Education & Youth Development

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EDUCATION & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Dave Biggers for Louisville Mayor 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Louisville's children are our future—but we're failing them. Chronic absenteeism has doubled since the pandemic. Achievement gaps between low-income students and their classmates remain massive. Thousands of young people lack access to after-school programs, summer jobs, or pathways to careers. Meanwhile, school buildings crumble from deferred maintenance, teachers leave due to low pay and impossible working conditions, and families struggle to afford childcare that costs more than college tuition.

I believe every Louisville child deserves an excellent education and meaningful opportunities—regardless of their zip code or family income. While the mayor doesn't control Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), Louisville Metro Government has enormous power to support students, families, and educators through strategic partnerships, direct services, and community investment.

The Challenge

Louisville's education and youth development crisis shows up in stark numbers:

1. **Academic Achievement Crisis:** Only 34-35% of JCPS students are proficient in reading; 27-28% in math. Low-income students lag far behind their classmates.

2. **Chronic Absenteeism Emergency:** 28.4% of JCPS students were chronically absent

(missing more than 10% of school days) through the first half of the 2024-25 school year, down five and a half percent from a year earlier but still far too many (JCPS news release, Jan. 30, 2025).

3. **Opportunity Gaps:** Many JCPS students lack access to after-school programs. Summer jobs fall well short of the number of young people who need them. Early childhood education does not reach all eligible low-income children.

4. **School Infrastructure Decay:** A large backlog of deferred maintenance. Schools without air conditioning. Lead in water. Crumbling facilities in West Louisville while East End schools receive investments.

5. **Youth Violence & Trauma:** Homicides and shootings take a heavy toll on our city; many victims and witnesses are children and teens. Many JCPS students experience trauma (violence, abuse, housing instability, food insecurity).

My Vision

I will make Louisville a city that invests in every child's success through comprehensive education and youth development partnerships:

After-School Programs Expansion ($15M annually): Universal access to free, quality after-school programs in all neighborhoods—serving 15,000+ additional students with homework help, enrichment, meals, and safe spaces.

Youth Employment Program ($12M annually): 3,000+ paid summer jobs and year-round internships for Louisville youth, with pathways to careers in city government, nonprofits, and local businesses.

Early Childhood Education Expansion ($5M annually): Triple Louisville's investment in pre-K and childcare, serving 1,500 additional children and supporting childcare workers.

Library System Expansion ($2M annually): Library staff for youth programs, new and expanded branches in underserved areas (built from the capital budget, outside the operating budget), literacy programs, and technology access for students and families.

School Support Partnerships ($1M annually): Direct support for JCPS through social workers, mental health counselors, attendance interventions, and facility improvements.

Budget Impact

This policy requires **$32.5 million in new annual spending**—funded through reallocation from ineffective violence prevention contracts, new federal funding partnerships, and

evidence-based investments that pay for themselves through improved educational outcomes and reduced youth justice system costs.

All proposals fit within Louisville Metro's $1.13 billion annual operating budget.

Why This Matters

Education is the foundation of opportunity. When children succeed in school, they escape poverty, avoid the criminal justice system, and contribute to Louisville's prosperity. When children fail, our entire community pays the price—through crime, unemployment, poverty, and lost potential.

Youth development prevents violence. Research indicates that structured after-school programs, summer jobs, and positive adult mentorship can reduce youth involvement in violence. Investing in young people prevents problems rather than paying to manage crises.

Louisville's prosperity depends on our children's success. Companies choose cities with educated workforces. Talent stays in cities with opportunities for young people. Families move to cities that invest in children.

My education and youth development agenda will ensure every Louisville child has the support, opportunities, and resources they need to thrive.

CURRENT SITUATION: EDUCATION & YOUTH IN CRISIS

By the Numbers

Academic Achievement:
– **Reading Proficiency (JCPS):** 34-35% overall
– **Math Proficiency (JCPS):** 27-28% overall
– **High School Graduation Rate:** 87% four-year rate, class of 2023 (JCPS, Oct. 31, 2023)
– **Chronic Absenteeism:** 28.4% of students through the first half of 2024-25 (JCPS, Jan. 30, 2025)

Youth Opportunities:
– **After-School Program Access:** Demand is greater than the seats available
– **Summer Youth Employment:** Far fewer jobs than young people who want one
– **Early Childhood Education:** Metro-funded pre-K does not reach all eligible children
– **Library Access:** Branches in underserved areas need expansion

Infrastructure & Support:

– **JCPS Deferred Maintenance:** Large backlog
– **School Social Workers, Counselors and Nurses:** Stretched thin

Youth Violence & Justice:
– **Students Experiencing Trauma:** Many (violence, abuse, housing instability, food insecurity)

Major Problems

Problem 1: Chronic Absenteeism Crisis Destroying Educational Outcomes

28.4% of JCPS students were chronically absent through the first half of the 2024-25 school year (JCPS, Jan. 30, 2025)—missing more than 10% of school days, about 18 days a school year. JCPS reports that is a decrease of five and a half percent from the same period a year earlier, but still far too many.

Why chronic absenteeism matters:
– Students who miss 10% of school days are less likely to graduate
– Reading proficiency requires consistent attendance—gaps compound
– Absence is early warning sign for dropout, unemployment, justice system involvement

Why students miss school:
1. **Health/healthcare access:** Asthma attacks, untreated medical conditions, lack of dental care (toothaches prevent attendance)
2. **Transportation barriers:** Bus routes cut, unreliable transportation, families can't drive students
3. **Housing instability:** Families experiencing homelessness or frequent moves
4. **Lack of engagement:** Students don't see relevance of school to their lives
5. **Mental health:** Anxiety, depression, trauma from community violence
6. **Lack of safe, supportive environment:** Bullying, don't feel safe or welcomed at school

Current response is inadequate:
– JCPS attendance staff are stretched thin
– Truancy court punishes families but doesn't address root causes
– No coordinated system connecting students to health, housing, mental health services
– After-school and summer programs that boost engagement do not reach every student who needs them

Result: Thousands of students fall further behind each year, widening achievement gaps and reducing graduation rates.

Problem 2: Massive Achievement Gaps by Income

Low-income students (eligible for free/reduced lunch) lag far behind their middle- and upper-income classmates:

Low-income students are proficient at far lower rates than their middle- and upper-income classmates in both reading and math.

Achievement gaps start early:
– By kindergarten entry, low-income children are 12-14 months behind in language/literacy
– By 3rd grade (critical reading milestone), gaps are 2-3 years
– By 8th grade, gaps are 3-4 years
– By high school, many students so far behind they disengage entirely

Why gaps exist:
1. **Early childhood education access:** Middle/upper-income families afford pre-K; low-income families lack access
2. **Summer learning loss:** Low-income students lose 2-3 months of learning each summer; affluent students gain
3. **Resource inequality:** Schools in low-income areas have less experienced teachers, fewer AP courses, outdated materials
4. **Trauma and instability:** Low-income students more likely to experience violence, housing instability, food insecurity—all affecting learning
5. **Low expectations:** Implicit bias leads educators to expect less from low-income students

Current response fails:
– JCPS invests in intervention programs, but funding insufficient
– After-school tutoring does not reach all struggling students
– Summer school serves only students who failed courses (not students behind but passing)
– Early childhood education does not reach all eligible low-income children

Result: Achievement gaps persist generation after generation, perpetuating economic inequality.

Problem 3: Lack of After-School Programs Leaving Students Unsupervised

JCPS dismisses at 2:30-3:00 PM. Most parents work until 5:00-6:00 PM. That leaves many students unsupervised for hours each afternoon—what youth development experts call “the danger hours” for risky behavior.

Current after-school landscape:
– **Quality programs:** Run by YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, community centers, and school-based programs
– **Waitlists:** Many programs have waitlists—demand exceeds supply
– **Geographic gaps:** West Louisville, Shawnee, South End severely underserved
– **Cost barriers:** Many programs charge fees that low-income families cannot afford

What happens without after-school programs:
– **Academic decline:** No homework help; students fall behind
– **Safety risks:** Unsupervised teens more likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence

– **Risky behavior:** Peak hours for youth substance use, sexual activity, crime are 3:00-6:00 PM
– **Missed opportunities:** No access to enrichment (arts, sports, STEM, leadership development)

Evidence for after-school programs:
– **Academic improvement:** Participants show higher math and reading scores
– **Attendance improvement:** Chronic absenteeism is lower for participants
– **Violence reduction:** Participants are less likely to be involved in violence
– **Social-emotional development:** Improved self-esteem, conflict resolution, leadership skills

Result: Thousands of students unsupervised during danger hours, falling behind academically, at risk of violence and risky behavior.

Problem 4: Youth Unemployment and Lack of Career Pathways

Many Louisville youth ages 14-21 need summer employment and career development opportunities, and today's summer jobs programs reach only a fraction of them.

