiring, Ban the Box, Second Chances

Legal System: Public Defender, Commonwealth Attorney, Legal Aid, Prosecutorial Discretion, Racial Disparities

Full glossary: rundaverun.org/glossary

FAQ

Q: Won't releasing people pretrial make us less safe?

A: Risk assessment releases low-risk people, detains dangerous people regardless of wealth. Current system releases wealthy dangerous people who can pay bail while jailing poor non-dangerous people. Risk-based decisions improve public safety compared to wealth-based detention. Evidence from peer cities shows no increase in crime when pretrial release expands based on risk assessment.

Q: Don't people need consequences for their actions?

A: Absolutely—but effective consequences that change behavior, not just punishment. For addiction, treatment works better than jail. For mental illness, medication and housing work better than incarceration. For poverty-driven crime, jobs and stability prevent reoffending. Diversion programs hold people accountable while addressing root causes—more effective than incarceration that doesn't reduce recidivism.

Q: Can Louisville afford this when crime is high?

A: We can't afford NOT to reform. Current approach costs \$150M+ annually for incarceration that doesn't reduce crime. This plan costs \$22M while saving \$45M—**net savings of \$23M annually**—while actually reducing recidivism and crime. We're currently spending more for worse results.

Conclusion

Louisville's criminal justice system fails everyone: **Victims don't get justice or healing. Offenders don't get accountability or rehabilitation. Communities don't get safety. Taxpayers don't get value.**

Dave Biggers offers evidence-based reforms that deliver what the current system doesn't: **Real accountability. Real treatment. Real second chances. Real safety. Real justice.**

The choice is clear: Continue expensive failure? Or embrace proven reforms that work?

Dave will deliver justice that actually works.

Paid for by Dave Biggers for Louisville Mayor 2026

Louisville Crime Data Dashboard

Explore interactive crime statistics for Louisville neighborhoods:

Louisville Crime Data Dashboard

Explore neighborhood-by-neighborhood crime statistics and see how Dave Biggers' mini substation plan will dramatically improve response times and public safety across Louisville.

Data source: Louisville Metro Open Data Portal integration pending

Search Your Neighborhood

 Search

Filter by Crime Level:

All Neighborhoods High Crime (700+ incidents) Medium Crime (400-700) Low Crime (<400)

Filter by Deployment Phase:

Phase 1 (Year 1 - Highest Priority) Phase 2 (Year 2)

Sort Results:

Most Incidents First Fewest Incidents First Slowest Response First By Deployment Phase

The Data is Clear: We Need Change

Dave Biggers' mini substation plan is designed to dramatically cut 911 response times in the neighborhoods that need it most. Join us in bringing real public safety solutions to every Louisville neighborhood.

[Read the Full Public Safety Plan Volunteer for Change](#)

What Louisville Residents Say

What This Means for YOUR Neighborhood

Every Louisville neighborhood is unique. Enter your ZIP code to see how this policy directly impacts your community:

Find Your Mini Substation

Enter your ZIP code to see when your neighborhood will receive a community police substation.

Find My Substation

63 ZIP code areas across Louisville will receive mini substations over 4 years.

Part of Dave Biggers' comprehensive public safety plan.

See the Budget Impact

Explore how this policy fits into Dave's comprehensive \$1.2 billion budget plan:

How Does Dave's Budget Affect You?

See your personalized impact - zero tax increase, real benefits

☐ Household Income \$50,000

☐ Children in JCPS

☐ Your ZIP Code

Your Personal Impact

How we calculate: Benefits based on average family savings from wellness center access (\$800/year), youth program value (after-school + summer jobs), and your specific mini substation timeline. All benefits come from the same \$1.2B budget - zero tax increase.

Share your results with friends and family:

☐ Share My Results

Compare This Policy

See how Dave's approach differs from current administration policies:

Policy Comparison: Real Change vs. Status Quo

See the clear differences between Dave Biggers' transformative vision for Louisville and the current mayor's approach. The choice is yours.

☐ Share This Comparison ☐ Print Comparison

☐ Public Safety ☐ Wellness ☐ Youth ☐ Economy ☐ Housing ☐ Transparency

☐

Public Safety & Policing

Current Mayor

Traditional policing model

Approach

- Centralized police response
- Reactive approach to crime
- Limited community engagement
- Focus on patrol units

Timeline Ongoing

Budget Status quo funding

Impact Response times: 15-20 minutes average

Dave Biggers

Community-based mini substations

Approach

- 63 mini substations across Louisville (4-year deployment)
- Officers living and working in communities they serve
- Preventative community policing model
- Year 1: 12 substations in highest-need areas

Timeline Year 1-4 phased rollout

Budget Revenue-neutral through property tax restructuring

Impact Response times: 3-5 minutes (neighborhood-based)



Mental Health & Wellness

Current Mayor

Limited wellness infrastructure

Approach

- Reliance on existing healthcare facilities
- No dedicated community wellness centers
- Fragmented mental health services
- Emergency-room dependent model

