

2012

The City of **Nicholasville**

*Report to the
Community*

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nicholasville.org



Letter from the Mayor

Dear Friends,

When it comes to your city government, what's most important to you?

From my many years of public service, I believe people want and expect primarily three things: 1) consistent service, 2) responsible decision making, and 3) representation.

Nicholasville covers only about 8.5 square miles. But we sure have a lot packed into our city limits: residences of all types and sizes; retail stores large and small; professional businesses; and various types of entertainment—from movie theatres to the arts and bowling allies to outdoor sports venues.

People who live, work and play here rely on our safe and navigable streets, dependable electricity, clean tap water, and other infrastructure for their quality of life. We don't want to have to think about most city services--we just want them taken care of. I'm proud to say we exceed those expectations most of the time. In fact, many of our services have won awards for quality.

Most people also don't pay much attention to the day-to-day government decisions. The more responsible leaders are, the more their actions fade into the fabric of our lives. I am so thankful for a City Commission that doesn't mind dealing with minute details of running a town while keeping the big picture ever in their minds.

My goal as mayor is to represent you in every decision I make. As we sort through how to allocate city funds, what grants to apply for, what zoning changes to accept, and what piece of equipment not to buy due to cost cutting, I have you in mind. You, the parent. You, the member of the local church. You, the person looking for a job. And You, the newcomer or life-long resident.

As the articles in this report share, these are not the most prosperous of times. But we are making steady progress toward a way of life that reflects our shared values.

Thank you for the faith you show in us and for the privilege of serving you.

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



Your City Commission

Every day as residents go about their lives in Nicholasville, more than 200 city employees are working to make the community an even better place to live, work and play.

Regardless of where they work, everything city employees do is the result of decisions made by the City Commission on the public's behalf.

This isn't an easy job. In addition to public safety and other municipal services, Commissioners must plan for infrastructure maintenance and improvements, often looking many years into the future. Following are some of the recent advances made within city operations, as shared by the Commissioners.

Water and Sewer Departments

Water Depts.: The 2010 expansion of the water treatment facility solidified the availability of water for our community. Grants recently were acquired to help ensure there will be enough water from Pool 8 of the Kentucky River to provide tap water to the community and to prevent too much water on our streets from flooding.

Sewer Depts.: The city soon will move forward with construction of an 18-inch main between Brookview and W. Oak Street, thanks to a \$760,000 grant. The new sanitary sewer line will run parallel to the existing one to add capacity.

Public Safety Departments

Fire Dept.: Firefighters responded to more than 800 calls so far this year, with a record number of grass and brush fires. They conducted CPR and defibrillator training for city employees and have

worked with JCTC to provide emergency service courses.

Police Dept.: The NPD has added six new cruisers. And thanks to drug forfeiture funds, they put new radios, computers and printers in all vehicles. Two officers are assigned to the DEA and one to the Ky. State Police Task Force, which helps us keep the drug problem under control. The NPD won two state awards for enforcement: seatbelt usage and DUIs. And, a week-long active shooter response training was held for local first-responders.

Administration and Finance

Streetscape Project: The Streetscape project has turned out very well and is an important step toward revitalizing downtown. It won't happen overnight, but will create new interest. Funds are in place to replace the wires holding the stoplights with much more attractive mast arms at all the main intersections included in the Streetscape project.

Finance: Sound fiscal management is a top priority for the Commission. Unlike some cities across the nation that are experiencing deep financial losses, the City of Nicholasville's finances are in good condition, thanks to the efforts of Commission members and superintendents who have used fiscal restraint in budgeting and allocating precious resources.

Electric and Meter Departments

Electric Dept.: The city is in the process of replacing underground electric lines in the Kimberly Heights neighborhood and increased security has been installed at all substations.

Meter Dept.: New water meter installations are nearly complete for customers within the city and about 10 percent of those outside the city's border. The meters can be read from the street using a touch pad, thanks to the use of radio waves.

Street Department & Cemetery

Cemetery: After many months of planning, the City recently purchased property to expand the Maple Grove Cemetery. The 1,100 new grave sites will ensure availability for about 15 years and create \$1 million in revenue.

Streets Dept.: It's an ongoing effort to keep our streets clean and safe, but our personnel do an excellent job. Residents can help pavement last by preventing chemicals from spilling or dripping onto streets and cleaning any spills promptly.