Why youth employment matters:
– **Financial stability:** Families need teenage earnings to make ends meet
– **Skill development:** Responsibility, professionalism, time management, teamwork
– **Career exploration:** Exposure to potential careers; networking
– **Violence prevention:** Employed youth are less likely to be involved in violence
– **Educational outcomes:** Working students have higher graduation rates and college enrollment

Current landscape:
– **Metro government Summer Youth Employment:** Too few jobs
– **YouthBuild, YouthForce, other nonprofits:** Additional jobs
– **Private sector:** Limited participation in youth hiring
– **Total:** Far fewer jobs than young people who want one

Barriers to youth employment:
– **Lack of jobs:** Not enough positions available
– **Lack of connections:** Low-income youth don't have networks to find jobs
– **Transportation:** Can't get to work sites
– **Lack of experience:** Employers reluctant to hire youth without work history
– **Criminal records:** Even minor juvenile offenses create barriers

What happens without youth employment:
– **Idle summers:** No structure, supervision, or productive activity for 3 months
– **Summer learning loss:** Low-income students lose 2-3 months of academic progress
– **Involvement in violence:** Summer months see spike in youth violence
– **Missed workforce development:** No pathway from school to career

Louisville's summer jobs fall far short of the need.

Problem 5: Early Childhood Education Gap Creating School Readiness Crisis

Research shows that high-quality early childhood education (pre-K for ages 3-4) can pay off in reduced special education, grade retention, crime, and improved earnings.

Louisville's early childhood landscape:
– **Eligible children:** Many low-income 3-4 year-olds in Louisville
– **Coverage:** Metro-funded pre-K and Head Start together do not reach all of them

Impact of missing pre-K:
– Children without pre-K often enter kindergarten behind in language, literacy, math
– Children without pre-K are less likely to reach 3rd grade reading proficiency
– Achievement gaps present at kindergarten persist through high school

Childcare crisis compounds problem:
– Childcare takes a large share of a low-income family's income—unsustainable
– Result: Parents unable to work or forced to use unlicensed, low-quality care

Childcare workforce crisis:
– Childcare worker pay is low
– Many childcare workers rely on public assistance (Medicaid, SNAP, housing vouchers)
– High turnover reduces quality
– Chronic workforce shortage—centers can't hire enough workers

Current Metro investment in early childhood:
– No childcare worker wage supplements
– No assistance with childcare facility capital improvements

Result: Thousands of children start school already behind, childcare unaffordable for working families, early childhood educators living in poverty.

Problem 6: School Infrastructure Inequality and Decay

JCPS faces a large backlog of deferred maintenance—crumbling buildings, outdated HVAC, lead in water, ADA accessibility violations. And inequity is stark: West Louisville schools suffer worst conditions while East End schools receive capital investments.

Examples:
– **No air conditioning:** 15+ schools lack adequate cooling; classrooms reach 90+ degrees in September
– **Lead in water:** 50+ schools with elevated lead levels in drinking fountains
– **Roof leaks:** Water damage causing mold, structural issues
– **Outdated facilities:** Schools built in 1950s-70s never updated

– **Technology gaps:** Inadequate broadband, outdated computers

Geographic inequity:
– West Louisville schools: Built 1940s-60s, minimal updates, poor conditions
– East End schools: Newer construction, recent renovations, modern facilities

Why Metro government involvement matters:
– JCPS budget constrained; can't address the maintenance backlog alone
– Louisville Metro has bonding capacity, capital improvement funds
– Community Wellness Centers (my public safety proposal) could co-locate in schools, sharing facilities
– Partnerships reduce duplication (Metro and JCPS both operate recreation facilities)

Current Metro-JCPS partnership minimal:
– No joint capital planning
– Limited facility sharing
– Missed opportunities for efficiency and equity

Result: Students learn in substandard, inequitable conditions; buildings decay further each year; morale suffers among students, families, educators.

Why Current System Persists

Five factors maintain the status quo:

1. **Fragmented governance:** JCPS is independent from Metro government; coordination is voluntary, not required
2. **Insufficient funding:** Metro invests relatively little annually in education and youth
3. **Short-term thinking:** Politicians prioritize visible projects over long-term youth development
4. **Divided by income:** Affluent families opt out of public systems; lack political pressure for improvement
5. **Competing priorities:** Public safety, roads, economic development consume budget; youth seen as "nice to have" not essential

Bottom Line: Without major Metro investment and partnership with JCPS, Louisville's children—especially low-income students—will continue to fall behind, achievement gaps will persist, and our city's future will suffer.

I will change course.

MY VISION: INVEST IN EVERY CHILD'S SUCCESS

I believe **every child deserves excellent education and meaningful opportunities**—regardless of zip code or family income. While the mayor doesn't control JCPS, Louisville Metro Government has enormous power to support students, families, and educators.

Core Principles

1. **Universal Access:** Every Louisville child should have access to quality early childhood education, after-school programs, summer jobs, and educational support.

2. **Equity:** Invest most in students and communities with greatest needs—closing achievement gaps and addressing historical inequities.

3. **Partnership:** Metro government and JCPS working together—coordinated services, shared facilities, aligned goals.

4. **Evidence-Based:** Fund programs proven to work—early childhood education, after-school programs, youth employment, attendance interventions.

5. **Whole-Child Approach:** Address barriers to learning—health, housing, food security, mental health, safety—not just academics.

Goals (4-Year Term)

By 2029, I will achieve:

 15,000+ students in after-school programs: Universal access to free, quality after-school programming in all neighborhoods

 2,000+ youth employed annually: Summer jobs and year-round internships with pathways to careers

 4,500 children in pre-K: Triple Metro investment in early childhood education

 Chronic absenteeism cut to 20% through coordinated interventions

 Achievement gaps narrowed 25%: Reading and math proficiency gaps between the highest- and lowest-scoring zip codes reduced 25% from a Year 1 baseline (by family income where zip-code data isn't available)

 New and expanded library branches: In underserved areas, built from the capital budget, outside the operating budget

 200+ additional school support staff: Social workers, counselors, nurses funded through Metro-JCPS partnership

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DETAILED PROPOSALS

Proposal 1: Universal After-School Programs ($12M Annually)

What It Is

Louisville will invest $12 million annually to expand free, quality after-school programs—serving 15,000 additional students (27,000 total) and achieving near-universal access in neighborhoods with greatest need.

Program Model:

Hours: 3:00-6:00 PM on school days (M-F)

Location: YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, community centers, schools, libraries, parks

Services:
– **Homework help and tutoring** (aligned with JCPS curriculum)
– **STEM enrichment** (robotics, coding, science experiments)
– **Arts and culture** (music, visual arts, theater, dance)
– **Sports and recreation** (basketball, soccer, fitness, outdoor activities)
– **Social-emotional learning** (conflict resolution, leadership, character development)
– **Healthy meals and snacks** (addressing food insecurity)
– **Safe, supervised environment** (trained youth development professionals)

Eligibility: All JCPS students; free to families <80% AMI; sliding scale for higher-income families

Priority enrollment:
1. Students chronically absent
2. Students below grade level in reading/math
3. Students experiencing trauma, housing instability, or other risk factors
4. Students in high-violence neighborhoods

Quality standards:
– Staff ratios: 1 adult per 12 students
– Staff qualifications: Bachelor’s degree or equivalent experience in youth development

– Evidence-based curricula (Academic Youth Development, WINGS, NYSAN standards)
– Parent engagement and communication
– Coordination with school-day teachers
– Regular assessment of academic and social-emotional outcomes

Geographic distribution:
– **West Louisville (Shawnee, Russell, Park DuValle):** 4,000 slots (currently 1,500)
– **South End (Newburg, Highview, Okolona):** 3,000 slots (currently 1,000)
– **Downtown and surrounding (Portland, Smoketown, Shelby Park):** 2,500 slots (currently 1,000)
– **Other neighborhoods:** 5,500 slots (currently 8,500—maintain access)

Partnership model:
– Metro government provides funding
– Community organizations operate programs (YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, Salvation Army, Metro Parks, community centers)
– JCPS provides facilities, coordinates curriculum alignment, shares student data
– Regular evaluation by Office of Performance Management

Why It Matters

After-school programs are proven to improve academic and social outcomes:

Academic benefits:
– **Higher test scores** in math and reading for regular participants
– **Lower chronic absenteeism** (students engaged want to attend school)
– **Less grade retention** (homework help prevents falling behind)
– **Higher high school graduation rates** for students in programs for several years

Safety and behavioral benefits:
– **Less youth violence involvement** (supervised during danger hours)
– **Less substance use** (structured activities, positive peers)
– **Fewer suspensions/expulsions** (social-emotional learning improves behavior)

Family and community benefits:
– **Parents able to work full-time** (childcare during after-school hours)
– **Reduced childcare costs** for working families
– **Community cohesion** (programs bring families together)

Evidence from national research:
– **Harvard Afterschool Program Evaluation:** 21% math score increase, 18% reading increase
– **RAND Corporation study:** Every $1 invested returns $2.50 in improved test scores, reduced grade retention, increased high school graduation
– **Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL):** 11% academic

improvement, 23% social-emotional improvement

Louisville will benefit:
– 15,000 more students academically successful
– Fewer dropouts, more graduates, stronger workforce
– Reduced youth violence and crime
– Working families supported (parents can work without childcare burden)

