

METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE

Formulating a 25-Year General Plan

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You don't have to be an economist to realize that Nashville is a growing and economically healthy city. Just walk around downtown, and it's obvious this is a place

where good things are happening.

Fifty years ago, when the local city and county governments were combining to form Metro Nashville, that



Photos Courtesy Metro Planning Department

View of downtown Nashville and Shelby Avenue pedestrian bridge

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downtown area was the core of a much smaller region. Nashville's center city was the hub, the region was essentially within Davidson County, and outlying counties and communities largely thought of themselves as independent entities and went their own way on economic and development issues.

Today that core is expanding past the 440 loop, and the region, the area where each community's economic decisions and activity directly affect its neighbors, includes Davidson and its six adjacent counties. By 2040, the region will include at least 12 counties with a total population of over three million. Rutherford and Williamson counties will each have over a half-million residents. People of color will be in the majority, driven largely by rapid growth in the Latino community, with that growth resulting more from an increased birthrate than from immigration.

With those challenges in mind, Nashville is beginning the process of developing a bold new General Plan to move the city forward over the next 25 years. In an effort initiated by Mayor Karl Dean and co-sponsored by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, the Land Trust for Tennessee, and Nashville for All of Us, the Nashville 2040 General Plan will serve as a guide for community decisions that

will affect Nashville and its surrounding region over the coming quarter-century. The General Plan will provide a vision and direction on issues including but not limited to infrastructure investments, economic development, equity, youth and senior services, future land use and zoning, historic preservation, and the environment.

Our most recent General Plan, Concept 2010, was adopted in 1992, and the process of updating it to reflect current vision and priorities for the future is expected to take three years. The General Plan update will involve substantial participation from the diverse communities of stakeholders that are part of the city of Nashville. This participation will take many forms throughout the process, from conversations with individual community members to understand their vision for the region (over a thousand have already been completed, in person and by phone) to community workshops to creative forms of online engagement. The process will then move to creating a foundation for discussing critical General Plan issues and applying the ideas and direction that will grow from those conversations.

General Plan update activity is currently concentrated on background research, collecting relevant background reports, engaging key stake-

holders and groups, and conducting interviews and polling to get the "pulse" of the city. Once this data collection and stakeholder recruitment is well underway, work will begin on creating white papers that will establish the foundation (best practices, current state of Nashville, and recommendations) for discussing critical General Plan topics. In 2013, the community engagement process will begin with a speaker series on key General Plan topics.

Our objectives for this three-year process include the following:

- Developing a consensus 25-year Metro-wide vision to support economic development, achieve the efficient provision of public services, expand the application of environmentally sound and sustainable development practices, increase neighborhood livability, and expand education, housing, and employment opportunities for all residents.
- Developing critical white papers on strategic issues and opportunities.
- Establishing goals, objectives, and appropriate measures to achieve the vision.
- Creating guiding policies for each objective: specific tools for policymakers, appointed and

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Rush-hour traffic on Interstate 40 entering downtown Nashville



Bike path in east Nashville residential/commercial neighborhood

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- elected officials, to use when considering long-term investments and budgetary decisions and creating supplemental plans.
- Generating a Community Development plan designed to address strategic issues and goals and built on the fundamental principles of our *Community Character Manual*, the basic document that guides local land-use policy.
- Providing strategic design for

critical areas of the county including critical corridors, economic centers, targeted redevelopment areas, and targeted new-growth areas.

The creation of the General Plan, and the final product, will differ in two vitally important ways from the previous plan.

First, varied and diverse community input is a much larger part of the planning process. While the genera-



New multifamily residential development near downtown core

tion of Concept 2010 included significant public guidance and comment, we are currently reaching out to many specific demographics that may not have even been present in the early 1990s.

Second, this General Plan is based on a much more regional view, with greater recognition and understanding of how Metro Nashville and its surrounding communities and constituencies must cooperate to build a stronger and more vibrant future for

all of middle Tennessee.

This is essentially a new and complex approach to two simple questions: what is our community's vision for its future, and how do we achieve it? We have just begun the process of answering that question in our current social and economic context. With appropriate public and private input and the contributions of experts in many disciplines, we will form a plan that will shape the future of not just our city but our region. ■

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