Health, Livability, & the Built Environment

driving forces report

This report addresses key forces and decisions shaping the future of the built environment and the way that it shapes the health of Nashvillians and the livability of our neighborhoods and places. The contents of this report were developed by NashvilleNext planning staff working with the Health, Livability, & Built Environment Resource Team (members at right) during 2013.

About Driving Forces

Each NashvilleNext Resource Team began its work by identifying a set of Driving Forces — key decisions or outside factors shaping Nashville's future. Each Team considered trends currently affecting Nashville, as well as how different trends and forces interact to affect the future.

This exercise served three primary purposes:

» Identify key trends & understand how different trends interact

» Bring different perspectives into the process and understand how they interact

» Introduce team members to one another prior to beginning the process of making recommendations.

This report contains no direct policy guidance or recommendations. However, its contents did shape the Goals & Policies developed by this Resource Team in early 2014 (available for review by the public in mid-2014).

It is presented here as a record of the process.

See more

See the Driving Forces identified by other Resources Team
» *http://www.nashville.gov/Government/NashvilleNext/ NashvilleNext-Resource-Teams.aspx*

Once available for review, the draft Goals & Policies for all of the Resource Teams will also be available on that page.

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Parts of the Driving Forces

Each Resource Team's work is presented in three parts that together make up the Driving Forces for their element:

» **Loops:** A high-level summary of the topics and trends discussed by the Resource Team. The loops are the most straightforward way to understand what's involved in each element.

» **Forces:** A more detailed listing of the forces considered by each Resource Team.

» **Influence Diagram:** A complex picture representing how the Forces interact. Forces are linked to one another when changes in one Forces are directly or inversely related to one another.

Loops

WALKABILITY

Places are walkable when they include pedestrian facilities (such as sidewalks and street trees) that allow walkers (including people with mobility limitations) to access destinations for daily and weekly needs (shopping, parks, schools, churches, and the like). Other things that make a place walkable include calm traffic, being safe, and being perceived as safe. Design, density, and layout of walkable areas (matched to the character and context of a neighborhood or commercial area) also contribute to an area's walkability.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

The condition of a person's body and mind that results in overall feelings of well-being. Well-being has many different aspects, including mental, physical, spiritual, social health. The quality of our workplaces and built and natural environments contribute to our well-being when they:

» are safe and unpolluted,
» provide access to services and nature, and
» enable an active lifestyle.

COMMUNITY & SOCIAL SUPPORT

The support that one's neighbors, acquaintances, communities, and social network provide. This support enables individuals to access information and services important to them and to respond to and overcome problems. It is also related to community and personal identity and to the ability of individuals to meet their needs within their communities. As Nashville and its neighborhoods change, cultural tension can reduce social support, while familiarization can restore it.

CONTEXT & CHARACTER

Nashville includes many different kinds of places, with varied characters. Context refers to the overall pattern of land uses and intensities, ranging from natural, undisturbed areas, to rural areas, to suburban neighborhoods, to urban neighborhoods, to downtown. Accommodating new housing, services, and jobs, and improving health and livability requires either matching changes to fit the context and respect existing neighborhood character or carefully and intentionally changing the character of key locations.

For more on context and character, see the characteristics table on the following two pages.

SAFETY

Safety, and perceptions of safety, are critical to Nashville's livability. This includes being safe from crime, but also relates to traffic safety and environmental hazards. The built environment shapes opportunities for crime, such as areas where crime can occur unseen or undetected.

