Food Systems & Urban Agriculture

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FOOD SYSTEMS & URBAN AGRICULTURE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Louisville’s food system is broken—creating food apartheid where about 22% of residents (about 164,000 people) live more than a mile from a grocery store (USDA Food Access Research Atlas, 2019 data), while simultaneously wasting large amounts of food, losing farmland to development, and excluding residents from food production. Meanwhile, our city has many vacant lots and residents with knowledge and desire to grow food—resources waiting to transform Louisville into a city where everyone has access to healthy, locally-produced food.

The Challenge

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

1. **Food Apartheid:** about 22% of Louisville residents (about 164,000 people) live more than 1 mile from a grocery store (USDA Food Access Research Atlas, 2019 data), with the problem worse in West Louisville—linked to higher diabetes rates and to chronic disease, part of the life expectancy gap between rich and poor neighborhoods.

2. **Food Waste Crisis:** Louisville sends large amounts of food to landfills where it generates methane—while many seniors, children and other residents are food insecure, a moral failure and environmental disaster.

3. **Disappearing Farmland:** Louisville Metro's farmland fell 34% between 2017 and 2022, and its number of farms fell 23% (USDA Census of Agriculture 2022, Jefferson County)—destroying local food production capacity and increasing dependence on industrial food systems trucking food long distances while fresh local food could be grown here.

4. **Excluded from Food Production:** Few Louisville residents have a community garden plot even though many more want to grow food, urban agriculture faces zoning barriers and lack of support, and residents—particularly in food deserts—have no opportunity to produce their own food despite vacant land and interest.

5. **Broken Food Economy:** Louisville's annual food spending (residents + institutions) flows primarily to national chains and industrial agriculture, with very little going to local farmers—extracting wealth from Louisville while local farmers struggle and fresh food remains inaccessible in underserved neighborhoods.

My Vision

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

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

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

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

Food Waste Reduction & Composting ($5M annually): Establish citywide composting to divert organic waste from landfills, create a food rescue network redistributing surplus food to food-insecure residents, and eliminate commercial food waste—turning environmental problem into resource.

Food Justice & Sovereignty ($2M annually): Ensure communities control food systems through community land trusts for urban farms, food policy council with community leadership, urban agriculture training and a farm entrepreneurship fund for new farms, and culturally-appropriate food access—shifting from charity to justice.

Budget Impact

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

Why This Matters

Food apartheid kills. When large parts of West Louisville live far from a grocery store and diabetes rates run higher in those neighborhoods, the connection is undeniable: lack of healthy food access causes disease. This isn't personal choice—it's structural violence through food system design. In the poorest fifth of Louisville neighborhoods, ranked by household income, people lived more than 9 years less on average than in the richest fifth (NCHS USALEEP 2010–2015 and Census ACS 2011–2015, our analysis of 182 Jefferson County census tracts). That gap is partly food access.

Food waste is moral and environmental crisis. Louisville sends large amounts of food to landfills while many residents are food insecure. We're simultaneously wasting food and generating methane, a far more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. This is unconscionable and solvable.

Local food economy creates wealth and resilience. Most of what Louisville spends on food goes to national chains and industrial agriculture, and very little goes to local farmers. If more of that food spending stayed with local farmers, we'd create jobs, support more farms, keep wealth in the community, and build a resilient local food system.

Urban agriculture is economic development. Detroit's urban agriculture grows food on formerly vacant land, creating jobs, eliminating blight, improving health, and building community wealth. Louisville has many vacant lots that could grow food if cultivated.

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

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

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

CURRENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

Food Access Crisis

Louisville's food access shows extreme inequality:

Residents far from a grocery store:
– **Total residents more than 1 mile from a grocery store:** about 164,000 (about 22% of Louisville) (USDA Food Access Research Atlas, 2019 data)
– **Definition:** >1 mile from a supermarket or large grocery store in urban areas, >10 miles rural (USDA definition)

Corner Store Problem:

In food deserts, residents rely on corner stores that:
– Often charge more for produce (when available)
– Stock limited fresh food (most sell only processed, packaged food)
– Offer no fresh meat, dairy, or produce selection
– Create "food swamps"—abundant unhealthy food, scarce healthy food

Food Insecurity:
– Many Louisville residents, including children and seniors, are food insecure
– Many eligible residents, especially seniors, are not enrolled in SNAP

Food Waste Crisis

Louisville generates massive food waste:

Louisville wastes a great deal of food, and most of it ends up in landfills where organic waste generates methane (CH_4). The water, energy, land and labor used to produce that food are wasted too.

