

Food Systems & Urban Agriculture

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FOOD SYSTEMS & URBAN AGRICULTURE

Dave Biggers for Louisville Mayor

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Louisville's food system is broken—creating food apartheid where 23% of residents (142,000 people) live in food deserts lacking access to healthy food, while simultaneously wasting 40% of food produced, losing farmland to development, and excluding residents from food production. Meanwhile, our city has 4,600 vacant lots and residents with knowledge and desire to grow food—resources waiting to transform Louisville into a city where everyone has access to healthy, locally-produced food.

The Challenge

Louisville's food systems crisis shows up in stark numbers:

1. **Food Apartheid:** 23% of Louisville residents (142,000 people) live in food deserts >1 mile from grocery stores, with rates reaching 47% in West Louisville—directly contributing to diabetes rates 86% higher in food deserts and chronic disease driving the 12-year life expectancy gap.
2. **Food Waste Crisis:** Louisville wastes 156,000 tons of food annually (40% of food

produced) going to landfills where it generates methane—while 18,400 seniors, 22.4% of children, and 62,000 total residents are food insecure, a moral failure and environmental disaster.

3. **Disappearing Farmland:** Louisville Metro loses 2,800 acres of farmland annually to development—destroying local food production capacity, eliminating 28 farms/year, and increasing dependence on industrial food systems trucking food 1,500+ miles while fresh local food could be grown here.
4. **Excluded from Food Production:** Only 1,200 Louisville residents participate in community gardens (vs. 45,000+ wanting to grow food), urban agriculture faces zoning barriers and lack of support, and residents—particularly in food deserts—have no opportunity to produce their own food despite vacant land and interest.
5. **Broken Food Economy:** Louisville’s \$4.2 billion annual food spending (residents + institutions) flows primarily to national chains and industrial agriculture, with <5% going to local farmers—extracting wealth from Louisville while local farmers struggle and fresh food remains inaccessible in underserved neighborhoods.

Dave’s Vision

Dave will transform Louisville’s food system from extractive and inequitable to regenerative and just—eliminating food deserts, building urban agriculture infrastructure enabling residents to grow food, creating local food economy supporting farmers and community, ending food waste through composting and redistribution, and ensuring every Louisville resident has access to healthy, affordable, culturally-appropriate food.

Food Desert Elimination (\$6M annually): Ensure 95% of Louisville residents within 1 mile of healthy food through grocery incentives, mobile markets, food co-ops, and urban agriculture—ending food apartheid driving chronic disease (coordinates with Public Health & Wellness).

Urban Agriculture Infrastructure (\$8M annually): Create 100 community gardens, 20 urban farms producing 2 million lbs food annually, support 500 backyard/vacant lot gardens, and eliminate zoning barriers—enabling residents to grow food in every neighborhood.

Local Food Economy Development (\$4M annually): Build food hubs connecting local farmers to institutions, establish farmers market infrastructure, create food business incubators, and shift institutional purchasing to local—keeping \$200M+ food dollars in Louisville economy supporting 600+ farm/food jobs.

Food Waste Reduction & Composting (\$5M annually): Establish citywide composting

diverting 80,000 tons organic waste from landfills, create food rescue network redistributing 8 million lbs food to food-insecure residents, and eliminate commercial food waste—turning environmental problem into resource.

Food Justice & Sovereignty (\$2M annually): Ensure communities control food systems through community land trusts for urban farms, food policy council with community leadership, urban agriculture training particularly for Black farmers facing discrimination, and culturally-appropriate food access—shifting from charity to justice.

Budget Impact

This policy requires **\$25 million in new annual spending**—funded through federal agriculture/nutrition grants (\$10M), compost facility revenue (\$4M, beginning Year 3 after infrastructure buildout; Years 1-2 bridge funding from Metro general fund allocation), General Fund (\$7M), institutional food purchasing redirection (\$3M), and philanthropic partnerships (\$1M). Economic analysis projects \$175-225M in annual economic returns (7-9x ROI) through local food economy development, healthcare savings from improved nutrition, reduced food waste costs, farmland preservation, and job creation.

Why This Matters

Food apartheid kills. When 47% of West Louisville lives in food deserts and diabetes rates are 86% higher in those neighborhoods, the connection is undeniable: lack of healthy food access causes disease. This isn't personal choice—it's structural violence through food system design. The 12-year life expectancy gap between West Louisville and East End is partly food access.

Food waste is moral and environmental crisis. Louisville sends 156,000 tons of food to landfills annually while 62,000 residents are food insecure. We're simultaneously wasting enough food to feed every food-insecure resident 2,500 lbs/year and generating methane (25x more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂). This is unconscionable and solvable.

Local food economy creates wealth and resilience. Louisville spends \$4.2 billion annually on food—but <5% goes to local farmers, extracting \$4 billion to national chains and industrial agriculture. If Louisville captured just 20% of food spending locally (\$840M), we'd create 2,500+ jobs, support 200+ farms, keep wealth in community, and build resilient local food system.

Urban agriculture is economic development. Detroit's urban agriculture produces 200,000+ lbs food annually on formerly vacant land, creating jobs, eliminating blight, improving health, and building community wealth. Louisville has 4,600 vacant lots—potential for 4 million+ lbs food annually worth \$12M if cultivated.

Food sovereignty is self-determination. When communities can't grow own food, control what food is available, or shape food systems, they're dependent on extractive corporations.

Food sovereignty—community control over food systems—is economic justice, environmental justice, and racial justice.

Dave’s policy will eliminate food deserts, enable urban agriculture, build local food economy, end food waste, and ensure food justice—transforming food from source of disease and extraction to foundation of health and community wealth.

CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

Food Access Crisis

Louisville’s food access shows extreme inequality:

Food Deserts:

- **Total residents in food deserts:** 142,000 (23% of Louisville)
- **Definition:** >1 mile from full-service grocery in urban areas, >10 miles rural
- **West Louisville:** 47% in food deserts
- **Russell:** 73% >1 mile from grocery
- **Portland:** 61% in food deserts
- **East End:** 4% in food deserts

Grocery Store Distribution:

Area	Grocery Stores	Residents per Store	Food Desert %
East End	18	6,200	4%
Highlands	12	3,600	8%
South End	15	6,000	22%
West Louisville	6	22,700	47%

Health Consequences:

Metric	Food Deserts	Food-Secure Areas	Disparity
Diabetes Rate	16.2%	8.7%	+86%
Obesity Rate	42.1%	28.4%	+48%
Heart Disease	9.4%	5.8%	+62%
Produce Consumption	1.2 servings/day	3.4 servings/day	-65%

Corner Store Problem:

In food deserts, residents rely on corner stores that:

- Charge 47% more for produce (when available)

- Stock limited fresh food (most sell only processed, packaged food)
- Offer no fresh meat, dairy, or produce selection
- Create “food swamps”—abundant unhealthy food, scarce healthy food

Food Insecurity:

- **Total food-insecure residents:** 62,000 (16.8% of households)
- **Children:** 22.4% of Louisville children food-insecure
- **Seniors:** 16% (18,400 seniors)
- **SNAP Participation:** Only 67% of eligible residents enrolled (vs. 48% of eligible seniors)

Total Federal Food Assistance Left Unclaimed: \$180M annually due to underenrollment.

Food Waste Crisis

Louisville generates massive food waste:

Total Food Waste: 156,000 tons annually (40% of food produced/purchased)

Sources:

- **Residential:** 87,000 tons (56%)
- **Commercial (restaurants, grocery stores):** 43,000 tons (28%)
- **Institutional (schools, hospitals, etc.):** 26,000 tons (16%)

Current Disposal: 95% goes to landfills where organic waste generates methane (CH₄)

Environmental Impact:

- **Methane Emissions:** 125,000 metric tons CO₂-equivalent annually
- **Wasted Resources:** Water, energy, land, labor used to produce wasted food
- **Landfill Space:** Food waste occupies 28% of landfill volume

Economic Cost:

- **Resident Cost:** Average Louisville household wastes \$1,800/year in uneaten food
- **Disposal Cost:** \$8.7M annually in collection and landfill tipping fees
- **Total Economic Loss:** \$280M+ annually in purchased food wasted

Meanwhile: 62,000 food-insecure residents could be fed with rescued food.

Food Rescue Current Capacity:

Louisville has minimal food rescue infrastructure:

- **Dare to Care (food bank):** Redistributes 18M lbs food annually
- **Capacity:** Could handle 30M+ lbs with expanded infrastructure
- **Gap:** 320M lbs wasted annually, only 18M lbs rescued (5.6%)

Composting:

Louisville has virtually no composting infrastructure:

- **Residential Composting:** <2% of households compost
- **Commercial Composting:** No commercial composting facility accepting food waste at scale
- **Yard Waste Composting:** Exists but doesn't accept food waste

Result: Organic waste that could be turned into soil amendment enriching urban agriculture instead produces greenhouse gases in landfills.

Disappearing Farmland & Declining Local Agriculture

Louisville Metro is losing farmland to development:

Farmland Loss:

- **Annual Loss:** 2,800 acres/year
- **Farms Lost:** 28 farms/year (average 100 acres/farm)
- **Total Since 2000:** 67,200 acres lost (24% of 2000 farmland base)
- **Remaining:** 214,000 acres (vs. 281,200 in 2000)

Why Farmland Lost:

- **Development Pressure:** Land more valuable for housing/commercial than farming
- **Lack of Farmland Protection:** No purchase of development rights program, weak ag zoning
- **Aging Farmers:** Average farmer age 62, many retiring without successors
- **Economic Stress:** Small farms struggle to compete with industrial agriculture

Local Food Production:

Louisville has strong agricultural base but minimal connection to city food system:

Current Local Food Economy:

- **Farms in Louisville Metro:** 2,100 farms
- **Farm Revenue:** \$420M annually
- **Louisville Resident Food Spending:** \$4.2 billion annually
- **% Spent on Local Food:** <5% (\$210M)—most goes to national chains, industrial agriculture

Farmers Markets:

- **Markets:** 18 farmers markets in Louisville Metro
- **Annual Sales:** \$8.4M (0.2% of food spending)
- **Barriers:** Limited hours (Saturday mornings), no SNAP infrastructure at most markets, seasonal only

Institutional Purchasing:

Louisville's large institutions (schools, hospitals, universities, jails, senior centers) purchase \$320M food annually:

- **% Local:** <3% (\$10M)

- **Barriers:** Purchasing policies favor large distributors, no local food aggregation/distribution infrastructure, price-focused without considering local benefit

If institutions purchased 30% local (feasible per national models), \$96M would flow to local farmers—supporting 280+ farms.

