

IMAGINE NASHVILLE

Where Everyone Belongs

A Vision for Nashville's Future

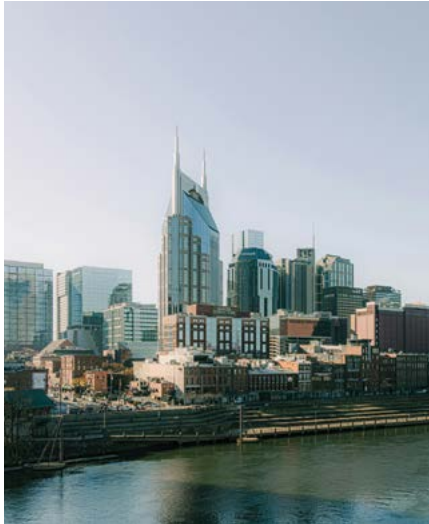




CONTENTS

- 4** **Open Letter To Nashvillians**
- 8** **The Big Idea**
WHY IMAGINE NASHVILLE?
- 12** **Share Your Dream**
IMAGINE NASHVILLE'S GOAL & APPROACH
- 14** **Every Zip Code. Every Perspective.**
A LOOK AT THE DATA
- 26** **Where Everyone Belongs**
AN ACTIONABLE PLAN
- 52** **Turning Dreams Into Action**
IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK
- 54** **Beyond Imagination**
KEY INDICATORS
- 56** **For The Nashville Of Our Dreams**
A CALL TO ACTION

An open letter to Nashvillians



Fellow Nashvillians,

Many of us in Music City often sound like, well, broken records. We love this city, and we sing its praises to anyone who will listen. We share our good news, our success stories, and even what we suspect is the secret to our success: Nashville's collaborative spirit.

Through time and across industries, from boardrooms to classrooms to Music Row writers' rooms, this cooperative commitment to the collective good has led to incredible outcomes: innovative businesses, life-changing discoveries, defining moments in civil rights, stunning centers of art and culture, roaring sold-out stadiums, and unforgettable hit songs.

Each of us—the co-chairs of Imagine Nashville and our fellow steering committee members—has seen up close this dedication to the common good. We may come from different backgrounds and work in different fields, but we've often found ourselves working together and with countless others across the city to celebrate wins, address challenges, and advance opportunities. This is how Imagine Nashville was born.

We have witnessed firsthand the power of collective investment and action and all the ways Nashville has become the envy of the nation – even the world. Our economy has grown by leaps and bounds. We have rich diversity and a creative class other cities dream of. Titans of industry and some of the nation's best higher education institutions call Nashville home.

We have also witnessed a sense of growing inequality – and mounting challenges for residents related to Nashville's rapid growth.

As we considered this all, it became clear: Nashville has reached a critical inflection point. Along with many others, we believed it was time that all of Nashville's neighbors had the chance to help answer, "Where are we going? What is possible? Is there a deliberate vision for how we continue to grow, and for the benefit of whom?"

And so, Imagine Nashville was launched in 2023, and more than 10,000 have joined us in answering these questions. The following pages offer a look at the invaluable returns from that effort: the data, the dreams, and now, the vision—ambitious and real ideas for action—for the future of the city we love.

Imagine Nashville brought us together in new and powerful ways, and it can continue to do so. The research marked just the beginning of an ongoing collective effort. In true Nashville style, we dreamt of the city we want. Now, we're equipped to move ahead, with the privilege of working together to make it happen.

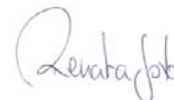
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Special thanks to Janet Miller for her visionary leadership in conceptualizing the project and ensuring its success.



“It was clear Nashville needed and yearned for a way to bring the many parts of our community together behind a set of actionable ideas for the future.”

– Dr. Alex Jahangir, co-chair

The big idea.

WHY IMAGINE NASHVILLE?

Nashville’s last community-led visioning effort was done more than 30 years ago. “21 Goals for the 21st Century” was released in 1991 and provided a roadmap for civic, philanthropic, private sector, and community action.

“The Nashville of today is a very different place than when we were involved in the original visioning effort in the 1990s. For it to work, it must be a much larger, independent effort with many community partners sitting as equals around the table.”