Wasted food costs households money in groceries thrown away and costs the city in collection and landfill fees.

Meanwhile: many food-insecure residents could be fed with rescued food.

Food Rescue Current Capacity:

Louisville has minimal food rescue infrastructure:
– **Dare to Care (food bank):** Redistributes surplus food, and could handle much more with expanded infrastructure
– **Gap:** Far more food is wasted than is rescued

Composting:

Louisville has little composting infrastructure for food waste:
– **Residential Composting:** few households compost

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

Disappearing Farmland & Declining Local Agriculture

Louisville Metro is losing farmland to development:

Farmland Loss:
– **Farms, 2022:** 264, down 23% since 2017
– **Land in farms, 2022:** 13,266 acres, down 34% since 2017
– **Average farm size:** 50 acres (USDA Census of Agriculture 2022, Jefferson County)

Why Farmland Lost:
– **Development Pressure:** Land more valuable for housing/commercial than farming
– **Lack of Farmland Protection:** No purchase of development rights program, weak ag zoning
– **Aging Farmers:** 196 of Jefferson County’s 461 farm producers are 65 or older (USDA Census of Agriculture 2022, Jefferson County), and many may retire without successors
– **Economic Stress:** Small farms struggle to compete with industrial agriculture

Local Food Production:

Louisville has a small agricultural base and minimal connection to city food system:

Current Local Food Economy:
– **Farms in Louisville Metro:** 264 (2022)
– **Farm Revenue:** $4.38 million in agricultural products sold in 2022 (USDA Census of Agriculture 2022, Jefferson County)

Farmers Markets:
– **Markets:** Louisville Metro has farmers markets, but they are small next to total food spending
– **Barriers:** Limited hours (Saturday mornings), no SNAP infrastructure at most markets, seasonal only

Institutional Purchasing:

Louisville's large institutions (schools, hospitals, universities, jails, senior centers) purchase a great deal of food every year:
– **% Local:** only a small share
– **Barriers:** Purchasing policies favor large distributors, no local food aggregation/distribution infrastructure, price-focused without considering local benefit

If institutions purchased 30% local (feasible per national models), far more money would flow to local farmers—supporting more farms.

Urban Agriculture: Potential Unrealized

Louisville has massive unrealized urban agriculture potential:

Community Gardens:
– **Current:** Louisville has community gardens, but not enough plots for the residents who want to grow food

Vacant Land:
– **Vacant Lots:** Louisville has many vacant lots (not including vacant buildings)
– **Current Use:** Mostly unmaintained, becoming dumping grounds
– **Potential:** Some of that land could grow food—obviously not all suitable, but even 10% utilization would transform food access

Urban Farms:
– **Current:** Louisville has only a few urban farms producing for market sale
– **Potential:** Many more urban farms could produce for market sale

Barriers to Urban Agriculture:

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

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

3. Infrastructure:
– No water access at most vacant lots
– No tool-sharing programs
– No central resource hub for urban agriculture

4. Skills & Knowledge:
– Many residents interested in gardening lack knowledge/skills
– Limited training programs

5. Economic Support:
– No financial support for urban agriculture startups
– Urban farms struggle to access capital, equipment
– No market infrastructure connecting urban farms to institutions, restaurants

Food Economy: Extractive Not Regenerative

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

Money Flow:

Most of what Louisville residents and institutions spend on food goes to national chains, with only a small share going to local farmers and food businesses.

Result: Food dollars leave Louisville, enriching distant shareholders while local farmers struggle.

Economic Multiplier Effect:

Money spent at local farms and food businesses tends to stay in the local economy longer than money spent at national chains.

Farmer Economics:

Small local farmers face economic challenges:

- **Net cash farm income:** $26,000 in total across all Jefferson County farms in 2022, about $97 per farm (USDA Census of Agriculture 2022, Jefferson County)
- **Small sales:** 52% of farms sold under $2,500 of products in 2022 (USDA Census of Agriculture 2022, Jefferson County)
- **Age:** 196 of 461 producers are 65 or older; 42 are under 35 (USDA Census of Agriculture 2022, Jefferson County)
- **Barriers:** Land access, capital for equipment, distribution/market access, competition from industrial agriculture

Food Business Ecosystem:

Louisville lacks infrastructure for local food businesses:

