
NashvilleNext

Youth Engagement Plan



Executive Summary - A plan for engaging youth

NashvilleNext is a process to create a plan for the future of Nashville. The process will gather the ideas and input of people who care about Nashville - from residents to business owners to commuting workers to city leaders - as well as experts of all backgrounds. The plan's elements include art and culture, economic development, education, environment, transportation, diversity, livable communities, public safety, and more.

The goal of NashvilleNext is to create a plan that will ensure the prosperity and well-being of our city and region for the next 25 years. In this, the success of NashvilleNext will depend on community engagement. Over the last 20 years, the community engagement process in Nashville has been an inclusive and comprehensive process. Through the community planning process, and processes envisioning Nashville's downtown core, and open space and environmental features, community members have become accustomed to providing their input on the future growth and preservation of the city. The NashvilleNext process seeks to offer the same opportunities for community engagement.

The approach to community engagement includes a broad range of engagement opportunities. The opportunities align with the various phases of the process and anticipated outcomes. The approach also includes a commitment to engaging hard-to-reach constituents primarily through targeted outreach efforts and the assistance of strategic partnerships; youth are one of these hard-to-reach constituents. To facilitate the engagement of hard-to-reach constituents, NashvilleNext assembled the Community Engagement Committee (CEC) to assist in reaching hard-to-reach constituents. There are four members of the engagement committee who are focused on engaging youth and young families.



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Through the CEC members' guidance and encouragement, teens attended several NashvilleNext events during the early stages of community outreach. Those events were seminal, creating an interest in NashvilleNext that would influence future youth outreach efforts. What resulted was NashvilleNext serving as the topic of the Mayor's Youth Council's annual Youth Summit.

NashvilleNext collaborated with the Mayor's Youth Council to cohost the annual Youth Summit in April 2013. After receiving great response from youth during that event, additional work began in the summer of 2013 to better engage youth in the NashvilleNext process. NashvilleNext began working in collaboration with the Mayor's Youth Council and Oasis Center leadership, a leading youth serving organization in Nashville, to develop a comprehensive engagement strategy for youth.

The goal of this and any youth engagement strategy should be to include youth in a meaningful way, avoiding tokenism and creating an environment where youth are fully involved in decision-making. The team is committed to working toward this goal as the engagement strategy evolves from a singular distinctive event (the Youth Summit) to a robust calendar of outreach and activities; the result, creating a group of young people who are actively involved in deciding what's NEXT for Nashville.



“We Got NEXT!”



Engaged Youth Are Critical to Nashville's Future

Over the next 25 years, the planning horizon for NashvilleNext, youth (in this case people age 20 and younger) will comprise roughly 28% of Davidson County's total population. Being a significant portion of the county's growing population, youth can have significant influence on decisions pertinent to Nashville's growth. Having unique experiences and needs with regard to transportation, public spaces and recreation, and schooling and employment, the input of youth can provide different perspectives and identify nuances that are often overlooked when dealing with such issues, nuances that also relate to young families and seniors who also grapple with similar issues in these areas. Involving youth in the community planning process not only benefits the youth involved, but it also benefits civic leaders by providing fresh insight as they work to build more livable and sustainable communities.

Engaging youth in the community planning process can be a rewarding experience for all involved. For policy makers often criticized for 'pie-in-the-sky' forward thinking, youth idealism is often more widely

accepted in public policy conversations than the former. Young people can often change the direction of a policy conversation that is overwhelmed by rigid and conventional arguments. As a result, those involved in planning and civic engagement seek to engage youth (and other hard-to-reach demographics) through technology and other innovations to include them in policy conversations. As youth assume a more active role in these dialogues, they begin to take ownership of their community by being a part of the solution rather than the problem, a dual reward for youth and the communities in which they reside.

