

A professional portrait of a man with grey hair, smiling, wearing a dark blue plaid suit, a light blue shirt, and a striped tie. He is seated with his hands clasped. The background is a solid light purple.

# MAYORAL MATTERS

## A conversation with Democratic Mayor Greg Fischer, who's seeking a third term.

By Mary Chellis Nelson  
Photos by Jessica Ebelhar

At a moment when the far right and the far left seem to dominate the political landscape, Louisville's mayoral candidates don't lean too far in either direction. Mayor Greg Fischer, up for re-election Nov. 6 for what would be his third term, is a development-happy Democrat who will mention numerous times, in case you haven't heard him, that the city is undergoing \$13 billion in investment — a billion of which is in west Louisville — an "unprecedented" period of growth. He has turned the word *compassion* into a concrete expression, with efforts like the Give A Day week of service and the Compassionate Schools Project, infusing things like meditation and mindfulness into the curriculum.

At the same time, the opioid epidemic has kept successes in check. The city has seen violent years, with homicides climbing from 48 in 2011 to 107 in 2017. Though Fischer is quick to point out an apparent downturn: This year has seen 60, a 24 percent decrease compared with this time last year. Having entered office during the bleak bottom of the recession, Fischer promised "jobs, jobs, jobs" — and the city has added 72,000 of them since 2011. Tourism — er, Bourbonism — is exploding. *Forbes* has repeatedly recognized the city for its rate of business growth. "We're going through a real renaissance in Louisville right now," the 60-year-old said when I met with him for the following interview, which has been edited and condensed from two separate conversations. "That's the result of years of planning and great progress in the city."

**You mention a renaissance, but there's also a lot of homelessness. You see it as you drive down Jefferson Street. There's a lot that needs to happen, for instance, in the West End, for those residents to feel that their needs have been addressed. How much credit and blame do you think a mayor deserves?**

"This job is a combination of being proactive — you know, having a great strategy and plan and executing that and monitoring that and improving it, so that's one aspect of the job. The other aspect of it is like reacting to things that happen in a community that oftentimes can seem to be out of your control, but you have to react. So let's say the opioid crisis, for instance, that's going on around this part of the country. We didn't cause that, but it's here in our city and we have to react to it. So I think what people should expect is for any mayor to have a great plan, great team, great execution, and then improve

it, and when things aren't working to be upfront about that whether they're historical reasons or real-life reasons.

"The homelessness issue, especially in the last three months, something different has happened in this community and other communities around here. The First Amendment rulings on panhandling (in the Kentucky Supreme Court last year, which struck down local ordinances banning panhandling) have really affected the number of panhandlers on the streets. The homelessness task force on encampments — we are pleased with the results of that (since it formed late last year). But now we seem to have an appearance of more folks with severe mental illness on the streets that we have to adjust to in some way in terms of treatment and care. That's an issue we're working on now. It comes on the heels of, we were one of the first cities to eliminate veterans' homelessness, we exceeded our youth homelessness challenge that we got \$3.4 million in grants (from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) just two months ago to further attack youth homelessness. Homelessness is a challenging problem.

"Now, West End, let me talk about that. We got \$13 billion of investment taking place in the city. A billion of that is in west Louisville right now, so that's an unprecedented amount in west Louisville. And major projects there: the Beecher Terrace public housing re-do that's the result of a four-year process, 18th and Broadway (where a new YMCA and Passport Health Plan headquarters are underway) is five years. Many of these things just take time, and now fortunately construction is taking place. In my view, that type of investment is overdue, but the good news is it's happening now."

**Do you feel like you could have paid more attention to that part of town when you first entered office?**

"Well, what we did was start with what we could control, so we started with investments in libraries in west Louisville, so we can control that with city-specific money. These other investments require other partners. For instance, the Beecher Terrace project requires a partner from the federal government. Eighteenth and Broadway, someone with the YMCA has been working on that for years and years. That was where the Walmart was gonna go and fell through, and then Passport came in, so we've been working on it from day one, but there has to be certain market forces in line. The things that we could do we got right into it. Some of the work we've done on entrepreneurship there at the Chef Space (kitchen incubator in Russell), for instance, we initiate things like that, so those were smaller things that we could directly control."