Urban Agriculture: Potential Unrealized

Louisville has massive unrealized urban agriculture potential:

Community Gardens:

- **Current:** 38 community gardens citywide (0.5-1 acre average = ~25 acres total)
- **Participants:** ~1,200 residents
- **Waiting Lists:** 400+ people waiting for garden plots
- **Need:** Survey shows 45,000 Louisville residents interested in growing food

Vacant Land:

- **Vacant Lots:** 4,600 (not including vacant buildings)
- **Total Acreage:** ~1,200 acres vacant land
- **Current Use:** Mostly unmaintained, becoming dumping grounds
- **Potential:** At Detroit production levels (3.4 lbs/sq ft annually), could produce 180M lbs food worth \$540M—obviously not all suitable, but even 10% utilization would transform food access

Urban Farms:

- **Current:** 3 urban farms (2-5 acres each producing for market sale)
- **Production:** ~50,000 lbs annually
- **Potential:** 20 urban farms at 3 acres each producing 200,000 lbs/year = 4M lbs annually

Barriers to Urban Agriculture:

1. Zoning:

- Restrictive zoning limits agriculture in many zones
- Prohibits selling food grown in residential zones
- Restricts animal husbandry (chickens, bees)
- Requires expensive permits/approvals

2. Land Access:

- Vacant lots owned by Land Bank, private owners—difficult for community groups to access
- No systematic program transferring vacant land to urban agriculture

3. Infrastructure:

- No water access at most vacant lots
- No tool-sharing programs
- No central resource hub for urban agriculture

4. Skills & Knowledge:

- Many residents interested in gardening lack knowledge/skills
- Limited training programs
- Black farmers/gardeners face knowledge gap from historical exclusion

5. Economic Support:

- No financial support for urban agriculture startups
- Urban farms struggle to access capital, equipment
- No market infrastructure connecting urban farms to institutions, restaurants

Food Economy: Extractive Not Regenerative

Louisville's food economy extracts wealth rather than building it:

Money Flow:

Louisville residents + institutions spend \$4.2 billion annually on food:

- **National Chains (Kroger, Walmart, etc.):** \$2.8 billion (67%)
- **Regional Chains:** \$840M (20%)
- **Restaurants (mostly chains):** \$420M (10%)
- **Local Farmers/Food Businesses:** \$140M (3%)

Result: \$4 billion leaves Louisville annually, enriching distant shareholders while local farmers struggle.

Economic Multiplier Effect:

- **Money spent at national chains:** \$1 → \$0.43 remains in local economy (rest to corporate headquarters, suppliers)
- **Money spent at local farms/businesses:** \$1 → \$2.60 remains in local economy (re-spent locally multiple times)

Shifting 20% of food spending to local (\$840M) would generate \$2.2 billion in local economic activity vs. \$361M under current system—net gain of \$1.8 billion.

Farmer Economics:

Small local farmers face economic challenges:

- **Median Farm Income:** \$18,400 (below poverty)
- **% Farms Profitable:** Only 42%
- **Age:** Average farmer 62—many retiring, few young people entering farming
- **Barriers:** Land access, capital for equipment, distribution/market access, competition from industrial agriculture

Food Business Ecosystem:

Louisville lacks infrastructure for local food businesses:

- **Commercial Kitchens:** Only 4 shared commercial kitchens for food entrepreneurs (vs. 12 needed)
- **Food Hubs:** No aggregation/distribution facility connecting farms to institutions
- **Processing:** Limited meat processing, minimal value-added processing for produce
- **Retail:** Local food businesses struggle to compete with chains on price, convenience

The Major Problems

1. Food Apartheid Drives Disease and Death

When 47% of West Louisville lives in food deserts and chronic disease rates are 86% higher:

This isn't personal choice, it's structural violence:

- No grocery stores within walking distance
- Corner stores charge 47% more for limited produce
- Transit inaccessible for heavy grocery loads
- Result: Diet-driven chronic disease, 12-year life expectancy gap

Food desert = health sentence.

2. Food Waste is Moral and Environmental Crisis

156,000 tons wasted annually while 62,000 residents food-insecure:

We're simultaneously:

- Throwing away enough food to feed every food-insecure resident 2,500 lbs/year
- Generating 125,000 metric tons CO₂-equivalent methane
- Wasting \$280M+ in purchased food
- Paying \$8.7M to dispose of wasted food

This is unconscionable when solvable through food rescue and composting.

3. Local Food Economy Underdeveloped

<5% of \$4.2 billion food spending goes to local farmers:

Result:

- \$4 billion extracted annually to national corporations
- Local farmers earning below poverty
- No resilient local food system
- Vulnerability to supply chain disruptions

If Louisville captured 20% local (\$840M), would create 2,500 jobs and build food

sovereignty.

4. Urban Agriculture Potential Unrealized

4,600 vacant lots, 45,000 residents wanting to grow food, but only 38 community gardens serving 1,200:

Massive unrealized potential:

- Vacant land becoming blight instead of food production
- Residents dependent on expensive food system instead of growing own
- Lost economic development and community wealth building
- Squandered opportunity for food justice

5. Farmland Disappearing

2,800 acres/year lost to development (28 farms annually):

Destroying:

- Local food production capacity
- Agricultural heritage
- Economic opportunity for future generations
- Food system resilience

Without intervention, Louisville will lose remaining farmland within 75 years—total dependence on industrial agriculture trucking food 1,500+ miles.

DAVE'S VISION: FOOD JUSTICE & SOVEREIGNTY

Dave envisions a Louisville where:

No one lives in a food desert—95% of residents within 1 mile of healthy, affordable food through grocery stores, food co-ops, mobile markets, urban farms, and community gardens.

Residents grow food—100 community gardens, 20 urban farms, 500 backyard/vacant lot gardens producing millions of pounds of fresh food in every neighborhood, with communities controlling land and production.

Food dollars stay local—30% of institutional food purchasing from local farmers (\$96M annually), thriving farmers markets, food hubs connecting farms to buyers, and local food businesses supported by infrastructure.

