Arts, Culture & Tourism

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ARTS, CULTURE & TOURISM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Louisville's cultural vibrancy and creative economy are underfunded and underutilized assets with enormous potential. While our city boasts world-class institutions like the Kentucky Center for the Arts, the Speed Art Museum, and Actors Theatre, alongside vibrant cultural traditions from bourbon to bluegrass, we're failing to invest equitably in arts and culture across all neighborhoods—and we're missing opportunities to leverage tourism as an economic development engine that benefits everyone, not just downtown corridors.

The Challenge

Louisville's arts, culture, and tourism crisis shows up in stark numbers:

1. **Inequitable Arts Access:** Access to arts and culture is heavily concentrated in wealthy neighborhoods—while West Louisville neighborhoods with rich cultural heritage receive minimal city arts funding.

2. **Artist Economic Insecurity:** Many Louisville artists earn too little from their art and have to work second jobs, which drives creative talent to cities like Nashville, Austin, and Asheville that invest in artist support infrastructure.

3. **Tourism Dollars Bypass Communities:** Louisville tourism generates about $3.1 billion in economic impact and supports about 72,000 hospitality jobs in Jefferson County (Louisville Tourism, citing a 2025 Tourism Economics study and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)—but much of the spending stays in the downtown/NuLu corridor, with West Louisville neighborhoods seeing little tourism economic benefit despite being home to Muhammad Ali's childhood home and the heritage of the many communities that built Louisville.

4. **Crumbling Cultural Infrastructure:** Years of limited city investment in arts/culture infrastructure have left community arts centers, historic theaters, and cultural spaces in disrepair—particularly in lower-income neighborhoods where arts programming is most needed for youth development.

5. **Underinvestment in Creative Economy:** Louisville's city spending on arts and culture is modest—even as the creative economy brings jobs and economic activity to the city.

My Vision

I will transform Louisville into a city where arts, culture, and tourism drive equitable economic development and every neighborhood has access to world-class cultural programming. My plan will put $25 million a year into arts and culture, create sustainable career pathways for artists, spread tourism benefits to underserved neighborhoods, and leverage Louisville's unique cultural assets—from bourbon to bluegrass, from Muhammad Ali to the Louisville Orchestra—to build a creative economy that works for everyone.

Creative Communities Fund ($8M annually): Establish dedicated funding stream for neighborhood-based arts organizations, community cultural centers, and grassroots arts programming—with 50% of funds reserved for West Louisville and historically underserved communities.

Artist Support Infrastructure ($4M annually): Create live/work spaces, career development grants, and creative business incubator to ensure artists can afford to live, work, and thrive in Louisville.

Cultural Tourism Equity Initiative ($6M annually): Develop tourism infrastructure and programming in West Louisville, Russell, Portland, and other neighborhoods bypassed by current tourism economy—including Muhammad Ali Heritage Trail, Louisville Heritage Tourism, and neighborhood cultural festivals.

Public Art & Creative Placemaking ($4M annually): Fund public art installations, creative placemaking projects, and cultural district development in every neighborhood—with artists paid living wages and projects community-led.

Tourism Workforce Development ($3M annually): Create career pathways in hospitality and tourism for Louisville residents, particularly in neighborhoods with high unemployment—ensuring tourism growth benefits local workers, not just employers.

Budget Impact

This policy requires **$25 million in new annual spending**—funded through Louisville Visitors & Convention Commission (LVCC) restructuring ($12M), Tourism Development Fee expansion ($8M), corporate sponsorships/philanthropy ($2M), the Percent-for-Art program ($1M), and General Fund allocation ($2M, paid for inside Parks' own budget). Most of the money is tourism revenue put to work for neighborhood cultural development.

Why This Matters

Arts and culture are economic engines, not luxuries. The creative economy brings jobs, visitors, and neighborhood investment to Louisville, yet we chronically underfund it. Meanwhile, Nashville has invested heavily in arts and culture and built a major tourism economy.

Tourism dollars should benefit the communities that create culture. When tourism brings about $3.1 billion in economic impact to Louisville but West Louisville sees little of it—despite being home to Muhammad Ali's legacy and a cultural heritage that draws visitors worldwide—that's not just economic injustice, it's a massive missed opportunity.

Creative workers deserve sustainable careers. When many Louisville artists have to work second jobs to get by, we lose talent to cities that invest in artist support.

Cultural investment is a smart use of public funds. Arts investment can create jobs, raise property values, grow small businesses, and attract tourism—while also supporting educational outcomes, public health, and civic engagement.

My policy will ensure arts, culture, and tourism work for all Louisville residents—not just downtown property owners and wealthy neighborhoods. It's about building a creative economy where artists can thrive, neighborhoods share in tourism prosperity, and Louisville's unique cultural identity becomes our competitive advantage in attracting talent and investment.

CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

Arts & Culture Landscape

Louisville's cultural sector is simultaneously vibrant and struggling, world-class and inequitably distributed:

Major Cultural Assets:
– **Performing Arts:** Kentucky Center for the Arts, Actors Theatre (home of Humana Festival of New American Plays, Tony Award-winning), Louisville Orchestra, Kentucky Opera, Louisville Ballet
– **Museums:** Speed Art Museum, Frazier History Museum, Muhammad Ali Center, Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft
– **Music Heritage:** Bourbon & Beyond Festival, Forecastle Festival, Kentucky Derby Festival, Louisville Hip Hop Festival, bluegrass and jazz traditions
– **Literary Culture:** Home to authors like Hunter S. Thompson, Sue Grafton, Silas House

The Equity Problem:

Despite these assets, arts participation shows stark economic and neighborhood disparities:

- **Participation Gap:** Opportunities to attend arts and cultural events are uneven, with fewer in West Louisville than in the East End
- **Funding Concentration:** Arts funding is concentrated in organizations in or near downtown, leaving West Louisville organizations competing for a small share of funding

Artist Economic Crisis:

Louisville artists face economic conditions that make creative careers unsustainable:

- **Income Gap:** Many Louisville artists earn well below the city median income
- **Multiple Jobs:** Many artists work second jobs to survive
- **Brain Drain:** Louisville loses arts graduates to cities like Nashville, Austin, and Asheville that have artist support infrastructure
- **Lack of Infrastructure:** Zero city-funded artist housing, minimal grant/fellowship opportunities compared to peer cities

Crumbling Infrastructure:

Years of underfunding have left cultural infrastructure in crisis:

- **Deferred Maintenance:** Community arts centers in Portland, Russell, Smoketown, and Parkland have deferred maintenance that limits programming capacity
- **Theater Closures:** Neighborhood movie theaters have closed, eliminating community gathering spaces
- **Digital Divide:** Many arts organizations lack capacity for digital programming, limiting hybrid arts delivery

Tourism Economy

Louisville's tourism industry is a major economic driver—but benefits aren't shared equitably:

Tourism Impact:
– **Economic Impact:** About $3.1 billion in economic impact from tourism in Louisville (Louisville Tourism, citing a 2025 Tourism Economics study)
– **Job Creation:** Tourism supports about 72,000 hospitality jobs in Jefferson County (Louisville Tourism, citing U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)
– **Tax Revenue:** Tourism generates state and local tax revenue

Geographic Concentration:

Tourism wealth is highly concentrated in small areas:

- **Downtown Dominance:** Much of tourism spending occurs in the downtown/NuLu corridor
- **Bourbon Trail Effect:** Distillery tourism (1.7M visitors annually) primarily benefits downtown and isolated distillery locations, with limited neighborhood economic spillover
- **Derby Concentration:** The Kentucky Derby brings a large single-weekend economic impact, much of it captured by downtown hotels, restaurants, and the Churchill Downs area
- **West Louisville Desert:** West Louisville receives little of the tourism spending despite being home to Muhammad Ali's childhood home, heritage sites, and music history

Workforce Equity Issues:

Tourism job growth hasn't translated to economic security for many workers:

- **Low Wages:** Many hospitality jobs pay low wages
- **Part-Time Dominance:** Many tourism jobs are part-time or seasonal
- **Limited Advancement:** Advancement into management is limited for hospitality workers

Competitive Context

Louisville is losing ground to peer cities that invest more in arts/culture:

Results of Underinvestment:
– **Tourism and Creative Economy:** Cities like Nashville and Austin that invest heavily in arts and culture have built larger tourism and creative sectors than Louisville.

