

Kentucky Homeownership Wage Index

Published: October 3, 2026

Category: Economic Development

KENTUCKY HOMEOWNERSHIP WAGE INDEX

The Wage It Takes to Buy a Home in Kentucky — Published Every Year, Forced on No One

THE PROBLEM

In 2017, a Louisville worker earning \$15 an hour bought a \$110,000 house. The mortgage took a quarter of his paycheck. That worker was Dave Biggers.

Run the same numbers today:

- A \$15/hour worker can afford a **\$99,000** house at today's rates by the same 28% standard — and there are almost none for sale
- The Kentucky median home sold for **\$289,095** in June 2026, up 3.2% in a year
- Kentucky's minimum wage is still **\$7.25** — unchanged since 2009, set by reference to federal law
- Every "living wage" number in circulation measures survival, not the thing Kentuckians actually want: a house with their name on it

The wage didn't move. The house did.

Current Reality: The same paycheck that bought a home in 2017 rents one today.

Our Solution: A public, annually published number — the hourly wage at which a full-time Kentucky worker can buy the median Kentucky home — and public recognition for every employer who pays it.

Impact: One honest yardstick that every wage in the state can be measured against, and a reason to be proud of clearing it.

WHAT THE INDEX IS

The Kentucky Homeownership Wage Index is the hourly wage at which a full-time worker can carry a mortgage on the median Kentucky home using the standard a lender uses.

The formula fits on a napkin:

1. Take the median Kentucky home sale price for the prior 12 months.
2. Assume a standard buyer: 5% down, 30-year fixed at the current Freddie Mac average, property tax and insurance at Kentucky norms.
3. Compute the monthly payment (principal, interest, taxes, insurance).
4. A lender wants that payment at or below **28% of gross income**. Divide by 0.28 for the annual income required.
5. Divide by 2,080 hours. That is the index.

Today's number: \$43.81 per hour.

Input	Value	Source
Kentucky median sale price, June 2026	\$289,095	Redfin Kentucky Housing Market
30-year fixed mortgage rate, Aug 27 2026	6.66%	Freddie Mac Primary Mortgage Market Survey
Down payment	5%	Standard first-time buyer
Property tax + insurance	1.5% of value per year	Kentucky norms
Monthly payment (PITI)	\$2,126	computed
Annual income at 28%	\$91,126	computed
Index	\$43.81 / hour	computed

Other sources put the statewide median between \$278,000 and \$298,000; the index lands between **\$42.13 and \$45.16** across all of them. The published figure uses one named source and one named date, every year, so the number can be checked by anyone with a calculator.

The 2017 proof

Apply the same formula to 2017 — the Kentucky REALTORS' fourth-quarter 2017 statewide

median of \$133,805 and a 3.95% mortgage — and the index reads **\$15.87 an hour**. Dave earned \$15 and bought a home. The formula is not a theory; it describes what actually happened to a Louisville worker nine years ago, and what stopped happening since.

WHAT METRO GOVERNMENT WILL DO

1. Publish it — every year, on the same day

Louisville Metro will compute and publish the Kentucky Homeownership Wage Index each January, with:

- The number, the inputs, and the arithmetic
- The gap to the state minimum wage (\$7.25) and to the federal poverty line
- The share of Louisville jobs, by sector, that pay at or above it (from public wage data)
- A companion figure for renting the median Louisville apartment, so the index speaks to people who are not buying yet

The number lives on a permanent Metro page. Reporters, employers, unions and workers can all quote the same figure.

2. Recognize the employers who pay it — voluntarily

Any Louisville employer whose starting wage meets the index may apply for the **Homeownership Wage Employer** mark: a public listing, a window decal, and a place in Metro's annual report.

- **Opt-in.** No employer is required to apply, report, or pay the index.
- **Self-certified, spot-checked.** Employers attest; Metro verifies a sample each year; a false attestation loses the mark.
- **Free.** No fee, no fine, no inspection regime.

This is a recognition program, not a regulation. It exists so that paying a homeownership wage is something a Louisville business can put on the door.

3. Measure Metro itself against it

Louisville Metro Government will publish, each year, how many of its own positions pay at or above the index and the plan to close the gap over time. The *Metro Employee Bill of Rights* carries that commitment and its funding.

4. Carry it to Frankfort

Louisville cannot set a minimum wage — Kentucky law preempts it, and the Kentucky Supreme Court struck down Louisville’s own ordinance 6–1 in 2016. What Louisville can do is put a number on the table that the General Assembly has to answer to. The index is that number. Dave’s administration will bring it to every session, with the annual report attached.

