Kentucky Homeownership Wage Index

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KENTUCKY HOMEOWNERSHIP WAGE INDEX

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

THE PROBLEM

In 2017, I earned $15 an hour and bought a $110,000 house. The mortgage took a quarter of my paycheck.

Run the same numbers today:

 A $15/hour worker can afford a **$99,000** house at today's rates by the same 28% standard (computed with the formula below)
 The Kentucky median home sold for **$289,095** in June 2026, up 3.2% in a year
 Kentucky's minimum wage is still **$7.25** — unchanged since 2009, set by reference to federal law
 Every "living wage" number in circulation measures survival, not the thing Kentuckians actually want: a house with their name on it

The wage didn't move. The house did.

Current Reality: The same paycheck that bought a home in 2017 rents one today.
Our Solution: A public, annually published number — the hourly wage at which a full-time Kentucky worker can buy the median Kentucky home — and public recognition for every employer who pays it.

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

WHAT THE INDEX IS

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

The formula fits on a napkin:

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

Today's number: $43.81 per hour.

Input	Value	Source
Kentucky median sale price, June 2026	$289,095	Redfin Kentucky Housing Market
30-year fixed mortgage rate, Aug 27 2026	6.66%	Freddie Mac Primary Mortgage Market Survey
Down payment	5%	Standard first-time buyer
Property tax + insurance	1.5% of value per year	Assumption (not a measured figure)
Monthly payment (PITI)	$2,126	computed
Annual income at 28%	$91,126	computed
Index	**$43.81 / hour**	computed

If the statewide median were anywhere between $278,000 and $298,000, the index would land between **$42.13 and $45.16**. The published figure uses one named source and one named date, every year, so the number can be checked by anyone with a calculator.

The 2017 proof

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

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

WHAT METRO GOVERNMENT WILL DO

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

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

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

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

2. Recognize the employers who pay it — voluntarily

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

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

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

3. Measure Metro itself against it

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

4. Carry it to Frankfort

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

WHAT THE INDEX IS NOT

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

WHY THESE CHOICES

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

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

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

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

IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

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

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

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Year 1 (2027): First index published in January with full methodology. Homeownership Wage Employer program opens; first listing published in June. Metro's own gap report published alongside.
Year 2 (2028): Second index. Sector-by-sector share of jobs at or above the index added. First presentation to the General Assembly.
Year 3+ (2029+): Annual, same date, same formula. The formula does not change without a published explanation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Isn't $43.81 an hour unrealistic?
A: It is what the median Kentucky home costs at today's rates, stated as a wage. If the number is shocking, that is information about housing, not about the formula. In 2017 the same formula said $15.87. The index will fall when homes get cheaper or rates drop — and when they do, the index will say so.

Q: Will this drive employers out of Louisville?
A: Nothing here applies to any employer who does not choose it. The only thing an employer can lose is the chance to be on a list.

Q: Why not just fight for a higher minimum wage?
A: We will — in Frankfort, where the authority is. The index is what we bring to that fight: a Kentucky number, from Kentucky data, that every legislator's constituents can check.

Q: What about renters?

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

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

Q: Who checks the math?
A: Anyone. Every input is public, every source is named, and the formula is five steps.

EVIDENCE BASE

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

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OUR COMMITMENT

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

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

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

What This Means for YOUR Neighborhood

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

Find Your Mini Substation

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

Find My Substation

63 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.