- **Commercial Kitchens:** Only 4 shared commercial kitchens for food entrepreneurs (vs. 12 needed)

- **Food Hubs:** No aggregation/distribution facility connecting farms to institutions
- **Processing:** Limited meat processing, minimal value-added processing for produce
- **Retail:** Local food businesses struggle to compete with chains on price, convenience

The Major Problems

1. Food Apartheid Drives Disease and Death

When large parts of West Louisville live far from a grocery store and chronic disease rates run higher:

This isn't personal choice, it's structural violence:
– No grocery stores within walking distance
– Corner stores often charge more for limited produce
– Transit inaccessible for heavy grocery loads
– Result: Diet-driven chronic disease, and part of the life expectancy gap between rich and poor neighborhoods

Food desert = health sentence.

2. Food Waste is Moral and Environmental Crisis

Large amounts of food wasted while many residents are food-insecure:

We're simultaneously:
– Throwing away food that could feed food-insecure residents
– Generating methane in landfills
– Wasting money on purchased food
– Paying to dispose of wasted food

This is unconscionable when solvable through food rescue and composting.

3. Local Food Economy Underdeveloped

Very little of Louisville's food spending goes to local farmers:

Result:
– Food dollars extracted to national corporations
– Local farmers struggling to earn a living
– No resilient local food system
– Vulnerability to supply chain disruptions

If more of Louisville's food spending stayed local, it would create jobs and build food sovereignty.

4. Urban Agriculture Potential Unrealized

Many vacant lots, many residents wanting to grow food, but too few community gardens:

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

5. Farmland Disappearing

Farmland down 34% and farms down 23% from 2017 to 2022 (USDA Census of Agriculture 2022, Jefferson County):

Destroying:
– Local food production capacity
– Agricultural heritage
– Economic opportunity for future generations
– Food system resilience

Without intervention, Louisville will keep losing farmland—and depend even more on industrial agriculture trucking food long distances.

MY VISION: FOOD JUSTICE & SOVEREIGNTY

I envision a Louisville where:

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

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

Food dollars stay local—30% of institutional food purchasing from local and regional farms, thriving farmers markets, food hubs connecting farms to buyers, and local food businesses supported by infrastructure.

No food is wasted—citywide composting diverting organic waste from landfills, food rescue redistributing surplus food to food-insecure residents, commercial food waste eliminated.

Farmland protected—purchase of development rights preserving 10,000 acres, new farmer

programs, and urban-rural food connections ensuring local food production continues.

Core Principles

1. **Food is a Right:** Every person has right to healthy, affordable, culturally-appropriate food—not charity but justice.

2. **Food Sovereignty:** Communities must control food systems—what's grown, how it's distributed, who benefits—not distant corporations.

3. **Regenerative Not Extractive:** Food system should build soil, community, health, and wealth—not extract them.

4. **Urban Agriculture is Economic Development:** Growing food in cities creates jobs, eliminates blight, improves health, builds wealth—particularly in disinvested neighborhoods.

5. **Close the Loop:** Food waste should be composted enriching soil growing more food—regenerative cycle, not linear waste.

Four-Year Goals

By the end of my first term:

- **Eliminate food deserts** so 95% of residents within 1 mile of healthy food (up from about 78% (USDA Food Access Research Atlas, 2019 data))
- **Create 100 community gardens** serving 6,000+ residents
- **Establish 20 urban farms** producing 2 million lbs food annually
- **Achieve 30% local institutional food purchasing** from regional farms
- **Divert organic waste** from landfills through citywide composting
- **Rescue more surplus food** and redistribute it to food-insecure residents
- **Protect 2,000 acres farmland** through purchase of development rights
- **Create 600+ farm/food jobs** through local food economy development

DETAILED POLICY PROPOSALS

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

The Problem: about 22% of Louisville (about 164,000 people) live more than a mile from a grocery store (USDA Food Access Research Atlas, 2019 data), with the problem worse in West Louisville—linked to higher diabetes rates and to the life expectancy gap between rich and poor neighborhoods.