Budget

Annual Cost: $12 million

Per-student cost: $800/year (15,000 additional students)
– Partnerships, facility sharing, and economies of scale help keep the per-student cost down

Breakdown:
– **Program operations:** $9M (staffing, materials, curricula)
– **Meals and snacks:** $1.8M (15,000 students × $120/year)
– **Transportation:** $600K (bus routes to programs for students in underserved areas)
– **Quality improvement:** $400K (staff training, evaluation, program development)
– **Administration and coordination:** $200K (1 FTE Metro coordinator)

Funding Sources:
– **Metro general fund:** $6M (new investment)
– **Federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant:** $4M (requires local match; Metro investment unlocks federal funds)
– **Reallocation from ineffective violence prevention contracts:** $2M (after-school programs more effective at preventing youth violence than current contracts)

Cost-Benefit:
– Better academic outcomes, fewer dropouts, and higher graduation rates reduce later costs
– Reduced youth violence saves emergency services and justice system costs
– Parents working full-time generates economic growth and tax revenue

Implementation Timeline

Year 1 (FY2027-28):
– January-March: Issue RFP for after-school providers; select partners
– April-June: Hire staff, develop curricula, prepare facilities
– August: Launch expanded programs serving 5,000 additional students (17,000 total)

Year 2 (FY2028-29):
– Expand to 22,000 students (10,000 additional)
– Evaluate Year 1 outcomes; refine programs
– Add transportation routes to underserved areas

Year 3 (FY2029-30):
– Expand to 27,000 students (15,000 additional)
– Near-universal access in high-need neighborhoods
– Achievement and attendance improvements measurable

Year 4 (FY2030-31):
– Sustain 27,000 students
– Chronic absenteeism reduced 30-40% among participants
– Academic proficiency improved 15-20% among participants
– Model program recognized nationally

Proposal 2: Youth Employment & Career Pathways ($8M Annually)

What It Is

Louisville will create a comprehensive youth employment program providing 3,000+ paid summer jobs and 500+ year-round internships for young people ages 14-21—with pathways to careers in city government, nonprofits, healthcare, skilled trades, and technology.

Three Program Components:

Component 1: Summer Youth Employment (2,000 jobs)

6-week paid summer jobs (June-July) for youth ages 14-21:

Job placements:
– **Metro government departments:** 600 jobs (Parks, Public Works, Libraries, Health, 311, offices)
– **Nonprofit partners:** 600 jobs (community centers, childcare, elder care, environmental restoration)
– **Small businesses:** 400 jobs (retail, restaurants, neighborhood services—Metro subsidizes 50% of wages)
– **JCPS:** 400 jobs (summer school support, facilities maintenance, technology assistance)

Wages: $15/hour × 25 hours/week × 6 weeks = $2,250 per youth

Support services:
– **Financial literacy training:** Banking, budgeting, saving, credit
– **Professional development:** Resume writing, interviewing, workplace behavior
– **Career exploration:** Exposure to different fields; guest speakers
– **Mentorship:** Each youth paired with adult mentor (supervisor + career counselor)

Priority hiring:
1. Youth involved in justice system or at high risk
2. Youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability
3. Youth from high-violence neighborhoods (Russell, Shawnee, Park DuValle, Smoketown)

4. JCPS students with poor attendance or below grade level

Component 2: Year-Round Internships (500 positions)

School-year internships for high school students:

Hours: 10 hours/week during school year (September-May)

Placements:
– **Healthcare:** Baptist Health, UofL Health, Norton Healthcare (patient services, medical records, community health)
– **Technology:** Local tech companies (coding, web development, IT support)
– **Skilled trades:** Electrical, plumbing, HVAC apprenticeships
– **City government:** Rotations through departments; exposure to public service careers
– **Nonprofits:** Community organizing, program coordination, youth development

Wages: $15/hour × 10 hours/week × 36 weeks = $5,400 per student

Benefits:
– Real-world work experience aligned with career interests
– Academic credit (internships coordinated with JCPS career pathways)
– Mentorship from professionals in chosen fields
– Pathway to permanent employment or apprenticeships

Component 3: Career Pathways Program

Direct pipeline from internships to careers:

- **Pre-apprenticeship programs:** Electrical, plumbing, HVAC, construction trades—guaranteed apprenticeship upon completion
- **Metro government career ladder:** Summer workers and interns eligible for permanent Metro jobs at 18
- **Healthcare career pathway:** Internships leading to CNA, medical assistant, pharmacy tech certifications
- **Technology pathway:** Coding bootcamp scholarships for program participants

Why It Matters

Youth employment has profound impacts on individual and community well-being:

Academic outcomes:
– **Higher graduation rates:** Working students tend to graduate at higher rates
– **College enrollment:** Employed youth tend to enroll in college at higher rates
– **Career readiness:** Work experience teaches responsibility, professionalism, time management

Violence prevention:
– **Lower youth violence involvement** among employed youth
– **Structured summer:** Prevents idle time during peak violence months
– **Positive identity:** Employment provides purpose, self-worth, alternative to street culture

Economic mobility:
– **Earnings:** First job creates work history; easier to get subsequent jobs
– **Financial skills:** Youth learn banking, budgeting, saving
– **Networks:** Exposure to professionals, mentors, career fields
– **Family support:** Teen earnings help families pay bills, buy groceries

Employer benefits:
– Businesses gain motivated workers
– Pipeline for talent development
– Strengthened community relationships

Budget

Annual Cost: $8 million

Breakdown:
– **Summer jobs (2,000 × $2,250):** $4.5M
– **Year-round internships (500 × $5,400):** $2.7M
– **Program administration:** $400K (5 FTE coordinators)
– **Financial literacy and professional development:** $200K
– **Career pathways support:** $200K (pre-apprenticeship, certifications)

Funding Sources:
– **Metro general fund:** $4M (new investment)
– **Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Youth Program:** $2M
– **Private sector partnerships:** $1M (employers contribute 50% of wages for business placements)
– **Reallocation from juvenile justice system:** $1M (employment prevents justice involvement; saves $5M+ in justice costs)

Cost-Benefit:
– **Violence prevention:** Less youth violence saves emergency services and justice system costs
– **Educational outcomes:** Higher graduation and college enrollment increases lifetime earnings and tax revenue
– **Return on investment:** Youth employment pays back in violence reduction, improved education, and increased earnings

Implementation Timeline

Year 1 (FY2027-28):
– January-March: Develop partnerships with Metro departments, nonprofits, businesses, healthcare, trades
– April-May: Recruit and hire 750 youth for summer program (pilot expansion)
– June-July: First summer cohort (750 youth)
– September: Launch year-round internships (150 students)

Year 2 (FY2028-29):
– Summer: 1,500 youth employed
– School year: 300 interns
– Career pathways partnerships established

Year 3 (FY2029-30):
– Summer: 2,000 youth employed
– School year: 400 interns
– Pre-apprenticeship programs launch

Year 4 (FY2030-31):
– Full implementation: 2,000 summer + 500 year-round = 2,500 total
– First cohort transitioning to permanent careers
– Measurable reductions in youth violence, improvements in graduation rates

Proposal 3: Early Childhood Education Expansion ($5M Annually)

What It Is

Louisville will triple its investment in early childhood education—expanding from 1,500 to 4,500 pre-K slots and supporting the childcare workforce—ensuring every low-income child has access to quality early learning.

Three Strategies:

Strategy 1: Pre-K Expansion (3,000 additional slots)

Target: Low-income 3-4 year-olds (families <200% federal poverty level = $60,000 for family of 4)

Settings:
– **JCPS schools:** 1,500 slots (partner with JCPS to expand existing programs)
– **Community-based childcare centers:** 1,000 slots (contracts with licensed providers)
– **Head Start partners:** 500 slots (local match leveraging federal expansion)

Quality standards:
– Evidence-based curricula (Creative Curriculum, HighScope, Tools of the Mind)

– Teachers with bachelor's degrees in early childhood education
– Class sizes: 1 teacher + 1 assistant per 20 children
– Minimum 6 hours daily (full-day program)
– Family engagement and parent education
– Kindergarten transition support

Integration with services:
– Health screenings (vision, hearing, dental, developmental)
– Nutrition (breakfast, lunch, snacks)
– Social services referrals (housing, healthcare, food assistance)
– Mental health consultation (addressing trauma, behavioral challenges)

Strategy 2: Childcare Worker Wage Supplements ($1.2M annually)

Problem: Childcare workers are paid low wages—poverty wages for many early childhood educators

Solution: Wage supplements bringing early childhood educators to $15/hour (this program's floor, not a citywide minimum wage)

Eligibility: Licensed childcare centers serving low-income children; workers with CDA (Child Development Associate) or higher credential

Impact:
– 800 childcare workers receive $4,000-6,000 annual supplements
– Reduced turnover (improves quality and stability for children)
– Increased professionalism and career sustainability
– Expanded capacity (centers can recruit and retain workers)

Strategy 3: Childcare Facility Improvements ($800K annually)

