

2011

The City of **Nicholasville**

*Report to the  
Community*

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Your City Commission

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Business on Upswing

Utility and Road  
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[nicholasville.org](http://nicholasville.org)



## Letter from the Mayor

Dear Fellow Citizens,

Cities all across Kentucky and the nation are competing to create jobs by bringing in new businesses and making their communities the type of place where families want to live. Nicholasville is no different. We've been successful in many ways and continue to work hard to make this community even better. Here are some of the good things happening here.

- The quality of life in Nicholasville and throughout Jessamine County is hard to beat. We are surrounded by some of nature's most beautiful landscapes and celebrate a rich history. It's also one of the most affordable communities in the country as reported by Money Magazine.
- We are blessed with good schools that are safer because of the School Resource Officer Program, which is conducted in partnership with the Jessamine County Schools, city of Nicholasville and Jessamine County Fiscal Court.
- Our city is growing and many new businesses have located here. Brannon Crossing is a good example of that.
- After many years of hard work, Nicholasville has an ambulatory care center and several other new health care facilities.
- Our downtown is in the middle of a facelift. The \$1.7 million project, funded by the state and sponsored by the city and county, is taking place on Main Street between Oak and Walnut streets. By the end of the year, we'll have a much improved downtown that not only will enhance the aesthetics and accessibility of our city, but also will generate new business opportunities.
- We have well-trained and award-winning police and fire departments that do an excellent job of keeping the community safe.

These are but a few of the positives in Nicholasville. As you'll see in this publication, there are many more things of which we can proud within our community. I see a bright future ahead and think you will, too.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russ Meyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Russ Meyer

Mayor

# New Commission Takes the Reins



From left: Commissioner Andy Williams, Peter Sutherland, Mayor Russ Meyer, Commissioner John Collier, and Vice Mayor Doug Blackford.

The Nicholasville City Commission was sworn in December 17 by Circuit Court Clerk Doug Fain. Commissioners Doug Blackford, Johnny Collier, Pete Sutherland and Andy Williams began a two-year term on January 1. Mayor Russ Meyer's second four-year term also began that day.

Sutherland is the only new member of the Commission. The former owner of Sutherland Chevrolet and now an insurance agent, Sutherland said he'd always had an interest in public service.

"When I left the dealership and got more involved with the Chamber, I got excited about some of the projects the city was working on and decided it would be a good time to run," Sutherland said.

The Eastern Bypass and the I-75 Connector are of great interest to Sutherland because he sees both as good for attracting business and jobs. Vice Mayor Blackford agrees.

"I think the more progress we make on the Eastern Bypass, the closer we are to the I-75 Connector," Blackford said.

All the commissioners said they look forward to completing the downtown revitalization project, and some said they hope to see some movement toward the new city hall construction.

"If the economy continues to do better, I'd like to see the new city hall started in the next two years," Williams said.

Johnny Collier, a veteran commissioner, agrees that moving toward construction is something he's looking forward to as well. He also said he's proud of the city's financial situation.

"We're one of four or five cities in Kentucky with a AA bond rating, and the smallest city to have that," he said.

With Nicholasville's form of government, Commissioners are citywide representatives, rather than representing a specific district or group. Commissioners make laws, ensure they are carried out and perform administrative functions. The mayor is a fully participating member of the Commission and can vote on all matters.

Each commissioner is responsible for working with various departments within city government. They serve as the liaison between the department, constituents and city government. Blackford works with Water and Sewer, Collier the Police and Fire Departments, Sutherland Electric and Meter, and Williams Streets and Cemeteries.

The City Commission meets at 5 p.m. the first, second and fourth Monday of each month at City Hall. Meetings also are streamed live via [www.bluegrasswebtv.com](http://www.bluegrasswebtv.com).

For more information about meetings, agendas and commission contacts, visit [www.nicholasville.org/government/city-commission.php](http://www.nicholasville.org/government/city-commission.php).

# Streetscape program underway downtown



Renovation of Nicholasville's downtown core got off to a strong start in 2010 before winter's severe cold and record snowfall interfered. Construction is expected to move quickly the rest of this year.

When the project is complete, downtown streets will have two, 11-foot lanes and parking spaces that are eight-feet wide. Sidewalk widths will vary depending on the location of existing structures. Utilities will be buried and new trees and lighting will be added. The plan includes many decorative details such as brick and stone sections within the sidewalk and street, attractive lamp posts and better signage.