– Janet Miller, Nashville’s Agenda

“21 Goals”

helped launch the city on a forward trajectory and even initiated some of our many accomplishments over the past few decades. Generally, it helped signal that Nashville was a city on the rise: a visionary, determined, and welcoming community that now counts among its most notable successes:

- The relocation and expansion into Nashville by many of the country’s largest corporate HQs including Alliance Bernstein, Amazon, Bridgestone, Dell, and Oracle
- Going from no major league sports franchises to three, as the Tennessee Titans, Nashville Predators, and Nashville SC now call Nashville home
- The expansion of our public library system to become one of the best, most respected systems in all of the U.S.
- Prioritizing public greenspace to add 7,000+ acres of park/greenspace, establish 2,700+ acres of floodplain, and develop 100+ miles of greenways
- Prioritizing arts and culture, leading to the opening of the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Schermerhorn Symphony Center, and National Museum of African American Music, and to the relocation/expansion of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum
- Coordinating efforts across our community and establishing resources like The Metropolitan Housing Trust Fund Commission to address issues of affordable housing and homelessness
- Embracing diversity as a civic asset and acknowledging the human rights issues of our day, from welcoming and supporting refugee communities to successfully defeating exclusionary efforts like the “English Only” ballot measure

As we've garnered success and raised our profile, increasingly more people from all over the nation and the world have decided to make this "big small town" their home.

Yet, at the same time and through such rapid growth, we have more neighbors who feel disconnected from Nashville's progress. And in the post-pandemic years especially, a strong desire for a community-led effort emerged:

to consider the impact of Nashville's growth and develop a bold and inclusive vision for the future of the city.

It was time for a new visioning initiative. It was critical that any new effort reach across ZIP codes, income, racial and ethnic lines, and age differences to ensure everyone has a voice in forming a lasting and powerful road map. And it depended in large part on securing the participation of the communities, stakeholders, and organizations that are central to the ultimate success of this effort.

Share your dream.

IMAGINE NASHVILLE'S GOAL & APPROACH

The goal of Imagine Nashville was—and remains—simple:
To create a **unified vision for the next decade driven by the shared values of Nashville's residents.**

This involved an intentionally inclusive approach to asking:

What are our shared values?

What are our shared priorities that align around those values?

What can we do together to create the city we all dream of?

It is not intended to lead to government solutions only, but instead to capture a **collective voice** that helps inform the work of policymakers, nonprofits, philanthropists, the business community, and neighborhood groups.

“This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do something that changes the trajectory of not just our community, but the actual people who call it home. Let's not miss our chance.”

– Dr. John Faison, co-chair

Getting here started with very intentional listening – not to a few, but many. Imagine Nashville undertook an unprecedented level of community outreach: a months-long attitudinal research effort that was designed to reach into every corner of the city.

Through 1:1 interviews, weeklong online community conversations, and extensive survey research, Imagine Nashville engaged people of **all ages**, those in **often under-represented populations**, and residents in **every neighborhood and ZIP code** in the city.

“For us to be our best, we must make sure the future is bright not just for some, but all. This survey is the first step toward identifying what we need to do to make sure Nashville is a place where everyone feels they belong, and everyone feels they are sharing in the success of the city.”

– **Renata Soto**, co-chair

From the beginning, Imagine Nashville leadership also committed to a fully transparent process. Any information collected was treated as **the people’s data**: open and accessible to all, without filter.

In total 10,000+ Nashvillians were part of this effort. The recommendations are by Nashvillians, for Nashvillians, with accountability to Nashvillians for results.

“The emphasis on community and ‘belonging’ is unlike anything I have seen in other large regions around the country.”

– Dee Allsop, CEO
Heart + Mind Strategies,
Research Partner

Every zip code.

Every perspective.

A LOOK AT THE DATA

As a community-led movement, Imagine Nashville seeks to understand what unites the people of this city.

We started our research by asking, “what is it that people love most about Nashville?”

The answer? **A singular blend of creativity, culture, community, and diversity** that enlivens Nashville.

We could have stopped there, and drafted a vision focused on that. But we also wanted to know more about the people who live here.

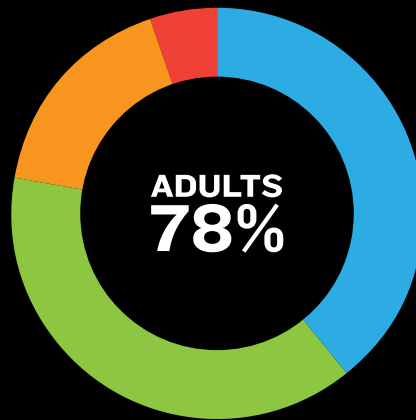
What values do Nashvillians share?