To inherit such rewards a youth engagement process must create opportunities for a young person to define a community problem, help craft a solution and, ultimately, take ownership. Youth must also feel a sense of communion (the need for connection to community), justice (the need to do what's right) and authenticity (the need to see things as they are) within the engagement process to be invested in the effort. Adults must create a process where youth and adults share the power and work effectively to discuss and solve issues. Therefore, engaging youth in the community plan process must avoid:

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1. Tokenism - The act of involving youth (or any group/person) in a non-meaningful way to satisfy process objectives and goals, rather than encourage collaboration in decision-making.
2. Adulthoodism - Display of attitudes and behaviors that result when adults feel that youth are inferior.

According to the American Planning Association, these two factors can create a youth engagement process whose participants are passive recipients of information rather than people who assert themselves to voice particular concerns or viewpoints.

To create active participants, the youth engagement process must:

1. Include youth at the highest level of traditional engagement, where they may serve as contributors and informants, and collaborators and decision-makers.
2. Actively include youth as part of the public dialogue and decision-making.
3. Create influential engagement that seeks and accomplishes change.

The NashvilleNext process seeks to reach the overall goal of including youth in a meaningful way, avoiding tokenism and creating an environment where youth are fully involved in decision-making. To do so, youth activities and outreach methods moving forward will seek to collaborate and inform, while seeking contributions to decision-making. The Youth Summit was a great start; but like many youth engagement activities, it was limited and discrete. The NashvilleNext team and Oasis Center leadership seek to expand upon that event to create a more comprehensive youth engagement process that fulfills the aforementioned goal.

“My ideas matter!”



Youth Engagement Plan

The youth engagement activities are envisioned to parallel the NashvilleNext process. The NashvilleNext process has five phases:

- **Phase 1: Community Input and Speaker Series** - Community Input, Broad Visioning and Education.
- **Phase 2: Creating the Vision** - Selecting priorities and establishing Guiding Principles.
- **Phase 3: Mapping Future Growth and Preservation** - Deciding where and how the community will grow, while determining what would be preserved.
- **Phase 4: Making Policy Decisions** - Performing more in-depth review of specific areas, and selecting preferred scenarios for the future.
- **Phase 5: Adopting the Plan** - Draft Plan Creation and Community Vetting.

The table to the right is a summary of youth engagement activities conducted and how well the activity aligned with each phase of NashvilleNext.

Results

The NashvilleNext team, in collaboration with Oasis Center / Mayor’s Youth Council, created alignment between NashvilleNext and Oasis Center / MYC activities through NashvilleNext’s Phase 4.5. Phase 5 was more difficult to adapt activities for youth. Phase 5 began the summer of 2015, the end of the Metro Nashville Public Schools’, school year; therefore, youth outreach was limited to college students due to timing.

Despite lighter outreach towards the end of the NashvilleNext process, the activities that did occur brought to bear the concerns of our city’s youth. These efforts and partnerships with youth serving organizations, should serve as an example of youth engagement for other county wide processes.

Table 1. NashvilleNext Process and Outcomes

NashvilleNext Phases and Outcomes	Youth Engagement Activities	Alignment with NashvilleNext Process? (YES / NO)
Phase 1 Community Input and Speaker Series Outcomes Community Input, Broad Visioning and Education	Youth Outreach (Spring 2013) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth attended the NashvilleNext kickoff meeting, and several NashvilleNext Speaker Series events. Youth Summit Event (Spring 2013) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth participated in NashvilleNext broad visioning activities at the youth summit. • Adult Facilitators provided expert guidance in issue areas. • Youth provided recommended strategies to address specific issues in areas of college access, education, transportation, health, and equity and diversity – all relevant NashvilleNext topics. • Traveling Youth Exhibit. Placed in schools and youth centers to gather broad input on the future of Nashville. 	YES
Phase 2: Creating the Vision Outcomes Selecting priorities and establishing Guiding Principles	Youth Outreach (Fall 2013) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be the Next Mayor (priority-setting event) held in four area high schools – Hillsboro, Whites Creek, Glenciff and Antioch High Schools. Be the Next Mayor youth input considered alongside adult input gathered at countywide community meetings. • Dot surveying conducted at youth events to prioritize youth summit recommendations. 	YES
Phase 3: Mapping Future Growth and Preservation Outcomes Deciding where and how the community will grow, while determining what should be preserved	Youth Summit Event (Planned for Spring 2014) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor’s Youth Council, 2014 Youth Summit. Mapping future growth and preservation areas. • In class packets where sent to area high schools. Students commented on where growth and preservation should take place. 	YES
Phase 4: Making Policy Decisions Outcomes Performing more in-depth review of specific areas, and selecting preferred scenarios for the future	Youth Outreach (Summer and Fall 2014) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor’s Youth Council provided input on the Education and Youth Goal and Policies. • Mayor’s Youth Council Briefing and surveys on the Preferred Future. 	YES
Phase 5: Adopting the Plan Outcomes Draft Plan Creation and Community Vetting	Youth Outreach (Summer 2015) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book – a – Planner presentations held at Tennessee State University. While not high school aged and younger, the Millennial demographic was briefed on the plan’s elements and adoption process. 	NO: <i>Explanation</i> – more youth engagement needed on the adoption process.