Although the project has been disruptive to downtown businesses, Euro Wine Bar owner Charlie Hensley is focused on the end goal.

"This will be positive for the city and Jessamine County," Hensley said. "It has been hard, but I'm trying to focus on how beautiful it will be. The new sidewalks will be better for people with strollers and we hope to have outside seating when it's all done."

Hensley said his customers have made a big difference for him. They've endured the rubble, dust and inconvenient parking situation to dine at his restaurant.

"My customers are great. Many come two or three times a week and bring friends and family members to help make up for the lost business," he said.

Gary Goldey, Public Works superintendent, asks business owners and residents for their continued patience over the next few months and for people to keep coming downtown.

"We strongly believe when the project is finished everyone will be pleased with the results," he said. "In the meantime, please continue visiting downtown merchants. There's parking in several city lots and on side streets as well as some temporary spaces on Main Street."

For regular updates on the Streetscape Project, visit [Nicholasville.org](http://Nicholasville.org). Residents and business owners also are invited to attend public meetings about the project each Monday at 10 a.m. at City Hall.

# Nicholasville Business Outlook Positive

Even in a down economy, Nicholasville is fortunate to have evidence of new job opportunities and business success throughout the city.

For example:

- Hundreds of new businesses have opened in the past few years.
- St. Joseph and Central Baptist hospitals have increased the number of healthcare jobs in the city with their new facilities.
- The Nicholasville Cracker Barrel is the top grossing store in the nation.
- McDonald's in Brannon Crossing is one of the most successful franchises in the region.
- Before building here, Sam's Club had Nicholasville as its number one priority for a new location.
- McKechnie Vehicle Components (MVC) has added product lines and jobs when many manufacturers are reducing them or shutting down.

While not every business has been setting records, many believe Nicholasville has gained momentum in its quest to increase jobs. Nancy Stone, who recently retired as Jessamine County Chamber of Commerce executive director, said she saw an increase in the sense of optimism and pride among members during her 10-years with the Chamber.

City records show that Nicholasville businesses paid employees 88% more in 2010 than was paid in 2000. Even with the impact of the recession, the 2010 payroll for the city exceeded that of 2005 by 25%. Stone said that as she interacted last year with other chamber executives and business leaders throughout the region it was common for them to comment on what is happening in Nicholasville.

"A number of people have said to me that they wish they had as much going on in their communities in



Nicholasville's McKechnie Vehicle Components recently has added product lines and jobs.

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**"We expect more good things to happen in the near future."**

—Mayor Russ Meyer

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terms of economic growth as we have in Nicholasville," she said.

New Chamber director Amy Cloud said that makes it an exciting time to be in her role. "There is a growing sense that if you want it, we've got it right here in Nicholasville," she said. "And all the different groups are on the same page in terms of making things happen."

Mayor Russ Meyer underscored that point, saying McKechnie's turnaround is a perfect example of what can happen when strong partnerships exist among local, state and federal governments.

Local leaders recognized the automotive industry's rapid decline was about to put McKechnie out of business and its employees out of work. With the support of Congressman Ben Chandler and the USDA, state and local officials helped procure loans needed to turn the company around. That included a Rural Development Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan for \$5 million leant through Nicholasville's Citizens Commerce National Bank.

McKechnie now employs 285 people and has diversified its customer and product base, including many parts that previously were produced in China. The new VW Passat will feature a number of chrome parts made in Nicholasville.

"We have many positive stories like this one," Meyer said. "Nicholasville is in an enviable position due to our growth and the cooperative approach our leaders are taking. We expect more good things to happen in the near future."



## **In the Works** *Infrastructure Improvements*

The city's sewer system serves about 8,700 customers through a 4.1 MGD wastewater treatment plant, 14 pump stations and a collection system composed of a network of gravity sewers and force mains. Keeping it up-to-date ensures reliable service and protects the environment and our quality of life.

Recently the city extended sanitary sewer services to the commercial/light industrial area in the north end commonly known as the drag strip. This enables about 380 properties that have relied on holding tanks and septic systems to connect to the wastewater collection

system. The sewer system is more cost-effective and will keep the ground water in the area cleaner. Property owners are paying for the \$7.6 million project.

This year the city will replace sewer lines that have been in the heart of Nicholasville for 40 – 50 years. A state grant is covering the estimated \$400,000 cost for the preventive maintenance work, which is along Second Street between Stratton and West Oak.