City Commissioners and Their Administrative Areas

Doug Blackford, Mayor Pro Tem
Water & Sewer Departments

John Collier
Public Safety Departments

Russ Meyer, Mayor
Administration & Finance

Pete Sutherland
Electric & Meter Departments

Andy Williams
Street Department & Cemetery

Building Permits: The Tides May Be Turning



The Culver's being planned for Main Street will look a lot like this new store.



A population tidal wave that established Nicholasville as one of the state's fastest growing cities a few years ago appears to have buoyed the city's reputation among major retailers despite a dip in construction permits.

New home and business construction permits, a major indicator of a community's growth, declined by 48 percent from 2007 to 2011, but corporations continue to surf the city for new sales turf.

The drop in permits comes after years of accelerated growth. With 28,015 residents counted in the 2010 Census -- a growth rate of 42 percent since 2000 -- Nicholasville ranks as Kentucky's 11th largest city.

Construction hammers were in full swing in 2007, when the city issued a total of 402 building permits, with 172 being for new residential construction and 22 being for new commercial, professional or industrial structures.

The recession silenced much of that activity over the next few years with new residential construction permits falling to 61 by 2009 and business construction permits falling to 10 in the same period. The downturn continued through 2011, when residential permits were down to 50 and business permits were down to 8.

Permits in 2012 are not quite keeping pace with last year, with 26 residential permits and four business permits granted in the first six months.

Nicholasville's residential permit slump was less than that of Lexington but greater than Richmond and Georgetown experienced.

But the rising tide of businesses locating in the city is expected to have a ripple effect that will lead to at least a trickle of jobs and eventually more residential housing permits, said Dean Anness, Nicholasville building and zoning supervisor.

"We've seen an increase in commercial activity, which is a good sign," said Anness.

For example, plans are in the works for the city's first Culver's. Owner Mary Struckhoff is pleased to be locating her family-oriented restaurant known for its ButterBurgers and Fresh Frozen Custard in Nicholasville, which is where she lives. The project is in the due diligence phase and has been presented to the Nicholasville Planning Commission. The approximately 4,500 square foot store is expected to employ 50 – 60 team members.

"All of the corporate representatives we talk to who are looking for new business locations love this city," said Anness. "Location experts track businesses in this area and know they are very successful. It's all about sales. As jobs increase, hopefully the residential permits will begin to rise again, too."

Economic Forecast: Sunnier Days Ahead

While the economic outlook for the nation remains a bit cloudy, conditions in Nicholasville are quite sunny with a chance for even brighter days ahead.

Recent developments in Brannon Crossing and in the city's Enterprise Park have showered the area with some 230 new and future jobs and helped decrease the unemployment rate from 8.4 percent to 7.1 percent in the past 12 months, said Wayne Foster, president of the Jessamine County Joint Economic Development Authority. That decline is similar to the dip in the statewide unemployment rate, but far better than the national decline from 7.7 percent to 7.9 percent.

Among the recent corporate additions to Nicholasville's roster of employers:

- Intech Contracting, LLC, a Lexington-based engineering and construction company, opened a new facility in Enterprise Park. Intech provides structural steel and concrete renovation services for

highway bridges and design/build services for commercial and industrial clients. They also have a fabrication shop that produces fabricated structural steel components as well as fabricated reinforcing steel for concrete.

- ABR Construction, Inc., which does commercial roofing and architectural sheet metal work as well as excavation and site development, relocated their operations from Lexington. They purchased an 18,000-square-foot facility in Crestview Centre on Crestview Court.
- Ashgrove Woods broke ground in January on a \$30 million assisted-living facility behind Brannon Crossing. The development will include 72 individual homes and townhomes. The project will provide hundreds of temporary jobs during the construction phase and about 150 permanent jobs when completed.



Dean Anness, with Nicholasville Building & Zoning, prepares to make a final inspection of the new Cane's restaurant.

A slew of new retail stores, restaurants and service businesses have located to the city and several more are in the works, Foster said. One major retailer eyeing the city is Gander Mountain Co., a national outdoor recreation retailer. Gander Mountain, based in Minneapolis, would operate out of a 50,000-plus square-foot building near Hobby Lobby.

The local economic climate is also ripe for growth and expansion with existing employers. Companies with expansion projects in the works include Medivet America, which makes stem-cell kits for the treatment of animals and is adding 10,000 square feet of additional research and warehouse space. Three other companies alone – Donaldson, McKechnie Vehicle Components and SMC – added almost 125 jobs in the past several months.