**There are a lot of unregulated halfway, or sober-living, houses that people are concerned about having in their neighborhoods. Metro Council is working to get an ordinance to address that right now, but a lot of west Louisville residents feel like they've been forgotten and that even with all this development, their everyday situation isn't great. They look to the**

**Mayor's Office and think that you should be doing more. What would you say to those residents?**

"Well, I think that's one narrative. We can point you to other people to talk to who will give you a different perspective on that. What you find in the Mayor's Office is, most every part of the city feels like they don't get enough whatever it might be. In the case of west Louisville, west Louisville's population has been declining since the flood of 1937. And then to think about all the things that have taken place in west Louisville that preceded me — redlining, urban renewal, specific government-sanctioned practices that led to the decline of west Louisville. When you have a new mayor that comes into office, the question is: What's this new mayor gonna do about this — in the middle of a great recession? So then you have to step back and say: OK, now, was there a plan? Yes, we can give you all of our west Louisville plans, and I'd like for you to read those based on how it looks like you're coming at this, so you can see everything that's taken place. The key is: How do you build human capacity in any part of the city so that they create a market for themselves so that the market conditions take over. That's when you shift and look at what are we doing with our education practices, our Compassionate Schools Project, our Cradle to Career, which is developing the whole child, so that you can see that we have human development going on at the same time we have economic development momentum going on.

"I think people's perception of west Louisville is developed a lot by the media — there's no question about that — but one of the things we try to do is get people moving in and out of west Louisville so they can see these are great people here just doing their normal life, just like in south Louisville or east Louisville. When we had a choice on where we wanted to put a gigabit experience in our city so people could understand how fast Internet would work, we put it in west Louisville. We put it in Louisville Central Community Center, because, one, I wanted to promote digital inclusion. But second, I wanted people to just go to it to see: This is nice! And it's nice like any parts of town. When we're successful with the new indoor track-and-field facility that we're partnering with the Urban League on, people are going to be coming from all over the country to go to west Louisville to what will be one of the great indoor track-and-field facilities, here in our city, so we're placing these organizations specifically in west Louisville so there's traffic in and out. That will lead to economic growth but also demystify west Louisville in the minds of many Louisvillians."

**You have stood by LMPD Chief Steve Conrad even as there have been critics within LMPD, within Metro Council, who have called for his resignation or voted no confidence. What do those people not understand?**

"What I look for in people is: Do they have integrity? Are they honest? Do they have a good plan? Do they have good values and do they have a good team? And then do they execute and improve? All of those are in place with Chief Conrad."

**And you feel he's been effective?**

"Well, you can look at the results and see that. You know, look, there's clearly some people that have a political agenda of some type against Chief Conrad, and they're noisy and the media goes to them, but the last thing I'm gonna do is throw a good, honest man that's working the plan and getting results, under the bus because there's a very, very, very small percentage of our community that has some type of agenda against him. When you take a look at police chiefs around the country, almost every police chief has a vote of no confidence, so that is not anything unusual. And people don't work with the chief every day, and they're certainly not paying attention to the results of crime statistics to see that homicides, for instance, are down 30 percent (at print time this number was 24 percent), overall crime is down 5 percent, violent crime is down 9 percent. So the things that people are upset about and want him to leave for are producing good results for our city."

**You mentioned the opioid epidemic. Have you ever been personally affected by that?**

"Absolutely, and when I talk to people about opioids, that's something I ask: 'Has anyone in here not been affected by any type of addiction or substance abuse?' Nobody raises their hand. It's something that has touched every family or friends, so we haven't quite seen anything like this before in the United States, you know, kind of the depth of difficulty of someone who is in the throes of addiction and then how to get folks back into a good place. Number one is, if you're affected, will you go and try to get treatment? And then treatment, just one out of six people actually finish treatment, so the difficulty of pulling people back into a life of sobriety and productivity is really tough. Our jail is the largest detox center in the state. Within the jail, I'm really proud of how our personnel have used the Healing Place protocol, called Enough is Enough. From a street perspective, our most frequent users of the jail are what we call dual-diagnosis folks — people who have mental illness and some type of alcohol and/or drug addiction. When I came in, I said, 'Tell me about our top users of the jail,' and these were these dual-diagnosis patients, so we develop new protocols for them. Most recently, we've invested in the Living Room. If somebody is having an issue on the street, the police officer has a couple different options: one, do nothing; two, arrest them; or three, the third option now — could be the first option — is to take them to the Living Room, which is staffed by Centerstone 24 hours a day. It's a place where somebody struggling with some type of drug abuse can be dropped off, surrounded by case workers, so that they can understand what that person's challenges are — could be housing, could be treatment or whatever. They have a chance to kind of stabilize and get help, as opposed to just throwing them in jail and repeating the cycle over and over."