Many of the answers mirrored other U.S. cities: **Family. Security. Independence. Happiness. Peace of mind.**

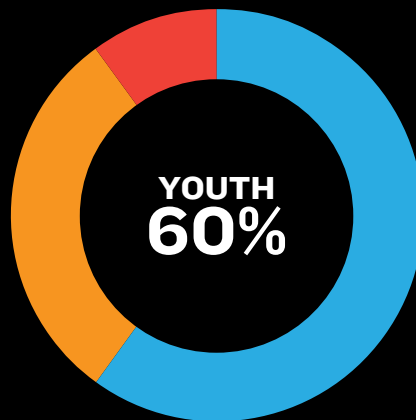
ONE VALUE EMERGED AS UNIQUE TO NASHVILLE:

A sense of belonging.

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU BELONG IN NASHVILLE?



Strongly Belong	39%
Somewhat Belong	38%
Somewhat Don't Belong	17%
Strongly Don't Belong	5%



Agree or Strongly Agree	60%
Neutral	30%
Disagree or Strongly Disagree	17%

We unpacked “belonging” as a value and learned that people feel they belong here because of:

- **Nashville’s rich diversity**
- **How genuinely welcoming and accepting Nashvillians are**
- **The supportive and collaborative spirit we have**
- **Our strong sense of community**

**In this city, people have historically
believed, and still do believe:**

**“I have
a place
here.”**

For many, Nashville is a good place to raise families, build relationships, and find opportunities. A clear majority of Nashvillians say **things are positive in Nashville**; more than half see their **quality of life getting better** in the future.

TOP 5

POSITIVES IN NASHVILLE

GOOD RESTAURANTS, SHOPPING, ENTERTAINMENT
OUTDOOR RECREATION, PARKS, GREEN SPACES
CREATIVE, GATHERING PLACE FOR MUSICIANS, ARTISTS, ETC.
DIVERSITY OF PEOPLE AND CULTURES
HIGH-QUALITY HEALTHCARE AND HOSPITALS

ADULTS

GOOD RESTAURANTS, SHOPPING, ENTERTAINMENT
GOOD EDUCATION
CREATIVE, LOTS OF MUSIC AND ART
ACCESS TO FUN ACTIVITIES
DIVERSITY OF PEOPLE AND CULTURES

YOUTH

Yet, the research raises red flags about whether residents enjoy equitable access to the city’s amenities and whether priorities and focus are on the right things. A growing number of Nashvillians fear they may not belong here much longer.

More than any other factor, **income** determines who feels they belong.

72%
Nashvillians

see “a growing divide between rich and poor.”

57%
Low-income families

feel increasingly excluded from the opportunities and benefits of living here.

47% of Nashvillians qualify as “low-income,” which is defined as households earning less than \$50k/year. Source: Brookings Institution



Who else reported feeling left behind? Respondents who are:

LGBTQ+
48%

AGES 65+
45%

YOUTH
40%

**AFRICAN AMERICAN/
BLACK** **31%**

For those whose sense of belonging is waning, the data suggests we consider this: The attributes ranked as “positives” of living here do not align with what Nashvillians say are the most important or impactful drivers of their quality of life.

By contrast, these are the very things they say Nashville is not doing well.

TOP 5 Negatives in Nashville

ADULTS

TRAFFIC/CONGESTION
It's hard to get around

LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING
Shortage/cost

TOO MUCH GROWTH
Not being managed well

LACK OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

HIGH COST OF LIVING

YOUTH


TRAFFIC/CONGESTION
It's hard to get around

EXPENSIVE TO LIVE IN NASHVILLE

HOMELESSNESS

EXPENSIVE HOUSING

MORE CRIME
Neighborhoods are less safe



Ultimately, Nashvillians expressed frustration and anxiety about the city's growth.

29%
Adults

35%
Youth

“Growth in Nashville is making things better.”

Fortunately, there is a ray of light in the research: a source of great hope and optimism from which Nashville can thrive as a place where all belong.

71%
Nashvillians

“Growth brings mostly benefits and advantages if it is more carefully managed.”