Activities and Outcomes

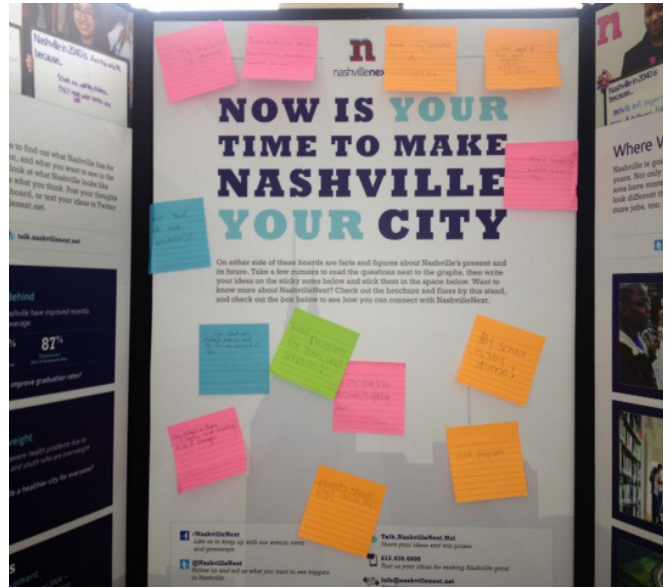


A 2013 Mayor's Youth Council Summit attendee provides input on camera.

Mayor's Youth Council Youth Summit - Visioning - Phase 1 Youth Outreach

The Mayor's Youth Council Youth Summit was held on Saturday, April 27, 2013. On a rainy spring day, more than 50 youth attended the Oasis Center located just north of downtown Nashville. The summit was fully planned by the Mayor's Youth Council. The youth set the agenda for the day, organized the activities and assisted with outreach. NashvilleNext educational and promotional materials were provided by the Metro Planning Department and McNeely Pigott & Fox, engagement consultants. Oasis Center and NashvilleNext team members assisted with recruitment of adult volunteers.

The summit began with an ice-breaker activity, followed by a welcome from Rick Bernhardt, director of the Metro Nashville Planning Department, Oasis Center CEO Tom Ward and Mayors Youth Council Coordinator Brandon Hill. The youth then attended breakout sessions on topics aligned with NashvilleNext. After the breakout session the youth gathered to visit various input stations to provide their thoughts on the future of Nashville.



A traveling exhibit rotated between youth serving organizations to gather input for NashvilleNext.

In addition to the youth summit, a traveling exhibit to gather input on the future of Nashville was used. The exhibit traveled to several youth organizations - Rockettown, Oasis Center, and the Downtown Branch of the Nashville Library's Teen Area. The exhibit produced stacks of post-it notes with ideas from the city's youth about the future of Nashville.