No food is wasted—citywide composting diverting 80,000 tons organic waste from landfills, food rescue redistributing 8 million lbs to food-insecure residents, commercial food waste

eliminated.

Farmland protected—purchase of development rights preserving 10,000 acres, new farmer programs, and urban-rural food connections ensuring local food production continues.

Core Principles

1. **Food is a Right:** Every person has right to healthy, affordable, culturally-appropriate food—not charity but justice.
2. **Food Sovereignty:** Communities must control food systems—what’s grown, how it’s distributed, who benefits—not distant corporations.
3. **Regenerative Not Extractive:** Food system should build soil, community, health, and wealth—not extract them.
4. **Urban Agriculture is Economic Development:** Growing food in cities creates jobs, eliminates blight, improves health, builds wealth—particularly in disinvested neighborhoods.
5. **Close the Loop:** Food waste should be composted enriching soil growing more food—regenerative cycle, not linear waste.

Four-Year Goals

By the end of Dave’s first term:

- **Eliminate food deserts** so 95% of residents within 1 mile of healthy food (up from 77%)
- **Create 100 community gardens** serving 6,000+ residents (up from 38 gardens, 1,200 residents)
- **Establish 20 urban farms** producing 2 million lbs food annually (up from 3 farms, 50,000 lbs)
- **Achieve 30% local institutional food purchasing** (\$96M to local farmers, up from \$10M)
- **Divert 80,000 tons organic waste** from landfills through composting (up from <1,000 tons)
- **Rescue 8 million lbs food** redistributing to food-insecure residents (up from current levels)
- **Protect 2,000 acres farmland** through purchase of development rights

- **Create 600+ farm/food jobs** through local food economy development
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DETAILED POLICY PROPOSALS

PROPOSAL 1: Food Desert Elimination (\$6M annually)

The Problem: 23% of Louisville (142,000 people) live in food deserts, with 47% of West Louisville >1 mile from grocery—directly causing diabetes rates 86% higher and contributing to 12-year life expectancy gap.

Dave's Solution:

Launch **Food Desert Elimination Initiative** (coordinates with Public Health & Wellness) ensuring 95% of residents within 1 mile of healthy food through grocery incentives, mobile markets, food co-ops, and urban agriculture—ending food apartheid.

Program Components:

A. Grocery Store Attraction (\$3M annually)

(Coordinates with)

Bring full-service groceries to food deserts:

- **New Store Incentives:** \$500K-\$1M forgivable loans for groceries opening in food deserts—forgiven over 10 years if operational (goal: 6 stores over 4 years) (\$2M annually)
- **Food Co-op Development:** Support community-owned cooperative groceries with startup capital, technical assistance, training (\$500K annually, 2 co-ops)
- **Corner Store Expansion:** Grants for corner stores to add refrigeration, expand produce, healthy foods (\$300K annually, 30 stores)

B. Mobile Markets (\$1.2M annually)

Bring fresh food directly to food deserts:

- **Mobile Market Fleet:** 5 trucks operating 6 days/week in food desert neighborhoods

selling fresh produce, meat, dairy, staples at affordable prices (\$1M annually operations, \$1M capital Year 1)

- **SNAP/EBT Accepted:** All mobile markets accept SNAP, offering Double Bucks (spend \$20 SNAP, receive \$40 purchasing power)
- **Senior Delivery:** Home delivery for homebound seniors unable to reach mobile markets (\$200K annually, 500 seniors weekly)

C. Farmers Market Expansion (\$800K annually)

Increase farmers market access:

- **New Markets:** Establish 6 new farmers markets in food desert neighborhoods (12 total new, 30 citywide) (\$300K annually operations, \$600K capital over 2 years)
- **Year-Round Markets:** Convert 8 seasonal markets to year-round with covered structures (\$200K annually)
- **SNAP Infrastructure:** EBT/SNAP at all markets with Double Bucks matching (\$200K annually—city funds match, increases SNAP spending power)
- **Transportation:** Free shuttles from neighborhoods to farmers markets (\$100K annually)

D. Urban Agriculture for Food Access (\$1M annually)

Produce food in neighborhoods:

- **Community Gardens:** 25 new gardens annually in food deserts (100 total over 4 years) providing fresh produce to 3,000 residents (\$400K annually, \$4K per garden for infrastructure)
- **Urban Farms:** Establish 5 urban farms annually (20 total) producing for affordable sale in food deserts—2M lbs annually by Year 4 (\$600K annually startup capital, farms become self-sustaining through sales)

Implementation Timeline:

- **Year 1:** 3 mobile markets operational, 2 grocery stores open, 25 community gardens established, 5 urban farms begin
- **Year 2:** 5 mobile markets, 4 groceries total, 50 gardens, 10 urban farms producing 500K lbs
- **Years 3-4:** Full implementation—6 groceries, 100 gardens, 20 farms producing 2M lbs annually

Success Metrics:

- % in food deserts (Target: <5%, down from 23%)
 - West Louisville food desert rate (Target: <15%, down from 47%)
 - Produce consumption in food deserts (Target: 2.5 servings/day, up from 1.2)
 - New grocery stores (Target: 6 in food deserts)
 - Mobile market customers (Target: 15,000 weekly)
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PROPOSAL 2: Urban Agriculture Infrastructure (\$8M annually)

The Problem: Only 38 community gardens serving 1,200 residents (vs. 45,000 wanting to grow food), 3 urban farms producing 50,000 lbs (vs. potential for millions), and 4,600 vacant lots becoming blight instead of food production—squandered opportunity for food justice and economic development.

Dave's Solution:

Create **Urban Agriculture Infrastructure** with 100 community gardens, 20 urban farms, 500 backyard/vacant lot gardens, training programs, and eliminated zoning barriers—enabling residents to grow food in every neighborhood and transforming vacant land into productive agriculture.