*The full research report, key highlights, and 30+ dashboards remain available at imaginevashville.org/research. Additionally, **The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee** is spearheading an effort to offer all of the data on a searchable, open-access platform.*



Indeed, this research and the resulting goals and ideas for action intend to help define and shape a “more carefully managed” way forward—a collective approach that preserves and protects Nashville’s unique environment, with all its diversity, creativity, and community spirit—to promote progress and a genuine sense of belonging.

The True Measure of Success: Engaging Nashville’s Youth

Imagine Nashville partnered with the Civic Design Center’s Nashville Youth Design Team to capture young people’s unique concerns and visions for the city’s future and to empower them to lead conversations and share **big ideas** with their peers.

More than 2,000 young people participated in the interactive Dream City Workshop, designed to ensure youth are active participants in city-planning. Their surveys (1,181 in all) provide great insight into the priorities of Nashville’s young people.

“The opinions and ideas of youth haven’t always been brought to light, but that needs to change because youth offer a unique and extremely important outlook that no one else can.”

– Addison Harper, high school freshman



46-48%

of youth who identify as two or more races/
ethnicities, Middle Eastern or North African, or
Black agree or strongly agree they belong here.

Youth cite **expense** and **traffic** as the
most frustrating parts about living here.

Overall, they anticipate they will like living here
less in 5 years.

“Decades from now, the ultimate proof of our success or failure will be if today’s young people have stayed or returned to the city to raise their families and pursue their own dreams.”

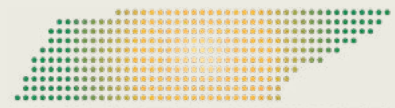
– Renata Soto, co-chair

Young people told us they need:

- **More youth-centered accessible spaces to socialize, pursue creative interests, and get energy out**
- **Safe, youth-friendly transportation**
- **Options about how, where, and what they learn**

In their vision for our city, Nashville’s youth prioritize:

- **Strong neighborhoods with unique identities and opportunities to live, work and play**
- **Plenty of opportunities for young people to get a great education and develop their interests both in and out of school**



THINKTENNESSEE

“With the partnership of ThinkTN, we were able to gather helpful insights and promising practices from cities and experts across the country.”

– Alex Jahangir, co-chair

Where everyone belongs.

AN ACTIONABLE PLAN

The sweeping community research revealed shared values and key priorities that must be addressed to at once preserve the unique character of our city and foster a better quality of life and sense of belonging for all Nashvillians.

Residents are the soul of Nashville; therefore, they should be at the center of the city’s continued growth and prosperity, inclusive of those Nashvillians who feel an increasing lack of belonging in our city.

You belong here.

Nashvillians envision a city in which we are not only growing, but where residents and neighborhoods are thriving. Nashville will be a thriving city when:

- **All Nashvillians have meaningful and accessible pathways for a higher standard of living – an essential ingredient for a good life.**
- **Our transit system allows us to move about the city safely and efficiently.**
- **We have ample attainable and affordable housing options that match demand and meet our needs.**
- **Each neighborhood has a distinct character and fosters a high quality of life for residents.**

With shared values and priorities leading the way, Nashville can become the city of our dreams, where everyone can thrive and grow **together**.

The following pages outline a vision for collective action, anchored around these **key priorities**. This vision is a convergence of thousands of pieces of community feedback alongside the thinking of some of the best and brightest minds locally and across the country.

And to be clear—achieving these ambitious goals for the city will require work on everyone’s part—not just local government,

but also the support and funding from state and federal government partners. Moreover, our fate as a city rests not solely on government action, but requires the deep commitment of the private sector, nonprofit organizations, neighborhood groups, private philanthropy, area employers, and residents. There is work for all of us.

It also includes an implementation framework to ensure world-class public-private partnerships, continued transparency, and shared accountability – ultimately calling on Nashville’s signature collaborative spirit to turn **dreams into action**.



2035 Goals:

Increase the number of good and promising jobs from 44%⁴ to 60%.

At least 50% of public school students complete high school as Ready Graduates, with a high-wage, high-demand credential, and/or ready for college.

Reduce ALICE households by at least 10%.



PRIORITY

All Nashvillians have meaningful and accessible pathways for a higher standard of living – an essential ingredient for a good life.

Creating a city where everyone belongs begins with ensuring all Nashvillians can earn a living wage and have a shot at a higher standard of living. There are two sides of that coin. First, we should be prioritizing economic development efforts that create “good jobs” – a term economists use to describe higher-wage jobs and/or jobs that include other key benefits such as health care, childcare,¹ etc. Second, we need to elevate, expand, and align education, training, and workforce development efforts to ensure Nashvillians are positioned to get the jobs being created.