Grants for licensed childcare centers:
– Facility repairs and upgrades (HVAC, roofs, plumbing, ADA accessibility)
– Playground equipment and outdoor learning spaces
– Technology (tablets, educational software, parent communication systems)
– Health and safety improvements (lead abatement, ventilation)

Eligibility: Centers serving 50%+ low-income children

Average grant: $40,000 per center (20 centers annually)

Impact:
– Improved quality and safety
– Expanded capacity (centers can serve more children)
– Reduced closures (facilities maintained, not deteriorating)

Why It Matters

Early childhood education is the highest-return investment in education:

Academic outcomes:
– **3rd grade reading proficiency:** Higher for pre-K participants
– **High school graduation:** Higher for pre-K participants
– **College enrollment:** Higher for pre-K participants

Long-term outcomes:
– **Reduced special education:** Fewer special education placements
– **Reduced grade retention:** Fewer students held back
– **Reduced crime:** Fewer arrests as adults
– **Increased earnings:** Higher lifetime earnings

Return on investment:
– **Nobel Prize-winning research (James Heckman):** Every $1 invested in quality early childhood education returns $7-10 in reduced costs and increased earnings
– **Perry Preschool Study:** $7.16 return per $1 invested
– **Abecedarian Project:** $9.20 return per $1 invested

Louisville benefits:
– 3,000 more children school-ready
– Achievement gaps narrowed before they widen
– Working families supported (affordable childcare enables work)
– Economic development (strong early childhood system attracts businesses and talent)

Childcare worker wage supplements:
– Professionalize early childhood workforce
– Reduce turnover (improves quality)
– Expand capacity (centers can recruit workers)
– Economic justice (childcare workers deserve living wages)

Budget

Annual Cost: $5 million

Breakdown:
– **Pre-K expansion (3,000 slots × $1,000 per child Metro contribution):** $3M
– Total cost per child: $8,000-10,000
– Metro contribution: $1,000 (leverages state funding, federal Head Start, JCPS partnership)
– **Childcare worker wage supplements (800 workers × $1,500 average):** $1.2M
– **Facility improvement grants (20 centers × $40,000):** $800K

Funding Sources:
– **Metro general fund:** $3M (new investment)

– **State pre-K funding:** $1M (Metro match unlocks state dollars)
– **Federal Head Start expansion:** $1M (local match requirement)

Leveraged investment:
– $5M Metro investment leverages $20M+ total (state, federal, JCPS partnership)
– 4:1 leverage ratio

Cost-Benefit:
– Pre-K can reduce later special education, grade retention, and dropout costs

Implementation Timeline

Year 1 (FY2027-28):
– January-March: Partner with JCPS, Head Start, childcare centers to identify expansion sites
– April-June: Hire teachers, prepare facilities, enroll children
– August: First expansion cohort (750 new slots = 2,250 total)
– September: Launch wage supplement program (200 workers)

Year 2 (FY2028-29):
– Expand to 3,000 total slots (1,500 new)
– Wage supplements for 500 workers
– Facility grants for 10 centers

Year 3 (FY2029-30):
– Expand to 3,750 total slots (2,250 new)
– Wage supplements for 700 workers
– Facility grants for 15 centers

Year 4 (FY2030-31):
– Full implementation: 4,500 slots (3,000 new)
– Wage supplements for 800 workers
– Facility grants for 20 centers annually
– First cohort entering kindergarten school-ready
– Achievement gap reduction measurable by 2032 (when cohort reaches 3rd grade)

Proposal 4: Library System Expansion & Enhancement ($2M Annually)

What It Is

Louisville will invest $2 million annually in library youth programs, open a new branch and expand existing branches in underserved areas (built from the capital budget, outside the operating budget), and enhance literacy programs—ensuring every Louisville child and family has access to books, technology, tutoring, and safe learning spaces.

Four Components:

Component 1: Library Staff for Youth Programs ($1M annually)

Library staff time goes to after-school homework help and youth programs at the branches.

Component 2: New and Expanded Branches in Underserved Areas ($600K annually for 3 branch projects over 4 years)

Locations:
1. **Shawnee neighborhood** (expand and renovate the existing branch)
2. **Newburg/Highview (South End)** (new branch)
3. **Portland neighborhood** (expand and renovate the existing branch)

Services:
– Full library collections (books, DVDs, audiobooks, e-books)
– Public computers and free WiFi
– Children's programming and storytimes
– Adult literacy and GED classes
– Meeting rooms for community use

Annual cost per branch: $200K (staff, collections, utilities, maintenance)

Construction: The new Newburg/Highview building and the Shawnee and Portland renovations are a capital (building) project, built from Metro's capital budget, outside the operating budget.

Component 3: Literacy & Homework Help Programs ($300K annually)

Expanded programming:

1. **Early literacy (ages 0-5):**
2. Daily storytimes at all branches
3. 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program (tracking, incentives)
4. Parent education (reading aloud, language development)
5. **Elementary literacy (K-5):**
6. After-school homework help (tutors at all branches 3-6pm M-F)
7. Summer reading program (prevents summer learning loss)
8. Book giveaways (every child keeps books; builds home libraries)

9. **Teen services (6-12):**
10. Homework help and tutoring
11. College prep (SAT/ACT prep, college essays, financial aid applications)
12. Career exploration and job readiness
13. **Adult literacy:**
14. ESL (English as Second Language) classes
15. GED prep and testing
16. Digital literacy (computer skills, internet safety, job applications online)

Component 4: Technology Access & Digital Equity ($100K annually)

Enhancements:
– 200 additional public computers (high-need branches)
– Chromebook lending program (students check out laptops for homework)
– WiFi hotspot lending (families without home internet)
– Assistive technology for people with disabilities
– Technology training classes (coding for kids, job skills for adults)

Why It Matters

Libraries are critical education infrastructure:

Academic support:
– Many Louisville students lack reliable internet at home—libraries provide access
– Homework help and tutoring improve academic outcomes
– Summer reading programs prevent learning loss

Literacy development:
– Early literacy programs improve kindergarten readiness
– Access to books builds vocabulary and reading skills
– Adult literacy and GED programs enable economic mobility

Digital equity:
– Many low-income households lack computers
– Libraries provide technology access for job applications, school, healthcare
– Digital literacy training enables workforce participation

Community gathering spaces:
– Safe, welcoming environments for families
– Meeting rooms for neighborhood groups, nonprofits, civic organizations

– Connection to social services and resources

Evidence:
– **Institute of Museum and Library Services:** Libraries increase graduation rates 3-5% in communities with robust systems
– **Pew Research:** 80% of Americans say libraries help people find jobs; 76% say libraries help students succeed in school
– **American Library Association:** Every $1 invested in libraries returns $4-5 in economic value

Expansion will serve 100,000+ additional users annually.

Budget

Annual Cost: $2 million

Breakdown:
– **Library staff for youth programs:** $1M (staff time across system)
– **New and expanded branches (1 new, 2 expanded over 4 years):** $600K annually average to open and run them; construction comes from the capital budget, outside the operating budget
– Year 1: 1 branch ($400K startup + $200K operations)
– Year 2: 1 branch ($400K startup + $400K operations for 2)
– Year 3: 1 branch ($400K startup + $600K operations for 3)
– Year 4: $600K operations for 3 branches
– **Literacy programs:** $300K (staff, materials, incentives)
– **Technology:** $100K (computers, Chromebooks, hotspots)

Funding Source:
– Metro general fund: $2M (new investment)

Cost-Benefit:
– Improved educational outcomes (graduation, college enrollment)
– Economic development (digital equity, job access)

Implementation Timeline

Year 1 (FY2027-28):
– January-June: Plan youth programs; assign staff
– July: Youth programs begin at the branches
– July-December: Plan Shawnee branch expansion and renovation (design)

Year 2 (FY2028-29):
– January: Expanded Shawnee branch reopens
– July-December: Plan Newburg/Highview branch

Year 3 (FY2029-30):
– January: Newburg/Highview branch opens
– July-December: Plan Portland branch expansion and renovation

Year 4 (FY2030-31):
– January: Expanded Portland branch reopens
– Full system: new and expanded branches, youth programs, enhanced programming
– 100,000+ additional users annually

Proposal 5: School Support Partnerships ($1M Annually)

What It Is

Louisville Metro will directly support JCPS through partnerships providing social workers, mental health counselors, attendance interventions, and facility improvements—addressing non-academic barriers to learning.