“We’ve seen an increase in commercial activity, which is a good sign,” said Anness. “As jobs increase, hopefully the residential permits will begin to rise again, too.”

— Dean Anness,
Nicholasville Building & Zoning

Downtown Buzz About the Streetscape Project

Quotes from some of the people who live or work near downtown:

“I believe it’s dressed up downtown. It has made it more attractive to visitors and enhanced the business atmosphere.”

—Bruce Smith
Bruce E. Smith Law Offices, PLLC
Downtown business Owner since 1974



“An attractive and vibrant downtown has a significant impact on a community’s image, quality of life and economic development. The streetscape project has certainly changed our downtown’s appearance for the better. Now we need to make it economically vibrant so we can benefit from the positive benefits of jobs and investment.”

—Wayne Foster, President
Jessamine County Joint Economic Development Authority

“I love our new Main Street. To me it is an outward sign of the future direction and heart of Nicholasville and shows the importance of relationships in community and family. The flower baskets and banners are so welcoming and fun. The new look and feel is consistent with the new spirit of family we have here, as indicated by the VisitNich.com Bowl and Soccerama games and the creation of a new league promoting the arts. I am very excited for all our futures in Nicholasville and Jessamine County.”

—Stephanie Routt, President,
Nicholasville Tourism Commission
Past President, NicholasvilleNow!

“It looks better. It was a mess while it was going on, but now that it’s done, it looks a lot better when you look at all the details. I like the railings and the benches.”

—“Miss Patty” Sanders
Prime Star/Marathon Store

“The overall project turned out very nice. The new project has given the downtown area a needed facelift, and makes it convenient for pedestrians to do business in the downtown corridor. Most people don’t realize the amount and complexity of the utilities on a project of this magnitude. Sanitary sewers, storm sewers, waterlines, and electric lines, etc. are all underground. Main Street is the oldest street in town, so that’s why some of the utilities were in especially bad condition and had to be replaced and/or relocated underground. Unknown circumstances like that can turn a big project into a much larger project and cause delays.”

—Jason Banks, Civil Engineer, Banks Engineering, Inc.
Jessamine County Resident



“Having underground utility lines has made a vast improvement to downtown Nicholasville. The sidewalks make it easier for residents to do business there. It is our hope that this improvement will encourage more businesses to consider moving downtown.”

—Neal Cassity
Jessamine County Judge Executive

“It all looks so nice. I like the benches, the trash receptacles and the parking areas. I’m a downtown girl: I live downtown and love downtown. I’ve lived here most of my life. I think everyone would have to agree it’s an improvement in the way downtown looks.”

—Wini Yunker, Nicholasville resident

“It’s certainly a big improvement in the downtown. It lasted longer than everybody thought and was an inconvenience to the downtown businesses because of the dust and all the construction. But I guess you could say, like in Shakespeare’s play, “All’s well that ends well.” All I’ve heard from people commenting on the project is that it’s made a big difference in the downtown area. I think it’s really been a good project, and I’m glad they did it. I applaud the city—their actions for bringing this about.”

—Ben Brown, President
United Bank

“The physical appearance is much nicer – The new benches, flag poles and trash containers give our downtown a classier appearance and the trees give it greater curb appeal. It was important to do this to show that our historic downtown area is the heartbeat of our community. It projects a positive “feel good” atmosphere to those visiting or working in our downtown. I can’t wait to see the next phase.”

—Tommy Cobb, President
Town Square Bank



Stop and Go on the Way Out

Folks have said for generations that the line between Nicholasville and Lexington would one day be a grey one. Well, that day has come.

While the development along the stretch of road between the two cities has delighted shoppers from across the region with a plethora of restaurants and retail outlets, it has come with its share of misery for motorists.

“Growth can bring some pain along with the pleasure,” said Nicholasville Mayor Russ Meyer, referring to the U.S. 27 corridor. “The area is a major economic hub for us, but we don’t want it to be at the expense of commuters. As I said during my campaign for mayor, we have to take a strategic approach to control the growth.”

Three major projects could bring stop and go traffic woes along the stretch to a screeching halt.

A state traffic study of U.S. 27 soon will offer ways to improve traffic flow, reduce the number of rear-end collisions and increase the capacity of the roadway without the expense of widening the road. The study is expected to recommend stretching the distance between traffic lights, installing medians to restrict left turns at non-signal intersections, and widening right-turn lanes.