The Major Problems

1. Inequitable Access to Arts/Culture

Most Louisville residents, especially in lower-income neighborhoods, have minimal access to arts programming:

- **Geographic Barriers:** Many neighborhoods have no arts venues or organizations
- **Cost Barriers:** Tickets to major cultural institutions can be unaffordable for families on lower incomes
- **Transportation Barriers:** Getting to major cultural venues by TARC can require transfers
- **Cultural Barriers:** Programming at major institutions doesn't reflect community diversity

2. Unsustainable Artist Careers

Louisville can't retain creative talent without supporting infrastructure:

- **Housing Crisis:** No city-funded artist housing
- **Health Care Gap:** Many Louisville artists are uninsured—my answer is the community wellness centers, open regardless of insurance
- **Grant Scarcity:** Louisville offers limited annual grant support for individual artists
- **Space Shortage:** Affordable studio and rehearsal space is hard to find

3. Tourism Bypasses Communities

Billions in tourism spending generate minimal benefit for neighborhoods that created Louisville's culture:

- **West Louisville Exclusion:** Russell neighborhood (home to a historic business district) sees little of the tourism spending
- **No Infrastructure:** West Louisville has very few hotel rooms compared with downtown—tourists can't easily stay in the communities they visit
- **Extraction Economics:** Tour buses visit West Louisville for 20-minute Ali home photo op, then return downtown for spending—classic economic extraction

4. Underfunded Cultural Infrastructure

Community cultural spaces are closing or deteriorating:

- **Funding Gap:** City arts funding has not kept pace with community needs
- **Facility Crisis:** Portland Community Arts Center, Smoketown Arts Center, California

Neighborhood Center all need major repairs to remain operational

- **Programming Cuts:** Neighborhood arts programs have been cut back due to funding constraints

5. Missed Creative Economy Opportunity

Louisville dramatically underinvests in one of the highest-return sectors:

- **Missed Return:** Arts investment brings economic activity back to the city—yet Louisville's investment is modest
- **Job Creation:** More support for arts and culture can add creative economy jobs in Louisville
- **Youth Development:** Arts programs can support student success—yet access to robust arts education is uneven across Louisville schools

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MY VISION: A CREATIVE CITY FOR EVERYONE

I envision a Louisville where:

Every neighborhood has access to world-class arts and cultural programming, with community arts centers, public art, and cultural festivals in West Louisville, the South End, and every part of our city—not just downtown corridors.

Artists can thrive in Louisville with affordable live/work spaces, career development support, and fair pay for creative work—making Louisville a city that retains creative talent instead of losing it to Nashville and Austin.

Tourism benefits everyone, with heritage tourism in West Louisville, neighborhood cultural tourism throughout the city, and hospitality jobs that pay living wages and offer career advancement—ensuring the communities that created Louisville's culture share in tourism prosperity.

Cultural investment drives economic development, with arts and culture recognized as infrastructure that supports job creation, small business growth, and community revitalization—not a luxury to fund after everything else.

Louisville's unique identity becomes our competitive advantage, with bourbon heritage, bluegrass music, Muhammad Ali's legacy, and Derby traditions leveraged to attract talent, investment, and visitors while remaining authentic to the communities that created these traditions.

Core Principles

1. **Arts Are Infrastructure:** Cultural programming and creative spaces are as essential as roads and sewers—they're economic engines, youth development tools, and community assets that deserve consistent public investment.

2. **Equity First:** Arts funding will prioritize historically underserved neighborhoods and communities bypassed by current cultural investment—with measurable equity goals and accountability.

3. **Tourism as Community Development:** Tourism should enrich the neighborhoods visitors experience, not extract from them—with infrastructure, spending, and jobs flowing to communities, not just downtown.

4. **Living Wages for Creative Work:** Artists, performers, and cultural workers deserve to earn sustainable livings from their creative practice without requiring second jobs—we'll fund artist support infrastructure that makes this possible.

5. **Community-Led Culture:** Cultural programming will be developed with neighborhoods, not for them—with community voices leading decisions about public art, cultural events, and arts center programming.

Four-Year Goals

By the end of my first term:

- **Raise General Fund arts spending** by $2M a year, with $23M a year more from tourism taxes, the hotel fee, capital projects and private gifts
- **Create affordable artist housing** through conversions and new development
- **Establish arts centers** in 5 neighborhoods currently lacking cultural infrastructure
- **Increase West Louisville tourism spending** to $50M+ annually
- **Raise artist median income** to $42,000 through sustainable career pathways
- **Achieve 50% of arts funding** going to organizations in historically underserved communities
- **Create 2,000 new creative economy jobs** at living wages
- **Reach 45% resident arts participation** through free/low-cost neighborhood programming

DETAILED POLICY PROPOSALS

PROPOSAL 1: Creative Communities Fund ($8M annually)

The Problem: City arts funding is concentrated in downtown and East End organizations, leaving West Louisville and lower-income neighborhoods with minimal resources for cultural programming—despite vibrant creative traditions and demonstrated community need.

My Solution:

Create a **Creative Communities Fund** with $8 million in annual dedicated funding for neighborhood-based arts organizations, community cultural centers, and grassroots arts programming—with 50% of funds ($4M) reserved for West Louisville, Russell, Portland, Parkland, Smoketown, and other historically underserved communities.

Program Components:

A. Neighborhood Arts Organization Support ($3M annually)

Provide multi-year general operating support to community-based arts organizations:

- **3-Year Operating Grants:** $50,000-$200,000/year for established neighborhood arts organizations (25 organizations funded)
- **Start-Up Grants:** $15,000-$40,000 for emerging community arts groups (30 organizations funded)
- **Capacity Building:** Technical assistance for grant writing, board development, fundraising, financial management
- **Equipment Grants:** $5,000-$25,000 for sound systems, lighting, musical instruments, art supplies
- **Geographic Distribution:** Minimum 50% of funding to West Louisville neighborhoods, 25% to South End/other underserved areas, 25% citywide competitive

B. Community Cultural Centers ($3M annually)

Renovate and operate cultural centers in neighborhoods lacking arts infrastructure:

- **Capital Improvements:** Upgrade Portland Community Arts Center, Smoketown Arts Center, California Neighborhood Center, and establish 2 new centers in Russell and Shively ($1.5M annually, leveraging $6M federal/state capital funds)
- **Operating Support:** Fund programming staff, utilities, maintenance for community cultural centers ($1M annually)

- **Programming Grants:** Support free/low-cost arts classes, performances, exhibitions at community centers ($500K annually)
- **Hours Expansion:** Ensure cultural centers open evenings and weekends with staffing support

C. Neighborhood Cultural Festivals ($1.5M annually)

Fund community-led cultural celebrations in every neighborhood:

- **Festival Grants:** $25,000-$75,000 for neighborhood cultural festivals (20 festivals annually)
- **Technical Support:** City provides permitting assistance, traffic control, marketing support at no cost
- **Artist Payments:** Require festivals to pay performers/artists minimum $200/performance (no free artist labor)
- **Examples:** West Louisville Hip Hop Festival expansion, Portland Somali Cultural Festival, Smoketown Jazz Festival, Germantown Oktoberfest, Phoenix Hill Arts Celebration

D. Public School Arts Partnerships ($500K annually)

Fund partnerships between community arts organizations and JCPS schools in underserved areas:

- **Residencies:** 50 artist residencies in JCPS schools (10-week programs, artists paid $5,000 each)
- **After-School Programs:** Arts programming in 25 schools lacking arts resources
- **Summer Intensives:** 2-week summer arts programs at community centers for 1,000 students
- **Teaching Artist Training:** Professional development for 100 artists to work effectively in schools

Implementation Timeline:
– **Months 1-3:** Establish fund governance with community representatives, develop application process
– **Months 4-6:** Issue first RFP, community engagement in every neighborhood
– **Months 7-9:** Award first grants, begin capital improvements at cultural centers
– **Months 10-12:** Programming launches, evaluation framework established
– **Years 2-4:** Scale successful programs, establish new cultural centers in additional neighborhoods

Success Metrics:
– Number of neighborhood arts organizations funded (Target: 55 by Year 4)

– Geographic distribution of funding (Target: 50% to underserved communities)
– Residents served by neighborhood arts programs (Target: 50,000 annually by Year 4)
– Arts participation rates in underserved neighborhoods (Target: 25% participation)
– Cultural center usage hours (Target: 40 hours/week average)

PROPOSAL 2: Artist Support Infrastructure ($4M annually)

The Problem: Louisville loses creative talent to cities that invest in artist support. With many artists working second jobs, no affordable artist housing, and low median incomes, Louisville struggles to compete with Nashville, Austin, or Indianapolis for creative workforce retention.

My Solution:

Create comprehensive **Artist Support Infrastructure** that enables sustainable creative careers in Louisville—including affordable live/work spaces, career development grants, and creative business support.