Four Partnership Areas:

Partnership 1: School-Based Social Workers ($400K annually)

Current: JCPS has far fewer school social workers than its students need

Metro investment: Fund 20 additional social workers in highest-need schools

Services:
– Connect families to housing assistance, food assistance, healthcare
– Address trauma, abuse, domestic violence
– Attendance interventions (home visits, barrier identification)
– Crisis response (student/family emergencies)
– Advocacy for students in foster care, homelessness

Cost: $400K (20 social workers × $20K Metro subsidy per position; JCPS covers remainder)

Partnership 2: Mental Health Counselors & Trauma Support ($300K annually)

Current: JCPS has fewer school counselors than its students need

Metro investment: Fund 15 additional mental health counselors in trauma-impacted schools

Plus: Trauma-informed schools training for educators (recognize trauma, adjust practices)

Services:
– Individual and group counseling
– Trauma screening and referrals
– Crisis intervention (suicidal ideation, self-harm, violence exposure)

– Social-emotional learning curricula
– Teacher consultation (managing trauma-impacted students)

Cost: $300K (15 counselors × $20K subsidy)

Partnership 3: Attendance Intervention Program ($200K annually)

Goal: Reduce chronic absenteeism to 20% over 4 years

Strategies:
1. **Early warning system:** Identify students missing 5%+ of days by October; intervene immediately
2. **Home visits:** Attendance staff visit families, identify barriers (health, transportation, housing)
3. **Barrier removal:** Connect families to services (healthcare, transportation assistance, housing)
4. **Mentorship:** Pair chronically absent students with mentors (check-ins, encouragement)
5. **Incentives:** Attendance challenges, prizes, recognition

Metro role:
– Fund 10 attendance intervention specialists (1 per high-absenteeism school cluster)
– Coordinate with Metro services (health, housing, transportation) to remove barriers
– Data sharing and tracking (Metro 311, social services integrated with JCPS attendance)

Cost: $200K (10 specialists × $20K subsidy)

Partnership 4: Facility Sharing & Improvements ($100K annually)

Opportunity: Many JCPS schools and Metro facilities (parks, community centers, libraries) serve same neighborhoods—duplication and inefficiency

Partnership model:
– **Community Wellness Centers co-located in schools:** My public safety proposal includes 18 Wellness Centers—several can co-locate in JCPS buildings (shared facilities, reduced costs)
– **Joint use agreements:** JCPS gyms available for Metro Parks programs evenings/weekends; Metro parks fields available for JCPS athletics
– **Shared maintenance:** Metro Public Works assists with JCPS facility maintenance in exchange for facility access
– **Capital improvements:** Metro contributes to school facility improvements (playgrounds, HVAC, roofs) in exchange for community access

Metro investment: $100K annually for joint capital improvements (leverages JCPS capital funds)

Example: Metro invests $100K in school playground improvements; community gains access evenings/weekends; school benefits from better facilities.

Why It Matters

Non-academic barriers prevent learning:

Poverty and trauma:
– Many JCPS students experience trauma (violence, abuse, housing instability)
– Students can't learn when hungry, homeless, traumatized, or witnessing violence
– Social workers and counselors address root causes

Chronic absenteeism:
– Students missing 10%+ of school days are less likely to graduate
– Attendance interventions identify barriers and connect families to help
– Reducing absenteeism improves achievement more than most curriculum reforms

Facility sharing:
– Reduces duplication (Metro and JCPS both operate recreation facilities)
– Maximizes community access (schools used evenings/weekends)
– Leverages limited capital funds (joint investments)

Partnership benefits both Metro and JCPS:
– Metro: Better educational outcomes reduce future costs (crime, unemployment, social services)
– JCPS: Additional resources address non-academic barriers; improved student outcomes
– Community: Integrated services, better facilities, coordinated support

Budget

Annual Cost: $1 million

Breakdown:
– School social workers (20 × $20K subsidy): $400K
– Mental health counselors (15 × $20K subsidy): $300K
– Attendance intervention specialists (10 × $20K subsidy): $200K
– Facility sharing and improvements: $100K

Funding Source:
– Metro general fund: $1M (new investment)

Leveraged investment:
– $1M Metro subsidy leverages $2M+ JCPS spending (Metro covers portion; JCPS covers remainder)
– Total value: $3M in services for $1M Metro investment

Cost-Benefit:
– Reduced chronic absenteeism saves JCPS funding (state funding tied to attendance)
– Improved mental health reduces crisis costs (hospitalization, emergency services)

– Social worker interventions prevent foster care placements, homelessness
– Return: $3-5 per $1 invested

Implementation Timeline

Year 1 (FY2027-28):
– January-June: Negotiate partnership agreements with JCPS
– August: First 10 social workers and 5 counselors deployed
– September: Attendance intervention program launches in 5 schools

Year 2 (FY2028-29):
– Expand to 20 social workers, 10 counselors, 10 attendance specialists
– First facility sharing agreements (3 schools)

Year 3 (FY2029-30):
– Full implementation: 20 social workers, 15 counselors, 10 attendance specialists
– 10 facility sharing agreements
– Chronic absenteeism reduced to 22%

Year 4 (FY2030-31):
– Sustained implementation
– Chronic absenteeism reduced to 20%
– Model partnership for Metro-JCPS collaboration

Proposal 6: Year-Round Schooling Initiative ($4M Annually)

What It Is

Louisville will advocate for and partner with JCPS to pilot a **year-round schooling model** using a 45/15 calendar (45 school days on, 15 days off)—approximately 4 months on, 2 weeks off rotating throughout the year. Students continue until all required credits/competencies are met.

Calendar Structure:

- **Traditional:** 180 days, September-May, 10-12 week summer break
- **Year-Round (45/15):** 180 days spread across full year with 4 intersession breaks
    - Quarter 1: 45 days → 15 days off
    - Quarter 2: 45 days → 15 days off
    - Quarter 3: 45 days → 15 days off
    - Quarter 4: 45 days → Summer intersession (modified)

Key Features:

1. **Education First—Continuous Learning:** Eliminates the devastating 2-3 month

"summer slide" learning loss that disproportionately impacts low-income students. Research shows disadvantaged students lose significant academic ground during extended breaks while affluent students maintain or gain.

2. **Competency-Based Completion:** Students continue schooling until all credits/competencies are met—no arbitrary cutoff
3. **Intersession Enrichment:** 2-week breaks include optional remediation for struggling students and enrichment for advanced students
4. **Built-In Childcare Solution:** Year-round schedule provides reliable, structured care aligned with working parent schedules—a major benefit for Louisville families
5. **Facility Efficiency:** Buildings used year-round instead of sitting empty 3 months

Why It Matters

The Summer Slide Is Real—And Devastating for Low-Income Students:

- Research shows disadvantaged students experience 2-3 months of "summer slide" learning loss annually
- Affluent students often GAIN during summer (camps, tutoring, enrichment travel)
- By 9th grade, summer learning loss accounts for 2/3 of the achievement gap between low-income and affluent students

Louisville's Childcare Crisis—Year-Round Schools Help

The Problem:

- Childcare is a major expense for Louisville families
- Summer care alone is a major cost for families
- Low-income families must choose between work and supervision

How Year-Round Schools Help:

- Eliminates 10-12 week summer care scramble
- 2-week intersessions easier to manage than 3-month gaps
- Metro-funded intersession programs provide FREE supervised care
- Parents can maintain stable employment year-round
- **Lower summer care costs for families**

Operational Benefits:

- Reduces teacher burnout through regular breaks (less "June exhaustion")

- Decreases chronic absenteeism (students less likely to disengage with shorter breaks)
- Better facility utilization (buildings used year-round)
- More frequent intervention opportunities (struggling students get help every 9 weeks, not just at year-end)

Adoption Trends:

- Growing adoption nationwide for equity reasons

Working Families Integration

Year-round schooling works with my other education investments to support working families:

Initiative	Coverage	Family Benefit
Early Childhood (Pre-K)	Ages 3-4, full day	Saves childcare costs
Year-Round School	K-12, 180 days spread year-round	Eliminates summer care costs
After-School Programs	3pm-6pm daily	Free care during work hours
Intersession Programs	2-week breaks, 4x/year	Supervised enrichment during breaks
TOTAL FAMILY SAVINGS	Birth through graduation	—

This is what government that works for working families looks like—not scattered programs, but an integrated system that supports children AND parents.

Budget

Annual Cost: $4 million (increased from $3M to strengthen childcare component)

- Intersession academic programming: $1.5M (enrichment, remediation during breaks)
- **Intersession childcare/supervision: $1M** (full-day care during 2-week breaks for working families)
- Extended facility operations: $500K (utilities, maintenance for year-round use)
- Pre-K integration support: $500K (coordinate year-round school with Metro pre-K programs)

- Research and evaluation: $250K (data collection, outcomes measurement)
- Administration: $250K (coordination with JCPS)

Cost-Benefit:

- Reduces summer learning loss
- Helps narrow achievement gaps (closing economic disparities)
- Better facility utilization (more efficient use of school buildings)
- **Lowers summer childcare costs for families**
- **Enables parents to maintain employment** (no summer scramble)

Implementation

Year 1 (FY2027-28):

- Partner with JCPS to identify 5-10 pilot schools (prioritize West Louisville, high-poverty areas)
- Metro provides $1.5M for intersession academic programming (remediation + enrichment)
- Metro provides $1M for intersession childcare (full-day supervision during 2-week breaks)
- Metro provides $500K for pilot evaluation/research partnership with UofL
- Coordinate with Metro pre-K programs for seamless year-round coverage

Year 2 (FY2028-29):

- Evaluate pilot outcomes (attendance, achievement, **parent employment stability**)
- Expand to 15-20 schools if successful
- Refine intersession programming based on results
- Survey families on childcare impact

Years 3-4 (FY2029-30 to FY2030-31):

- Full rollout to 50+ schools if data supports
- Integrate with expanded after-school and early childhood programs
- Target: 25,000+ students in year-round schools by 2029
- **Target: 15,000+ families benefiting from year-round childcare alignment**

Proposal 7: Student-Based Funding Reform Advocacy ($500K Annually)

What It Is

Louisville will lead statewide advocacy to reform Kentucky's school funding formula from property-tax-dependent to **true per-pupil funding**—calculating the actual cost to educate a student (including instruction, meals, transportation, supplies, support services) and funding each student directly regardless of local property values.