Youth Summit Breakout Sessions

It was important to the Mayor's Youth Council that the summit mimic the NashvilleNext kickoff event, which they attended and enjoyed. This included utilizing various stations for input and organizing breakout sessions around topics that were being discussed in the NashvilleNext process. The breakout sessions included:

- College Readiness and Access
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Education
- Health
- Transportation

For each breakout session, youth facilitators from the Mayor's Youth Council were paired with adult

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facilitators who served as topical experts. The adults were asked to provide support to the students as they led discussions around these topics. The adults who attended included:

College Access

Oasis College Connection Staff

Diversity and Inclusion

Stephanie Teatro – Director of Advocacy, Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition

Education

Patricia P. Stokes – CEO, Urban League of Middle Tennessee

Health

Tracy Buck – Director of Prevention and Wellness, Metropolitan Nashville Health Department

Transportation

Ed Cole – Executive Director, Transit Alliance of Middle Tennessee

Within each session the youth were asked to respond to the topics and, corresponding statistics by answering a series of questions to spark discussion:

- 1. What do you think about the topic?**
- 2. What do you think can be done about the problem statement?**
- 3. What would you like to see in Nashville related to (topic)?**

Discussions commenced around each topic to facilitate thought and ultimately, recommendations that the entire summit would then weigh in on. The youth's input was indicative of both how insightful the next generation of leaders can be, and that there is much work still to be done to improve the quality of life in the city.



Ed Cole talks with a 2013 Mayor's Youth Council attendee in the transportation break out session.

College Access

College/career access was ranked as one of the most important issues by high school-aged young people.

In 2010, 70% of students enrolled in a two- or four- year college within two years from graduating high school. By age 27, only about 40% had earned a bachelor's or associate degree.

In a 2010 survey, 86% of Nashville students desired to pursue a two- or four- year professional degree.

The average 9th grade student in Nashville has a 32.5% chance of attending college right after high school.

In a 2010 Nashville survey, 82.4% of students said the part of the college-access process where they need the most help is filling out applications and obtaining financial aid.

For many low-income students the largest barrier to attending college is the cost. The average cost in 2010 for in-state students at four-year public institutions was \$7,605/year.

The majority of students rely on parents or family members to prepare for college and/or career instead of community/professional support and services.

In 2012, about 29% of MNPS students score 21+ on the ACT (which means only about three out of 10 students in Nashville are prepared for college courses in all four ACT subject areas: English, Reading, Math and Science).

Average MNPS student ACT score is 18.4.

"The rigor and difficulty level should be increased in high school and even more in elementary/middle school to increase college readiness."

"Teens need education on how college may affect your income."

Youth Summit Recommendations

- Create a culture of high expectation to go to college in the community, at school and at home.
- Provide more information about scholarships and financial opportunities.

"Need to add ACT prep as a required course in high school."

"It's not just about going to college, but staying in college."

Diversity and Inclusion

Over the last decade, Tennessee has had the third-fastest-growing foreign-born population of all the states in the U.S.

Nashville's black population is projected to grow by 13% and Hispanic by 51% by 2020.

The accessibility of good jobs and career advancement is a strong indicator of inclusion.

Women comprise 48% of all employed Nashvillians, but only 40% of managers. Blacks, 25% of all employed but only 16% of managers. Hispanic/Latinos, 9% of all employed, but only 4% of managers.

Between 2005 and 2007, African-Americans and Hispanics were twice as likely as whites to be poor.

As of 2010, 25.2% of the foreign-born population in Tennessee was living below the poverty line (compared to 17.3% of U.S.-born population).

36% of black and Hispanic students in MNPS have proficient or advanced reading and language test scores compared to 60% of white students.

In math, 49% of white students scored proficient or advanced compared to 22% of black students and 28% of Hispanic students.

Black males are suspended from school at significantly higher rates than other subgroups.

Bullying continues to be an issue in public schools for minority, LGBT and disabled students.

"(The growth) statistics are good - Nashville needs to increase its diversity."

"Economic position really hinders further opportunities for success."

Youth Summit Recommendations

- Create more ESL classes for adults and children.
- Create space and opportunity to celebrate and learn about different cultures, including after-school activities.
- Teachers and counselors should reflect the diversity of the community and should be encouraged to learn about different cultures.
- Make policy and development changes with inclusion and accessibility in mind.

"I think that (test) scores sort of reflect on the student's life at home. If they have no one pushing them, they will not care."

"I believe that bullying is still a problem because society, in general, is still indicating that you need to be a certain way to fit in; therefore, people put others down to feel good about themselves if the other person is different and doesn't fit in."