Program Components:

A. Artist Housing Program ($2.5M annually)

Create affordable artist housing by converting vacant buildings:

- **Building Conversions:** Partner with developers to convert vacant industrial buildings (old warehouses, factories) into artist live/work spaces—city provides $15M in capital funding leveraging $45M in federal/private investment
- **Affordability Requirements:** Rents capped at 30% of area median artist income ($28,400)—approximately $710/month for 800 sq ft live/work space
- **Artist Certification:** Residents must be practicing professional artists (50+ hours/month creative practice) with portfolio review
- **Geographic Distribution:** Artist housing in neighborhoods all around Louisville, not concentrated in a few places
- **Income Diversity:** 40% units for extremely low-income artists (<$17,000), 40% for low-income ($17,000-$34,000), 20% for moderate-income ($34,000-$50,000)
- **Lease-to-Own Option:** After 5 years, artists can purchase units through community land trust at affordable prices

Operational Model:
– **Year 1:** Acquire/begin conversion of the first vacant buildings
– **Year 2:** Complete first buildings, begin leasing, start converting more buildings
– **Year 3:** Second round of buildings operational, begin the next round of conversions

– **Year 4:** Every converted building operational, long-term sustainability model established

B. Artist Career Development Grants ($1M annually)

Fund grants that enable artists to advance their careers:

- **Creation Grants:** $5,000-$15,000 for artists to create new work (60 grants/year)
- **Professional Development:** $1,000-$5,000 for workshops, conferences, residencies, skills training (100 grants/year)
- **Equipment Grants:** $500-$3,000 for equipment purchases (cameras, instruments, kilns, etc.)—100 grants/year
- **Emergency Grants:** $500-$2,000 for artists facing unexpected financial crises (medical bills, eviction prevention)—100 grants/year
- **Application Process:** Simple online application, rolling deadlines, 2-week turnaround, peer artist review panel

C. Creative Business Incubator ($500K annually)

Help artists build sustainable businesses from their creative practice:

- **Physical Space:** 10,000 sq ft incubator space in Russell or Smoketown with shared studios, office space, equipment ($200K annually)
- **Business Training:** Workshops on pricing, marketing, contracts, intellectual property, taxes, accounting for creative businesses (50 artists/year)
- **Microgrants:** $1,000-$5,000 seed funding for artist businesses (30 grants/year)
- **Mentorship:** Match artists with successful creative entrepreneurs for 6-month mentorships (30 matches/year)
- **Market Access:** Connect artists with corporate buyers, hotels, developers for commissions and sales

Implementation Timeline:
– **Months 1-6:** Acquire first artist housing buildings, launch first grant cycle
– **Months 7-12:** Begin housing conversions, distribute first $500K in grants
– **Year 2:** First artist housing completed and leased, $1M in grants distributed, incubator space opens
– **Years 3-4:** Scale up artist housing, $1M+ in annual grants

Success Metrics:
– Artist housing units created (Target: new units every year)
– Career development grants distributed (Target: $1M annually)
– Artist income increase (Target: median artist income rises to $42,000 by Year 4)
– Artist retention rate (Target: 80% of artists remain in Louisville 5 years post-program participation)

– Creative business sustainability (Target: 70% of incubator businesses still operating after 3 years)

PROPOSAL 3: Cultural Tourism Equity Initiative ($6M annually)

The Problem: Louisville's tourism economy (about $3.1 billion in economic impact, per Louisville Tourism) bypasses the neighborhoods and communities that created much of our cultural heritage. West Louisville, home to Muhammad Ali's childhood and a rich cultural heritage, receives little of the tourism spending—classic economic extraction.

My Solution:

Launch a **Cultural Tourism Equity Initiative** that develops tourism infrastructure and programming in West Louisville and other underserved neighborhoods—ensuring communities share in tourism prosperity and visitors experience authentic Louisville culture beyond downtown.

Program Components:

A. Muhammad Ali Heritage District ($2.5M annually)

Create world-class heritage tourism destination in West Louisville:

- **Ali Heritage Trail:** Develop walking/biking trail connecting Muhammad Ali's childhood home, Ali Center, Columbia Gym, Central High School, and other significant sites—with interpretive signage, public art, streetscape improvements ($1M capital Year 1, leveraging $4M federal funds)
- **Ali Home Museum:** Convert Muhammad Ali's childhood home into small museum/visitor center operated by West Louisville community organization ($300K annually)
- **Ali District Wayfinding:** Professional signage, maps, mobile app connecting Ali sites to nearby restaurants, shops, cultural venues ($200K Year 1)
- **Small Business Support:** Grants for West Louisville businesses near Ali sites to upgrade facades, improve accessibility, expand hours for tourists ($500K annually, 40 businesses)
- **Tour Development:** Support community-led tour businesses (walking tours, bike tours, bus tours) with equipment grants, marketing, liability insurance ($200K annually)
- **Events Programming:** Fund 12 annual events in Ali District (boxing exhibitions, cultural festivals, speaker series) that draw visitors ($300K annually)

B. Louisville Heritage Tourism ($1.5M annually)

Tell the stories of the many communities that have made their mark on Louisville over generations:

- **Heritage Sites:** Restore/interpret additional sites including Whitney Young's birthplace, Georgia Powers' legacy sites, historic neighborhood business districts, churches, and cultural landmarks ($500K annually)
- **Underground Railroad Trail:** Develop marked trail connecting Louisville's verified Underground Railroad sites with interpretation, commemoration, and connections to contemporary justice movements ($300K Year 1, $100K ongoing)
- **Heritage Tourism Marketing:** Professional marketing campaign targeting the heritage tourism segment ($200K annually)
- **Partnerships:** Fund partnerships between West Louisville organizations and established heritage tourism operators (Kentucky Derby Museum, Frazier Museum, etc.) to cross-promote ($100K annually)
- **Capacity Building:** Support 10 West Louisville organizations to develop tourism products (tours, events, programming) with training and seed grants ($200K annually)
- **Heritage Tourism Infrastructure:** Fund 3 small inns/B&Bs in West Louisville neighborhoods so visitors can stay in communities they're visiting ($200K annually in forgivable loans/grants)

C. Neighborhood Cultural Tourism ($1.5M annually)

Expand tourism to neighborhoods citywide:

- **Neighborhood Tourism Grants:** $50,000-$150,000 grants for neighborhood organizations to develop tourism products—Germantown brewery trail, NuLu art district expansion, Highlands restaurant week, Irish Hill heritage tour, etc. (10 neighborhoods annually)
- **Cultural District Designations:** Establish formal cultural districts in 5 neighborhoods with tax incentives for cultural businesses, marketing support, and infrastructure investment
- **Festival Tourism:** Market major neighborhood festivals (St. James Court Art Show, Garvin Gate Blues Festival, etc.) as tourism draws with hotel packages, transportation, and extended programming
- **Trail Connections:** Connect bourbon, bluegrass, and heritage trails to neighborhood businesses—ensuring tourists spend time and money beyond distilleries and downtown

D. Tourism Workforce Equity Program ($500K annually)

Ensure West Louisville residents benefit from tourism job growth:

- **Hospitality Training:** Partner with community colleges for hospitality career training specifically recruiting West Louisville residents (200 people/year)
- **Tour Guide Training:** Certify 50 West Louisville residents annually as professional tour guides for heritage tourism
- **Small Business Loans:** Low-interest loans for West Louisville residents to start tourism businesses (tour companies, B&Bs, restaurants, retail)—$200K loan fund
- **Employment Connections:** Require tourism businesses receiving city incentives to recruit 30% of workforce from West Louisville

Implementation Timeline:
– **Months 1-6:** Community engagement in West Louisville, site planning for Ali Heritage Trail, begin Heritage District business grants
– **Months 7-12:** Begin Ali Trail construction, launch first neighborhood tourism grants, begin tour guide training
– **Year 2:** Ali Heritage Trail opens, Muhammad Ali home museum operational, 5 neighborhood tourism initiatives launched
– **Years 3-4:** Expand to additional heritage sites, scale neighborhood tourism program citywide, establish sustainability model

Success Metrics:
– Tourism spending in West Louisville (Target: $50M annually by Year 4)
– Visitors to Ali Heritage District (Target: 250,000 annually by Year 4)
– New tourism businesses in West Louisville (Target: 40 by Year 4)
– Tourism jobs held by West Louisville residents (Target: 500 by Year 4)
– Hotel rooms in West Louisville (Target: 200 additional rooms by Year 4)
– West Louisville small business revenue from tourism (Target: $15M annually by Year 4)

PROPOSAL 4: Public Art & Creative Placemaking ($4M annually)

The Problem: Public art in Louisville is concentrated in wealthy areas, with most neighborhoods lacking public art infrastructure. Meanwhile, public art can strengthen community identity and neighborhood vitality—but only if equitably distributed and community-led.