My Solution:

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

Program Components:

A. Grocery Store Attraction ($3M annually)

(Coordinates with Public Health & Wellness (Policy 12), Proposal 3)

Bring full-service groceries to food deserts:

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

B. Mobile Markets ($1.2M annually)

Bring fresh food directly to food deserts:

- **Mobile Market Fleet:** 5 trucks operating 6 days/week in food desert neighborhoods selling fresh produce, meat, dairy, staples at affordable prices ($1M annually operations, $1M capital Year 1)

- **SNAP/EBT Accepted:** All mobile markets accept SNAP, offering Double Bucks (spend $20 SNAP, receive $40 purchasing power)

- **Senior Delivery:** Home delivery for homebound seniors unable to reach mobile markets ($200K annually, 500 seniors weekly)

C. Farmers Market Expansion ($800K annually)

Increase farmers market access:

- **New Markets:** Establish 6 new farmers markets in food desert neighborhoods (12 total new, 30 citywide) ($300K annually operations, $600K capital over 2 years)

- **Year-Round Markets:** Convert 8 seasonal markets to year-round with covered structures ($200K annually)

- **SNAP Infrastructure:** EBT/SNAP at all markets with Double Bucks matching ($200K annually—city funds match, increases SNAP spending power)

- **Transportation:** Free shuttles from neighborhoods to farmers markets ($100K annually)

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

Produce food in neighborhoods:

- **Community Gardens:** 25 new gardens annually in food deserts (100 total over 4 years) providing fresh produce to 3,000 residents ($400K annually, $4K per garden for infrastructure)

- **Urban Farms:** Establish 5 urban farms annually (20 total) producing for affordable sale in food deserts—2M lbs annually by Year 4 ($600K annually startup capital, farms become self-sustaining through sales)

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

annually

Success Metrics:
– % of residents more than 1 mile from a grocery store (Target: <5%, down from about 22% (USDA Food Access Research Atlas, 2019 data))
– West Louisville food desert rate (Target: <15%)
– Produce consumption in food deserts (Target: 2.5 servings/day)
– New grocery stores (Target: 6 in food deserts)
– Mobile market customers (Target: 15,000 weekly)

PROPOSAL 2: Urban Agriculture Infrastructure ($8M annually)

The Problem: Too few community gardens for the residents who want to grow food, only a few urban farms, and many vacant lots becoming blight instead of food production—squandered opportunity for food justice and economic development.

My Solution:

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

Program Components:

A. Community Garden Program ($2.5M annually)

Create 100 community gardens citywide:

- **New Garden Establishment:** 25 gardens annually (100 total over 4 years)—0.5-1 acre each on vacant lots, park land, institutional property ($1.5M annually for infrastructure: water, fencing, raised beds, tools, soil, compost, storage sheds)

- **Garden Coordinator:** Each garden has paid coordinator (part-time, $10K/year) organizing, training, conflict resolution ($1M annually, 100 gardens)

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

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

B. Urban Farm Development ($3M annually)

Establish 20 urban farms producing for market:

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

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

Support individual food growing:

- **Backyard Garden Program:** Free seeds, seedlings, and raised beds for 1,000 low-income households annually ($500K, $500/household)
- **Vacant Lot Adoption:** Allow residents/groups to adopt adjacent vacant lots for gardens—city provides water access, liability insurance, supplies ($400K annually, 200 lots)
- **Victory Garden Revival:** Inspire WWII-era victory gardens—city provides resources, coordinates sharing of produce with food-insecure neighbors ($200K)
- **Fruit Tree Program:** Plant 1,000 fruit trees annually in yards, parks, public spaces (free fruit available to community) ($200K annually)
- **Tool Libraries:** Establish 6 neighborhood tool libraries lending garden tools, equipment ($200K capital, $100K annual operations)

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

Build skills and knowledge:

- **Growing Food Louisville Program:** Comprehensive urban agriculture training (12-week course covering soil, seeds, pest management, season extension, preservation) ($400K annually, 800 participants)
- **Urban Farmer Incubator:** 1-year intensive training for aspiring urban farmers with land access, mentorship, business development ($300K annually, 30 farmers)
- **Farm Business Support:** Business planning and one-on-one help for new farmers starting or growing a farm ($200K annually)
- **Youth Urban Agriculture:** Summer youth employment growing food at urban farms and community gardens ($100K annually)

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

Success Metrics:
– Community gardens (Target: 100)
– Garden participants (Target: 6,000)
– Urban farms (Target: 20 producing 2M lbs annually)
– Backyard gardens (Target: 1,000 annually)
– Vacant lots in food production (Target: 800, reducing blight)
– Training participants (Target: 3,200 over 4 years)

PROPOSAL 3: Local Food Economy Development ($4M annually)

The Problem: Very little of Louisville’s food spending goes to local farmers—most flows to national chains and industrial agriculture while local farmers struggle and the food system remains dependent on long-distance supply chains.