Current Problem:

- Kentucky's SEEK formula guarantees a base of $4,586 per pupil for 2025-26 (Kentucky Department of Education, FY2025-26 SEEK Final Calculation, Feb. 27, 2026), but total funding varies wildly by district wealth
- Per-student spending differs widely across Kentucky districts—creating inequity
- Property tax reliance means poor neighborhoods = poor schools

My Model—True Per-Pupil Funding:

Step 1: Calculate Actual Cost Per Student

- Base instruction: ~$8,000/student
- Breakfast + lunch (180 days): ~$1,500/student
- Transportation: ~$1,200/student
- Supplies and materials: ~$500/student
- Support services (counselors, social workers): ~$1,000/student
- Special education (weighted average): ~$2,000/student
- Facility maintenance: ~$1,500/student
- **Total: ~$15,700 base per student**

Step 2: Apply Weighted Factors

- Low-income students: +40% ($6,280 additional)
- English Language Learners: +30% ($4,710 additional)
- Students with disabilities: +80-200% (varies by need)
- Grade level adjustments (high school costs more)

Step 3: Fund Students, Not Property

- State calculates enrollment + weighted factors
- Funding follows student regardless of neighborhood wealth

- Eliminates funding disparity between rich and poor districts

Why It Matters

Research on Funding Reform:

- States that equalized funding saw improved outcomes for low-income students
- California's Serrano v. Priest led to more equitable funding after court-ordered reform
- Michigan's Proposal A centralized funding but faced revenue challenges—Louisville model would learn from these lessons

Equity Impact:

- Would direct more state funding to underfunded schools
- Closes "property tax gap" that keeps schools divided by income
- Ensures every Louisville child receives adequate funding regardless of zip code

Budget

Annual Cost: $500,000 (advocacy, research, coalition-building)

- Research and policy analysis: $200K
- Coalition building (statewide partners): $150K
- Public education campaign: $100K
- Legislative advocacy: $50K

Potential Impact: If successful, would direct more state funding to underfunded schools.

Implementation

Mayor's Role (State Advocacy):

- Lead coalition of urban mayors advocating for funding reform
- Testify before Kentucky General Assembly
- Partner with education equity organizations
- Commission research on funding disparities

Local Actions:

- Use Metro resources to supplement JCPS funding in highest-need schools
- Partner with JCPS on targeted interventions (social workers, counselors)
- Advocate for local option to supplement state funding equitably

What the Mayor can do about JCPS. The Mayor of Louisville has no formal authority over JCPS governance — the school board is independently elected and the legislature, not Metro, sets the rules. What Metro controls is support, not control: no city voucher program, no diversion of Metro dollars to private-school tuition, and continued transportation support (Metro transit passes) for families who need to get their kids to whichever public school serves them. On the state legislature's recurring JCPS break-up and governance bills, my position is local control — Louisville families and the elected board, not Frankfort, should decide how JCPS is run.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Total Annual Cost

Program	Annual Cost	Notes
After-School Programs Expansion	$12M	15,000 additional students; free quality programming 3-6pm daily
Youth Employment Program	$8M	3,000 summer jobs + 500 year-round internships
Early Childhood Education	$5M	3,000 additional pre-K slots + childcare worker wages + facilities
Library Expansion	$2M	Youth programs, 1 new and 2 expanded branches (buildings from the capital budget), literacy programs, technology
School Support Partnerships	$1M	Social workers, counselors, attendance intervention, facilities
Year-Round Schooling Initiative	$4M	Pilot program, intersession enrichment, childcare integration, pre-K coordination
Student-Based Funding Advocacy	$500K	Statewide coalition, research, legislative advocacy
TOTAL	**$32.5M**	

Funding Sources

Source	Amount	Notes
Metro General Fund (New Investment)	$23.5M	New budget allocation for education and youth

Source	Amount	Notes
Federal Funding Leverage	$6M	21st Century ($4M), WIOA Youth ($2M)
Reallocation from Ineffective Programs	$2M	Violence prevention contracts with poor outcomes
Private Sector Partnerships	$1M	Employers contribute 50% wages for youth employment placements
TOTAL	**$32.5M**	Funded without tax increases

All funding within Louisville Metro's $1.13 billion annual operating budget.

Outputs (4-Year Term)

 27,000 students in after-school programs (15,000 additional)
 10,000+ youth employed (2,000 annually × 4 years summer + 500 annually year-round)
 4,500 children in pre-K (3,000 additional slots)
 Chronic absenteeism reduced to 20%
 Achievement gaps narrowed 25% (reading/math proficiency gaps reduced from 30-34 points to 22-25 points)
 New and expanded library branches (a new Newburg/Highview branch; Shawnee and Portland expanded and renovated), built from the capital budget, outside the operating budget
 200+ school support staff (social workers, counselors, attendance specialists)

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE (4-YEAR TERM)

Year 1 (FY2027-28): Foundation

Q1:
– Negotiate partnerships with JCPS, nonprofits, childcare providers, employers
– Issue RFPs for after-school programs, youth employment sites
– Hire coordinators for each program

Q2:
– Select after-school providers; hire staff
– Recruit youth for summer employment (750)
– Expand pre-K enrollment (750 new slots)

Q3:
– Launch expanded after-school programs (5,000 additional students = 17,000 total)
– Summer youth employment (750 jobs)
– Library youth programs begin

Q4:
– Year-round internships launch (150 students)
– School support partnerships deploy (10 social workers, 5 counselors)
– Plan Shawnee library branch expansion

Year 2 (FY2028-29): Expansion

Q1-Q4:
– After-school programs expand to 22,000 students (10,000 additional)
– Summer youth employment: 1,500 jobs
– Year-round internships: 300 students
– Pre-K expansion: 3,000 total slots (1,500 additional)
– Expanded Shawnee library branch reopens
– School support: 20 social workers, 10 counselors, 10 attendance specialists
– Chronic absenteeism reduced to 25%

Year 3 (FY2029-30): Maturity

Q1-Q4:
– After-school programs: 27,000 students (15,000 additional—full implementation)
– Summer youth employment: 2,000 jobs
– Year-round internships: 400 students
– Pre-K: 3,750 slots (2,250 additional)
– Newburg/Highview library branch opens
– School support: 20 social workers, 15 counselors, 10 attendance specialists (full implementation)
– Chronic absenteeism reduced to 22%

Year 4 (FY2030-31): Sustainability

Q1-Q4:
– All programs at full implementation
– Pre-K: 4,500 slots (3,000 additional)
– Expanded Portland library branch reopens (1 new and 2 expanded branches total)
– Chronic absenteeism: 20%
– Achievement gaps narrowed 25% (measurable by 2030-2032 as cohorts progress)
– Louisville recognized nationally for education and youth investment

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SUCCESS METRICS & ACCOUNTABILITY

After-School Programs

 Enrollment: 27,000 students (15,000 additional; universal access in high-need neighborhoods)
 Attendance: 80%+ of enrolled students attend regularly (3+ days/week)
 Academic Improvement: Participants show 15-20% higher proficiency in reading/math vs. baseline
 Attendance Improvement: 30% reduction in chronic absenteeism among participants
 Parent Satisfaction: 85%+ of parents satisfied with programs
 Safety: Zero serious safety incidents; well-supervised, trained staff

Youth Employment

 Jobs Created: 3,000 summer jobs + 500 year-round internships annually
 Demographic Reach: 60%+ participants from high-violence neighborhoods, low-income families, or justice-involved
 Career Pathways: 40%+ of year-round interns transition to apprenticeships or permanent employment
 Violence Reduction: 60% lower violence involvement among participants vs. comparison group
 Educational Outcomes: 90%+ graduation rate for participants; 65%+ college enrollment

Early Childhood Education

 Pre-K Enrollment: 4,500 children (3,000 additional slots; 75% of eligible low-income children)
 Kindergarten Readiness: 80%+ of pre-K participants school-ready (vs. 50% without pre-K)
 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency: 75%+ of pre-K cohort proficient by 3rd grade (vs. 40% without pre-K)
 Childcare Worker Retention: Turnover reduced from 40% to 20% with wage supplements
 Family Satisfaction: 90%+ of families satisfied with program quality

Library System

 Usage Increase: 100,000+ additional visits annually (from 6M to 7M)
 New Branch Access: 80,000 residents within 2 miles of library (from underserved areas)
 Technology Access: 75,000+ computer sessions annually in new/expanded branches
 Literacy Program Participation: 50,000+ children in summer reading; 2,000+ adults in GED/ESL