Consider these facts:

- In 2023, Nashville created 24,000 new jobs, placing Nashville among the top five cities in the U.S. for job growth.² Yet, 47% of Nashvillians make less than a living wage – \$50,000 annually (\$23.84/hour) for a single adult with no dependents in Nashville.^{3,4}
- More than half of Nashvillians told us they feel the primary goal for K-12 education in Nashville should be to “lift children out of poverty and level the playing field” and “ensure that they can support themselves as an adult in the world.”
- 31% of public school students finished high school in 2022 as Ready Graduates, prepared for postsecondary education and/or career.^{5,6}
- Work-based learning ranges from career exposure to career experience and helps students explore career pathways while learning critical job skills needed for entry and advancement.⁷ Unfortunately, not all students have equitable access to these opportunities. In a survey conducted by American Student Assistance, 79% of high school students expressed interest in participating in work-based learning experiences, but only 34% were aware of any opportunities,⁸ and only 2% completed an internship during high school.⁹
- Students who do not have access to these opportunities face additional obstacles that preclude participation, including lack of transportation and support services, language barriers, and inflexible scheduling.¹⁰ Adults returning to the classroom to improve their career opportunities face the same issues while also working to support their families.

The ideas for action that follow are designed to address both the need to focus on creating the right kind of jobs and a host of efforts needed to ensure Nashvillians are poised to get those jobs.

“Nashville can be more than one thing. We should strive to be connected, to be a creativity and innovation hub, and be a place where everyone feels like they belong. We can do all three.”

– Age 40, 37219

Ideas for Action

A. Leverage the city’s higher education/research & development, health care, technology, and other growing industries to fuel our [innovation economy](#) and position Nashville as the “innovation hub” of the South.

B. Invest in expanding Nashville’s small business footprint and take companion steps to protect local small businesses from displacement.

Examples include:

- Create more [business improvement districts](#) (BIDs) to support infrastructure in the surrounding neighborhood.
 - Revitalize existing and develop new [neighborhood commercial corridors](#) in low-income communities with a focus on cultivating small businesses.
 - Support and expand the incubation of Black-owned and other marginalized businesses by providing greater access to experienced advisors and access to capital. (e.g. [Corner to Corner](#), [TSU Innovation Center](#))
-

C. Building from the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce’s [2020 Workforce Study](#), create an annual scorecard that measures:

- The number and percent of jobs in high-growth industries
 - The number and percent of good and promising jobs by industry
 - Labor force participation
-

D. Support and scale economic mobility initiatives that are successfully moving families out of poverty by removing systemic barriers to high-wage employment.

E. Guarantee all students have equitable access to high-wage, high-demand career pathways and career-based learning opportunities by removing barriers, including:

- **Geographic:** an array of AP, IB/Cambridge, dual enrollment and Early College options available to all students in every high school; high-growth industry Career Academies in every high school; safe, affordable public transit options (see transit section) for students to participate in internships, Early College, etc.
 - **Financial:** provide equitable financial assistance for all low-income students seeking to earn college credit while in high school (including dual enrollment, AP/IB/Cambridge exam fees, etc.) and make widely available paid internships and apprenticeships.
 - **Awareness:** Centralize all available college and career readiness options, including internships, into one broadly communicated website. Ensure all students and families know the full array of options (e.g. Career Academies, AP classes, dual enrollment) available at each school prior to entering high school.
-

F. Ensure unemployed and underemployed adults have knowledge of and easy access to education and workforce training that leads to high-wage, high-demand jobs.

This should include:

- Scale [Earn and Learn](#) apprenticeship and training programs.
- Increase wrap-around supports such as childcare and transportation (e.g. [Nashville Reconnect](#)) and debt-free financial aid (e.g. [Nashville GRAD](#), [Nashville FLEX](#)) for working and or caregiving adult students to ensure they are able to complete education and skills training.
- Centralize all available resources into one easily accessed, broadly promoted website.
- Develop a communications strategy that promotes available resources (education, training, job placement, apprenticeship, etc.) for adults and encourages completion of a high-demand degree or credential.