My Solution:

Launch a **Public Art & Creative Placemaking Program** that funds public art installations, murals, creative placemaking projects, and cultural district development in every neighborhood—with artists paid living wages, projects community-led, and 50% of investment in historically underserved areas.

Program Components:

A. Neighborhood Public Art Program ($2M annually)

Fund public art in neighborhoods currently lacking art infrastructure:

- **Mural Program:** Commission 40 large-scale murals annually in commercial corridors and community spaces—50% in West Louisville, South End, and other underserved neighborhoods ($800K annually, $20K average per mural including artist payment, supplies, wall prep, anti-graffiti coating)
- **Sculpture Installations:** Commission 10 permanent sculptures annually for parks, streetscapes, and public spaces ($400K annually, $40K average per installation)
- **Digital/Interactive Art:** Fund 5 large-scale digital or interactive public art installations annually (projection mapping, interactive sculptures, sound installations)—$250K annually
- **Temporary Installations:** Support 20 temporary/seasonal art installations (6-month duration) that activate underutilized spaces ($200K annually)
- **Artist Payments:** All artists paid at minimum $50/hour for design time, installation, and community engagement (enforced through contracts)
- **Community Selection:** Each neighborhood forms public art committee that selects projects through democratic process—no top-down decisions

B. Creative Placemaking Initiatives ($1M annually)

Fund creative placemaking projects that use arts/culture for community development:

- **Creative Corridors:** Transform commercial corridors through coordinated public art, facade improvements, lighting, landscaping, and cultural programming (3 corridors annually: e.g., Broadway in West Louisville, Dixie Highway, Preston Street)—$400K annually
- **Creative Pop-Ups:** Fund temporary activation of vacant storefronts with artist studios, galleries, performance spaces (20 spaces annually)—$200K annually
- **Parklet Program:** Install artist-designed parklets (small public spaces in parking spots) in commercial districts—$150K annually, 15 parklets
- **Wayfinding Art:** Artist-designed wayfinding systems for neighborhoods developing cultural tourism—$150K annually, 3 neighborhoods
- **Bus Stop Art:** Transform 50 TARC bus stops annually into artistic landmarks with shelters, seating, lighting designed by local artists—$100K annually (cost-share with TARC)

C. Cultural District Development ($750K annually)

Establish formal cultural districts with infrastructure investment:

- **District Designation:** Designate 5 cultural districts by Year 4 (e.g., West Louisville Arts District, NuLu expansion, Portland Cultural Corridor, Smoketown Jazz District, Germantown Arts Quarter)
- **Tax Incentives:** Property tax abatement for cultural businesses, artists, and arts organizations locating in cultural districts (revenue neutral—development pays for itself)
- **Facade Grants:** $10,000-$50,000 matching grants for building improvements in cultural districts (20 grants annually)
- **Marketing Support:** Professional branding, wayfinding, and marketing for each cultural district ($150K annually)
- **Infrastructure:** Pedestrian improvements, lighting, street furniture in cultural districts ($400K annually, leveraging $1.6M in federal/state funds)

D. Percent-for-Art Program ($250K annually)

Require 1% of capital project budgets for public art:

- **Capital Project Requirement:** All city capital projects >$1M must allocate 1% of budget for public art commissioned from Louisville artists
- **Dedicated Staff:** Hire 2 public art administrators to manage commissions, community engagement, and maintenance
- **Artist Registry:** Maintain database of Louisville artists available for public art commissions
- **Maintenance Fund:** 20% of percent-for-art funding reserved for maintenance/conservation of existing public art

Implementation Timeline:
– **Months 1-3:** Establish Public Art Commission with community representatives, develop artist selection processes
– **Months 4-6:** Issue first RFPs, community engagement for neighborhood public art committees
– **Months 7-12:** Install first 20 murals, 5 sculptures, begin creative corridor projects
– **Years 2-4:** Scale to 40 murals annually, establish 5 cultural districts, implement percent-for-art program citywide

Success Metrics:
– Public art installations created (Target: 200+ by Year 4)
– Geographic distribution (Target: 50% of investment in underserved neighborhoods)
– Artists commissioned (Target: 300 Louisville artists paid for public art by Year 4)
– Total artist payments (Target: $5M paid to artists by Year 4)
– Property value impact (Target: 15% increase in corridors with creative placemaking)
– Community satisfaction (Target: 80% of residents report pride in neighborhood public art)

No one is above anyone else, in bronze either. Public land should not carry monuments that raise a real person above everyone else, Confederate or otherwise. However much someone accomplished, it doesn't make them more than human. Statues of characters and ideas are different: think of Rocky in Philadelphia. From now on, Louisville won't put up new monuments to real people on public land. I took this further than my 2018 answer, which was about the Confederate statues ("if a majority of Louisville want the statues gone, they're gone").

PROPOSAL 5: Tourism Workforce Development ($3M annually)

The Problem: Louisville's tourism industry creates thousands of jobs—but most are low-wage, part-time positions without advancement pathways. Many hospitality workers earn low wages, many positions are part-time, and advancement to management is limited. Tourism growth should create career pathways, not just low-wage service jobs.

My Solution:

Launch a **Tourism Workforce Development Program** that creates career pathways in hospitality and tourism, particularly for residents of high-unemployment neighborhoods—ensuring tourism growth benefits Louisville workers with living wages, benefits, and advancement opportunities.

Program Components:

A. Hospitality Career Academy ($1.2M annually)

Create training pipeline for hospitality careers:

- **Culinary Training:** Partner with Jefferson Community & Technical College for 6-month culinary arts program training 100 people/year for chef and line cook positions—with guaranteed job placement at $16+/hour
- **Hotel Management Training:** 12-week hotel operations program covering front desk, housekeeping management, sales, revenue management—training 75 people/year for supervisory positions at $18+/hour
- **Tourism & Events:** 8-week program covering event planning, tour operations, convention services—training 50 people/year for event coordinator positions at $17+/hour
- **English Language Support:** For immigrant/refugee participants, integrate English language training with hospitality skills
- **Barriers Removed:** Free tuition, tools/uniforms provided, stipends ($400/week) during training, childcare assistance, transportation support

- **Recruitment Focus:** Prioritize recruitment from West Louisville, Russell, Portland, Smoketown, and neighborhoods with unemployment >10%

B. Tourism Apprenticeship Program ($800K annually)

Create earn-while-you-learn pathways into skilled tourism jobs:

- **Registered Apprenticeships:** Establish Department of Labor-registered apprenticeships in culinary arts, hotel management, and event management—combining on-the-job training with classroom instruction
- **Employer Partnerships:** Partner with 20 hotels, restaurants, and tourism employers to host apprentices
- **Wage Progression:** Apprentices start at $15/hour, progress to $22/hour by completion (2-year programs)
- **Cohort Size:** 100 apprentices enrolled annually across all programs
- **Retention Bonuses:** $2,000 bonus for apprentices who complete program and remain employed 1 year post-completion
- **Employer Incentives:** City reimburses 50% of apprentice wages in Year 1, 25% in Year 2 to encourage employer participation

C. Worker Advancement Fund ($600K annually)

Help current hospitality workers advance into higher-wage positions:

- **Tuition Assistance:** Up to $3,000/year for hospitality workers pursuing degrees/certificates in hospitality management, culinary arts, or business (200 workers annually)
- **Supervisory Training:** 40-hour supervisory skills training for frontline workers seeking management positions—free to workers, covering conflict resolution, scheduling, performance management, labor law (150 workers annually)
- **Professional Development Scholarships:** $500-$2,000 scholarships for hospitality workers to attend conferences, workshops, certification programs (100 scholarships annually)
- **Language Skills:** English classes for immigrant hospitality workers to improve communication skills and qualify for advancement
- **Career Coaching:** One-on-one career coaching for 200 hospitality workers annually to identify advancement pathways and overcome barriers

D. Living Wage Incentive Program ($400K annually)

Incentivize tourism employers to pay living wages and provide benefits:

- **Wage Subsidies:** Businesses that commit to at least $15/hour, with Homeownership

Wage Employer recognition for those who reach the Kentucky Homeownership Wage Index for all positions receive wage subsidies of $2/hour/employee for 2 years (max 25 employees per business)—helping businesses transition to higher wages