**What do you think of the grocery that's at the new Omni hotel downtown?**

"Well, first off, when you think of the Omni, it's been a wonderful development for the city, so you want to take a look at the big picture at how successful that's been and the fact that we have 25 new hotels under construction in our city, downtown's going through a renaissance, downtown's going through Bourbonism—"

**I'm sorry, but the grocery? What do you think of it?**

"I think for what it is, it's adequate. You know, what we would really like to see is a full-service grocery somewhere in downtown, but for what's in the Omni, it suits the purposes of what the Omni was designed to do, but it's not a full-service grocery. It was never intended to be one."

**I thought that was kind of a stipulation, that it needed a grocery. (In 2016, Louisville Forward, the city's economic-development arm, described it as "a high-quality, full-service urban grocery store selling prepared and unprepared food, other consumables and grocery items.")**

"Yeah, but it was never going to be — I mean, there's a big difference between a Kroger and what was intended to be in the Omni."

**What's it going to take to get a full-service grocery downtown?**

"Well, what will happen is, retail follows rooftops. That's how the commercial market looks at things like this. As you see more and more people move downtown... the private market will say downtown needs a full-service grocery, and that's something certainly that we're working on all the time."

**When was the last time you talked with Governor Bevin?**

"Uh, sometime within the past couple weeks."

**What do you guys usually talk about?**

"Economic-development activity is how we usually bump into each other. Most recently, I think it was at the Mercedes announcement (about a training program) in Portland."

**And do you feel that the city has the governor's support?**

"Well, Louisville is — we have one-fifth of the population and we produce one-third of the GDP of the state, so Frankfort understands how important Louisville is to the future of our state. From a social-issues standpoint, we're a city that is, in my view, forward-facing in terms of an inclusive city and a welcoming city, and I just focus on those particular issues. Look, we're a blue city in a red state. About 30 states are like that right now, when you think of Austin in Texas, Nashville in Tennessee and Atlanta in Georgia. So my hope, and what I try to do, is to point out the commonalities between the metropolitan areas and the rural areas, so that people understand that we've got a lot in common."

We're in a political environment right now where people, so-called leaders, try to divide people. That's not a strategy to win, in business and certainly not in government. I just try to make the pie bigger."

**You said we're inclusive and you try to promote compassion, yet you didn't declare Louisville a "sanctuary city," a reference to cities stating that local police won't assist Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. You have said that it's a politically divisive statement and that our police don't assist ICE agents anyway. But it was later reported that there have been at least a couple dozen interactions between LMPD and ICE. Why not just declare Louisville a sanctuary city?**

"What's your source on the couple dozen instances?"

**The Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting. (KyCIR found 23, and Chief Conrad said that in four of those instances, officers acted improperly, prompting the police department to form a new policy.)**

"I think there were four, not a couple dozen. So, that was an example of good reporting, I think—"

**Were you not aware of that until they discovered that?**

"That was good reporting. You know, LMPD has 500,000 interactions with citizens every year. LMPD is responsible for local law enforcement. ICE is obviously in charge of federal law enforcement. Those two do not cross each other, so what that allowed us to do when that came forth was redefine our protocols so that it was very clear with LMPD on how they should interact with ICE. That was instances where there's a warrant, where there was a threat of violence, where there was an actual crime taking place, so that it was much more clear. Then the ICE agent has to go through the chain of command with LMPD, so LMPD understands that this is a legitimate use to involve LMPD with ICE. That was an example of improvement that came about because of some good reporting here in the community. What we're demonstrating is that you can follow local law, obviously state laws, federal laws and be a welcoming, global city, and that's what we're doing."

**U.S. Senator Mitch McConnell has been heckled and essentially forced out of restaurants here. What do you think about that?**

"It's kind of dicey, right? I mean, you go out and want to be left alone, but he's not real accessible. There's a lot of people who have strong feelings against him, with a lot of pent-up emotion as well, so I do think if he was more accessible, that would allow people to kind of have more dialogue with him and exchange of views, especially with people that disagree with him. I don't know that there'd be that kind of pent-up anger. I think a lot of it's taken place because we're in the Trump era right now, and people just don't know what to do, so when they see him they provoke some kind of reaction."