Context and character of parts of Nashville and Davidson County

Rural	Suburban	Urban
Example areas		
Bells Bend, Joelton, Linton, Neelys Bend, Scottsboro, Union Hill, Whites Bend, Whites Creek	Antioch, Bellevue, Bordeaux, Charlotte Park, Cane Ridge, Creive Hall, Donelson, Glencliff, Glengarry, Green Hills, Hadley Park, Hermitage, Hillwood, Inglewood, Nations, Oakland Acres, Priest Lake, Rayon City, Rosebank, West Meade, Una-Antioch	12South, Belmont-Hillsboro, Buena Vista, Chestnut Hill, Cleveland Park, Eastwood, Edgehill, Germantown, Greenwood, Hope Gardens, Hillsboro-West End, Historic Buena Vista, Lenox Village, Lockeland Springs, McFerrin Park, Old Hickory Village,
Neighborhood characteristics		
Sparsely developed with agricultural and low density residential uses	Moderately developed with primarily residential, but other uses are present, often separated from residential areas	Designed with carefully integrated mixture of housing and mix of commercial, employment, entertainment and other uses
Residential		
Common housing types include single-family and two-family; very low density	Most common housing types include single-family and two-family, but townhomes and manor homes are also found; also found are apartments but they are usually separated from one- and two-family homes; low to moderate density	Multiple housing types, single-family, two-family, townhomes, stacked flats, alley houses; moderate to high density
Housing generally located on very large lots with deep, varying setbacks and wide spacing that honors environmental features	Housing generally located on large lots with moderate setbacks, although some new developments may have shallower setbacks	Housing generally located on smaller lots with shallower setbacks and minimal spacing between homes
Open space		
Open space generally passive, utilizing natural vegetation and landscape with few, if any, additional amenities	Fewer public parks because open space and park activities provided via large yards in classic suburban; in newer developments with smaller yards, open space provided within each development	More formal to accommodate active recreational uses, with passive uses appearing as plazas, courtyards and squares

Rural	Suburban	Urban
Open space *(continued)*		
May also include privately-held land trust and conservation easements	Existing trees and vegetation are integrated into site design to preserve green space and dense foliage	Variety of types, ranging from ball fields and playgrounds to picnic areas and urban gardens
Greenways link rural centers and open space	Public open spaces generally larger to serve larger area	Open space often incorporated into centers
Centers		
Smaller, main street areas and village centers with smaller scale and intensity, usually limited to civic uses and daily convenience commercial	Larger, concentrated areas of commercial, employment, entertainment and civic uses with some residential uses that serve immediate neighborhood, community, or region	Pedestrian-friendly areas of commercial, residential, employment, entertainment and civic uses that serve immediate neighborhood or community
Generally located at intersection of two prominent rural roads	Generally located at prominent intersections along edge of several neighborhoods, although smaller neighborhood-scaled centers may exist	Generally located at prominent intersections; varies in scale from larger centers to small neighborhood centers
Corridors		
Corridors designed to not overwhelm natural landscape; often built to follow natural topography; shoulders and ditches/swales are present, not curbs or sidewalks	Corridors act as throughways, moving people to and from outer areas into more densely populated urban areas; curbs, gutters and sidewalks are present	Corridors may decrease in width, but because of denser population, additional modes of travel are provided by sidewalks, bikeways, and transit
Buildings are clustered near corridor intersections in towns and hamlets	Land uses are best centered at intersections but are also found in a linear fashion along corridors	Mix of uses exist with buildings placed and oriented so that they address the street
Along corridors land uses limited to residential and often removed from view with deep setbacks	Land uses adjoining corridors range from residential to commercial uses with deeper setbacks to accommodate landscaping; some areas are built closer to the street	Corridors may contain all higher density residential or a mix of uses
Limited road network; limited travel options, mostly vehicles	Moderate street connectivity; pedestrian and biking opportunities; limited transit options	Street grid usually more complete, people have multiple routes and corridors begin to function as destinations; multiple modes of travel options

Forces

Access to green

(parks, greenways, and green space)
Places with abundant, conserved green spaces help people to connect with each other and with nature. The terms 'green space' refers to natural areas that are used for recreation and socialization, places of scenic beauty, areas that provide habitat for plants and animals, land that absorbs and filters water before it enters our rivers, land that we farm, and land that is forested. It includes more types of green spaces beyond parks, playgrounds and greenways, such as woods, wetlands, manicured gardens, and farms. The Nashville Open Space Plan includes goals for preserving parkland; creating a green infrastructure network; protecting floodplains and other sensitive natural areas; protecting agricultural lands and growing more local food; improving park and greenway linkages; creating additional small parks and landscaped gateways; and increasing tree canopy. (Source: Nashville Open Space Plan: www.conservationfund.org/projects/open-space-plan-for-nashville/)

Access to information & services

Access in this sense means people have genuine access to information and services for financial questions, health and wellness, government departments and programs, safety, language, parenting programs, and other programs that benefit residents in their daily lives.