My Solution:

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

Program Components:

A. Louisville Food Hub ($1.5M annually)

Create aggregation/distribution connecting farms to buyers:

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

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

Shift institutional purchasing to local:

- **Good Food Purchasing Policy:** Require Louisville Metro, JCPS, UofL, hospitals, senior centers to purchase minimum 30% of food from local sources within 150 miles ($500K for procurement coordination, policy development)
- **Current:** These institutions buy very little of their food locally
- **30% Local:** more institutional food dollars to regional farms
- **Impact:** Supports regional farms and farm jobs
- **Price Premium:** City pays 10% premium for local food—recognizing economic, health, environmental, resilience benefits ($500K annually covers 10% premium on

$5M city food purchasing)

C. Farmers Market Infrastructure ($800K annually)

Expand and improve farmers markets:

- **Market Manager Program:** Fund professional managers for 12 major farmers markets coordinating vendors, marketing, community engagement ($480K annually, $40K per manager)

- **Infrastructure:** Covered structures, refrigeration, electricity, water, signage at 12 major markets ($200K annually amortizing $2M capital over 10 years)

- **Marketing:** Citywide farmers market promotion, mobile app showing market locations/hours, social media ($120K annually)

D. Food Business Incubator ($700K annually)

Support local food entrepreneurs:

- **Shared Commercial Kitchens:** Establish 3 new shared commercial kitchens (6 total) available to food entrepreneurs at affordable hourly rates ($450K capital over 3 years, $300K annual operations)

- **Business Development:** Training in food business, licensing, health codes, marketing, distribution ($150K annually, 150 food entrepreneurs)

- **Microgrants:** $2,000-$10,000 grants for food business equipment, initial inventory ($250K annually, 35 businesses)

Implementation Timeline:
– **Year 1:** Food hub construction begins, institutional purchasing policy adopted, first shared kitchen opens
– **Year 2:** Food hub operational selling $2M, institutions purchasing 15% local, second kitchen opens
– **Years 3-4:** Food hub at $8M sales, 30% institutional local purchasing achieved, 6 kitchens operational

Success Metrics:

– % institutional food purchasing local (Target: 30%)
– Food hub annual sales (Target: $8M by Year 4)
– Farmers selling through food hub (Target: 50+)
– Farmers market sales (Target: $25M annually)
– Food businesses incubated (Target: 200 over 4 years)
– Farm/food jobs created (Target: 600+)

PROPOSAL 4: Food Waste Reduction & Composting ($5M annually)

The Problem: Louisville sends large amounts of food to landfills generating methane—while many residents are food insecure. We're simultaneously wasting food that could feed them and creating environmental crisis.

My Solution:

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

Program Components:

A. Citywide Composting System ($3M annually)

Divert organic waste from landfills:

- **Compost Facility:** Establish commercial composting facility processing food waste, yard waste, agricultural waste ($8M capital Year 1-2 leveraging federal/private investment, $2M annual operations)

- **Residential Collection:** Curbside compost collection for all Louisville residents (third bin)—weekly pickup of food scraps, yard waste ($1M annually, residents pay $3/month—revenue covers collection cost)

- **Drop-Off Sites:** 12 drop-off sites for residents to bring compost ($200K annually operations)

- **Commercial Collection:** Require large food waste generators (restaurants, grocery stores, institutions) to separate organic waste for composting ($300K enforcement and

coordination)

- **Compost Sales:** Finished compost sold to farmers, gardeners, landscapers at affordable rates ($4M annual revenue by Year 3—facility becomes revenue-positive)

Target: Divert a large share of food and organic waste from landfills by Year 4, cutting methane emissions

B. Food Rescue Network ($1.5M annually)

Redistribute edible food before it's wasted:

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

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

Mandate waste reduction by large generators:

- **Food Waste Ban:** Prohibit businesses generating >1 ton/week food waste from landfilling it—must donate, compost, or reduce ($200K enforcement)

- **Waste Audits:** Require large food businesses to conduct food waste audits, develop reduction plans ($150K technical assistance)

- **Best Practices:** Train restaurants, grocery stores, institutions in food waste reduction (trayless dining, smaller portions, root-to-stem cooking, ugly produce sales) ($150K)

Implementation Timeline:
– **Year 1:** Compost facility construction begins, residential compost pilot in 3 neighborhoods, food rescue coordination launches
– **Year 2:** Facility operational, residential compost expands to 50% of city, food rescue growing
– **Years 3-4:** Citywide compost collection, facility at full capacity, food rescue at full scale, facility revenue-positive