A state grant of \$150,000 is enabling the city to design and build a water main, valves, fire hydrants and related facilities needed to connect two sections of the

sewer system that now dead-end near each other. Tying the Crenshaw Lane main to the one on Phillips Lane will allow the city to isolate a problem should one occur, which would result in fewer people being affected.

Late last year Nicholasville completed a three million gallon-per-day expansion of its water treatment plant. This \$14.5 million project, funded through a low-cost loan from the Kentucky Infrastructure Authority, was instrumental in bringing Jessamine County a reliable potable water supply for decades to come.

# Update on East Nicholasville Bypass and I-75 Connector

Years of planning and advocacy by Nicholasville leaders have resulted in allocations of state and federal funds needed to move two new road projects forward.

The East Nicholasville Bypass project consists of constructing a four-lane bypass on the east side of Nicholasville. The northern end will be at US 27 north of Nicholasville at a new interchange that will tie into the existing bypass near the current crossing of the Norfolk-Southern Railroad. The southern end of the bypass will be at US 27 south of Nicholasville where US 27 and Danville Road currently connect.

“Phase II Roadway Design” is under way. It includes right-of-way plans, construction plans, traffic control plans, and cost estimates needed for the project. Right-of-way acquisition will begin in 2012.

The Bypass is needed to reduce congestion through downtown Nicholasville and to provide better access for commuters to US 27 both north and south of Nicholasville. The east side of Nicholasville has seen a surge in residential and commercial development over the years, and Main Street serves as the collector of this traffic. Currently, more than 37,000 vehicles per day converge at the north end of the project. More than 24,000 vehicles per day travel downtown between KY 39 and KY 169.

For the US 27 to I-75 Connector, “Phase I Roadway Design and Environmental Services” is about to begin. This includes preparing engineering studies, identifying utility impacts, drainage design, creating reliable cost estimates by developing a financial plan, holding public meetings, and planning and working toward environmental approval.

The need for better regional access and east-west connectivity are what make this project necessary. As it is now, people traveling from the Nicholasville area and points south and west must go further north into Lexington to get to I-75. This contributes to high traffic volumes, including a high percentage of trucks, on US 27, KY 1980 and Man-O-War Blvd. The purpose is to reduce traffic congestion and travel time and to increase safety and improve access for truck traffic. It also will address Homeland Security needs by providing an alternate route for I-75 traffic around the Clays Ferry Bridge.

There will be a number of opportunities for the public to hear updates, provide input and respond to information. Watch for announcements in the Jessamine Journal, through the Jessamine Chamber of Commerce and through the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. Updates are posted on the Cabinet’s website at [www.transportation.ky.gov](http://www.transportation.ky.gov).





## Stadium and Pro Football Hall of Fame Plans Moving Forward

For several years many in the community have been working on a plan and funding for a new multi-purpose athletic stadium and a permanent home for the Kentucky Pro Football Hall of Fame. A volunteer board, headed by Jimmie Shearer, is making progress. Shearer is hopeful that ground will be broken for Phase I in a few months, but that is dependent on funding and good weather.

The stadium site is located behind East Jessamine Middle School and will accommodate 4,000 spectators when complete. Shearer said the site offers plenty of room for a stadium and parking as well as a building for the Hall of Fame. The first phase will be readying the playing field.

“We hope to get the field playable by fall,” Shearer said. “We have our permits all lined up, and we’d like to start excavation when the weather breaks.”

Although the group hopes to eventually have a synthetic surface installed, that will have to wait. The immediate plan is to sow grass.

The Jessamine County Chamber of Commerce houses the Kentucky Pro Football Hall of Fame but this temporary location is running out of space. The Hall of Fame inducts five members each year. To be eligible, a player has to have been born in Kentucky or played in Kentucky.

The pre-induction party in Nicholasville (June 23 this year) for inductees serves as a fundraiser. The induction ceremony is held the following evening in Lexington.

# City Briefs

## City Finances on Right Track

A municipal government's audit can be compared with having a good physical—it's not a lot of fun to go through, but getting a clean bill of health is very reassuring. CPA Leta Mattingly's thorough audit of the city's financial records resulted in a positive report for Nicholasville's 2009/2010 fiscal year. Not only did everything check out the way it was supposed to, but revenues also exceeded projections and expenses were lower than budgeted.

Many cities have found themselves in the red due to decreased revenues caused by the recession. Mayor Meyer credited the city's financial stability to careful financial management by everyone associated with city government, particularly department superintendents who have had to provide equal or greater services with fewer resources.