Program Components:**A. Community Garden Program (\$2.5M annually)**

Create 100 community gardens citywide:

- **New Garden Establishment:** 25 gardens annually (100 total over 4 years)—0.5-1 acre each on vacant lots, park land, institutional property (\$1.5M annually for infrastructure: water, fencing, raised beds, tools, soil, compost, storage sheds)
- **Garden Coordinator:** Each garden has paid coordinator (part-time, \$10K/year) organizing, training, conflict resolution (\$1M annually, 100 gardens)

Geographic Priority: 60% in food deserts, 40% citywide based on demand

Eligibility: Open to all residents, sliding-scale plot fees (\$20-\$60/year based on income)

B. Urban Farm Development (\$3M annually)

Establish 20 urban farms producing for market:

- **Farm Establishment:** 5 farms annually, 2-5 acres each on vacant land clusters (\$1.5M annually startup capital: equipment, infrastructure, initial operating costs)
- **Business Model:** Farms sell produce at farmers markets, to institutions, through CSAs at affordable prices—becoming self-sustaining within 2-3 years
- **Land Tenure:** 30-year leases on city land at \$1/year with option to purchase through community land trust
- **Training & Technical Assistance:** Farming training, business planning, marketing support for urban farmers (\$500K annually)
- **Equipment Sharing:** Shared equipment (tillers, tools, wash stations) available to all urban farms (\$300K capital, \$100K annual maintenance)
- **Priority:** 50% farms led by Black/brown farmers addressing historic exclusion from agriculture

C. Backyard & Vacant Lot Gardens (\$1.5M annually)

Support individual food growing:

- **Backyard Garden Program:** Free seeds, seedlings, and raised beds for 1,000 low-income households annually (\$500K, \$500/household)
- **Vacant Lot Adoption:** Allow residents/groups to adopt adjacent vacant lots for gardens—city provides water access, liability insurance, supplies (\$400K annually, 200 lots)
- **Victory Garden Revival:** Inspire WWII-era victory gardens—city provides resources, coordinates sharing of produce with food-insecure neighbors (\$200K)

- **Fruit Tree Program:** Plant 1,000 fruit trees annually in yards, parks, public spaces (free fruit available to community) (\$200K annually)
- **Tool Libraries:** Establish 6 neighborhood tool libraries lending garden tools, equipment (\$200K capital, \$100K annual operations)

D. Urban Agriculture Training & Support (\$1M annually)

Build skills and knowledge:

- **Growing Food Louisville Program:** Comprehensive urban agriculture training (12-week course covering soil, seeds, pest management, season extension, preservation) (\$400K annually, 800 participants)
- **Urban Farmer Incubator:** 1-year intensive training for aspiring urban farmers with land access, mentorship, business development (\$300K annually, 30 farmers)
- **Black Farmer Justice Program:** Specialized support for Black farmers addressing historic discrimination and knowledge gaps from exclusion (\$200K annually)
- **Youth Urban Agriculture:** Summer youth employment growing food at urban farms and community gardens (\$100K annually, 100 youth jobs)

Implementation Timeline:

- **Year 1:** 25 gardens, 5 urban farms, 200 backyard gardens, 200 vacant lot adoptions, training begins
- **Year 2:** 50 gardens total, 10 farms producing 500K lbs, 400 backyard gardens
- **Years 3-4:** 100 gardens total, 20 farms producing 2M lbs, 1,000 backyard gardens, urban agriculture normalized citywide

Success Metrics:

- Community gardens (Target: 100, up from 38)
 - Garden participants (Target: 6,000, up from 1,200)
 - Urban farms (Target: 20 producing 2M lbs annually, up from 3 producing 50K lbs)
 - Backyard gardens (Target: 1,000 annually)
 - Vacant lots in food production (Target: 800, reducing blight)
 - Training participants (Target: 3,200 over 4 years)
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PROPOSAL 3: Local Food Economy Development (\$4M annually)

The Problem: <5% of Louisville's \$4.2 billion food spending goes to local farmers—extracting \$4 billion annually to national chains and industrial agriculture while local farmers struggle and food system remains dependent on 1,500+ mile supply chains.

Dave's Solution:

Build **Local Food Economy** with food hubs connecting farms to institutions, farmers market infrastructure, food business incubators, and institutional purchasing commitments—shifting 30% of institutional purchasing to local (\$96M annually), creating 600+ farm/food jobs, and building resilient local food system.

Program Components:

A. Louisville Food Hub (\$1.5M annually)

Create aggregation/distribution connecting farms to buyers:

- **Facility:** 20,000 sq ft warehouse with refrigerated storage, washing/packing equipment, delivery trucks aggregating produce from 50+ small farms for distribution to institutions, restaurants, retailers (\$3M capital Year 1 leveraging \$6M federal/private investment, \$1M annual operations)
- **Services:** Aggregation, washing, packing, delivery, invoicing, marketing—eliminating barriers preventing institutions from buying local
- **Pricing:** Food hub charges 20-25% margin (standard)—farmers receive 75-80% of sale price, much higher than wholesale (50-60%)
- **Target:** \$8M in annual sales by Year 4 (benefiting 50+ farms)

B. Institutional Local Purchasing Initiative (\$1M annually)

Shift institutional purchasing to local:

- **Good Food Purchasing Policy:** Require Louisville Metro, JCPS, UofL, hospitals, senior centers to purchase minimum 30% of food from local sources within 150 miles (\$500K for procurement coordination, policy development)
- **Current:** These institutions purchase \$320M food annually

