

Cleanup

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“truly apocalyptic” day one scene, saying it was a “full-body experience” stepping onto the burnt earth still covered in plane debris and smoldering fires.

“What today won’t replicate are some of the smells, sounds, the oil that was in the air and on the ground,” he said. “The amazing first responders have been working every day over the past 71 days ... They’ve made progress much quicker than anyone ever thought on that first night.”

Greenberg said there is still no total cost figure for the cleanup effort, though he anticipates seeking reimbursement for that cost through insurance sources, including through UPS.

Crash debris was cleared from the site in early January, officials said, and the NTSB investigation continues. The federal agency, which released its preliminary report in November, has previously said its full report — with conclusions, probable cause and safety recommendations — could take a year or more.

Officials could not provide a definitive timetable for fully returning the area to normalcy, though Louisville MSD leadership noted it expects its work to continue for at least 60 to 90 days.

“It will take a significant amount of time to be able to mitigate and process the water, and to be able to see what the contaminants are in the soil and be able to deal with that,” said Brian Bingham, Louisville MSD chief operations officer. “So there’s still a lot of unknowns at this point.”

Approximately 3.6 million gallons of oily liquid has been collected from the site — including 200,000 gallons of pure oil — about 2 million gallons of which has already been processed, he added.

Much of MSD’s work is focused on treating the water in the Melco Flood Retention Basin, which James Parrott, Louisville MSD executive director, said is critical during flood events in the city.

“It’s going to be a phased approach, but once we get through this, we don’t anticipate any environmental impact locally or even downstream of the Melco basin,” he said.

While gas and electric lines have been restored, there’s still work ahead to repair water and sewer infrastructure, city officials said.

Roadways, too, have been damaged and will need repair before the site can fully reopen, said Jody Meiman, executive director of Louisville Metro Emergency Management Agency.

Dozens of businesses in the area have dealt with reduced access to their locations since the crash, allowing cleanup crews better access to the site.

Starting Jan. 14, however, business owners and their employees will have 24/7 access to their properties and will be allowed to escort customers back to those properties via checkpoints.

Worker safety is a key driver of keep-



Mayor Craig Greenberg speaks to the media Jan. 13 at a business on Grade Lane, 71 days after UPS Flight 2976 crashed.

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL CLEVINGER/COURIER JOURNAL



Burned wreckage is shown from a trailer storage business.

ing the area closed to the public, and Grade Lane will continue to be busy with worker activity, Meiman said.

“People need to have a purpose to be back on this site,” he said.

John Geary, vice president of Massachusetts-based Clean Harbors, said his workers, nearly 300 at the peak, have logged 116,000 hours on site since they were contracted by UPS to oversee the overall cleanup response.

“Thirty years of doing this work all over the country, all over the world, we’ve never worked with a group of responders and regulators that you have here in Louisville,” he said. “Absolutely, utterly amazing fabric of the community.”

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A UPS jet takes off Jan. 13 from Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport and climbs over Grade A Auto Parts.

Elections

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R-Lebanon, will not seek reelection. He served in the House from 2003 to 2009 and has been the region’s senator since then, serving in recent years as chair of the influential Senate Transportation Committee. Two Democrats, Malcolm W. Jones and Carrie Gribbins Truitt, are vying to replace him in District 14, along with seven Republicans: Brian Bayers, Stephen Carney, Ben Mudd, Dallas Robinson, Lynn Shelburne, Peggy Brady Smith and James Victory.

- State Rep. Bill Wesley, R-Ravenna, is leaving his state House District 91 seat and has instead filed to run in a state Senate primary race against incumbent Sen. Brandon Smith, R-Hazard. Wesley’s moment in the spotlight in 2025 came when he confronted a transgender woman who’d entered a women’s restroom at the Capitol. Smith was a state representative from 2001 to 2008 and has since been in the Senate, where he chairs the chamber’s Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

- State Rep. Ryan Dotson, R-Winchester, is leaving his seat to pursue a run to replace U.S. Rep. Andy Barr, who’s running for McConnell’s seat amid his pending retirement. Dotson’s primary opponents include former state Sen. Ralph Alvarado along with Adam Perez Arquette, Greg Plucinski and Steve Shannon, with six Democrats also running.