- **Health Insurance Support:** Businesses that offer health insurance to all full-time employees receive $100/employee/month for 2 years to offset premium costs
- **Good Jobs Certification:** Create “Louisville Good Jobs” certification for tourism businesses meeting standards (living wage, benefits, advancement pathways, worker voice)—certified businesses receive marketing support and priority for city contracts/incentives
- **Full-Time Conversion Incentives:** Businesses that convert part-time positions to full-time receive $1,000/conversion (max 10 conversions per business)
- **Employer Recognition:** Annual awards ceremony recognizing hospitality employers with best wages, benefits, and advancement practices

Implementation Timeline:
– **Months 1-4:** Develop partnerships with JCTC, hospitality employers, establish curriculum
– **Months 5-8:** Begin recruitment in high-unemployment neighborhoods, launch first training cohorts
– **Months 9-12:** First 100 graduates placed in jobs, apprenticeship program launches
– **Years 2-4:** Scale to 225+ people trained annually, expand apprenticeships, measure wage/advancement outcomes

Success Metrics:
– Workers trained (Target: 225/year by Year 4)
– Job placement rate (Target: 85% placed within 90 days of completion)
– Starting wages (Target: $17 average starting wage)
– Retention rates (Target: 75% still employed in hospitality after 2 years)
– Advancement rates (Target: 35% advance to supervisory roles within 3 years)
– West Louisville participation (Target: 40% of participants from West Louisville zip codes)

BUDGET SUMMARY

Total Annual Investment: $25 Million

Program	Annual Cost	Funding Source
Creative Communities Fund	$8M	LVCC restructuring ($8M)
Artist Support Infrastructure	$4M	Tourism Development Fee expansion ($3M), Philanthropic partnerships ($1M)

Program	Annual Cost	Funding Source
Cultural Tourism Equity Initiative	$6M	LVCC restructuring ($4M), Tourism Development Fee ($2M)
Public Art & Creative Placemaking	$4M	General Fund ($2M), Percent-for-Art ($1M), Corporate sponsorships ($1M)
Tourism Workforce Development	$3M	Tourism Development Fee expansion ($3M)

Funding Sources Detail

Louisville Visitors & Convention Commission (LVCC) Restructuring ($12M annually):

The LVCC currently receives about $44.7M a year in tax revenue (Louisville Convention and Visitors Bureau, FY2026 financial disclosure report filed with the Kentucky Department for Local Government). Under my policy, LVCC funding will be restructured to dedicate $12M annually (about 27% of that) to community cultural development and equity initiatives:

- **Current Practice:** LVCC funds primarily benefit downtown convention/hotel interests with minimal neighborhood investment
- **Restructuring:** $12M redirected to Creative Communities Fund ($8M) and Cultural Tourism Equity Initiative ($4M)
- **Justification:** Tourism taxes generated by Louisville’s cultural attractions should fund community cultural development, not just downtown marketing
- **Accountability:** Community representatives added to LVCC board to ensure funding serves neighborhoods

Tourism Development Fee Expansion ($8M annually):

Expand tourism development fee to generate dedicated revenue for arts/culture/tourism workforce:

- **Fee Structure:** $2/room/night fee on all hotel/motel stays
- **Revenue Generation:** Estimated $8M a year after collection
- **Distribution:** Artist Support Infrastructure ($3M), Tourism Workforce Development ($3M), Cultural Tourism Equity Initiative ($2M)
- **Visitor Impact:** Small—$2 a night is a modest addition to a hotel bill

General Fund Allocation ($2M annually):

Dedicate $2M of General Fund money to public art, re-pointed inside Parks’ own budget:

- **Increase:** $2M a year added to the city’s General Fund arts and public art spending
- **Justification:** Arts/culture investment supports economic activity, job creation, and

property values—a sound use of public funds

- **Distribution:** Public Art & Creative Placemaking ($2M)

Corporate Sponsorships & Philanthropy ($2M annually):

Leverage private sector support for arts/culture initiatives:

- **Corporate Partnerships:** Partner with major Louisville corporations (YUM!, UPS, Humana, Brown-Forman, etc.) for arts sponsorships—$1M annually
- **Foundation & Individual Philanthropy:** National arts funders (NEA, Mellon Foundation, Kresge, etc.) and major donors, for artist housing and artist grants—$1M annually
- **Match Requirement:** City funding serves as match to leverage private investment

Percent-for-Art Program ($1M annually):

Dedicated public art funding from capital projects:

- **Source:** 1% of all city capital projects >$1M allocated to public art
- **Annual Capital Budget:** $185.2M in the adopted FY2026-27 capital budget (Louisville Metro adopted budget FY2026-27)
- **Conservative Estimate:** $1M annually for public art (actual likely higher as capital budget grows)

Budget Impact on Louisville Metro

Total New Investment: $25M annually represents 2.2% of Louisville Metro's $1.13 billion operating budget.

Combined spending across policies is not added up page by page any more: each policy's Metro share is placed once, in the reallocation ledger behind the Executive Budget Summary, which spends exactly the adopted $1,125,931,500.

Revenue Generation & Offsets:

This policy generates substantial economic returns that offset costs:

- **Direct Economic Impact:** Added economic activity through tourism spending, creative economy job creation, property value increases
- **Tax Revenue Generated:** new sales, property, and income tax revenue from the added economic activity, measured and published each year rather than estimated in advance
- **Federal Funding Leverage:** federal grants (NEA, historic preservation, economic development) matched by city investment, reported as they are won

- **Private Investment Leverage:** private investment that follows (private development responding to cultural district investment), reported as it comes; the $2M of corporate and philanthropic gifts is already inside the $25M

Net Fiscal Impact: Only $2M of the $25M is General Fund money, and it is paid for inside Parks' own budget. The rest is tourism-tax money, the hotel fee, capital-project art money and private gifts.

Distribution by Focus Area

Focus Area	Annual Investment	% of Total
Neighborhood Arts Access	$8M	32%
Cultural Tourism Equity	$6M	24%
Artist Support	$4M	16%
Public Art	$4M	16%
Workforce Development	$3M	12%

Equity Allocation

61% of funding ($15.2M) dedicated to historically underserved communities:
– Creative Communities Fund: 50% reserved for West Louisville/underserved neighborhoods ($4M)
– Artist Support Infrastructure: 50% of housing and grants in underserved neighborhoods ($2M)
– Cultural Tourism Equity: 100% focused on West Louisville and underserved neighborhoods ($6M)
– Public Art: 50% of installations in underserved neighborhoods ($2M)
– Tourism Workforce: 40% recruitment from West Louisville and high-unemployment neighborhoods ($1.2M)

This ensures Louisville's arts investment corrects historic inequities rather than reinforcing them.

FOUR-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Year 1: Foundation Building

Months 1-3: Planning & Community Engagement
– Establish Creative Communities Fund governance with community representatives
– Complete community engagement in every neighborhood for arts priorities
– Form neighborhood public art committees

– Issue RFPs for first Creative Communities Fund grants
– Launch LVCC restructuring process

Months 4-6: Program Launches
– Award first $4M in Creative Communities Fund grants to 30 organizations
– Begin artist housing building acquisitions and conversions
– Begin Ali Heritage Trail planning and community engagement
– Issue first public art RFPs, select 20 murals

Months 7-9: Implementation Begins
– First 10 neighborhood arts programs launch with Creative Communities Fund support
– Begin capital improvements at 3 community cultural centers
– Launch Hospitality Career Academy with first cohort (75 people)
– Install first 10 murals and 3 sculptures
– Begin Ali Heritage Trail construction

Months 10-12: Momentum Building
– 20 murals and 5 sculptures installed
– First 75 Hospitality Career Academy graduates placed in jobs
– Artist housing conversions underway (first buildings in progress)
– Community cultural centers renovations 50% complete
– First 5 neighborhood cultural festivals funded and held
– Tourism Apprenticeship Program launches with first 30 apprentices

Year 1 Outcomes:
– 30 neighborhood arts organizations funded
– First artist housing under construction
– $500K in artist career grants distributed to 150 artists
– 20 murals and 5 sculptures installed
– Ali Heritage Trail construction 60% complete
– 75 workers trained and placed in hospitality jobs at $16+ average wage
– $8M in new arts funding flowing to neighborhoods

Year 2: Scaling & Expansion

Arts & Culture:
– Increase Creative Communities Fund to 40 organizations
– Complete first artist housing and begin leasing
– Distribute $1M in artist career grants to 260 artists
– Creative Business Incubator opens with first 20 artists
– Install 35 murals and 8 sculptures
– Open 2 renovated community cultural centers

Tourism:
– Complete Ali Heritage Trail and open Muhammad Ali home museum

– Launch 3 neighborhood tourism initiatives (Germantown, Portland, Smoketown)
– Install first cultural district wayfinding systems
– Train 50 community members as heritage tour guides
– Hospitality Career Academy graduates 150 workers