WHAT THE INDEX IS NOT

- **Not a mandate.** No employer is required to pay it.
 - **Not an ordinance.** *Kentucky Restaurant Association v. Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government* (2016) settled that Louisville cannot set wages by ordinance under KRS Chapter 337. This policy does not try.
 - **Not a condition on doing business with Metro.** Metro’s own contracting standards are set in the *Worker Bill of Rights* and the *Metro Employee Bill of Rights*, not here.
 - **Not a poverty line.** It measures the wage that buys a home, not the wage that avoids hunger. That is the point.
-

WHY THESE CHOICES

Why 28%? It is the front-end ratio conventional lenders use. A worker at the index does not merely dream of a mortgage — they qualify for one.

Why the statewide median, not Louisville’s? A Kentucky worker should be able to buy a home in Kentucky. The statewide figure travels to Frankfort, applies to every county, and is harder to dismiss as a Louisville problem. (Louisville’s own median currently sits within a few thousand dollars of the state’s.)

Why publish instead of require? Because a number people trust does more work than a rule people fight. The 2016 ordinance produced a court case; a published index produces a conversation every January, in every newsroom in the state.

Why a homeownership wage instead of a living wage? Living-wage calculators answer “what does it cost not to fall behind.” Kentuckians ask a different question: “when do I get to buy the house?” The index answers the question people actually have.

IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

Component	Annual Cost
Index computation and annual report (one analyst, data licensing)	\$150K
Homeownership Wage Employer program (intake, verification sample, listing)	\$200K
TOTAL	\$350K/year

Carried as a named \$350K line inside the Labor Standards Office budget established by the *Worker Bill of Rights* (\$4M/year total — see its cost table). **No new money.** The index is a report and a list; it costs what a report and a list cost.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Year 1 (2027): First index published in January with full methodology. Homeownership Wage Employer program opens; first listing published in June. Metro’s own gap report published alongside.

Year 2 (2028): Second index. Sector-by-sector share of jobs at or above the index added. First presentation to the General Assembly.

Year 3+ (2029+): Annual, same date, same formula. The formula does not change without a published explanation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Isn’t \$43.81 an hour unrealistic?

A: It is what the median Kentucky home costs at today’s rates, stated as a wage. If the number is shocking, that is information about housing, not about the formula. In 2017 the same formula said \$15.87. The index will fall when homes get cheaper or rates drop — and when they do, the index will say so.

Q: Will this drive employers out of Louisville?

A: Nothing here applies to any employer who does not choose it. The only thing an employer can lose is the chance to be on a list.

Q: Why not just fight for a higher minimum wage?

A: We will — in Frankfort, where the authority is. The index is what we bring to that fight: a Kentucky number, from Kentucky data, that every legislator’s constituents can check.

Q: What about renters?

A: The annual report will carry a companion figure for the median Louisville rent using the same 28% standard, so the index speaks to a worker's next step, not only the last one.

Q: Does Metro pay its own workers the index?

A: Not all of them, today — and the *Metro Employee Bill of Rights* commits Metro to publish that gap every year and report what closing it would cost, rather than pretend otherwise.

Q: Who checks the math?

A: Anyone. Every input is public, every source is named, and the formula is five steps.

EVIDENCE BASE

- **Kentucky median home sale price, June 2026: \$289,095, +3.2% year over year** — Redfin Kentucky Housing Market
 - **30-year fixed mortgage average, August 27 2026: 6.66%** — Freddie Mac Primary Mortgage Market Survey
 - **Kentucky statewide median sale price, Q4 2017: \$133,805 (+11.4% year over year); December 2017: \$134,274** — Kentucky REALTORS, reported January 2018
 - **30-year fixed mortgage average, December 2017: ~3.95%** — Freddie Mac Primary Mortgage Market Survey
 - **Kentucky minimum wage: \$7.25, adopted by reference to federal law** — KRS 337.275
 - **Local minimum wage preemption:** *Kentucky Restaurant Association v. Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government*, Kentucky Supreme Court, October 20 2016 (6-1) — Louisville's 2014 ordinance held invalid under KRS Chapter 337
 - **28% front-end ratio** — the conventional-lending housing-expense guideline (the "28/36 rule"); FHA's own front-end guideline is 31%, so 28% is the more conservative of the two
-

OUR COMMITMENT

We will not tell a single employer what to pay. We will tell everyone what it takes — every year, in a number they can check — and Louisville Metro will publish its own gap to that number before it asks anyone else to look at theirs.

If you work full-time in Kentucky, you should be able to buy a home in Kentucky. This index says what that costs. The rest is up to all of us.

Related policies: *Worker Bill of Rights* (the floor for every worker) · *Metro Employee Bill of Rights* (Metro as employer) · *Economic Development & Jobs* (Proposal 1 now points here)

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 \$1.13 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 \$1.13B 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

Share This Policy

Help spread the word about Dave's vision for Louisville:

▢ Related Policies You Might Like

[policy_recommendations limit="3"]

▢ 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 campaignZip 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.