- **30% Local:** \$96M to local farmers (up from current \$10M)
- **Impact:** Supports 280+ farms, creates 400+ jobs
- **Price Premium:** City pays 10% premium for local food—recognizing economic, health, environmental, resilience benefits (\$500K annually covers 10% premium on \$5M city food purchasing)

C. Farmers Market Infrastructure (\$800K annually)

Expand and improve farmers markets:

- **Market Manager Program:** Fund professional managers for 12 major farmers markets coordinating vendors, marketing, community engagement (\$480K annually, \$40K per manager)
- **Infrastructure:** Covered structures, refrigeration, electricity, water, signage at 12 major markets (\$200K annually amortizing \$2M capital over 10 years)
- **Marketing:** Citywide farmers market promotion, mobile app showing market locations/hours, social media (\$120K annually)

D. Food Business Incubator (\$700K annually)

Support local food entrepreneurs:

- **Shared Commercial Kitchens:** Establish 3 new shared commercial kitchens (6 total) available to food entrepreneurs at affordable hourly rates (\$450K capital over 3 years, \$300K annual operations)
- **Business Development:** Training in food business, licensing, health codes, marketing, distribution (\$150K annually, 150 food entrepreneurs)
- **Microgrants:** \$2,000-\$10,000 grants for food business equipment, initial inventory (\$250K annually, 35 businesses)

Implementation Timeline:

- **Year 1:** Food hub construction begins, institutional purchasing policy adopted, first shared

kitchen opens

- **Year 2:** Food hub operational selling \$2M, institutions purchasing 15% local, second kitchen opens
- **Years 3-4:** Food hub at \$8M sales, 30% institutional local purchasing achieved, 6 kitchens operational

Success Metrics:

- % institutional food purchasing local (Target: 30%, up from 3%)
 - Food hub annual sales (Target: \$8M by Year 4)
 - Farmers selling through food hub (Target: 50+)
 - Farmers market sales (Target: \$25M annually, up from \$8.4M)
 - Food businesses incubated (Target: 200 over 4 years)
 - Farm/food jobs created (Target: 600+)
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PROPOSAL 4: Food Waste Reduction & Composting (\$5M annually)

The Problem: Louisville wastes 156,000 tons of food annually going to landfills generating methane—while 62,000 residents are food insecure. We’re simultaneously wasting enough food to feed every food-insecure resident 2,500 lbs/year and creating environmental crisis.

Dave’s Solution:

Launch **Food Waste Reduction & Composting Initiative** with citywide composting diverting 80,000 tons organic waste from landfills, food rescue network redistributing 8 million lbs food to food-insecure residents, and commercial food waste reduction mandates—turning environmental problem into resource enriching urban agriculture.

Program Components:

A. Citywide Composting System (\$3M annually)

Divert organic waste from landfills:

- **Compost Facility:** Establish commercial composting facility processing 80,000 tons/year of food waste, yard waste, agricultural waste (\$8M capital Year 1-2 leveraging federal/private investment, \$2M annual operations)
- **Residential Collection:** Curbside compost collection for all Louisville residents (third bin)—weekly pickup of food scraps, yard waste (\$1M annually, residents pay \$3/month—revenue covers collection cost)

- **Drop-Off Sites:** 12 drop-off sites for residents to bring compost (\$200K annually operations)
- **Commercial Collection:** Require large food waste generators (restaurants, grocery stores, institutions) to separate organic waste for composting (\$300K enforcement and coordination)
- **Compost Sales:** Finished compost sold to farmers, gardeners, landscapers at affordable rates (\$4M annual revenue by Year 3—facility becomes revenue-positive)

Target: Divert 80,000 tons organic waste from landfills by Year 4 (50% of food/organic waste), eliminating 80,000 metric tons CO₂-equivalent methane emissions

B. Food Rescue Network (\$1.5M annually)

Redistribute edible food before it's wasted:

- **Food Rescue Coordination:** Hire 5 food rescue coordinators connecting restaurants, grocery stores, caterers, institutions with excess food to food banks, meal programs, food-insecure residents (\$250K annually)
- **Food Rescue Refrigerated Trucks:** 3 refrigerated trucks picking up perishable food and delivering to distribution sites (\$150K capital, \$100K annual operations)
- **Food Rescue App:** Digital platform allowing businesses to list surplus food, nonprofits to claim it—real-time coordination (\$100K development, \$50K annual operations)
- **Liability Protection:** Strengthen Good Samaritan food donation law clarifying liability protection—removing barrier to donation (\$50K education/outreach)
- **Tax Incentive:** Enhanced tax deduction for businesses donating food (state legislation advocacy) (\$50K advocacy)
- **Target:** Rescue 8M lbs food annually (5% of 156,000 tons wasted), feeding 15,000 food-insecure residents

C. Commercial Food Waste Reduction (\$500K annually)

Mandate waste reduction by large generators:

- **Food Waste Ban:** Prohibit businesses generating >1 ton/week food waste from landfilling it—must donate, compost, or reduce (\$200K enforcement)
- **Waste Audits:** Require large food businesses to conduct food waste audits, develop reduction plans (\$150K technical assistance)
- **Best Practices:** Train restaurants, grocery stores, institutions in food waste reduction (trayless dining, smaller portions, root-to-stem cooking, ugly produce sales) (\$150K)

Implementation Timeline:

- **Year 1:** Compost facility construction begins, residential compost pilot in 3 neighborhoods, food rescue coordination launches
- **Year 2:** Facility operational processing 20,000 tons, residential compost expands to 50% of city, rescuing 3M lbs food
- **Years 3-4:** Citywide compost collection, processing 80,000 tons annually, rescuing 8M lbs food, facility revenue-positive

Success Metrics:

- Organic waste diverted from landfills (Target: 80,000 tons annually by Year 4, 50% of total)
 - Methane emissions reduced (Target: 80,000 metric tons CO₂-equivalent)
 - Food rescued (Target: 8M lbs annually redistributed to food-insecure residents)
 - Compost produced (Target: 30,000 tons annually enriching urban agriculture)
 - Facility revenue (Target: \$4M annually, revenue-positive by Year 3)
-

PROPOSAL 5: Food Justice & Sovereignty (\$2M annually)

The Problem: Food system controlled by distant corporations, communities excluded from food decisions, historic discrimination against Black farmers continues, and food access treated as charity not justice—perpetuating dependence rather than empowerment.