Education

More than 81,000 students attend Metro Nashville Public Schools (about 20,000 are high school students).

MNPS Ethnic Breakdown:

- Black – 45.8%
- White – 33.3%
- Hispanic – 16.6%
- Asian/Pacific Islander – 4.1%
- Indian – 0.2%

27% of students in MNPS won't graduate.

Children who attend kindergarten without basic reading skills are three to four times more likely to drop out.

Students with supportive relationships with adults are five times more likely to graduate.

The number of white students attending Nashville public schools has dropped from 48% in 1999-2000 to 34% in 2011-2012, while the number of Hispanic students has increased from 4% in 1999-2000 to 16% in 2011-2012 (number of black students has remained the same).

The MNPS graduation rate in 2011-2012 was 78.4%, and more than 72% of all students in MNPS are economically disadvantaged.

MNPS has the following goals for every high school graduate:

- A plan for postsecondary education and career
- At least a 21 score on the ACT
- A work-based or service learning experience or a capstone project
- At least one course completed online
- A college credit, a professional certificate or both

"Hume-Fogg does well in academics, but no one seems to realize how important the community of the school is to that. We don't have much bullying, and people get along."

"Kids should learn to read in their early years, before attending school."

Youth Summit Recommendations

- Make guidance counselors more available to student needs.
- Provide more diverse class topics for students and create better extracurricular activities through MNPS.
- Improve teacher/student relationships (i.e., likeability and understanding of youth) by providing training for teachers.
- Encourage greater understanding of the students with extenuating circumstances (e.g., poverty, lack of parenting, resources, etc.).
- Create safer schools without excess use of security and police.
- Encourage teachers to use various styles and ways of teaching.

"Economically disadvantaged students have to deal with the burden of trying to focus on the future while also worrying about the present. It is a huge issue in our MNPS schools."

Health

Roughly one out of four young people in Nashville is overweight or obese, and these rates increase with age.

Tennessee's child obesity rate is 20.6%, which is the sixth-highest in the U.S.

Nashville exceeds the TN average with 26% of children and youth being classified as overweight or obese.

78.2% of high school youth do not engage in at least one hour of physical activity a day, which is the Surgeon General's recommendation.

A large percentage of economically disadvantaged youth live in areas where access to healthy foods is not readily available, which contributes to higher rates of obesity and health problems.

Nashville youth report the two biggest health concerns for people their age is drug/alcohol abuse and pregnancy. Additional health concerns reported by high school youth are smoking (23%), stress (21%) and STDs (20%).

64.8% of youth say they have engaged in alcohol consumption.

53% of youth have tried smoking, and 13.7% of youth report having been a regular smoker (every day for at least 30 days).

Infants of mothers with high school or lower education were 84% more likely than those with higher levels of education to die during infancy.

One in five children in the US have a mental health problem, and one in ten have a serious emotional disturbance.

75% of youth needing mental health services do not receive them.

"Schools should offer other types of fitness classes, not just the typical P.E./Kickball thing. Schools also need better menus and food options."

"There are only fast food restaurants in my neighborhood."

Youth Summit Recommendations

- **Address the quality of school lunches and vending.**
- **Offer overall health and wellness to teens.**
- **Provide different types of physical education/health classes in school but throughout the week.**
- **Provide more locations with active things to do/places to hang out.**
- **Use counter marketing campaigns to make tobacco use look "not cool."**
- **Provide more and better school gardens.**
- **Encourage affordable and healthy food in communities.**
- **Mental health and stress need to be addressed as it causes drug/alcohol use.**
- **Provide comprehensive sex/pregnancy education to address infant mortality rates.**

"Do NOT think that stress doesn't affect kids. Kids have stress, and it's crucial. Stress is the biggest gateway drug. Drinking, smoking, etc. is a way of coping with stress for many. Schools should offer mental help for students and counseling sessions ... mental health is very, very important."

Transportation

56% of high school students surveyed in Nashville said they had used public transportation in the last 12 months.

37% of these students rated their experience as average but could use improvement.

38% of these students said their experience was good and that the system works well most of the time.