Another project, the Eastern Bypass, is nearing the road-construction phase. The four-lane, 7.3-mile roadway will run around the eastern side of Nicholasville and is expected to ease some congestion for commuters from surrounding counties by allowing them to bypass the city. Some 45,000 motorists – including commercial truckers – are expected to use the bypass, which will include a new interchange at U.S. 27 North.

The bypass will split from U.S. 27 North and run over KY 39 and KY 169 before reconnecting with U.S. 27.

The acquisition of property along the path of the bypass is nearing completion and work on the road is expected to be complete in 2017.



Finally, the construction of a roadway that will link U.S. 27 in Jessamine County to I-75 in Madison County is currently in the design phase.

Commonly referred to as the I-75 Connector, the roughly 13-mile road is expected to run from the soon-to-be constructed Eastern Bypass to the KY 627/I-75 Interchange area in Madison County, but the exact route has not yet been determined, said Nancy Stone, chair of the Jessamine County Joint Transportation Task Force.

The roadway likely would include a bridge over the Kentucky River and could include a toll, she said.

Grants Offer Relief from Water Woes

Riney-B Dam

There soon will be a flood of relief – rather than water – for downtown residents as work gets underway on a new dam in Town Branch Creek to keep the area from flooding during heavy rainfall.

An inflow of funding in the form of a \$1.17 million grant from the Kentucky Department for Local Government will cover the cost of the construction of a flood-control dam. The new dam south of the aquatic center in Riney-B Park will directly benefit residents who live along Brookview Drive, Meadowlark Lane and Second Street.

“This is a big deal if you live in downtown or if you have a business in downtown,” said Nicholasville Mayor Russ Meyer. “Some people were displaced or had property damage during heavy rain in the past.”

City Clerk Roberta Warren and a handful of other city and county workers were instrumental in securing the grant, which required that a high number of low- to moderate-income families be impacted by the flooding. Warren led about a dozen workers in visiting nearly 800 homes to complete income surveys required for the grant application.

The dam is one of several water-related projects in the works that will stem the tide of water woes in the city.

Kentucky River Dam

Work could begin as early as next fall on the renovation of Kentucky River Dam 8, which supplies drinking water for the city of Nicholasville. The existing dam, primarily made of timbers filled with rock and capped with concrete, was originally



Flooding on Main Street will be resolved once the new dam is built south of the aquatic center in Riney-B Park.

constructed in 1899 and supports a nearly 18-mile-long pool of water. The dam will be replaced with a new one made of concrete-filled steel cylinders some 20 feet tall and 50 feet in diameter to be situated upriver from the existing structure. The new dam will better regulate the water supply during times of drought or flooding.

The project could be a boost for tourism if a lock allowing the passage of boats can be used. That option is dependent on funding and other factors.

Jerry Graves, executive director of the Kentucky River Authority, said the work is currently in the design phase. Bidding could get underway early next year and a contract for the work could be awarded as soon as next spring. Construction would likely be complete in 2014.

“It’s one of those situations where you literally don’t miss your water until your well runs dry,” Meyer

said. “We’re not waiting for our well to run dry because this project will secure one of our community’s greatest resources -- drinking water.”

New Water Mains

Finally, the city has secured a \$792,000 grant to replace some of the city’s oldest pipes – installed sometime in 1920 – in the Armory Place area, which includes North Second Street, High Street, Jessamine Avenue and Terrace Avenue. Decades of buildup in the pipes has resulted in low water pressure to some of the area’s 176 homes as well as frequent line breaks. The project also will allow for more fire hydrants in the area.

Tom Calkins, public utilities director, said work on the lines is expected to begin next year and should be completed by 2014.

Employee Tenure Something to Treasure

Few people know the city of Nicholasville as well or love it as much as Jimmy Dale Watts.

Better known as “J.D.,” the 62-year-old has worked for the city for more than two decades, serving three mayors and countless city commissioners and county administrators. The police dispatcher turned inventory controller turned courier logs some 20,000 miles a year running errands and packages from city hall to area banks to the post office to city and county offices. One of the longest serving employees on the city’s roster of 222 workers, he has finally made plans to retire and “do what I want, when I want and however long I want.

“It’s a wonderful place to work, so people tend to stick it out to retirement,” he said.

