



Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Jim Gray
Mayor

2015 Inaugural

Mayor Jim Gray
Jan. 4, 2015

Thanks to each and every one of you for being here today, especially our new and returning councilmembers ... congratulations!

I also want to welcome and congratulate *Crit Luallen*, my friend for many years and our new Lieutenant Governor, thank you, Governor Luallen, for being here. I can't think of a better way to start a new term!!

Thanks to *Bill Goodman, Rev. Gaines, Judge Kim Bunnell*, my nieces, *Avery and Ruby Kate Gray*, and the outstanding musical talent *Peggy Stamps* has assembled.

And thanks to our chair, *Donna Moloney*, and everyone who has helped with this event. I'm so grateful to Donna for putting her special touch on today's ceremony ... Thank you all so very much.

And to everyone here, and citizens across Lexington ... thanks from the bottom of my heart ... from the council and from me, thank you for trusting us to take care of our city.

There is simply no greater honor in our democracy than a vote of public trust.

Today is a day to celebrate our city. It's a worthy day. A day embedded in history. An important day. But not because of any of us up here ... it's because of you and because of Lexington.

- To know Lexington is to love a city that's onto something special ... today, Lexington is just the place to be. The most desirable place to live in Kentucky.
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But just a few years ago, we were hit by the **worst recession** in our lifetimes. And you know the story of that recession because you lived it.

But you may not know so well the story of how our city government responded to it, and after all, in the long run, how we responded is what really counts ... past performance is the best indicator of future performance ... *how we got things done*:

- Step by step, we buckled down. First came making sure the basics were in place... police and fire, then streets, roads, parks, garbage pick-up, street lights, recycling and cleaning up our sewers. It all had to be done and done right ... efficiently, and within new financial limitations. But, *we. got. things. done.*
- Second, with the basics under control, we got things done through structural reforms. The toughest steel goes through the hottest fire. Working with our employees and the Council and through shared sacrifice, we made the tough choices ... nationally recognized reforms in pension and employee health insurance and strong budgetary controls earned us an excellent AA rating from the nation's bond agencies, keeping borrowing costs low. Again, *We. Got. Things. Done.*
- With these hard-fought reforms in place we turned deficits into surpluses, allowing us to invest in initiatives that improve the quality of life and lead to economic opportunity and prosperity. *We got things done.*

So today we find:

- A well trained, well equipped and well staffed police force, working hand in hand with citizens and community leaders, building strong relationships ... And with our new chief, **Mark Barnard**, at the helm, we are confident those relationships will continue to grow, keeping Lexington's neighborhoods and streets safe.
- Today we find a well trained, well equipped and well led fire department, with new equipment and additional personnel.
- Today we find a city implementing a program for safe, clean affordable housing and help for those experiencing homelessness ... and a pledge for ongoing funding.
- Today we find a well-functioning Health Department ... and construction of a new primary care clinic underway on Southland Drive, open to all.
- And today we find a steadfast focus continuing on jobs, jobs, JOBS. Lexington has created 9,000 jobs in the past four years despite the recession ... and there are now more people working in Lexington than at any time in our history.

Yes, Lexington is emerging onto the national scene as one of the nation's great cities, driven by healthy, responsible growth:

- We are growing faster than most cities ...305,000 citizens now call Lexington home. We are the 61st largest city in the nation. Responsible growth, while protecting our rural landscape, is essential. But we know that *when you are green you grow ... and when you are ripe you rot*;
- While our historic growth boundary is being preserved, we see *creative, disciplined development throughout the urban core*, from downtown to Man O War;
- And a cultural movement has taken root and is growing ... new restaurants, new theater and arts groups, all within a framework of a diverse and welcoming city.

So today is a time to reflect on what's occurred over the past few years, and on our city's long history. For the further we look back, the longer we can look ahead.

Looking ahead, looking forward, demands that we engage a *call to action*, lifting up to the crow's nest and looking to the next horizon, looking out for the next generation.

This time in our history our city is *demanding* that we *look ahead* with a *call to action* where there is no room for complacency or second best or lack of courage.

Because nothing big ever came from thinking small, and because I, like every one of you in this room want Lexington to be **the best city in America**.

Now let's be clear about something, being the best city in America does not mean being the biggest city in America. Being best means managing the basics *and* thinking aspirationally *and* implementing the things that matter.

So, what does looking ahead look like today?

- **We look ahead to becoming a gigabit city** ... making the information super highway available and affordable for all our citizens and businesses. While cities with rivers and railroads had an advantage in the industrial age; knowledge and ideas are what power today's information economy, and knowledge and ideas are carried on fiber.
- **We look ahead to a world class parks system, including getting started on Town Branch Commons**, and improving neighborhood parks across the city. Great cities have great parks – timeless public places for celebration and recreation.
- **We look ahead to helping our public schools** through their transition. We have a strong public school system. But as a community we must find answers for the equity and job training issues and ensure quality education across-the-board.

- **We look ahead to completing the new Senior Center and getting work underway on our Historic Courthouse.** In the campaign I heard from many of you – please Mayor, fix the Old Courthouse. And you are right. Taking care of our history says a lot about a place.
- **And we look ahead to continuing our emphasis on job creation and public safety.**

In Lexington we work together, across generations, following in the footprints of giants who dreamed big dreams for our city and then made them come true.

It all began in 1775 with a campfire at McConnell Springs on the banks of the Town Branch...239 years ago...almost a quarter of a millennium...and one year before the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Those pioneers recognized there was something special about this place, just as we all do today.

I want to close by acknowledging pioneers in their own right today, the great partners I have in our Vice Mayor and an energetic, committed, and determined City Council, leaders who have done so much for our City.

We are ready to work together, reaching up and lifting up and stretching to grab the brass ring for our city. There will be no Washington style politics infecting our progress ... we're going to get things done the right way ... together ... because we know there's no Democratic or Republican way to pick up the trash.

And, too, it's because we know that *the best is yet to come*. We know where we've been, and where we're going, and how we're going to get there. Yes ... we all know ... that for Lexington ... the *best is yet to come*.

Thank you all and God bless you each and every one.

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