Lack of transportation significantly limits a young person's ability to connect with positive opportunities in the community.

Lack of transportation was cited as a reason that Nashville youth do not participate in out-of-school-time activities and volunteer opportunities.

Fatal crashes are the leading cause of teen death. The Nashville-Murfreesboro metro region ranks fourth in the nation for fatal teen crashes.

Many youth feel the need to purchase and maintain a car because they are not aware of the transportation options available to them.

Transportation services are not always scheduled during the times that best meet the needs of youth.

"Public transportation is good for teenagers - it gives us independence. To have someone drive you, you have to rely on their schedule. The bus will always come."

"On the road, it's 'my car is better than your car.' On the bus, everyone is equal."

Youth Summit Recommendations

- **Provide more bike rental locations in neighborhoods, similar to what exists in downtown and Hillsboro Village.**
- **Encourage bikes as a viable alternative by encouraging safer bike usage; signage and roadway improvements.**
- **Provide more driving education classes in school.**
- **Better utilize our extensive railways for transportation.**
- **Provide transportation for students who want to go to schools outside of their zone.**
- **MTA should continue to provide different transportation options for different age groups.**
- **Create a designated "student block" of bus time, maybe from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., where police officers, MTA officials would ride on buses to provide extra comfort and security.**

"Many teens see having a car as a rite of passage, and not driving is considered 'weird.' If more teens rode Metro transit, more people would feel that it is safe and the number of driving teens might decrease."

Be the Next Mayor! Prioritizing - Youth Engagement Phase 2

During Phase 2 of the Youth Engagement component of NashvilleNext, youth were involved in *Be the Next Mayor*. Thirty-four priorities were narrowed down from more than 11,000 comments received during Phase 1 visioning. As part of Phase 2 (Creating the Vision), *Be the Next Mayor* allowed the broader community to further refine these 34 priorities for the future. The input received helped to inform the Guiding Principles that serve as the foundation of the NashvilleNext vision.

The public meetings were held in the evenings and on weekdays, making it difficult for youth to participate. Therefore, *Be the Next Mayor* was also conducted in four area high schools. The input collected was considered alongside input collected during the county wide meetings with the adult public. At Glenclyff High School, the hosting faculty member replicated the activity for additional classes. This activity proved well-suited for youth as they were engaged in healthy conversation around the various priorities.

In addition to *Be the Next Mayor* meetings, input continued with surveying on the 34 priorities at youth events and during Book A Planner presentations.

“Vote for Me!”

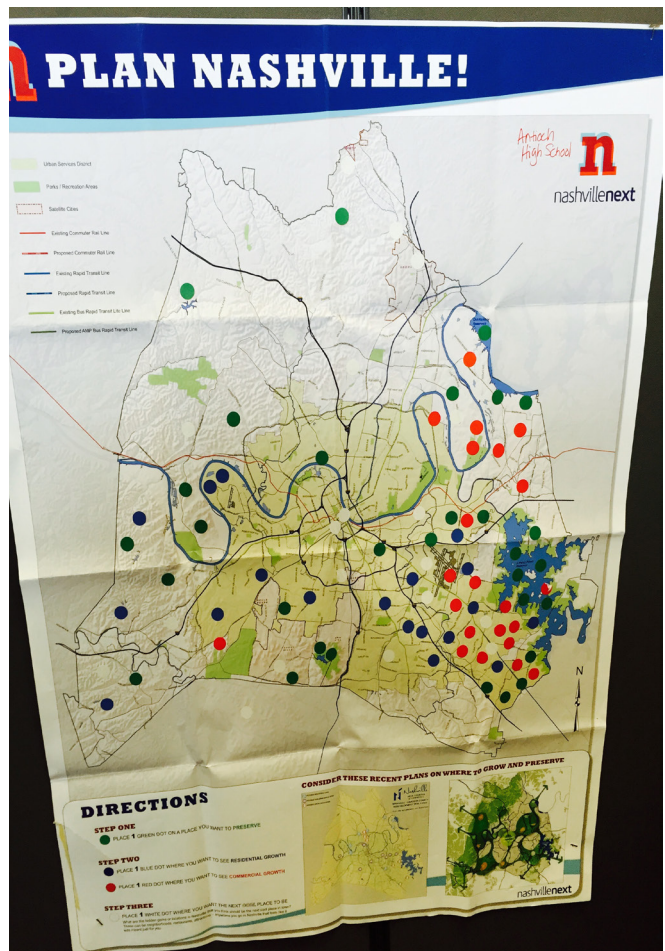


A Metro Planning Staff member facilitates a Be the Next Mayor group at Hillsboro High School.