G. Identify and resource a workforce development intermediary charged with creating a robust talent pipeline for Davidson County by:

- Aligning and coordinating K-12, higher education, government, and the business sector.
 - Accessing and leveraging federal funds.
 - Projecting employer needs and establishing K-12 and postsecondary strategies to meet demand.
-

H. Increase the number of affordable high-quality childcare slots in high-demand neighborhoods.

Examples include:

- Work with developers receiving Metro incentives to establish/expand childcare slots near new developments.
- Explore cost-share (i.e. family, employer, government) agreements to offset the cost of childcare for low-income employees.

I. Create strategies for improving the pay scale of childcare teachers and direct care workers to attract and retain employees, meet childcare and eldercare demand, and improve quality.

“We don’t need more service industry jobs that pay under \$25 / hour. Good jobs are ones that cover the cost in housing, which means at least \$75,000 annually.” – 37206



2035 Goal:

Increase commuting rates via walking, cycling, carpooling, and public transit to 20%.

2 PRIORITY

Our transit system allows us to move about the city safely and efficiently.

Nashville's population grew by nearly 20% between 2010 and 2020, but our investments in transit and multimodal transportation are far below our peer cities, earning us the dubious recognition of the worst commute in the U.S.¹¹ As a result, our growth is leading to more congestion, increasing traffic fatalities, and negative health impacts.¹² Current U.S. Census data indicates that 74.4% of commutes in Nashville are made via motor vehicles such as cars and taxis, while only 1.6% of commutes in Nashville occur via public transit, 2.1% are on foot, and 0.3% occurs via cycling; 22% report working remotely.¹³ Across all ZIP codes, Nashvillians uniformly agree that a safe, efficient public transit system is a necessity for a city of our size, with 90% of survey respondents advocating for investment to upgrade and expand our system.

Mayor O'Connell's Choose How You Move program, which is on the ballot in November, will create a dedicated revenue stream for transportation infrastructure – an essential next step and something clearly aligned with what Nashvillians told us they supported. The ideas for action that follow represent additional actions for private sector leaders, residents, nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, as well as government to take to ensure our transit options can meet growing demand.

Ideas for Action

A. Build high-capacity transit corridors that prioritize transit today and prepare Nashville for the future.

This should include:

- A robust frequent bus network, including crosstown routes, that operates 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.
 - Exploring public-private partnership to fund light rail, beginning with lines between the airport and downtown or other high-traffic locations.
 - Installing multi-modal, mixed-use transit centers that facilitate access to services, retail, and other community resources.
-

B. Ensure public transit is accessible to all Nashvillians.

This should include:

- A free and reduced fare program for older adults, youth, and low-income Nashvillians.
 - “Youth Ways” networks (safe, accessible, active transportation networks that efficiently enable youth to attend preferred schools, Career Academies, internships, and other career-based learning opportunities, postsecondary options, and after-school activities).
 - Expand and enhance paratransit along with a safe, [last mile](#) sidewalk and infrastructure program to better serve older adults and people with disabilities.
-

“Make the traffic control system ‘smarter.’ Use information from mapping systems, cameras, weight sensors, and existing traffic patterns to optimize traffic during busy times or events. I believe this is a good compromise compared to reconstructing whole sections of the city’s roads to make traffic flow better.” – Age 24, 37209

C. Increase safety for those using public and active transportation.

Examples include:

- Enhance and promote safety measures on public transportation, stops, and transit centers.
 - Implement a robust [quick-build](#) program that rapidly implements projects at dangerous crossings and roadways.
 - Identify and prioritize funding for short-term on-street connections to better connect the existing 100 miles of greenways.
-

D. Promote and incentivize the use of public transit and active transportation.

Examples include:

- Strengthen [Transportation Demand Management](#) (TDM) ordinance to shift commuters to more sustainable transportation modes and reduce congestion.
 - Install bike racks in business corridors and neighborhoods.
 - Grow [Open Streets](#) programming throughout the city.
 - Work with the business community to increase participation in transit benefit programs such as [MoveVU](#) and the [WeGo Ride](#) program.
 - Develop a citywide communications strategy that emphasizes the benefits of public transit, destigmatizes bus ridership, and showcases improved safety and cleanliness.
-

E. Recommit to implementing Plan to Play, the Metro Nashville Parks and Greenways master plan.



2035 Goals:

Produce and preserve at least 50,000 affordable housing units.

Reduce by 25% the number of Nashville residents that are housing cost burdened.