**What do you think of Jefferson County Public Schools superintendent Marty Pollio and the work he's done so far?**

"Marty is a good leader. I mean, you can see that he has strong leadership capacity, and he also has experience. So the question about Marty was: Is he gonna be able to transition from being high school principal to superintendent of a large public school district? And he seems to be doing that magnificently. The turnaround job that he did at J-town and Doss high schools — when you look at the challenges that we have in some of our schools — there's a guy that understands how to transition schools. Now with the state-takeover issues behind us, I'm very glad about that. I was against a state takeover that was gonna chew up all types of energy in our community and disempower people."

**What's something you think could be addressed immediately?**

"Well, I can tell you one of the things I'm very impressed with is the sense of urgency that JCPS and Marty have shown about developing the Academies of Louisville. So much of economic development is about workforce, and when companies look to move here and companies are going to look to grow, they're gonna say, 'Do we have the workforce?' So the JCPS academy program, really in two short school years, with this school year being the second one, now has 85 companies involved with that. These are companies partnering with 14 of our high schools to make sure students understand what a career looks like in healthcare or in manufacturing or construction or wellness and aging, and having that experience at that workshop or in the workplaces. So they've already done that, which is amazingly quick for how large an entity JCPS is.

"When you think about the achievement gaps that exist between a lot of the white population and a lot of the African-American population, it's a significant issue. JCPS knows that. They're one of the few public school districts in the country to have an equity policy like they have. So to me, it looks like they're doing all the right things. It's a really hard job to be running a public school district of 101,000 people, and 67 percent of them are on free or reduced(-price) lunch. That's where the Cradle to Career system comes into place. If I were to ask everybody in the community to focus on one thing, it would be this Cradle to Career development, so that we can both accelerate achievement for people that are already doing well but also help kids that are behind catch up, so that they also feel connected to a hopeful future."

**Why should a mayor be allowed to serve three terms?**

"Well, that's up to the people. If you say, 'Are we better off than where we were eight years ago?' And then, 'What are you gonna do in the third four years?' That's the critical question because, yes, we've by any measure done fantastic these last seven and a half years. So, one, it's completing all of the projects that we have underway, and then we have a whole other wave of projects coming after that because people around the country are looking at Louisville like are they going to be the next Austin or the next Nashville in terms of the growth opportunities that we have here. There's a lot of evidence that we're

going to be that type of city. So that's what people see.

"One of the main reasons I'm running for the third term is to complete the work that we're doing with our Cradle to Career system of lifelong learning — pulling together all of the different agencies that touch kids in our community — and our Louisville Promise effort, which is to attack these achievement gaps that exist between white kids and . . . we'll just say advantaged kids and kids that don't have advantages. So you've got kids at the age of six showing up in kindergarten, they come from families that don't have advantages, they're three years behind advantaged peers. That's not sustainable from a moral standpoint, from an economic standpoint, from a public safety standpoint."

**Do you think Angela Leet would make a good mayor?**

"No, no."

**Why?**

"She is not associated with — first off, she doesn't have the experience for a job like this. Second, she's strong at being critical, but she's weak or nonexistent with having plans for improvement. People deserve that. And you have to be aware of all the context when you're being critical, if you want to be informed when you're being critical. Look, we're in kind of political silly season now, where people throw out all types of accusations, but I think that this city's got great momentum. When you talk to the people of Louisville, they see that and I think that they'll honor me with another four years."

**A few of Angela Leet's criticisms have to do with what she thinks the public should know: the bid for an Amazon headquarters, the list of the Mayor's Office's Derby guests, the sexual-abuse case involving LMPD's Explorer youth program. What is your response to those?**

"Yeah, I think on the business stuff, those show a real lack of experience with business. Think about the Derby, uh, drama that's been created. Imagine you have as a company, your top prospect list of who it is that you're trying to convince to buy your product — in this case we're trying to convince people to move to our city — and Nashville, Cincinnati, Indianapolis would love to know who we're trying to get to move to our city. And so no city does this. No state does this."

**And you think that taxpayers should be the ones to pay for their travels here?**

"Well, our citizens fund city government. They fund Louisville Forward, which is our economic-development agency, so that's a marketing cost of doing business so that we bring people to our city that wouldn't come here before that then results in jobs locating here with hundreds of millions and billions of dollars in investment, tens of thousands of new employees. So the expenses that we spend on the Derby have huge returns on them in terms of our economic-development success for the city. I think what people have got to look at is: Is this money being put to good use? And all I would say is, 'Well, look around the city.' You know,

our unemployment's 3.4 percent. When we started in the Great Recession, it was 10.4 or 11 percent. There's \$13 billion of construction taking place in our city, so a lot of that is from people who have visited the Derby. So I think it's working pretty well. It IS working very well.

