

## **March 2, 2007 - Oldham County Chamber**

*Oldham County Chamber of Commerce 2007 Showcase Kickoff*

*11:45 a.m.*

*Remarks from Louisville Metro Mayor Jerry Abramson*

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It's great to join you all today.

I guess I drove over a county line on my way to lunch here.

But ... you know ... I hardly noticed.

There might have been a time when driving over that county line would have felt like a powerful THUMP.... like a giant speed bump ... the sound of THE BIG CITY giving way to a SUBURBAN OASIS.

Today I hardly noticed that county line because today so many other lines are clearly much more important -- the strong lines of connection between our communities ... whether the issue is jobs or transportation ... parks or public safety ... education or good stewardship of our natural environment.

The bottom line ...from my perspective ... is that those lines of connections are getting stronger... all the time. They challenge us to work together more closely and more effectively ... across our county lines... and with other counties in our region... to make the most of opportunities ... to meet common challenges ... and to achieve the best possible quality of life for our residents.

My lunch table today ... is a great little snapshot....of the kinds of strong connections that serve our communities well.

There's your chamber head, Deana Epperly Karem, who used to be with Louisville's chamber.. AND continues to work collaboratively with Louisville's chamber AND ... in a true spirit of regional cooperation ... still calls Louisville Metro home.

Your Judge-Executive Duane Murner was a leader with a leading Louisville corporate citizen. I think Duane had an R by his name when he ran for office ...and I have a D.... but that is of no importance ... in the face of our commitment to work together effectively ... for the benefit of our region...whether it's voicing transportation needs to Frankfort ...or planning to preserve precious natural resources.

There are presidents of two competing health care enterprises ... united today to sponsor this showcase event... and united in their commitment to keeping your residents healthy.

And there's the head of the Jeffersontown Chamber of Commerce... Vicki Weber...another reach across county lines.

I could go on. But you get the idea. No speed bumps. It's like that best-selling nonfiction book about the global economy...."The World is Flat."...In the face of 21<sup>st</sup> change, that book says... old boundaries ...traditional divisions... internationally ... across businesses and disciplines ... are slipping away. . . into one ....interconnected ... global economy. Well, Kentucky is flat, too.

Long gone are the days when the handful of urban cities in Kentucky were islands... surrounded by the dozens of rural counties that gave Kentucky its true character. Today our map has been redrawn ... the U.S. Census makes it official ... saying Kentucky is a collection of metropolitan regions ... with jobs and services provided in economic hubs. The census says, in fact, that more than half of all Kentuckians now live in metro areas. In my case, the census says Louisville is the heart of a 23-county region with nearly 1½ million residents in two states.

What does that mean for us? It challenges all of us... to appreciate the diversity we offer as a region ... the choices in housing, jobs, lifestyles ... and to work together on common issues.

In many ways the top issues I am focusing on ... as Mayor ... are top issues for you, too. Some ... I mentioned earlier...include:

Jobs: The health of our Ford plants... the growth of UPS and the dozens of business it attracts throughout our entire region... the strength of Humana...and the vitality of the dozens of fast-growing businesses based in Louisville ....all those economic development issues that I am working on...are relevant to you...just as the success of your new business park ... and the health of your business community ... is good for our entire region.

Two out of every 3 Oldham County residents ...roughly 13,000 people ... commute into Louisville to work. But the commute also goes the other way: Roughly 3,000 Louisville residents work here in Oldham County.

So it's no surprise then ... that transportation ...is another priority we can share. . . potential improvements to I-71... the need for us to construct two bridges ....one downtown and one in the East End... and to rebuild our dangerous and overcrowded Spaghetti Junction in downtown Louisville. . . and...the need for quality transit. TARC's express bus service between downtown Louisville and Oldham County has been a spectacular success story . . . with enthusiasm for expanding it, in fact. I know just last week Judge Murner and folks from TARC in Louisville went to the state to rally support for that ... in the face of plans to actually reduce state funding.

Not everyone who heads to Louisville ...by bus or car ... is going to work...needless to say. Oldham County ranks second, after Jefferson, in U of L enrollment, for example. If you talk to the heads of the Louisville Orchestra, Actors Theatre of Louisville and other attractions in my hometown...they will tell you that Oldham County residents are a big base of support. When an Oldham business and professional women's group decided to have a big party, it was great to see them choose a downtown Louisville hotel.

I hope all of you think of Louisville's downtown ... as a vibrant part of YOUR community. I hope it feels like an appealing destination... whether you are drawn to 4<sup>th</sup> Street Live ...or attractions like the Slugger Museum, the Ali Center, the Frazier History

Museum, the Science Center, whether you like to attend Thunder Over Louisville... Derby Festival events... Abbey Road on the River.

What may be less clear is the positive impact a vibrant downtown has on the prosperity of its entire region. . What happens in healthy downtowns...doesn't stay downtown. Study after study ... in city after city ...show strong and vital downtowns ... bring economic benefits community-wide...higher incomes... greater business innovation... increased appeal to young professionals and new businesses. It's an economic benefit for the entire state ...when momentum is strong in downtown Louisville... as it is today ... with a record number of housing units... along with a new arena and the Museum Plaza skyscraper ready to rise on our waterfront...ready to also spur additional development...from restaurants to retail. ... that bring added tax revenue.

Let me mention just one more initiative high on my mind ... that brings us together...related to preserving green space. Then I'd like to hear what's on your mind.

Both our communities are confronting the challenges of healthy growth. . . looking at ways to plan more effectively ... to maintain their unique character ...and balance development.

And we will be working together ... along with four other counties ... Henry, Shelby, Spencer and Bullitt...in a four-year plan for the watershed of Floyds Fork... to keep it as healthy as possible.

At the same time, Louisville is embarking on an ambitious project that will preserve more than 4,000 acres of land along Floyds Fork – an area of our community where rapid development has been occurring.

Three or 4 large new parks will be developed...as well as a 27-mile greenway, featuring a bike and pedestrian trail ...that will eventually link to a 100-mile loop around Louisville...with an additional loop that crosses the Ohio River and goes through Southern Indiana. Our goal is to connect your greenways with this project. . . as well.

I hope Oldham County residents will cross the county line to enjoy this new parkland ... hiking, biking, canoeing and enjoying spectacular terrain that includes 4 or 5 waterfalls.

I need to give credit to the leadership of David Jones Sr., one of the founders of Humana, for shepherding this initiative and raising more than \$20 million in private dollars ... and to the Future Fund and to \$38 million in federal funds secured by our senior United States Senator.

I could talk about other areas where our communities are working together: public safety, for example. Our MetroSafe emergency communications system has **worked with Oldham County dispatch. And our first responders stand ready to work together in emergencies.**

But I think you get the idea: I bet I've said "work together" a dozen times in the past 10 minutes.

It's the theme of local government inside Louisville metro ... where we have merged an old city and old county governments ...and work collaboratively with suburban cities and suburban fire districts.

And it reflects my commitment to working together with you ... with folks throughout our region.

One of my personal heroes is Senator Robert Kennedy, who once said this:

"That which unites us must be stronger than that which divides us. We can concentrate on what unites us and secure the future for all our children. Or we can concentrate on what divides us and fail our duty through argument and resentment and waste."

I view today's lunch as one chapter in a long, fruitful, continuing conversation among residents, businesses and leaders in our communities. . . about issues that unite us...part of working together to help secure the future for all our children.

Thank you for having me. Now I'd like to hear from you as well.