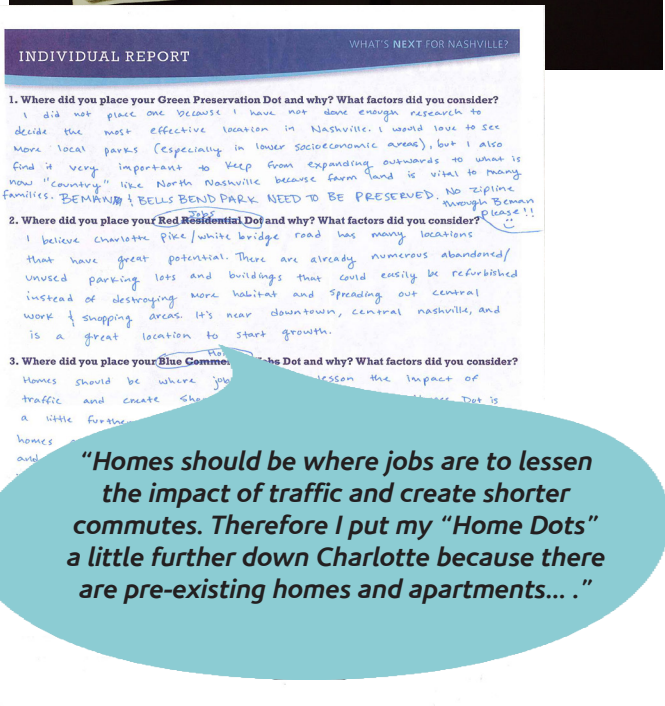
Plan Nashville! Growth and Preservation Mapping - Youth Engagement Phase 3

During Phase 3 of NashvilleNext, youth were involved in *Plan Nashville! Growth and Preservation Mapping*. Public meetings focused on a growth and preservation mapping exercise, in which participants worked in teams of 3 to 8 people, and used chips representing different kinds of places (such as urban mixed use, suburban residential, or downtown employment) to allocate Nashville’s anticipated growth of 200,000 new residents and 300,000 new jobs over the next 25 years. Each team also identified areas and kinds of places to preserve from development (such as floodplains or historic districts).

This activity was adapted for youth. Instead of population and employment chips, students used dots to denote areas of growth (housing or commercial), areas of preservation, and areas of opportunity. Hume Fogg and Antioch High Schools provided input through packets designed for in-class use. This activity was also a component of the Mayor’s Youth Council 2014 Summit.



(Above Right) Growth and Preservation Map from Antioch High School. Red Dots, represent desired commercial growth in Southeast Nashville. (Below Right) Quote from a Hume Fogg Student’s Growth and Preservation comment form. (Below) Youth Engagement during this phase was adapted from Growth and Preservation mapping exercises held the adult public. Adults from youth serving organizations participated in these meetings.