Timeline No expansion planned

Budget Minimal dedicated funding

Impact Long wait times, limited access in underserved areas

Dave Biggers

Regional wellness centers network

Approach

- 18 wellness centers across 6 regions
- Mental health counseling, addiction support
- Youth programs, family services
- 3 centers per region for accessibility

Timeline Year 1-4 phased rollout

Budget Integrated with public safety restructuring
Impact Accessible care within every neighborhood, preventative focus



Youth Development

Current Mayor

Standard recreation programs

Approach

- Traditional rec centers
- Limited after-school programming
- Seasonal sports leagues
- Minimal job training for youth

Timeline Status quo

Budget Existing recreation budget

Impact Serves fraction of Louisville youth

Dave Biggers

Comprehensive youth investment

Approach

- After-school programs at all substations
- Job training and mentorship
- Arts, sports, and STEM programs
- Youth advisory councils
- Summer employment pathways

Timeline Immediate implementation with substation rollout

Budget \$1,200 value per child annually

Impact Accessible programs in every neighborhood



Economic Development

Current Mayor

Corporate incentives focus

Approach

- Tax breaks for large corporations
- Downtown-centric development
- Limited support for small business
- Gentrification without displacement protection

Timeline Ongoing

Budget Millions in corporate subsidies

Impact Benefits concentrated in select areas

Dave Biggers

Community wealth building

Approach

- Small business incubators at substations
- Local hiring requirements for city contracts
- Neighborhood-based economic zones
- Affordable housing protection
- Living wage standards

Timeline Immediate policy changes, 4-year infrastructure build

Budget Redirected from corporate subsidies

Impact Jobs and wealth stay in neighborhoods

□

Housing & Affordability**Current Mayor**

Market-driven housing

Approach

- Minimal affordable housing requirements
- Limited tenant protections
- Rising rents in many neighborhoods
- Displacement from development

Timeline No comprehensive plan

Budget Minimal housing trust fund

Impact Affordability crisis worsening

Dave Biggers

Housing as a human right

Approach

- Expanded affordable housing trust fund
- Strong tenant protections
- Community land trusts
- Rent stabilization measures
- Anti-displacement policies for existing residents

Timeline Immediate policy changes

Budget Increased trust fund through property tax reform

Impact Protects residents, prevents displacement



Government Transparency

Current Mayor

Standard reporting

Approach

- Annual budget reports
- Limited real-time data
- Reactive public engagement
- Closed-door development deals

Timeline Status quo

Budget Minimal transparency infrastructure

Impact Limited public accountability

Dave Biggers

Radical transparency

Approach

- Real-time budget dashboard
- Public data portal for all city metrics
- Community advisory boards with veto power
- Open contracting process

- Regular town halls in all neighborhoods

Timeline Immediate implementation

Budget Low-cost digital infrastructure

Impact Citizens empowered with information and decision-making power

The Choice is Clear

Louisville deserves transformative change, not more of the same. Join us in building a city that works for everyone.

[Join the Campaign Read Full Policy Platform](#)

▢ What Louisville Residents Say

▢ Community Endorsements

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Make Your Voice Heard

Register to Vote

Register to Vote

Make your voice heard! Register to vote and participate in our democracy.



[Register to Vote](#) ✓ [Check Registration](#)

Important Deadlines

- **Registration Deadline:** Typically 30 days before election day
- **Early Voting:** Check your state's early voting schedule
- **Absentee Ballot:** Request absentee ballots early
- **Election Day:** Polls typically open 6 AM - 6 PM

Note: Deadlines vary by state. Check your local election office for specific dates.

Find Your Polling Place

Find Your Polling Location

Enter your address to find your polling place and get directions.

Your Address

City

State

ZIP Code

Find My Polling Place

You can also call **1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683)** for assistance finding your polling location.

Stay Updated on This Policy

Get notified when this policy is updated or when Dave speaks about this issue in YOUR neighborhood.

* indicates a required field

Email Signup Information

Fax Number (Leave blank)

Name *

Email * We'll send you updates about the campaign

Zip Code 5-digit zip code (optional)

☐ I'm interested in volunteering! We'll send you information about volunteer opportunities

Sign Up

Have Ideas to Improve This Policy?

This is YOUR city. If you have suggestions for how we can make this policy better for Louisville, please share them. Every idea is reviewed.

Suggest an Improvement for Louisville

Have an idea for improving Louisville? Share your policy suggestion below. Your voice matters in shaping our city's future.

Policy Title *

Description *

0/2000 characters

Category Select a category... ▼

Your Name *

Your Email *

ZIP Code (Optional)

☐ I agree that my suggestion may be reviewed and potentially incorporated into campaign policy. My email will only be used to notify me about the status of my suggestion.

Submit Suggestion

NOT ME, WE.

Together, we make Louisville better for everyone.