“I am a senior on a fixed income. Living with members of my family keeps me from being homeless or struggling financially. I would prefer not to be a burden to my family. It is important to remain close to my family, close to their neighborhood, but nothing is affordable.”

– Age, ZIP Unknown

3 PRIORITY

We have ample attainable and affordable housing options match demand and meet our needs.

For the past decade, housing demand has outpaced the supply. This lack of new housing is contributing to an affordability crisis. The median home price increased 62% in the past five years, and average rent increased 71% from 2020 to 2022 – creating an undo cost burden for 22% of homeowners and 52% of renters,¹⁴ meaning they are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Nashville is currently producing 25% of the projected affordable housing needed by 2030.¹⁵ Regardless of age, income, or race/ethnicity, Nashvillians feel a variety of housing options and price points are needed throughout the city.

The Barnes Fund and Catalyst Fund are crucial in accelerating public and private investment in affordable housing. Additionally, the city's Unified Housing Strategy, due to be released later this year, promises to set goals, outline strategies, and provide policy and program recommendations to advance access to affordable, safe, and stable housing for all Nashvillians. The ideas for action below represent additional strategies that can further bolster these efforts.

Ideas for Action

A. Identify under-represented housing types (rental, homeownership, gentle-density housing) and set clear [affordable](#) and/or [attainable](#) housing targets. Housing options for older adults, individuals/families experiencing homelessness, and people with disabilities should be prioritized.

B. Identify public and private property that can be utilized to increase housing stock. Examples include:

Examples include:

- [Partner with institutions](#) (i.e., academic, health, and faith-based) to use land and other resources for affordable housing development.
 - Give WeGo additional authority and budget to purchase, lease, and sell land to maximize and prioritize the purchase, sale, and leasing of affordable housing adjacent to transit.
 - Encourage more public-private partnerships whereby leading businesses, private philanthropy, and community partners pledge funding, land, or incentives to expand the city's attainable housing inventory. Track progress on this as part of the Metro Department of Housing's existing [State of Housing Dashboard](#).
-

C. Recognizing housing is an economic development issue, launch a public education campaign to better engage and inform neighborhood groups and residents on the importance of housing diversity throughout the city and in turn, build a stronger network of champions to advocate for a broad spectrum of household incomes, ages, and needs.

“Prioritize people experiencing homelessness for all housing voucher and public housing opportunities. Create housing options in vacant Metro properties. Provide tax incentives for properties that **RETAIN residents using voucher/subsidies for two or more years. Create a 24/7 dedicated phone/chat support line for people experiencing homelessness in Nashville to become part of Coordinated Entry.” – Age 37, 37207**

D. Substantially accelerate funding for both public and private housing affordability efforts, including maximizing all sources of revenue/funding.

Examples include:

- Leverage [recent state legislation](#) that allows Nashville to pledge long-term debt in the form of [affordable housing bonds](#) to support housing efforts.
 - Ensure the Barnes Fund has appropriate long-term, dedicated funding to continue encouraging nonprofit affordable housing ventures.
 - Make sure the Catalyst Fund is appropriately resourced to speed efforts to preserve and grow the city's larger affordable housing inventory.
 - Investigate broader incentives that will encourage more private development of affordable housing.
 - Explore, educate Metro Council and the public, and pass any necessary legislation that could enable additional housing finance options (i.e. special purpose finance products from financial institutions, and/or program-related investments from philanthropic organizations to support developers in building more owner and renter housing options.)
 - Maximize state and federal funding opportunities, such as [Transit-Oriented Development grants](#).
-

E. Streamline zoning, land use, and permitting process to incentivize and expedite development of attainable housing options.

Examples include:

- Expand where Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) can be built, improve online resources (i.e. map of parcels where ADUs are eligible), and facilitate permitting process for individuals seeking to build ADUs on their property.
- Provide ready-build or permit-ready plans that streamline the approval process and [similar innovative efforts](#) being used by other cities around the country to accelerate housing production.
- Establish expectations for developers via [zoning incentives](#), [community benefits agreements](#) (where allowable under law), and Memorandum of Understanding to accelerate progress in closing housing affordability gaps in key neighborhoods.

F. Expand homebuyer and rental assistance as well as home repair/modification and property tax relief programming to support people getting into housing and staying there. In particular, home repair/modification programming at scale could play an important role in supporting the housing needs of aging and low-income Nashvillians.