Metrics:
– Artist median income increases to $33,500
– Arts participation in underserved neighborhoods rises to 12%
– West Louisville tourism spending reaches $8M
– 225 workers trained and placed in hospitality careers

Year 3: Maturity & Refinement

Arts & Culture:
– 50 organizations funded through Creative Communities Fund
– More artist housing operational, more in construction
– Creative Business Incubator supports 40 artist businesses
– 3 cultural districts formally established with infrastructure investment
– 40 murals and 10 sculptures installed annually
– 5 community cultural centers fully operational

Tourism:
– Ali Heritage District attracting 100,000 visitors annually
– 5 neighborhood tourism initiatives operational
– 20 new tourism businesses in West Louisville
– Underground Railroad Trail completed and marketed nationally
– Hospitality Career Academy and Apprenticeship Program at full capacity (225 trained annually)

Metrics:
– Artist median income reaches $39,000
– Arts participation in underserved neighborhoods reaches 18%
– West Louisville tourism spending reaches $25M
– 400+ workers trained and placed in hospitality careers

Year 4: Sustainability & Long-Term Vision

Arts & Culture:
– 55 organizations funded through Creative Communities Fund
– Artist housing operational in every converted building
– $4M+ in cumulative artist career grants distributed
– Creative Business Incubator has supported 80 artist businesses
– 5 cultural districts fully operational generating $40M+ economic activity
– 150+ murals and 30+ sculptures installed citywide since program launch
– 5 community cultural centers serving 50,000+ residents annually

Tourism:
– Ali Heritage District attracting 250,000 visitors annually
– West Louisville tourism spending reaches $50M+ annually
– 8 neighborhood tourism initiatives operational citywide
– 40 new tourism businesses in underserved neighborhoods
– 200 additional hotel rooms in West Louisville
– 500+ West Louisville residents employed in tourism industry
– Heritage tourism marketing campaign reaches 2M people nationally

Metrics Achieved:
– City General Fund arts investment: up $2M a year
– Artist median income: $42,000+
– Arts participation in underserved neighborhoods: 25%
– Citywide arts participation: 45%
– West Louisville tourism spending: $50M+
– Creative economy jobs: 2,000+ new jobs at living wages
– Total economic impact: measured and published annually

Long-Term Sustainability (Years 5-10)

Sustained Investment:
– Creative Communities Fund becomes permanent with dedicated funding stream
– Artist housing program becomes self-sustaining through rents and lease-to-own
– Tourism Development Fee expansion generates ongoing revenue
– Percent-for-Art program funds ongoing public art maintenance and new commissions

Economic Transformation:
– Louisville’s creative economy grows to 7% of total economy
– Tourism economic impact reaches $5 billion annually (up from about $3.1B)
– Louisville recognized nationally as arts/culture destination, not just bourbon/Derby
– Artist retention rate matches peer cities—Louisville becomes place artists move to, not from
– West Louisville becomes recognized cultural tourism destination generating $100M+ annually

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SUCCESS METRICS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Dave’s Arts, Culture & Tourism policy will be evaluated on measurable outcomes, not just activity. The administration will publish quarterly public reports on progress toward these goals:

Cultural Access & Participation Metrics

Year 4 Targets:
– **Overall arts participation rate:** 45% of residents attending arts/cultural events regularly
– **Underserved neighborhood participation:** 25% in West Louisville, South End zip codes
– **Youth arts participation:** 65% of K-12 students in regular arts programming
– **Free/low-cost events:** 400+ free community cultural events annually
– **Geographic distribution:** 50% of city arts funding to underserved communities

Data Collection: Annual arts participation survey (1,000+ residents), neighborhood-level participation tracking, youth program enrollment data

Artist Economic Security Metrics

Year 4 Targets:
– **Median artist income:** $42,000
– **Artists working second jobs:** 35%
– **Artist retention rate:** 80% (artists remaining in Louisville 5 years)

Data Collection: Biennial artist economic survey, creative workforce retention study

Creative Economy Metrics

Year 4 Targets:
– **Creative economy jobs:** 2,000+ net new jobs
– **Creative economy GDP:** $1.8B annually
– **Creative sector as % of economy:** 6.5%
– **Arts organizations:** 240 organizations
– **Creative businesses started:** 100/year

Data Collection: Bureau of Labor Statistics creative economy data, Metro business license tracking, economic impact studies

Cultural Infrastructure Metrics

Year 4 Targets:
– **Artist housing units:** new units every year
– **Community cultural centers:** 5 renovated/operational
– **Public art installations:** 200 new installations
– **Cultural districts:** 5 formally designated districts
– **Neighborhoods with arts venues:** more neighborhoods with arts venues each year

Data Collection: City facilities management data, public art registry, cultural district economic tracking

Tourism Equity Metrics

Year 4 Targets:
– **West Louisville tourism spending:** $50M+ annually
– **Ali Heritage District visitors:** 250,000 annually
– **Tourism businesses in underserved areas:** 40+ businesses
– **West Louisville tourism jobs:** 500+ jobs
– **West Louisville hotel rooms:** 600+ rooms

Data Collection: Tourism spending survey by geography, Ali Heritage District visitor tracking, business license data, employment by zip code

Tourism Workforce Metrics

Year 4 Targets:
– **Median hospitality worker wage:** $16/hour
– **Hospitality jobs offering health insurance:** 60%
– **Full-time hospitality jobs:** 55%
– **Worker advancement to management:** 20% within 5 years
– **Workers trained through city programs:** 900+ over 4 years

Data Collection: Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data, employer benefits surveys, career academy graduate tracking

Public Art & Creative Placemaking Metrics

Year 4 Targets:
– **Murals installed:** 40 new/year
– **Sculptures installed:** 10 new/year
– **Artists commissioned:** 150/year
– **Artist payments for public art:** $1.5M+/year
– **Property value increase in creative corridors:** 15% increase in creative placemaking zones

Data Collection: Public art commission records, artist payment tracking, property assessor data for creative corridors

Equity & Inclusion Metrics

Year 4 Targets:
– **% arts funding to underserved communities:** 50%
– **Arts programs in schools serving low-income students:** 75% of schools
– **Tourism jobs held by West Louisville residents:** 15%

Data Collection: Grant recipient demographic tracking, board composition surveys, JCPS arts

program data, employment by residence zip code

Financial Accountability Metrics

Investment Tracking:
– **City General Fund arts investment:** $2M a year added by Year 4
– **Total creative economy investment:** $25M annually: $23M of public money and $2M of private gifts
– **Leverage ratio:** outside money (federal, philanthropic, private) brought in for each city dollar, reported each year

Outcome Tracking:
– **Economic impact:** total economic impact measured and published annually
– **Tax revenue generated:** new tax revenue from creative economy growth, measured each year
– **Jobs created per $100K invested:** 2.5 jobs per $100K (75 jobs per $3M workforce investment)

Budget Dashboard:
All metrics published quarterly on public dashboard at arts.louisvilleky.gov/dashboard with:
– Progress toward Year 4 targets (red/yellow/green indicators)
– Spending by program and neighborhood
– Demographic breakdown of beneficiaries
– Economic impact data
– Stories and testimonials from artists and communities served

Accountability Mechanisms

Community Oversight:
– **Arts & Culture Advisory Commission:** 15-member commission (majority from underserved communities) with approval authority over major spending decisions
– **Neighborhood Arts Councils:** Each neighborhood receives funding has community council overseeing local programming
– **Annual Public Forums:** Town halls in every council district to review progress and gather community input

Independent Evaluation:
– **Year 2 Evaluation:** Independent evaluation of Creative Communities Fund effectiveness, equity outcomes, economic impact
– **Year 4 Comprehensive Evaluation:** Full program evaluation by university researchers assessing all metrics and recommending adjustments
– **Ongoing Research Partnership:** Partner with University of Louisville and Bellarmine for ongoing creative economy research

Mayoral Accountability:

– **Quarterly Progress Reports:** Mayor presents progress to Metro Council with detailed data
– **Annual State of Culture Address:** Public address reviewing year's accomplishments and next year's priorities
– **Performance-Based Budgeting:** Continued funding contingent on meeting equity and economic impact targets

I commit to full transparency and community accountability. If programs aren't meeting equity or economic goals, we'll adjust—with community input driving changes. The goal isn't just spending money on arts, it's transforming Louisville into a city where culture drives equitable economic development and every neighborhood has access to world-class creative opportunities.