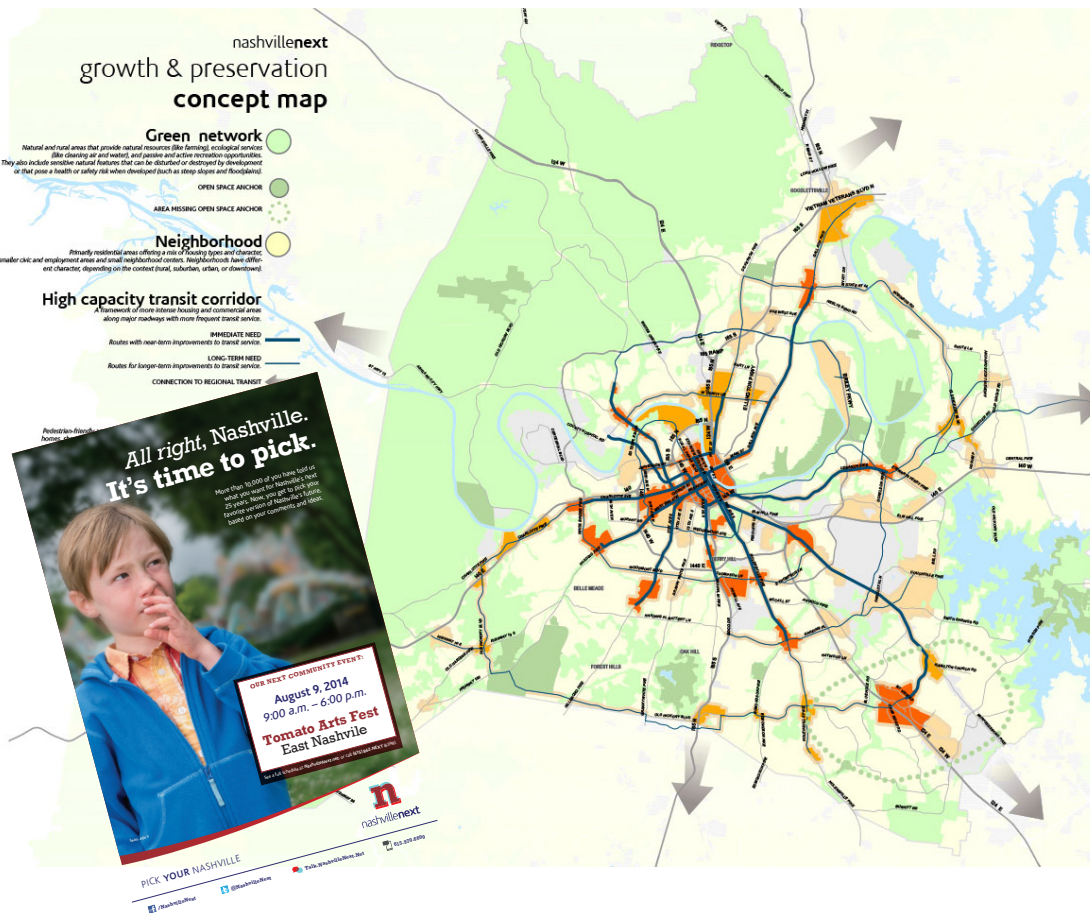


Pick Your Nashville! Preferred Future and Policy Setting - Phases 4 and 4.5

During the summer and fall of 2014, the public was engaged in selecting between Alternative Futures (*Pick Your Nashville!*) and then responding to the Preferred Future. After choosing from three Alternative Futures, the Preferred Future was released in Fall of 2014 for community comment, along with information on how the 14 Community Plans were proposed to be amended to align with it.

During these phases, focus groups were utilized to reach hard to reach groups, gathering qualitative input on the Alternative Futures and the Preferred Future. These phases occurred in the summer and during the fall / winter, again, making it difficult to reach youth by traditional means (e.g. during school, after school, youth serving organizations). Therefore, working with organizational partners on a smaller youth focus group would have been appropriate to gather qualitative input.

Despite the challenges due to timing, youth engagement efforts were still made. During Phase 4, the public also commented on NashvilleNext Goals and Policies. The Mayor's Youth Council reviewed and provided comment on the Education and Youth goals and policies. Those recommendations were incorporated into edits. During Phase 4.5, the Mayor's Youth Council was briefed and completed surveys on the Preferred Future. Similar to packets designed for in-school use during Phase 3, Preferred Future (Phase 4.5) packets were offered to four area high schools. Unfortunately timing (winter holiday breaks) made it difficult for instructors to implement the activity, and none were returned.



(Bottom Left) Phase 4 "Pick Your Nashville" surveys were distributed during the summer of 2014. (Left) The Preferred Future / Growth and Preservation map was the subject of a briefing held with the Mayor's Youth Council.