School Support Partnerships

 Staff Deployed: 20 social workers, 15 counselors, 10 attendance specialists in highest-need schools
 Chronic Absenteeism: Reduced to 20%

 Family Connections: 5,000+ families connected to housing, healthcare, food, mental health services annually
 Crisis Interventions: 3,000+ students receive mental health crisis support annually
 Facility Partnerships: 10+ joint use agreements (schools and Metro facilities)

Overall Education Outcomes

 Achievement Gap Reduction: Reading and math proficiency gaps between the highest- and lowest-scoring zip codes reduced 25% from a Year 1 baseline (by family income where zip-code data isn't available)
 Graduation Rate: 92% or higher
 College Enrollment: Increase from 52% to 60% (8-point increase)
 Chronic Absenteeism: Reduce to 20%
 Youth Violence: 40% reduction in youth involvement in violence

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RELATED GLOSSARY TERMS

This policy connects to 18 Education glossary terms on rundaverun.org:

School System Terms: Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), Metro Council Education Committee, School Board, Superintendent

Academic Terms: Achievement Gap, Chronic Absenteeism, Proficiency, Graduation Rate, College and Career Readiness

Programs & Services: After-School Programs, Summer Learning, Early Childhood Education, Pre-K, School Social Worker, School Counselor

Facilities & Infrastructure: School Facilities, Deferred Maintenance, Joint Use Agreement

Youth Development: Youth Employment, Mentorship, Positive Youth Development

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why should Metro invest in education when JCPS is a separate, independent government entity?

Because Metro government's success depends on JCPS students' success:

Public safety: Educated youth don't commit crimes; dropouts fill jails. Higher graduation rates are linked to less violent crime.

Economic development: Companies locate in cities with educated workforces. Talent stays where opportunities exist for young people.

Health outcomes: Education is the strongest predictor of health—more than income, insurance, or access to care.

Budget impacts: Dropouts cost Metro millions in criminal justice, emergency services, social services. Investing in education SAVES money.

Plus: Metro government has tools JCPS doesn't:
– After-school programs (Metro Parks, YMCAs, community centers)
– Youth employment (Metro departments, city contracts)
– Early childhood (Metro Health, childcare regulation)
– Social services (housing, health, food assistance that affect learning)

Partnership leverages resources: Metro + JCPS together achieve more than either alone. Metro's investment in education can reduce future costs.

2. Won't after-school programs just be glorified babysitting that doesn't improve academic outcomes?

Quality after-school programs are much more than babysitting—they're structured learning environments with proven academic benefits:

Academic components:
– Homework help from trained tutors (aligned with JCPS curricula)
– STEM enrichment (robotics, coding, science experiments)
– Literacy activities (reading clubs, writing workshops)
– Math games and challenges

Quality standards ensure effectiveness:
– Evidence-based curricula (Academic Youth Development, WINGS)
– Trained staff (bachelor's degrees or youth development experience)
– Coordination with school-day teachers
– Regular assessment of outcomes

This isn't babysitting—it's education extended into after-school hours.

3. How can summer jobs for youth prevent violence? Isn't that just a nice theory?

Not just theory—studies of summer youth employment programs have found

reductions in violence:

Chicago study (randomized controlled trial):
– Youth were randomly assigned to summer jobs or a control group
– Violent-crime arrests fell among the youth offered jobs

Boston study:
– Summer jobs program reduced youth violence
– Participants were less likely to be arrested
– Benefits greatest for highest-risk youth

Mechanisms explaining violence reduction:

1. **Time structure:** Employed youth aren't idle during peak violence hours (afternoons, evenings)
2. **Positive identity:** Employment provides purpose, self-worth, alternative to street credibility
3. **Mentorship:** Adult supervisors model pro-social behavior
4. **Stakes:** Youth with jobs have "something to lose"—less likely to risk arrest
5. **Income:** Legitimate earnings reduce motivation for illegal income

Plus: Financial literacy training, professional development, and career pathways provide long-term benefits beyond summer.

This is evidence-based violence prevention—not theory.

4. Why invest in pre-K when many children will still struggle in school? Isn't this just a temporary boost that fades?

Pre-K benefits do NOT fade—they compound over time. Longitudinal research tracking children for decades proves this:

Perry Preschool Study (60-year follow-up):
– Children who attended quality pre-K vs. those who didn't:
– **65% high school graduation** vs. 45% (20-point difference)
– **$23,000 higher annual earnings** at age 40
– **40% reduction in arrests** by age 40
– **7:1 return on investment**

Abecedarian Project (35-year follow-up):
– Pre-K participants vs. control group:
– **23% attended college** vs. 6%
– **$143,000 higher lifetime earnings**
– **9:1 return on investment**

Why benefits persist:

1. **School readiness:** Children who start kindergarten prepared succeed; those who start behind rarely catch up
2. **Confidence and engagement:** Early success builds self-efficacy; early failure creates disengagement
3. **Avoidance of special education:** Pre-K can reduce special ed placement (label avoidance improves outcomes)
4. **Social-emotional skills:** Self-regulation, conflict resolution learned in pre-K predict long-term success

“Fade out” myth comes from low-quality programs:
– Quality matters: Trained teachers, evidence-based curricula, adequate funding
– Duration matters: Full-day, full-year programs beat part-day
– Continuity matters: Pre-K benefits maximized when elementary schools maintain quality

Louisville’s investment in QUALITY pre-K will produce lifelong benefits.

5. How will new and expanded branches and library youth programs help students when the problem is they don’t want to learn?

This question assumes students “don’t want to learn”—that’s false. Students want to succeed but face barriers:

Barriers libraries remove:

1. **No internet at home (a barrier for many low-income students):**
2. Can’t do online homework, research, submit assignments
3. Libraries provide computers, WiFi, tech support
4. **No quiet study space:**
5. Overcrowded housing, multiple siblings, noisy environments
6. Libraries provide quiet, distraction-free spaces
7. **No books at home:**
8. Can’t build vocabulary, reading skills without books
9. Libraries provide unlimited free books; lending programs let students keep books

10. **No homework help:**
11. Parents working multiple jobs; can't help with homework
12. Libraries provide tutors, homework help programs
13. **Geographic barriers:**
14. Underserved neighborhoods need more library space close to home (a new Newburg/Highview branch; bigger, renovated Shawnee and Portland branches)
15. New and expanded branches bring resources to communities

Evidence:
– Library access is associated with better educational outcomes
– Summer reading programs help prevent learning loss
– Homework help programs can improve grades

Libraries aren't just about "wanting to learn"—they remove structural barriers that prevent learning.

Plus: Libraries serve entire families—parent literacy, job search, immigrant services, community meetings. Investing in libraries strengthens communities.

6. Won't social workers and counselors in schools just enable bad parenting by doing what parents should do?

This question misunderstands what school social workers and counselors do—and reflects harmful stereotypes about struggling families.

School social workers DON'T replace parents—they support families facing crises:

What social workers actually do:
– Connect homeless families to housing (parents can't teach when family has no home)
– Help families access healthcare (kids can't learn with untreated asthma, dental pain, vision problems)
– Report abuse/neglect to protect children (legally required)
– Support foster youth navigating system
– Provide crisis intervention (domestic violence, eviction, parent incarceration)

What mental health counselors do:
– Address trauma from violence, abuse, loss (many JCPS students experience trauma)
– Crisis intervention for suicidal students
– Counseling for anxiety, depression
– Social-emotional skill building

These aren't "parenting" tasks—they're specialized professional services.

"Bad parenting" is the wrong frame:
– Most struggling families love their children, work hard, want better lives
– Poverty, violence, housing instability create barriers
– Blaming parents ignores structural problems

Research shows:
– School social workers improve attendance, reduce dropout, connect families to resources
– Mental health counselors reduce suicide, improve outcomes for traumatized students
– These services have 3:1 ROI (reduced special ed, juvenile justice, emergency services)

This isn't "enabling bad parenting"—it's removing barriers so children can learn.

7. How can Louisville afford $32.5 million for education when JCPS already has its own, much larger budget?

Two key points:

Point 1: Metro's $32.5M investment is DIFFERENT from the JCPS budget:

JCPS budget covers:
– Teacher salaries
– School operations (utilities, transportation, food)
– Instruction (curricula, materials, technology)

Metro investment covers:
– **After-school programs** (outside school hours—not JCPS responsibility)
– **Youth employment** (Metro departments, summer jobs—not JCPS function)
– **Early childhood** (ages 0-5, before JCPS)
– **Libraries** (Metro department, not JCPS)
– **Social services** (housing, health connections—Metro role)

These are complementary, not duplicative.

Point 2: $32.5M is a bargain compared to costs of NOT investing:

Costs of education failure:
– Dropouts cost society through criminal justice costs, lost tax revenue, and social services
– Preventing dropouts saves money over time

Plus:
– Youth violence imposes large costs (emergency services, investigation, prosecution, incarceration)

Louisville can't afford NOT to invest in education and youth.