Access to capital

Access to capital means people have immediate access to money, loans, and assets for the purpose of building or purchasing housing and businesses.

Active lifestyles

Active living is a way of life that integrates physical activity into everyday routines, such as walk-ing to the store or biking to work. (Source: Active Living by Design: www.activelivingbydesign.org/)

Advocate within Metro

Dedicating Metro staff to advocating for residents and neighborhoods to ensure they have adequate information and maintain or improve customer responsiveness.

Auto-oriented uses

This refers to land uses that cater to automobiles. Designing for these uses usually means improving and building roads to accommodate more traffic, creating multiple curb cuts for ease of entry and exit, and large lighted signs that can be read by fast moving vehicles. By focusing too much on auto-oriented uses, streets can become unfriendly to pedestrians and cyclists through such features as continuous curb cuts (which have many potential points of conflict), parking lots along the street, and lack of sidewalks/crosswalks.

Awareness

Understanding of available services and opportunities to improve mental and physical health.

Built-in opportunities for crime

Opportunities where crime can occur unseen or undetected. The design and layout of buildings, parks, parking, sidewalks, and roads can make it easier or harder to commit crimes undetected.

Calm Traffic

Automotive traffic is safe and calm when it is slow moving and drivers are aware of walkers and cyclists.

Community anchors

Community anchors are nstitutions that support a neighborhood or community and contribute positively to a place's quality of life. Anchor institutions play a variety of roles from providing civic services such as libraries and museums; to fostering innovation and building partnerships such as business coalitions; to engaging the public and bringing people together such as faith institutions; to building community capacity such as resource centers and non-profits.

Connectivity

Connectivity is having a network of streets, sidewalks and trails with multiple routes and connections to link various spaces or destinations in a neighborhood, community, or city.

Context sensitivity

Context sensitivity refers to design that is sensitive to its surroundings, environment and neighborhood to maintain and reinforce an established form or character of development in a particular area. This includes consideration of unique, local features, such as historical buildings and landmarks. At a county level, context includes whether an area is rural, suburban, or urban. For examples of different contextx in Davidson County, see table on pages 3-4).

Cultural tension

This refers to feelings that are produced in situations where people are anxious and do not trust each other. The tension is often caused by variations in ways of life, particularly as neighborhoods change over time. Increased tension may lead to conflict or violence.

Diversity

Diversity refers to human qualities that are different from our own and those of groups to which we belong, but that are manifested in other individuals and groups. Dimensions of diversity include but are not limited to: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, work experience, and job classification. (Source: University of California, Berkeley: http://hrweb.berkeley.edu/diversity/why-diversity)

Eyes on the street

In the Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs observed what she called 'eyes on the street' – her belief in a certain kind of community with a mix of classes and in which there is constant activity in the streets that is often observed by others. Jacobs wrote of this type of community as lively and engaged, with positive social benefits arising from the free association of people who might have different functions and beliefs but who all exist with a neighborhood's social environment. Designers have elaborated on this concept as a tool to prevent crime by focusing on good building and street design that allows for clear views of the street and fosters use of sidewalks and street throughout the day and night. (Source: StreetsWiki: http://streetswiki.wikispaces.com/Eyes+On+The+Street)

Familiarization

The ability to adapt and become familiarized with, and generally accepting of, other people, surroundings and environment.

Financial security

Financial security is having the financial resources to support a standard of living now and in the foreseeable future.