Dave's Solution:

Center **Food Justice & Sovereignty** through community land trusts for urban farms, Food Policy Council with community leadership, Black farmer reparations and support, culturally-appropriate food access, and food sovereignty training—shifting from charity to justice.

Program Components:

A. Community Land Trusts for Urban Agriculture (\$800K annually)

(Coordinates with Policies #5 Affordable Housing, #13 Neighborhood Development)

Ensure community control of agricultural land:

- **Land Acquisition:** Community land trusts acquire 200 acres of land over 4 years (vacant lots, purchased farmland) for permanent community-controlled agriculture (\$600K annually for acquisition)
- **99-Year Leases:** CLTs lease land at \$1/year to urban farmers, community gardens with 99-year renewable leases—ensuring permanent affordability and community control
- **Cannot Be Sold:** Land held in trust in perpetuity—cannot be sold to developers, remaining agricultural forever
- **Community Governance:** CLT boards controlled by community members, farmers using land

B. Food Policy Council (\$300K annually)

Community leadership in food policy:

- **Structure:** 25-member Food Policy Council with majority seats for residents of food deserts, farmers, food workers—not food industry representatives
- **Authority:**
 - Review all city food-related policies
 - Develop food system plan
 - Allocate \$2M annual food sovereignty grants
- Advise Mayor and Council on food issues
- **Staffing:** 2 full-time staff (director, coordinator) supporting Council (\$200K annually)
- **Operations:** \$100K annually for meetings, research, community engagement

C. Black Farmer Justice & Reparations (\$500K annually)

Address historic discrimination against Black farmers:

- **Land Access:** Priority land access for Black farmers through CLTs—reserved agricultural land
- **Capital Grants:** \$10,000-\$50,000 grants for Black farmers for equipment, infrastructure, operating capital (\$300K annually, 15 farmers)
- **Training:** Specialized training addressing knowledge gaps from historic exclusion from agricultural extension, USDA programs (\$100K annually)
- **Market Access:** Priority vendor slots at farmers markets, food hub purchasing from Black farmers, institutional connections (\$100K coordination)

Context: Black farmers owned 14% of U.S. farmland in 1920, <2% today—land stolen through USDA discrimination, violence, fraudulent legal processes. This is reparations in action.

D. Culturally-Appropriate Food Access (\$400K annually)

Respect food sovereignty of diverse communities:

- **Culturally-Specific Food:** Ensure mobile markets, food banks, institutions stock foods appropriate to Louisville's diverse communities (Somali, Latinx, Asian, African American food traditions) (\$200K purchasing)
- **Community Food Assessments:** Conduct food assessments with refugee/immigrant communities identifying food needs and preferences (\$100K)
- **Halal/Kosher Options:** Ensure religious dietary restrictions respected in institutional food, emergency food (\$100K)

Implementation Timeline:

- **Year 1:** Food Policy Council established, CLT acquires 50 acres, Black farmer program begins
- **Years 2-4:** CLT acquires 200 acres total, Black farmer support at scale, culturally-appropriate food normalized

Success Metrics:

- Community-controlled agricultural land (Target: 200 acres in CLTs)
- Black farmers supported (Target: 60 over 4 years)
- Food Policy Council operational (Target: Year 1)
- Culturally-appropriate food availability (Target: 90% of food assistance programs stock diverse foods)

BUDGET SUMMARY

Total Annual Investment: \$25 Million

Program	Annual Cost	Funding Source
Food Desert Elimination	\$6M	Federal nutrition programs (\$3M), General Fund (\$2M), Philanthropy (\$1M)
Urban Agriculture Infrastructure	\$8M	Federal agriculture grants (\$4M), General Fund (\$3M), Compost revenue (\$1M)
Local Food Economy Development	\$4M	Institutional purchasing redirection (\$2M), General Fund (\$1.5M), Federal grants (\$500K)
Food Waste & Composting	\$5M	Compost facility revenue (\$4M by Year 3), Federal grants (\$500K), General Fund (\$500K)
Food Justice & Sovereignty	\$2M	General Fund (\$2M)

Budget Impact

Total New Investment: \$25M = 2.1% of \$1.2B General Fund budget

Combined Policy Spending (All 16 Policies):

- Total across all 16 policies: \$671.5M annually
- Percentage of General Fund: 56.0%
- Remaining capacity: \$528.5M

Economic Returns:

Healthcare Savings: \$45M annually by Year 4

- Improved nutrition reducing chronic disease (diabetes, heart disease, obesity)

Local Food Economy: \$96M annually to local farmers by Year 4

- Creates 600+ jobs, \$18M in wages
- Economic multiplier: \$250M total economic activity

Compost Facility Revenue: \$4M annually by Year 3

- Covers operating costs, revenue-positive

Food Waste Savings: \$15M annually

– Reduced disposal costs, rescued food value

Total Annual Economic Benefit: \$175-225M (7-9x ROI)

CONCLUSION

All 16 comprehensive policy documents for Dave Biggers' Louisville mayoral campaign are now complete! This represents a comprehensive policy platform covering every major area of city governance with detailed, evidence-based, community-driven solutions.

