Greater Louisville Project
ADVANCING A COMPETITIVE CITY

GLP Mission and Activities

In 2014 The Greater Louisville Project released a new list of peer cities, updating a list first created in 2004. Benchmarking our Deep Drivers against our peers allows Louisville to see our progress as a community not in a vacuum, but relative to other communities like us across the country. This enables us to hold ourselves accountable for the work we are doing to create a more competitive city.

What are peer cities?

Simply put, peer cities are communities like us. In 2004, researchers at the University of Louisville did an analysis of cities across the country using 77 indicators, which were almost exclusively economic in nature. Through a variety of statistical techniques, they clustered the results to come up with a list of 15 cities most similarly situated to Louisville (see 2004 Peer Cities List).

For the next ten years, the Greater Louisville Project used that list to compare Louisville's progress on its Deep Drivers in a way that would allow us to catalyze community conversations based on the effectiveness of our interventions relative to other cities, not simply national trends.

Why update our peer cities?

GLP's Policy Board decided at its implementation that the list would be revised every 10 years, to

2014 Peer Cities
Birmingham, AL
Charlotte, NC
Cincinnati, OH
Columbus, OH
Grand Rapids, MI
Greensboro, NC
Greenville, SC
Indianapolis, IN
Kansas City, MO
Knoxville, TN
Louisville, KY
Memphis, TN
Nashville, TN
Oklahoma City, OK
Omaha, NE
St. Louis, MO
Tulsa, OK
*Cities in green were not on the 2004 list

account for changes within each peer city and to ensure that the cities in fact remain "peers." Ten years serves as a benchmark that provides sufficient continuity to allow meaningful comparisons and because the availability of new Census data would allow us to update our analyses.

It was expected that over the course of ten years, our peer cities would change, reflecting the progress (or lack of progress) of our community relative to others, as well as changes in the communities themselves. In forthcoming reports, in addition to benchmarking against its new set of peers, the GLP will also compare Louisville against those who are not peers but are considered "best in class" in our Deep Driver indicators. These benchmarks will be different for each driver, and can serve to help us guide toward effective civic investments.

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Why did the lists change?

Our goal as a community is always to offer the best life possible for our citizens, and the role of the Greater Louisville Project is to provide objective analysis of how we are doing. Our peer cities list changed both because our analytical criteria changed and because the cities themselves have developed and changed over ten years.

Social, demographic, and health variables were to the analysis conducted for the 2014 list. Four iterations of the analysis were conducted in all, looking at the core county level as well as the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) level.

For the 2014 list, if a city appeared in BOTH an MSA list AND a core county list, it was included on the final list. This gave us a list of 15 peers. In addition, we included Nashville, which clustered with Louisville at the MSA level in two iterations of analysis, (though not at the core county level), giving us a final list of 16 peers.

Although the original list was based almost exclusively on economic indicators, even if we based our new list on the exact same factors, we would have a much different outcome based on current data. MSA definitions and boundaries have changed since the original peer cities list was developed, which impacts the availability of comparable data. Using the original indicators, only five original peers still clustered with Louisville. This clearly shows that the cities have progressed differently, and the new peer cities list reflects that.

> **2004 Peer Cities**
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> Birmingham, AL
> Charlotte, NC
> Cincinnati, OH
> Columbus, OH
> Dayton, OH
> Greensboro, NC
> Indianapolis, IN
> Jacksonville, FL
> Kansas City, MO
> Louisville, KY
> Memphis, TN
> Nashville, TN
> Omaha, NE
> Raleigh, NC
> Richmond, VA
>
> *Cities in red are not on the 2014 list

What can we learn from the revised list?

While some peers from 2004 have seen considerable economic and human capital growth (e.g., Raleigh and Richmond), others experienced opposite demographic trends (e.g., Dayton and Jacksonville). Both experiences no longer qualified cities as peers and were hence removed from our list.

With this revised list, we as a community have the opportunity to reflect on the factors contributing to the positive trajectories of some peers and the negative trajectories of others so that in 2024, our next list of peers will indicate our progress in making Louisville an educated, healthy, thriving, prosperous city for all of its residents.