RELATED GLOSSARY TERMS

This policy connects to the following terms in my Louisville Voter Education Glossary (available at rundaverun.org/glossary):

- **Creative Economy:** Economic sector including artists, performers, designers, writers, and cultural organizations—an important part of Louisville's economy
- **Cultural District:** Designated neighborhood with concentration of arts/culture organizations receiving special investment and tax incentives
- **Community Arts:** Arts programming developed by and for local communities, particularly in underserved neighborhoods
- **Public Art:** Art in public spaces (murals, sculptures, installations) accessible to everyone regardless of ability to pay
- **Creative Placemaking:** Using arts and culture as tool for community development and neighborhood revitalization
- **Heritage Tourism:** Tourism focused on experiencing cultural heritage and history of communities
- **Artist Housing:** Affordable live/work spaces for artists, typically in converted industrial buildings
- **Percent-for-Art:** Policy requiring percentage of capital project budgets (1% in my plan) be allocated to public art
- **Living Wage:** the Kentucky Homeownership Wage Index: the hourly wage at which a full-time worker can carry a mortgage on the median Kentucky home (see Kentucky Homeownership Wage Index)—contrasted with minimum wage
- **Tourism Development Fee:** Per-room-night fee on hotel stays generating revenue for tourism development and marketing
- **Arts Participation Rate:** Percentage of residents attending arts/cultural events

regularly—indicator of cultural access

- **Economic Development Accountability:** Requiring businesses receiving public incentives to meet community benefit standards (jobs, wages where state law allows, local hiring)
- **Community Land Trust:** Nonprofit organization that owns land in trust for community benefit, leasing to residents at affordable rates (see Affordable Housing & Anti-Displacement (Policy 05))
- **Participatory Budgeting:** Democratic process where residents directly decide how to spend public funds (see Budget & Financial Management (Policy 04), Proposal 1)
- **Complete Streets:** Streets designed for all users—pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, drivers—not just cars (see Infrastructure & Transportation (Policy 09))

For definitions and additional context, visit rundaverun.org/glossary.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why should taxpayers fund arts and culture when we have roads to fix and schools to fund?

Answer: Arts and culture ARE infrastructure—economic infrastructure that supports job creation, property value increases, tourism attraction, and small business growth.

Arts investment can:
– Create jobs
– Raise property values in creative placemaking zones, generating more tax revenue
– Support educational outcomes
– Support youth development and public health outcomes

Nashville has invested heavily in arts and culture and built a major tourism economy. Meanwhile, Louisville's arts investment is modest—we're underfunding an economic engine.

We can fix roads AND invest in culture—in fact, strong creative economy generates tax revenue that helps pay for roads. This isn't either/or, it's smart economic development.

2. Won't tourism in West Louisville just lead to gentrification and displacement like we've seen downtown?

Answer: This is a critical concern—and exactly why my policy includes Anti-Displacement Protections as a core component (building on Affordable Housing).

Specific protections:

1. **Community Land Trust Expansion:** All Ali Heritage District development includes CLT land ownership, preventing speculation and keeping housing affordable (see Affordable Housing & Anti-Displacement (Policy 05))

2. **Tenant Protections:** Just Cause eviction requirements, rent stabilization, right to legal counsel in eviction cases (see Affordable Housing & Anti-Displacement (Policy 05))

3. **Business Displacement Prevention:** Commercial anti-displacement fund ($2M annually) providing grants to long-standing West Louisville businesses threatened by rising rents—ensuring longtime neighborhood businesses benefit from tourism growth, not displaced by it

4. **Local Hiring Requirements:** 30% of jobs in tourism businesses receiving city support must go to West Louisville residents—ensuring jobs benefit community members

5. **Community Control:** West Louisville residents lead Ali Heritage District governance board with approval authority over development—no outsiders dictating what happens in the neighborhood

The goal is **equitable development**, not gentrification. We're investing in tourism infrastructure in West Louisville while simultaneously protecting residents and businesses from displacement. Memphis Soulsville and New Orleans Treme provide models where heritage tourism has benefited origin communities without mass displacement—through proactive anti-displacement policies like I am proposing.

3. How do we know city funding for artists won't just subsidize hobbyists instead of serious professionals?

Answer: My policy includes professional standards to ensure funding supports career artists, not casual hobbyists:

Artist Verification Requirements:
– **Portfolio Review:** Artists must submit portfolio demonstrating professional-level work and regular creative practice
– **50-Hour Rule:** Artists must spend minimum 50 hours/month on creative practice (verified through artist statements and work samples)
– **Income Test:** Artist housing limited to artists earning majority of income from creative work or demonstrating commitment to creative career
– **Peer Review:** Artist grant applications reviewed by panels of working artists who can assess

professional quality and career trajectory

This is how peer cities do it: Peer cities with artist support programs use similar verification systems to keep funding focused on working artists.

Supporting professional artists helps grow the entire creative economy.

4. Louisville already has the Kentucky Center, the Speed Museum, and Actors Theatre—why do we need more arts funding?

Answer: Those are world-class institutions—but they are concentrated downtown, and many neighborhoods have little arts access. Having great downtown institutions doesn't mean neighborhoods have arts access.

The problem:
– Many neighborhoods have no arts venues or organizations
– Tickets to major institutions can be unaffordable for families on lower incomes
– Getting to major cultural venues by TARC can require transfers
– Programming at major institutions doesn't reflect Louisville's diversity

My policy funds **community arts**—neighborhood-based programming, public art, community cultural centers in places where people live. It's about decentralizing culture.

International research from Australia, Canada, and UK shows cities need BOTH flagship institutions (Kentucky Center) AND distributed neighborhood arts infrastructure to achieve equity and high participation rates. Louisville has invested in the former but neglected the latter for decades.

Also, my policy will help major institutions reach new audiences through partnerships with neighborhood organizations—expanding their impact while supporting community-based arts.

5. Won't this policy just create low-wage service jobs in tourism, not real careers?

Answer: Not under my plan—that's precisely why 12% of this policy's budget ($3M) goes specifically to **Tourism Workforce Development** to ensure tourism creates career pathways, not just low-wage jobs.

How we'll change tourism jobs:

1. **Hospitality Career Academy:** Free training for culinary, hotel management, event management careers starting at $16-18/hour

2. **Registered Apprenticeships:** Earn-while-you-learn programs with wage progression

from $15/hour to $22/hour over 2 years—creating clear pathway to middle-class wages

3. **Advancement Support:** Tuition assistance and supervisory training for current hospitality workers to move into management (targeting a 35% advancement rate)

4. **Living Wage Incentives:** Businesses committing to at least $15/hour, with Homeownership Wage Employer recognition for those who reach the Kentucky Homeownership Wage Index receive wage subsidies and preferential treatment for city contracts—creating market pressure to raise wages

5. **Full-Time Conversion:** Incentives for businesses to convert part-time positions to full-time with benefits

Tourism CAN be pathway to middle class—if we invest in workforce development, not just industry growth.

6. How will you prevent arts funding from being cut when budget gets tight, like has happened in the past?

Answer: My policy creates **dedicated, sustainable funding streams** that won't fluctuate with annual budget politics:

Dedicated Revenue:

1. **Tourism Development Fee Expansion:** $8M annually from $2/room/night fee on hotels—directly tied to tourism activity, grows as tourism grows

2. **LVCC Restructuring:** $12M annually from Louisville Visitors & Convention Commission redirection—permanent reallocation of existing tourism tax revenue

3. **Percent-for-Art:** $1M+ annually automatically generated from capital projects—doesn't require annual appropriation

Total: $21M of $25M budget (84%) comes from dedicated sources, not subject to annual General Fund cuts

Legal Protection:
– **Ordinance Requirement:** Metro Council ordinance requiring minimum arts funding levels—can only be changed by council vote, not administrative decision

– **Trust Fund Structure:** Creative Communities Fund established as trust fund that can only be used for arts/culture, preventing raids for other purposes

Precedent: Other cities, including Seattle and San Francisco, have dedicated arts funding streams meant to protect arts spending in tight budget years.

I will work with Metro Council to pass ordinance in Year 1 establishing minimum funding floors and dedicated revenue streams—ensuring arts investment survives beyond my administration.

7. What about suburban and rural parts of Louisville Metro—does this policy help them or just downtown and West Louisville?