## Lovitt Appointed DEA/ABC Administrator

Nicholasville's Disaster Emergency Administrator (DEA) and Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) programs have a new administrator, but he's not new to the city. Jerry Lovitt, who took the role over from Frank Hubbard in January, was general government director in the 90's. Prior to that he had distinguished careers in the military and with the Kentucky State Police. He was KSP commissioner 1993 – 1995.

Lovitt's DEA duties will include addressing everything from homeland security issues to natural disasters. His main role as ABC administrator will be to oversee alcohol licenses within the city and enforce alcohol sales laws. Lovitt is especially interested in ensuring the laws are followed as they relate to youth.



## East-West Bowl a Tourism Initiative

Families often travel to youth and adult sporting events, making communities that host such activities travel destinations. Restaurants, hotels and other hospitality businesses benefit from the influx of fans to such events.

That's what the Nicholasville Tourism Commission had in mind when it agreed to sponsor the East West Bowl for 2011, its inaugural year. The early-season games will give the city's high school football

teams some good competition and serve as a recruiting tool for players.

The first year of the program will feature local schools in competition on August 19 at East Jessamine High School. East will play Tates Creek at 6:30 p.m., and West will play Somerset at 8:45 p.m.

The long-term plans are for the event to expand and be held in the multi-purpose sports arena that's currently in the funding stage and to involve the Pro Football Players of Kentucky.



# Employee Initiatives Save Money...



Safety Committee chairman Mark Corman and vice-chairman James Hubbard look over some of the gear that helps keep Nicholasville employees and the public safe (above). Both recently earned awards from the Kentucky League of Cities for their efforts (below).

## Safety Committee Focused on Prevention

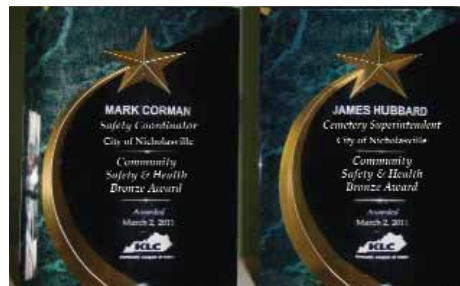
It's said information is power, and the impact the city's Safety Committee is having on its insurance cost is a perfect case in point. As a result of the steps taken by the Safety Committee members and their fellow employees, Nicholasville has saved an estimated \$150,000 in insurance premiums over the last three years. That's \$50,000 annually during tough economic times.

The committee's efforts also have helped to reduce down time due to injuries, prevent damage to equipment and improve the quality of life for employees while at work.

And it all comes from a little information.

"Awareness is the key," Safety Committee Chairman Mark Corman said. "You have to know what's going on around you at all times and be aware of things that can contribute to accidents."

For instance, three-quarters of driving accidents happen when people are backing up. The simple habit of parking a vehicle so you can drive straight out of a parking space, when possible, rather than backing out of it will decrease the chance of having an accident. Multiply that by the number of employees driving city vehicles on the job, and it can save a lot of money, not to mention increase their safety.



"It's all about keeping our employees and the public safe," Corman said. "Most of the focus is on trying to prevent many small problems because if you have small accidents and injuries, eventually you'll have a big one."

The committee is comprised of employees from all departments. They attend short meetings monthly to review safety checklists and receive handouts that focus on relevant safety topics, then share them within their departments. Committee representatives attend programs, such as the Kentucky Health & Safety Network Conference, to learn the latest tips and receive certification for certain activities. For instance, training people who are "flaggers" around road construction can improve their safety and that of those driving by.

The committee gives an award annually to a department that has zero lost time. In 2010, the Electric Department received the award.

"Improving safety requires a commitment by the individual employee to focus on following all the safety rules," Robert Blackford, Electric Department Superintendent, said. "For instance, in this department, wearing safety equipment is paramount—hard hat, gloves, boots, and other equipment. It not only saves the city money, it can be the difference in life or death."

# ...and Improve Lives



Fire Department Deputy Chief Kevin Baker (left) and Police Department Major Brian Slone joined forces to create the Joint Arson Task Force to better assess and resolve this type of crime.

## Joint Arson Task Force

One public servant specializes in knocking out fires. Another specializes in catching bad guys. They drive the same streets and protect the same people and property, but don't often work together.