8. Won’t youth employment take jobs away from adults who need work?

No. Youth employment creates ADDITIONAL jobs that wouldn’t otherwise exist—and benefits adult workers:

How youth employment works:

1. **Metro government jobs:** Positions created specifically for youth (not replacing adult workers)
2. Youth assist parks staff, librarians, public works crews (extra capacity, not replacements)
3. Adult supervisors required (creates adult jobs)
4. **Nonprofit jobs:** Youth work in summer camps, childcare, elder care—meeting seasonal demand
5. These positions exist BECAUSE of youth program (nonprofits couldn’t afford adult workers for seasonal roles)
6. **Small business subsidies:** Metro pays 50% of wages; businesses cover 50%
7. Businesses can hire additional summer help they couldn’t otherwise afford
8. Youth work entry-level roles (not displacing experienced workers)

Benefits for adult workers:

- **Mentorship opportunities:** Adults supervise and train youth (leadership development)
- **Increased capacity:** Youth provide extra help during busy seasons (parks, libraries)
- **Future workforce:** Youth trained in trades become adult workers (pipeline)

Plus: Youth earnings support families—working teens help pay bills, buy groceries, reduce financial stress on parents.

This is job creation, not job replacement.

9. What prevents these programs from becoming patronage systems where politicians reward supporters with jobs and

contracts?

Strong accountability mechanisms prevent patronage and ensure merit-based selection:

For youth employment:

1. **Objective eligibility criteria:**
2. Income-based (families <80% AMI)
3. Risk-based (justice involvement, high-violence neighborhoods, chronic absenteeism)
4. No discretion for political favoritism
5. **Lottery selection:**
6. More eligible applicants than positions → random lottery
7. No politician can guarantee specific person gets job
8. **Third-party administration:**
9. Nonprofit organizations (YouthBuild, YouthForce) administer applications and placement
10. Not Metro HR or mayor's office
11. **Public reporting:**
12. Data published: demographics, neighborhoods, schools of participants
13. Transparent verification of equity goals

For after-school contracts:

1. **Competitive RFP process:**
2. Organizations submit proposals evaluated by independent panel
3. Scored on evidence-based criteria (program quality, experience, cost-effectiveness)
4. Mayor cannot award contracts unilaterally
5. **Performance-based contracts:**
6. Funding tied to outcomes (attendance, academic improvement, retention)

7. Poor-performing providers lose contracts regardless of political connections

8. **Independent evaluation:**

9. Office of Performance Management evaluates all programs
10. Third-party evaluators (universities, research firms)
11. Results published publicly

Legal safeguards:
– Metro Ethics Commission investigates patronage complaints
– Open Records laws require transparency
– Federal funding (21st Century, WIOA) requires compliance with anti-patronage rules

Bottom line: Merit-based selection, competitive contracting, performance evaluation, and transparency prevent patronage.

10. What happens to these programs after my term ends? How do we sustain them?

I will build sustainable infrastructure that outlasts my administration:

Financial sustainability:

1. **Federal funding leverage:**
2. After-school programs: 21st Century grants (renewable 5-year cycles)
3. Youth employment: WIOA Youth (permanent federal program)
4. Early childhood: Head Start expansion (permanent)

5. Once local match established, federal dollars continue

6. **Evidence-based budgeting:**

7. Programs demonstrate results (academic improvement, violence reduction, graduation increases)
8. Future mayors face political cost of cutting effective programs

9. Budget transparency makes cuts visible and accountable

10. **Cost savings reinvestment:**

11. Programs reduce future costs (criminal justice, dropout, emergency services)

12. Savings documented and reinvested in programs

Political sustainability:

1. **Constituency:**
2. 27,000 families with kids in after-school programs defend funding
3. 2,000+ youth employed each summer + families = powerful advocates
4. Early childhood educators and parents mobilize for continued investment
5. **Demonstrated results:**
6. When chronic absenteeism falls to 20% and achievement gaps narrow 25%, success is undeniable
7. Media coverage, national recognition create political momentum
8. **Institutional partnerships:**
9. JCPS partnership agreements formalized (multi-year MOUs)
10. Nonprofit provider contracts (3-5 years, renewable)
11. Not dependent on any single individual

Legislative protections:

1. **Metro Council ordinances:**
2. Create dedicated education fund (similar to Affordable Housing Trust Fund)
3. Require Metro Council vote to eliminate programs (not just mayoral decision)
4. **Community oversight:**
5. Youth development advisory board with community representation
6. Annual reporting requirements to Metro Council and public

Once infrastructure is built—after-school sites, youth employment partnerships, pre-K slots, library branches—it's politically and practically difficult to dismantle. Families won't accept losing services their children depend on.

CONCLUSION: EVERY CHILD'S SUCCESS IS OUR SHARED FUTURE

Louisville's children face enormous challenges—poverty, violence, underfunded schools, lack of opportunities. But these challenges are not insurmountable. With strategic investment in after-school programs, youth employment, early childhood education, libraries, and partnerships with JCPS, we can ensure every child has the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

I believe **education is the foundation of opportunity**—and investing in young people isn't charity, it's smart policy. When children succeed in school, they escape poverty, avoid the criminal justice system, and contribute to Louisville's prosperity. When children fail, our entire community pays the price.

This comprehensive education and youth development agenda will:
– Provide 15,000+ students with free, quality after-school programs
– Create 2,000+ summer jobs and career pathways for youth
– Triple investment in early childhood education (4,500 pre-K slots)
– Expand library access with new and expanded branches and youth programs
– Support JCPS students through social workers, counselors, and attendance interventions

Every child deserves excellent education and meaningful opportunities—regardless of zip code or family income.

I will make Louisville a city that invests in every child's success.

Related Policy Documents:
– Public Safety & Community Policing
– Criminal Justice Reform
– Health & Human Services
– Budget & Financial Management
– Affordable Housing & Anti-Displacement
– Environmental Justice & Climate Action
– Economic Development & Jobs (Employee Bill of Rights)

Learn more at rundaverun.org/policy

Dave Biggers for Louisville Mayor 2026

“Democracy that works for everyone.”

RELATED POLICIES

This policy works in coordination with these related initiatives:

- **Public Safety & Community Policing:** Youth employment and after-school programs prevent violence more cost-effectively than increased policing.
- **Criminal Justice Reform:** Education support and youth development programs prevent juvenile justice system involvement and break the school-to-prison pipeline.
- **Technology & Innovation:** Universal broadband eliminates the digital divide and tech workforce training creates education-to-career pathways.
- **Arts, Culture & Tourism:** Arts and cultural programming provide essential youth development and creative enrichment opportunities.
- **Neighborhood Development:** Neighborhood infrastructure investments provide safe spaces for youth programs and after-school activities.

Explore all 16 comprehensive policies at My Complete Policy Platform.

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 mini substations across Louisville, at least one in every ZIP code, phased in over 4 years.

Part of my comprehensive public safety plan.

See the Budget Impact

Explore how this policy fits into my comprehensive $1.13 billion budget plan:

How Does My Budget Affect You?

See your personalized impact - zero tax increase, real benefits

Household Income $50,000 50000

Children in JCPS 0 0

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 $1.13B budget - zero tax increase.

Share your results with friends and family:

Share My Results

⚖ Compare This Policy

See how my approach differs from current administration policies:

⚖ My Plan, Category by Category

Pick a category to see what my plan does, how it is paid for, and when it arrives.

 Share This Plan Print This Plan
 Public Safety Wellness Youth Economy Housing Transparency

Public Safety & Policing

My Plan

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 Same $1.13 billion; no new taxes; priorities re-pointed inside the adopted budget
Impact Projected response times: 3-5 minutes (campaign estimate)

Mental Health & Wellness

My Plan

Wellness centers placed by health need

Approach

- I will place 18 Community Wellness Centers by health need (CDC PLACES 2024 plus Census poverty data)
- Mental health counseling, addiction support
- Youth programs, family services
- At least one center in every LMPD division

Timeline 6 centers a year over Years 1-3
Budget $45M a year when fully built (18 centers at $2.5M each), inside the adopted budget
Impact Accessible care within every neighborhood, preventative focus

Youth Development

My Plan

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 $32.5M for youth programs, inside the adopted budget
Impact Accessible programs in every neighborhood

Economic Development

My Plan

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 Same $1.13 billion; no new taxes; priorities re-pointed inside the adopted budget
Impact Jobs and wealth stay in neighborhoods

Housing & Affordability

My Plan

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 Same $1.13 billion; no new taxes; priorities re-pointed inside the adopted budget
Impact Protects residents, prevents displacement
□

Government Transparency

My Plan

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

Share This Policy

Help spread the word about my vision for Louisville:

Related Policies You Might Like

How to Vote for Me

I am a write-in candidate: in the race for Mayor, mark the write-in spot and write **DAVE BIGGERS** (the last name, Biggers, is required).

Early voting, no excuse needed: October 29–31 · Election Day: Tuesday, November 3, 6 AM to 6 PM. Registration for the November 3 election closed October 5.

✓ Check My Registration and Polling Place View All Election Dates →

Stay Updated on This Policy

Get notified when this policy is updated or when I speak 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

We use your details only to reach you about the campaign. Privacy Policy

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 *
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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.