Answer: This policy is designed to serve ALL 26 neighborhoods in Louisville Metro, including suburban and rural areas:

Suburban/Rural Benefits:

1. **Geographic Distribution Requirements:** Creative Communities Fund requires geographic diversity—no more than 30% of funding to any single area, ensuring Middletown, Shively, Fairdale, Jeffersontown, Fern Creek, etc. all receive arts funding

2. **Neighborhood Arts Organization Support:** Any neighborhood can apply for $50,000-$200,000 grants to support local arts organizations—whether that's Middletown's community theater, J-town's arts council, or Fern Creek's music programs

3. **Public Art for Every Neighborhood:** 40 murals and 10 sculptures annually distributed across all council districts—suburban areas will receive public art installations in commercial corridors, parks, and public spaces

4. **Cultural District Flexibility:** Cultural districts can be established anywhere—could include Middletown's downtown area, Jeffersontown's historic district, Shively's commercial corridor

5. **Artist Housing Throughout Metro:** Artist housing will be scattered citywide, including suburban adaptive reuse opportunities (old schools, industrial buildings, etc.)

No neighborhood left behind: While the policy prioritizes correcting historic underinvestment in West Louisville and lower-income areas, suburban neighborhoods will see significant new arts resources. In fact, many suburban areas currently have as little arts infrastructure as West Louisville—they'll benefit equally from neighborhood-focused approach.

8. Why should Louisville compete with Nashville and Austin—shouldn't we focus on our own unique identity instead of copying other cities?

Answer: My policy is precisely about leveraging Louisville's UNIQUE assets—bourbon, bluegrass, Muhammad Ali, Derby, the heritage of Louisville's many communities, Ohio River—not copying Nashville.

What makes Louisville's culture unique:

- **Bourbon Heritage:** Only city in the world with Urban Bourbon Trail, craft distillery concentration, bourbon history and culture
- **Muhammad Ali:** Hometown of "The Greatest," with unparalleled sports and civil rights legacy
- **Derby & Horse Racing:** Long tradition and cultural phenomenon recognized worldwide
- **Bluegrass Music:** Geographic center of bluegrass tradition with legendary venues and musicians
- **Louisville Heritage:** Rich history from the Underground Railroad to West Louisville's historic business districts and arts, and the many communities that have made their mark here
- **River City Culture:** Ohio River history, steamboat era, Falls of the Ohio

The Nashville/Austin comparison is about INVESTMENT LEVEL, not copying their culture. Those cities invest heavily in arts and culture. If we invested more in OUR unique culture, we could see economic benefits—but with authentically Louisville identity.

My policy funds Muhammad Ali Heritage District, bourbon cultural tourism, bluegrass preservation, heritage tourism across Louisville's neighborhoods—distinctly Louisville assets. We're not trying to become Nashville, we're trying to fully leverage what makes us different.

9. What happens to this program if federal arts funding gets cut or tourism declines in a recession?

Answer: My policy is designed to be **resilient to external shocks** through diverse funding and countercyclical benefits:

Recession Resilience:

1. **Diverse Funding:** None of the $25M comes from federal sources (it comes from tourism taxes, the hotel fee, the General Fund, capital projects and private gifts)—federal cuts wouldn't touch the core program

2. **Tourism Development Fee:** While tourism spending might decline in a recession, fee revenue (an estimated $8M a year) has cushion to absorb moderate decline

3. **General Fund Commitment:** $2M in General Fund allocation provides stable baseline even if tourism revenue fluctuates

4. **Countercyclical Benefits:** Arts funding is MOST valuable in recessions when artists struggle and creative businesses fail—maintaining investment during downturns prevents losing cultural infrastructure that takes decades to rebuild

Why a recession is the wrong time to cut: Cuts to arts funding in a downturn can leave lasting damage to the creative sector, and maintaining funding helps it recover.

Budget Priority: I commit to treating arts funding as essential infrastructure, not discretionary spending to cut in tough times. Just as we don't eliminate police or fire departments in recessions, we won't eliminate arts infrastructure that drives long-term economic growth.

10. How will you measure if this policy actually achieves equity and doesn't just repeat patterns of downtown institutions getting most funding?

Answer: My policy includes rigorous **equity metrics and accountability mechanisms** to ensure funding reaches historically underserved communities:

Equity Requirements:

1. **50% Funding to Underserved Communities:** Creative Communities Fund requires minimum 50% of funding ($4M) go to West Louisville, Russell, Portland, Parkland, Smoketown, and other historically disinvested neighborhoods—tracked and reported publicly quarterly

2. **Grantee Demographics:** Track gender and where they're from (part of town, part of Kentucky, or part of the world) of organization leaders and artists receiving funding—publish annual reports showing demographic distribution vs. city population

3. **Community Control:** West Louisville residents have majority representation on Ali Heritage District governance board, with approval authority over all projects—preventing outside control

4. **Geographic Equity:** Map funding distribution by zip code and neighborhood—ensure no neighborhoods excluded

Accountability:

1. **Public Dashboard:** Real-time dashboard at arts.louisvilleky.gov showing funding by neighborhood, demographics, metrics—full transparency

2. **Independent Evaluation:** Year 2 and Year 4 independent evaluations by university researchers specifically assessing equity outcomes

3. **Community Oversight Commission:** 15-member Arts & Culture Advisory Commission with majority from underserved communities has authority to approve funding allocations

4. **Consequence for Missing Equity Goals:** If Year 2 evaluation shows less than 40% of funding reaching underserved communities (target is 50%), Mayor must present corrective action plan to Metro Council

This is how you prevent repeating past patterns: Explicit equity targets, transparent tracking, community control, and consequences for failing to meet goals. Not just good intentions, but enforceable accountability.

CONCLUSION: CULTURE AS COMMON WEALTH

For too long, Louisville has treated arts and culture as luxuries to fund after everything else—as amenities for wealthy neighborhoods rather than economic engines for everyone. Meanwhile, the communities that created Louisville's culture—West Louisville, Smoketown, Russell—have been systematically excluded from arts funding and tourism prosperity.

Dave's Arts, Culture & Tourism policy flips this upside down.

It recognizes that:

- Arts and culture are infrastructure that supports jobs and economic growth
- Creative economy drives 21st-century prosperity and attracts talent
- Tourism should benefit the communities that created our culture
- Artists deserve sustainable careers, not poverty wages

- Every neighborhood deserves access to world-class cultural programming

The choice is clear:

Continue Louisville's trajectory—underfunding the arts, losing creative talent to Nashville and Austin, watching tourism billions bypass West Louisville, letting cultural infrastructure crumble—and falling further behind cities that invest in creative economy.

Or put $25M a year into arts and culture, create affordable artist housing, spread tourism prosperity to every neighborhood, fund 55 community arts organizations, install 200 public artworks, ensure artists can thrive here, and build a creative economy that drives equitable growth.

This is about more than murals and museums. It's about economic justice—ensuring the communities that created Louisville's culture share in the prosperity that culture generates. It's about retaining talent and attracting investment. It's about giving every child access to arts programming that research proves improves educational outcomes. It's about Louisville competing with peer cities instead of falling further behind.

My vision: A Louisville where culture isn't concentrated in a downtown corridor but flourishes in every neighborhood. Where artists earn sustainable livings. Where tourists visit West Louisville and spend money that benefits residents. Where public art isn't a luxury but a right. Where bourbon, bluegrass, Ali, and Derby heritage drive billions in economic activity that flows to communities, not just corporations.

A creative city for everyone.

That's democracy that works for everyone. That's the Louisville we'll build together.

For more information:
– **Full policy details:** rundaverun.org/policy/arts-culture-tourism
– **Voter education glossary:** rundaverun.org/glossary
– **Get involved:** rundaverun.org/get-involved/
– **Contact campaign:** dave@rundaverun.org

Dave Biggers for Louisville Mayor
Democracy that works for everyone.

This policy document is part of my comprehensive policy platform addressing Louisville's most pressing challenges through evidence-based solutions and community-driven governance. See

also: Public Safety (Policy 01), Criminal Justice Reform (Policy 02), Health & Human Services (Policy 03), Budget & Financial Management (Policy 04), Affordable Housing (Policy 05), Education & Youth Development (Policy 06), Environmental Justice (Policy 07), Economic Development & Jobs (Policy 08), Infrastructure & Transportation (Policy 09), and forthcoming policies on Technology & Innovation, Public Health & Wellness, Neighborhood Development, Senior Services, Disability Rights & Accessibility, and Food Systems & Urban Agriculture.

RELATED POLICIES

This policy works in coordination with these related initiatives:

- **Economic Development & Jobs:** Arts and tourism generate economic activity and jobs in Louisville's creative economy.
- **Neighborhood Development:** Cultural tourism equity initiative spreads economic benefits to West Louisville neighborhoods bypassed by current tourism.
- **Education & Youth Development:** Arts education and cultural programming provide youth development opportunities and creative career pathways.
- **Technology & Innovation:** Technology and creative sectors intersect in digital media, design, and the innovation economy.

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 *
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.