So, if you were to put firefighters and police officers together, what would you get? In Nicholasville's case, you'd have the Joint Arson Task Force: a more efficient way to recognize, investigate and help prosecute arson.

The Joint Nicholasville Arson Task Force is the brainchild of two senior leaders of each agency—Deputy Chief Kevin Baker from the Fire Department and Major Brian Slone from the Police Department. They each believed they could improve their department's approach to arson and decided to get creative in establishing a new relationship for the sake of the community.

To their surprise, initial research turned up no precedents of this happening in other communities around the state. Undaunted, they wrote a

memorandum of understanding of how the process would work and set about breaking new ground.

The task force includes about 15 members from the two departments, a mix of supervisors and non-supervisory personnel. All of them volunteered for the specialized work when it was first developed a few years ago.

"We all train together. We have learned about the identification and collection of evidence from Fire and Explosion scenes and using it to put a case together," Slone said. "We've even been specially trained in interrogation techniques for arsonists."

Baker said their new, low-cost initiative is the best of both worlds.

"Sometimes the cause of a fire is obvious. Other times, it's not. But suspecting it wasn't an accident isn't enough—you have to prove it was a crime," Baker said. "The arson rate is relatively low here and we believe keeping our conviction rate up is having an impact on that."

According to interFIRE.org, an online firefighter resource, fewer than 10% of arson cases are cleared.

With an estimated conviction rate of less than 1%, arson is the least effectively prosecuted criminal offense in America. Arson also is the nation's single largest dollar loss crime.

Nicholasville's statistics are vastly different from the nation's average. Since 2007, the city's Joint Arson Task Force has determined the cause of approximately 75% of all of the fires they responded to. That means there either has been a conviction or the case is still tied up in the court system. The other cases are either still under investigation, unsolvable or it was determined that arson was not the cause.

By solving this type of crime more often, the Task Force may be helping keep the community's insurance costs down because rates are based on losses. The lower the financial losses are from fires, the lower the insurance rate.

In addition, the task force has opened communication channels between these two public safety departments for the benefit of those they serve.

For a list of task force members, go to [www.nicholasville.org](http://www.nicholasville.org) and visit the police or fire page.



517 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356

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# Directory

## City Clerk

*Roberta Warren*  
City Clerk/Treasurer  
517 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.1121  
Fax: 859.881.0750

## City Commissioners

*Doug Blackford*  
*John Collier*  
*Pete Sutherland*  
*Andy Williams*  
517 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.1121  
Fax: 859.881.0750

## Finance

*Laurie Young, CMA*  
Finance Director  
601 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.9473  
Fax: 859.885.9476

## Fire Department

*Charles E. Brumfield*  
Fire Chief  
1022 South Main  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.5505  
Fax: 859.887.2713

## Human Resources

*Rita Randall*  
Director  
517 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.1121  
Fax: 859.881.0750

## Jessamine County Economic Development Authority

*Wayne Foster*  
President  
212 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.887.8770  
Fax: 859.887.8786

## Legal Services

*William Arvin*  
City Attorney  
517 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.4106  
Fax: 859.881.0750

## Maple Grove Cemetery

*James Hubbard*  
Superintendent  
500 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.4334  
Fax: n/a

## Mayor's Office

*Russ Meyer*  
Mayor  
517 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.1121  
Fax: 859.881.0750

## Meter Department

*David Teater*  
517 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.1121  
Fax: 859.881.0750

## Nicholasville Now!

*Tonya Coleman*  
Executive Director  
100 West Oak Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.881.3820  
Fax: 859.887.1211

## Parks and Recreation Department

402 Park Drive  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.9787  
Fax: 859.881.5017

## Planning Commission

*Greg Bohnett*  
Director  
517 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.9385  
Fax: 859.881.5263

## Police Department

*Barry Waldrop*  
Chief of Police  
510 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.9467  
Fax: 859.885.1766

## Wastewater Treatment Plant

*Van Bugg*  
Superintendent  
2296 Shun Pike  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.887.3100  
Fax: 859.885.3148

## Street & Road Department

*Gary Goldey*  
Superintendent  
517 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.1121  
Fax: 859.881.0750

## Tax Office

*Leanne Wafford*  
Tax Administrator  
517 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.7618  
Fax: 859.881.0750

## Utilities

*Tom Calkins*  
Public Utilities Director  
517 North Main Street  
Nicholasville, KY 40356  
Phone: 859.885.9473  
Fax: 859.881.0750