- Democrats will need a new House minority leader next year, as Rep. Pamela Stevenson, D-Louisville, is also running in the primary to replace McConnell in the U.S. Senate. Two Democrats — Robert LeVertis Bell and Joi McAtee — are running to follow her in District 43.

Across both parties, 40 House incumbents are running unopposed as the lone candidates in their districts. In Jefferson County and the surrounding region, four candidates will be the only name on the ballot in November: District 32’s Tina Bojanowski (D-Louisville), District 37’s Emily Callaway (R-Louisville), District 41’s Mary Lou Marzian (D-Louisville) and District 42’s Josh Watkins (D-Louisville).

- Rep. Ashley Tackett Laferty, D-Martin, is leaving office to run for district court judge in Floyd County. Laferty is the last Democrat in statewide office in Eastern Kentucky, a Democratic stronghold decades ago that has shifted to the right in recent years.

- Other state representatives who are not seeking reelection, according to filings with the secretary of state, include: District 14’s Scott Lewis (R-Hartford), District 27’s Nancy Tate (R-Brandenburg), District 52’s Ken Upchurch (R-Monticello), District 70’s William Lawrence (R-Maysville) and District 74’s David Hale (R-Wellington).

Noteworthy primaries

- District 36 Sen. Julie Raque Adams, R-Louisville, has one primary opponent in Republican candidate David J. Farley and has two Democrats running to face her in the general election: Sara Cole McIntosh, a former Jefferson County Board of Education member, and former

University of Louisville men’s basketball player Luke Whitehead, who now runs a racial advocacy group. Raque Adams has been in the Senate since 2015 after spending four years in the House and has more than \$230,000 in her campaign account, according to state records.

- Three Democrats have filed to run in District 30 against incumbent Rep. Daniel Grossberg, D-Louisville: Cassie Lyles and Max Morley, who are both teachers and public education advocates, and Mitra Subedi, a Bhutan native and local educator who fell 50 votes short of winning the district’s primary two years ago. Grossberg is in his second term but has been mired in an ethics investigation for about a year and a half, with a pivotal public hearing set to take place later in January. No Republicans are running.

- Former state Rep. Killian Timoney, R-Nicholasville, is making a political comeback in District 45. Timoney spent four years in office before losing a primary race in 2024 against an opponent who attacked him for voting against anti-transgender legislation passed in 2023. He’ll run in the primary against Jeffrey D. Thompson, with the winner set to advance to a general election race against incumbent Rep. Adam Moore, D-Lexington, who will be unopposed in May.

- Louisville information technology executive Suhas Kulkarni made waves on Jan. 9 when he filed to run for House District 48’s seat. The father of District 40 Rep. Nima Kulkarni, D-Louisville, said he was spurred to enter the race after a Republican legislator filed bills that would stop U.S. citizens born in other countries from holding local- and state-elected offices, according to the Kentucky Lantern. Kulkarni will face business owner and former National Guard

trooper Nathan Bellows in the primary, with the winner to challenge incumbent Rep. Ken Fleming, R-Louisville.

Uncontested races

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- In the Senate, where only even-numbered seats are up for grabs, eight incumbent senators are unopposed: District 2’s Danny Carroll (R-Benton), District 4’s Robby Mills (R-Henderson), District 16’s Max Wise (R-Campbellsville), District 18’s Robin Webb (R-Grayson), District 22’s Donald Douglas (R-Nicholasville), District 28’s Greg Elkins (R-Winchester), District 32’s Mike Wilson (R-Bowling Green) and District 38’s Mike Nemes (R-Shepherdsville).

- In the House, 34 of the 40 candidates running unopposed are Republicans. But Democrats expressed some optimism. “You will see more contested races. We will grow this caucus, and we will make sure that what stays at the center of who we are the people,” House Minority Leader Stevenson said.

- Senate Majority Leader Stivers, meanwhile, said the number of unopposed Republicans running in the Senate speaks for itself, calling it “a strong vote of confidence from Kentuckians in the direction our commonwealth is heading.”

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