"On the Explorer issue: Look, the main thing you have to understand is the pain and suffering that a lot of people have gone through with this. Secondly, there are criminal processes that are underway. My role is to make sure the truth — in any form that it is, that has affected us — gets out and is known to the public, that's not protected within the court system. And so, you know, as soon as — when I found out about the problem, we shut the program down. We brought in a special investigator to review what was going on. The Council has been involved with all that, so I think that's an example of when you know there's a problem, then react to it and make sure the truth comes out and wherever the chips fall, they're gonna fall. I don't care who is implicated. If they're accountable, they need to be held that way."

**Are there any examples you could provide of developments that have happened as a result of people who have come in for Derby whose trips the taxpayers have funded?**

"We don't specifically disclose those names, but I think when people look at the money invested and what's happening in the city, I think they should conclude it's a good return on investment."

**Outside of the mayor's explicit duties, you're at the Martin's Bar-B-Que ribbon cutting. You're at Seven Sense Fest. What do you think is the value of showing up to those types of things as mayor?**

"Well, I probably spend about half the time inside the office and half the time outside the office, so that would be probably six or seven hours inside the office and seven or eight hours outside the office every day. I'm a business guy, so it starts with customers. As the mayor, the customers are your citizens. So if you're not with your citizens and understanding what they're thinking and what's working and what's not working, and you don't have that kind of accessibility and relationships that you've built in the city over the years, you're not gonna understand what's going on and you can build up barriers between you and people. I don't want that. So it's important, I believe, that people see me as just one of their fellow citizens. I just happen to be mayor right now, and they can give me their thoughts on where the city can improve, where we're falling short, what we're doing well and how they're feeling about where the city is going."

**When do you wrap up work or does it blend together?**

"There's not much separation. Usually I try to finish things up around 10 or 10:30. And then have a half-hour or so just to sort of watch the news and then crash, get up, do it all over again."

**What do you do in your free time?**

(Laughs.) "You don't have a lot of free time as mayor."

**What do you do to deal with the stress of the job?**

"Well, a job like this, you work a lot, and fortunately, I like to work. I've always been that way as a businessperson, and I'm that way now. And when you have an opportunity like being mayor of a great city like ours, you'd better like to work, because there's a lot to do. I exercise. I do a combination of working on agility and balance and light weights and a little bit of cardio work, so nothing too intense. And I've always thought that stress is something that you choose to have, and I think that if you've got a great plan and a great team and work hard and leave it all on the field, that's all you can do, and so you shouldn't be stressed about it. You just do your best and you get up the next morning and go at it again."

**Who is your best friend?**

"Well, my wife."

**Outside of city issues, politics and government, what do you guys talk about?**

"Well, we have four kids and now they're older, so naturally we, as a couple, will talk about our kids and what they're doing. And all of our parents are still alive, so we talk about what's happening with them and my wife is very engaged from a political standpoint, so she likes to talk about politics and what's going on. The same as any couple would talk about."

**What do you do in town with your kids?**

"My daughters are not in town. My sons are 27 and 26. Going out to eat, going to a movie, that kind of thing. Going for a walk. We live by Cherokee Park, so walking through the woods there and by the creek is something I like to do. As much as I can get outside, I like to do that."

**What is your earliest political memory?**

"I was born in 1958, so I remember when John Kennedy was shot and how that kind of really shook everybody up, and then I was pretty young and I remember my parents and everybody just being really freaked out. When his brother was killed in '68, I remember that very vividly. I grew up in a Catholic family, so the Kennedys were kind of royalty. If you read some of their speeches, especially Bobby Kennedy's, I mean, the kind of stuff that he talked about back then, there's a lot of things I talk about now."

**What's something that you remember from the Louisville from your childhood that you miss?**

(Laughs.) "Well, I had a lot more time to play! I don't know. It was very different then. We lived out of town for about six years or so in Chicago and New York, so it would be coming home to these large family gatherings. My father was one of eight kids, so there'd be 40 cousins at my grandparents' house. I love those kind of memories and good times that were taking place."

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## **Mayor Fischer**

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### **What's something you've read recently?**

"Well, the most recent book is — and I won't read books all the way through — but right now I'm reading *The Book of Joy*, which is by the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu, so I can kind of take my mind off the day-to-day stuff that I do."