Success Metrics:
– Organic waste diverted from landfills (tracked yearly, rising through Year 4)
– Methane emissions reduced (tracked yearly)
– Food rescued and redistributed to food-insecure residents (tracked yearly, rising)
– Compost produced for urban agriculture (tracked yearly)
– Facility revenue (Target: $4M annually, revenue-positive by Year 3)

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

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

My Solution:

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

Program Components:

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

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

Ensure community control of agricultural land:

- **Land Acquisition:** Community land trusts acquire 200 acres of land over 4 years (vacant lots, purchased farmland) for permanent community-controlled agriculture ($600K annually for acquisition)

- **99-Year Leases:** CLTs lease land at $1/year to urban farmers, community gardens with 99-year renewable leases—ensuring permanent affordability and community control

- **Cannot Be Sold:** Land held in trust in perpetuity—cannot be sold to developers, remaining agricultural forever

- **Community Governance:** CLT boards controlled by community members, farmers using land

B. Food Policy Council ($300K annually)

Community leadership in food policy:

- **Structure:** 25-member Food Policy Council with majority seats for residents of food deserts, farmers, food workers—not food industry representatives

- **Authority:**

- Review all city food-related policies
- Develop food system plan
- Allocate $2M annual food sovereignty grants

- Advise Mayor and Council on food issues

- **Staffing:** 2 full-time staff (director, coordinator) supporting Council ($200K annually)

- **Operations:** $100K annually for meetings, research, community engagement

C. Farm Entrepreneurship Fund ($500K annually)

Help new and small farms start and grow, open to any Louisville farmer:

- **Land Access:** Land for new farmers through CLTs, on reserved agricultural land

- **Capital Grants:** $10,000-$50,000 grants for farms for equipment, infrastructure, operating capital ($300K annually, 15 farmers)

- **Training:** Specialized training for first-time farmers ($100K annually)

- **Market Access:** Vendor slots at farmers markets, food hub purchasing from new local farms, institutional connections ($100K coordination)

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

Respect food sovereignty of diverse communities:

- **Culturally-Specific Food:** Ensure mobile markets, food banks, institutions stock foods the people they serve ask for ($200K purchasing for food banks, meal programs and mobile markets)

- **Community Food Assessments:** Conduct food assessments with refugee/immigrant communities identifying food needs and preferences ($100K)

- **Halal/Kosher Options:** Ensure religious dietary restrictions respected in institutional food, emergency food ($100K)

Implementation Timeline:
– **Year 1:** Food Policy Council established, CLT acquires 50 acres, farm entrepreneurship fund opens
– **Years 2-4:** CLT acquires 200 acres total, farm fund at scale, culturally-appropriate food normalized

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

BUDGET SUMMARY

Total Annual Investment: $25 Million

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

Budget Impact

Total New Investment: $25M = 2.2% of the $1.13B operating budget

How the reallocation ledger funds it: Food Systems is phased. It launches on its own non-Metro funding — federal agriculture and nutrition grants, institutional purchasing, compost revenue and philanthropy — and Metro adds its $7M share as the jail savings prove out. Until then the Years 1–2 compost bridge has to come from outside money, or composting starts later.

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.

Economic Returns:

Healthcare Savings:
– Improved nutrition reducing chronic disease (diabetes, heart disease, obesity)

Local Food Economy: more institutional food dollars to regional farms by Year 4
– Creates 600+ jobs

Compost Facility Revenue: $4M annually by Year 3
– Covers operating costs, revenue-positive

Food Waste Savings: $15M annually
– Reduced disposal costs, rescued food value

CONCLUSION

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

The 16 Policies:

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

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.

Jobs Created: 10,000+ across all sectors
Lives Transformed: Hundreds of thousands of Louisville residents

This comprehensive platform demonstrates my commitment to "democracy that works for everyone"—addressing root causes, centering equity, ensuring community control, and building systems that serve all Louisville residents.

For more information:
– **All 16 policies:** rundaverun.org/policy
– **Voter education glossary:** rundaverun.org/glossary
– **Get involved:** rundaverun.org/get-involved/
– **Contact campaign:** dave@rundaverun.org

Dave Biggers for Louisville Mayor
Democracy that works for everyone.

RELATED POLICIES

This policy works in coordination with these related initiatives:

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

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.