Housing variety

Housing comes in a variety of shapes, sizes, types and prices. Each neighborhood or community should ideally provide a variety of housing options, including single-family homes, townhouses, stacked flats, live/work units, and accessory units. The more options a neighborhood is able to provide, the more diverse and vibrant the area can be. By including a variety of housing types, neighborhoods and communities can also accommodate a variety of densities. In addition, a variety of home prices is more likely in a neighborhood with a variety of housing types and densities. With proper design, various types of housing can mix in a neighborhood without changing the predominant character. (Source for more info – American Planning Association: www.planning.org/)

Lifelong learning/workforce development

This blends two concepts. Lifelong learning refers to the ongoing, self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. The term recognizes that learning is not confined to childhood or the classroom, but takes place throughout life and in a range of situations. Workforce development means equipping people with genuine access to learning centers and training facilities for educational and employment purposes and encouraging financial, health, language and parenting programs that improve people's daily lives.

Meeting needs in community

The ability of community residents to meet their daily needs within or close to their neighborhoods or communities.

Mental and physical wellness

Wellness refers to a healthy balance of the body and mind that results in an overall feeling of well-being. The dimensions of wellness may include mental, physical, spiritual, social, occu-

pational and environmental health conditions. The concept focuses on prevention of disease and improving both the health and the quality of people's lives. (Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/)

Neighborhood upkeep

This refers to maintenance in neighborhoods by residents, property owners, business owners, institutions and government departments that keep homes, buildings, businesses, properties and streets looking cohesive and well-kept. This includes landscaping, streetscapes, gateways, sidewalks, litter/graffiti removal, lighting, signage and property maintenance.

Organic community growth

Communities grow organically when growth occurs gradually in a way that contributes to and is sensitive of existing community character.

Pedestrian comfort and facilities

This refers to the density, layout, and infrastructure that encourages walking and biking in residential or commercial areas. These will vary based on community character and context, but some design aspects include short building setbacks, front porches, sidewalks, and bike paths. This concept is extremely important in areas planned for a mix of uses likely to support a relatively high level of pedestrian activity. (Source for more info – American Planning Association: www.planning.org/)

Quality of life

The attributes or amenities that combine to make an area a good place to live. The personal perception of the physical, economic, and emotional well-being that exists in the community. (APA dictionary)

Shared destinations

Shared destinations refer to a neighborhood's gathering places – coffee shops, pubs, markets, parks, etc. These gathering places are essential to community vitality and informal public life. The term 'third places' is also used, in addition to the first place being home and the second place being work. (Source for more info – Project for Public Spaces: www.pps.org/)

Social capital

The idea that social networks have value, which can be used to produce social or economic benefits between individuals.

Strong schools

Strong schools provide strong institutional support, resources and materials, lesson plans, and curricula for students and teachers; ensure that teachers are qualified and motivated; and provide needed budgetary resources to foster high academic achievement.

Influence Diagram

The influence diagram on the next page shows how the above Forces interact. This is presented as the effects of changes each Force. As one Force changes (increases or decreases), what other Forces also change (either in the same way as the first Force (direct relationship) or opposite to the first Force (inverse relationship).

Direct relationship (More X leads to *more* Y)

Inverse relationship (More X leads to *less* Y)

Metro tax base (takes contributions *from*)

Metro tax base (contributes *to*)

Influence diagram

Direct relationship (More X leads to *more* Y)

Inverse relationship (More X leads to *less* Y)

$$ **Metro tax base** (takes contributions *from*)

$$ **Metro tax base** (contributes *to*)

Lifelong learning/ workforce development

Strong schools

Population

Diversity

Organic community growth

Housing variety

Access to information & services

Access to capital

Metro responsiveness & effectiveness

Advocate within Metro

Quality of life

Context sensitivity

Meeting needs in community

Retail/ services options

Familiarization

Neighborhood upkeep

Community anchors

Financial security

Safe, affordable & accessible housing

Awareness

Cultural tension

Social capital

Shared destinations

Access to green

Jobs

Eyes on the street

Active lifestyles

Mental & physical wellness

Substance abuse

Safety

Pedestrian comfort + facilities

Connectivity

Bicycling

Sports, leisure activities & athletics

Stress

Built-in opportunities for crime

Calm traffic

Transit

Pollution

Auto-oriented uses

Access to affordable & healthy food

Air, water, land quality