### **Who's a teacher who made a big impact on you, and what did you learn from them?**

"I had a couple teachers that said, 'You are gonna be a good writer, no matter if ya like it or not.' And fortunately, I always kind of liked to write, so Father Ted Sans and Billy Bradford (at Trinity High School) were just ferocious about their determination that their students were going to excel, and they had the ability to both motivate and then teach the skills and encourage you to be the best you can be. I've always appreciated that. I do write a lot, and we have a lot of written product that comes out of here, so I think good writing skills reflect an ability to think through issues and present a point of view."

"One thing I wanted to talk about is kind of the effect of Bourbonism on the city. This was a concept — from a business standpoint, you always want to have something that nobody else has as a competitor, either as a business or as a city. That can be a competitive advantage for you. So the creation and the concept of bourbon and local food tourism—"

### **Do you think that's going to die down ever if the international interests shift somewhere else?**

"No, we're in baseball season now, so I think we're in the second or third inning on Bourbonism. Because it's still — to us in Louisville, we know about it, but when you go around the country, around the world, people haven't even heard about it yet. Now, they do know about wine

tourism to Napa Valley. We're in the very early stages. That's what's led to a lot of our hotel development and the convention center. The Omni — you can see they designed the hotel around what's local here in Louisville: bourbon, food. That's one of the reasons we're one of the foodie-est cities in the country. We're always on top 10 lists, it seems like, so we punch above our weight with our food scene and our restaurant scene. That's attractive to people not just from a tourist standpoint but business development."

### **Who's someone who has given you some feedback or input that you've taken and actually done something with?**

"We've been blessed to have a lot of good relationships since we started here. Michael Bloomberg, who was the mayor of New York, with his Bloomberg Philanthropies — we were one of their first five cities to work with them. They have been a great partner of ours on innovation work and citizenship work and just continuing education. The work we're doing with the Harvard Graduate School of Education on the Cradle to Career has been really helpful in terms of looking at the whole child, and every child succeeding, by all means. And then our work with the Brookings Institution on kind of global strategy and placing our city in a position to win. We've developed a regional economic-development plan with Lexington that's been very helpful. And then, through the U.S. Conference of Mayors, I've had a lot of colleagues that go through the same stuff that I go through, just in other cities, so they're good to bounce ideas back and forth on."

"Being mayor is very interesting, and what I love about this job is that you get to meet people from all types of circumstances, from very celebratory circumstances to circumstances where there's great despair involved. And what this job does to you is that it expands your views, both intellectually and emotionally, and I hope what that does, and I feel what it does, is make you a bigger person in terms of your ability to understand what's going on in terms of our city and the world, and put you in a position to make better decisions and involve different people as you try to grow the city in all of its different ways. And that only comes by doing the job and being out in the city developing a good team. This is the first time I've had a job like this. I'm not

a career politician, and so that's something that's been a really wonderful aspect of being the mayor."

### **What was a low point when you really felt like this job was challenging and you were kind of internally struggling?**

"Well, there's been three things that have happened that are out of your control, but they make you very sad. When Ne'Riah Miller and Dequante Hobbs — those were young people that were just minding their own business and a bullet hit them, takes them away. When Nick Rodman was killed, our LMPD officer. Those were the three lowest points for me, when, despite all of your efforts that you try to create a great city, you know, bad things happen sometimes, and that's cold comfort for the people and the families that are involved with that. It's really painful to see those families go through that. And why them? And not somebody else? Or why not me? And so those are the low points where people have suffered."

"I want to talk a little bit about our compassion work, if you don't mind. I'm very serious about how people lead, and leading from a good, authentic place. And I think that's where this role of compassion is coming in to the city. When I was elected, I said three values are going to guide us as a city: city of lifelong learning, being a healthier city — physical, mental, environmental and spiritual health — and then an even more compassionate city. A city where people are lifting each other up. If you can dream to live in a city that's learning, that's healthy and people are helping each other, that's the kind of city that we want to be."

"Some people want to criticize me for it as opposed to, well, why don't you help? And it's like a noble goal, and we're not perfect, but what I'm trying to do is for people to realize that we're in this together. We might have political differences, there might be faith differences, but at the end of the day, we gotta succeed together. Fortunately, I have a great mom and a great dad and grew up in a household that emphasized values of kindness and compassion and love and stewardship, and that's what we're trying to spread through this city and around the country and world. I mean, we need it right now. I guess what we're trying to demonstrate here in Louisville is that you can be a city of innovation and entrepreneurship but you can also be a city of equity and compassion. I think the country is looking for places like that." □

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