The 16 Policies:

1. Public Safety & Community Policing
2. Criminal Justice Reform
3. Health & Human Services
4. Budget & Financial Management
5. Affordable Housing & Anti-Displacement
6. Education & Youth Development
7. Environmental Justice & Climate Action
8. Economic Development & Jobs (with Employee Bill of Rights)
9. Infrastructure & Transportation
10. Arts, Culture & Tourism
11. Technology & Innovation
12. Public Health & Wellness
13. Neighborhood Development
14. Senior Services
15. Disability Rights & Accessibility
16. Food Systems & Urban Agriculture

Total Investment: \$671.5M annually (56.0% of General Fund)

Total Economic Returns: Estimated \$2+ billion annually across all policies

Jobs Created: 10,000+ across all sectors

Lives Transformed: Hundreds of thousands of Louisville residents

This comprehensive platform demonstrates Dave Biggers' commitment to "democracy that works for everyone"—addressing root causes, centering equity, ensuring community control,

and building systems that serve all Louisville residents.

For more information:

- **All 16 policies:** rundaverun.org/policy
- **Voter education glossary:** rundaverun.org/glossary
- **Get involved:** rundaverun.org/volunteer
- **Contact campaign:** info@rundaverun.org

Dave Biggers for Louisville Mayor

Democracy that works for everyone.

RELATED POLICIES

This policy works in coordination with these related initiatives:

- **[Public Health & Wellness](#):** Food desert elimination addresses the root cause of diabetes, obesity, and chronic disease driving health disparities.
- **[Environmental Justice & Climate Action](#):** Local food systems reduce transportation emissions while urban agriculture provides climate resilience infrastructure.
- **[Economic Development & Jobs](#):** Local food economy keeps \$200M+ circulating in Louisville while supporting 600+ farm and food jobs.
- **[Neighborhood Development](#):** Urban agriculture transforms vacant lots into productive food-growing community assets eliminating blight.
- **[Senior Services](#):** Food access and nutrition programs address food insecurity currently affecting 16% of Louisville seniors.

Explore all 16 comprehensive policies at [Dave's Complete Policy Platform](#).

What Louisville Residents Say

What This Means for YOUR Neighborhood

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

Find Your Mini Substation

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

Find My Substation

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

Part of Dave Biggers' comprehensive public safety plan.

See the Budget Impact

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

How Does Dave's Budget Affect You?

See your personalized impact - zero tax increase, real benefits

☐ Household Income \$50,000

☐ Children in JCPS 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 \$1.2B budget - zero tax increase.

Share your results with friends and family:

☐ Share My Results

Compare This Policy

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

Policy Comparison: Real Change vs. Status Quo

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

☐ Share This Comparison ☐ Print Comparison

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

☐

Public Safety & Policing

Current Mayor

Traditional policing model

Approach

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

Timeline Ongoing

Budget Status quo funding

Impact Response times: 15-20 minutes average

Dave Biggers

Community-based mini substations

Approach

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

Timeline Year 1-4 phased rollout

Budget Revenue-neutral through property tax restructuring

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



Mental Health & Wellness

Current Mayor

Limited wellness infrastructure

Approach

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

Timeline No expansion planned

Budget Minimal dedicated funding

Impact Long wait times, limited access in underserved areas

Dave Biggers

Regional wellness centers network

Approach

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

Timeline Year 1-4 phased rollout

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



Youth Development

Current Mayor

Standard recreation programs

Approach

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

Timeline Status quo
Budget Existing recreation budget
Impact Serves fraction of Louisville youth

Dave Biggers

Comprehensive youth investment

Approach

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

Timeline Immediate implementation with substation rollout
Budget \$1,200 value per child annually
Impact Accessible programs in every neighborhood



Economic Development

Current Mayor

Corporate incentives focus

Approach

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

Timeline Ongoing

Budget Millions in corporate subsidies

Impact Benefits concentrated in select areas

Dave Biggers

Community wealth building

Approach

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

Timeline Immediate policy changes, 4-year infrastructure build

Budget Redirected from corporate subsidies

Impact Jobs and wealth stay in neighborhoods

□

Housing & Affordability**Current Mayor**

Market-driven housing

Approach

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

Timeline No comprehensive plan

Budget Minimal housing trust fund

Impact Affordability crisis worsening

Dave Biggers

Housing as a human right

Approach

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

Timeline Immediate policy changes

Budget Increased trust fund through property tax reform

Impact Protects residents, prevents displacement



Government Transparency

Current Mayor

Standard reporting

Approach

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

Timeline Status quo

Budget Minimal transparency infrastructure

Impact Limited public accountability

Dave Biggers

Radical transparency

Approach

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

- Regular town halls in all neighborhoods

Timeline Immediate implementation

Budget Low-cost digital infrastructure

Impact Citizens empowered with information and decision-making power

The Choice is Clear

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

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

▢ What Louisville Residents Say

▢ Community Endorsements

Share This Policy

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

[dbpm_share_buttons]

▢ 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 campaign

Zip Code 5-digit zip code (optional)

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

Sign Up

Have Ideas to Improve This Policy?

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

Suggest an Improvement for Louisville

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

Policy Title *

Description *

0/2000 characters

Category Select a category... ▼

Your Name *

Your Email *

ZIP Code (Optional)

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

Submit Suggestion

NOT ME, WE.

Together, we make Louisville better for everyone.