That’s good news for the city of Nicholasville, which benefits from the low turnover with a roster of resourceful employees who “remember when,” want the best for the city and care about its future, said Rita Warner, human resources director for the city. Watts, she said, is an example of the dedication and longevity of city employees, most of whom have at least 10 years of service with the city.

“Past and present employees of the City of Nicholasville are some of the finest, most decent and loyal people I have ever had the pleasure to work with,” said Warner, who herself started working for the city as a receptionist nearly 20 years ago.



“With longevity of employment, you retain the history of information of the city’s services because that long time employee here today is the employee that did the work 15 to 20 years ago and will remember first hand the hows and whys of the incident,” said Warner.

Warner points to the employees of the Nicholasville utilities department as a prime example of how residents benefit from familiar faces.

“The staff has the benefit of becoming familiar with the customers and build a confidence between the two,” she said. “We have customers who will call in and ask for a particular customer service rep they have never met face to face, but have dealt with by telephone over the years and trust no one else to assist them.”

Warner also touts the ability of the city’s staff to adapt to changes and maintain high standards of education, training and professionalism.

“Looking back, I’m sometimes in awe to see how the city functions have expanded as well as the employee population,” she said. “Everything from utility-bill processing to the water and wastewater treatment plants have become more proficient with the addition of new technology and equipment. We are fortunate to have well educated and trained personnel who take pride in the work they and their departments perform.”

Watts, who can’t wait to spend some of this retirement time spoiling his grandnephews, concurs.

“I will definitely miss the people,” he said. “This is a great city and I’m honored to have served with so many great people.”



Bowl Stirs Up Tourism

Organizers of the annual VisitNich.com Bowl were expecting the event to score an even bigger turnout in its second year with the addition of a soccer bowl to the lineup of activities.

More than 3,500 people turned out last year, said Ken Cox, athletic director for Jessamine County Schools. The initiative between the Nicholasville Tourism Commission and Jessamine County Schools, is a boost for restaurants, hotels and other businesses that cater to the fans of participating teams.

In addition to the football Bowl, the Soccorama was added to the August 17 – 18 weekend event, with visiting teams playing Jessamine County's Jaguars and Colts.

Drug Free Workplace Is a Win-Win Program

A program aimed at providing drug and alcohol abuse education and treatment for employees and their families has saved the city roughly \$34,000 over the past two years. Rita Warner, human resources director for the city, worked with the Kentucky League of Cities to obtain state certification for a Drug Free Workplace Program in 2009. Since then, all employees have received training and the counseling and treatment services have been used more than 80 times by employees and/or their families. Having the program shaves 5 percent off the cost of the city's workers compensation, which resulted in a savings of \$14,000 in 2011 and \$20,665 this year.

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



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1812 – 2012

Happy Birthday, Nicholasville!

There are a number of momentous occasions a community can celebrate as it looks for ways to connect with its history. And, it just so happens that 2012 offers the city of Nicholasville a number of reasons to celebrate, including the 200th anniversary of its initial charter.

In 1812, Nicholasville became a formal political entity when an Act of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky granted the town its first charter on February 8. A charter is a legal document outlining how an organization such as a municipality can conduct business.



An account in *A History of Jessamine County, Kentucky*, by Bennett H. Young, quotes official state documents as follows: “An act authorizing the trustees of the town of Nicholasville to sell real property in said town under certain restrictions: Approved February 8, 1812.”

A history published by the Jessamine County Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc., *Jessamine County, Kentucky*, reports that the town was laid out in 1798 and named for General Nicholas.

“It’s inspiring to look at how our town progressed in its early years, and the ways leaders worked together to create a successful community,” said Nicholasville Mayor Russ Meyer. “I’m so proud to be part of continuing that legacy in a small way and helping to celebrate it this year.”

A newly updated Main Street in the heart of downtown (see related story) gives the town another reason to mark its progress.

Community Celebrations: Ribbon Cutting and Cake

A ribbon-cutting ceremony for Nicholasville’s Streetscape project was held September 4 at 10 a.m. with state and local officials near the corner of Main & Walnut Streets.

In addition, a community celebration of the 200th anniversary featuring cake took place in conjunction with the Jessamine Jamboree September 9 on the Courthouse lawn. Nicholasville residents were invited to visit the Nicholasville NOW tent following the parade to enjoy a free slice of birthday cake.