2035 Goal:

All neighborhoods are implementing neighborhood improvement plans that were co-created with residents.

4

PRIORITY

Each neighborhood has a distinct character and fosters a high quality of life for residents.

As Nashville has grown and spread, residents increasingly feel connected to their neighborhoods. Over half of survey respondents feel the number one priority for Nashville over the next decade should be cultivating the unique character of each neighborhood while also ensuring each neighborhood has all the key necessities and amenities residents need, including grocery stores, attainable housing, good schools, green spaces, and sidewalks. Critical to this is equipping neighborhoods with the resources and skills to identify and advocate for the needs of its residents.

Ideas for Action

A. Train neighborhood groups to develop robust neighborhood development plans based on the results of a Quality of Life/Neighborhood Livability Index. Plans should be authored by neighborhood residents and take into account the unique personality and characteristics of each neighborhood. They should address amenity gaps identified while balancing those needs with broader community needs.

B. Identify 4-5 neighborhoods to pilot “complete neighborhood” concepts, such as mixed-use transit centers, [co-locating early childhood and adult day programs](#), and developing [neighborhood commercial corridors](#).

C. Create and promote clean, safe, “[third places](#)” (fun places outside of school and home) for youth ages 12-18 that are accessible on evenings and weekends.

Examples include:

- Free and accessible soccer fields and basketball courts, especially pools, splash pads, etc.
 - “Up-size playgrounds” for middle and high school students, such as obstacle courses, climbing walls, splash pads.
 - Children’s parks similar to [Presidio Tunnel Tops](#) and [Tom Lee Park](#) in Memphis.
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D. Encourage community-building efforts such as block parties, community gatherings, festivals, etc., by streamlining and simplifying the permitting process.

E. Identify and allocate funding for community and neighborhood groups to ensure more equitable resources are available to every neighborhood.

F. Better equip neighborhood groups with the knowledge and resources they need to interface with Metro departments and private developers.

Examples include:

- Provide comprehensive, engaging [training](#) for neighborhood groups to effectively engage in neighborhood and city planning.
 - Develop and adopt a neighborhood ambassadors program to enhance education of the zoning, land use, and development processes.
 - Develop leadership and mentorship programs for leaders of neighborhood groups.
-

G. Increase [neighborhood access](#) to additional funding and resources.

Examples include:

- [Increasing Community Development Corporations](#) (CDCs) and [Community Development Funding Institutions](#) (CDFIs).

H. Ensure the development code is aligned with neighborhood visions, appropriately requiring developers to contribute to a high-quality built environment and needed infrastructure and to operate within the bounds of established neighborhood plans.

“A great neighborhood needs people who will step up to welcome newcomers, organize some bonding type of activities that all can take part in, and stay in touch with community resources like the Mayor’s office, police, etc.” – Age 69, 37135

I. Increase coordination of government services involved in large-scale development and/or capital projects in order to minimize negative impacts on residents.

J. Foster “belonging” of often excluded groups by expanding neighborhood and citywide amenities that strengthen Nashville’s social fabric.

Examples include:

- Establishing a community center for LGBTQIA+ that serves as a hub for health and social services and civic opportunities.
 - Further investing in community centers and resources for older adults and youth.
 - Engaging with African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, and WANA/AAPI affinity groups, business councils, artists and arts organizations, and neighborhood-based groups to identify and address unique needs.
 - Establish ways to ensure city amenities are more accessible to locals; for example, a “locals pass” or special promotions (e.g. free/discount day each week, pay-what-you-can option) that increase accessibility and affordability at area museums and cultural institutions.
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Turning dreams into action.

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Having a clear picture of where we are trying to go as a community is a critical part of the equation, but accountability for action is equally important. For this to work, there must be not only a collective commitment to these priorities, but also a way to ensure individuals and organizations are invited to the table, take action, and follow through on their commitments.

The recommendations outlined by Imagine Nashville represent the things Nashvillians most need and want to see. Housing, public transit, workforce development, and neighborhood development are all big issues involving many sectors and systems. They are also interdependent – one cannot advance without the other. While there is excellent work happening in most of these areas, that work cannot happen in a silo.

Additionally, Nashville must have an agreed upon set of common metrics to guide and help align the work happening across organizations and systems. The data needed is largely already being collected by different entities. However, the data is often challenging to find, nor can multiple datasets be easily brought together to best understand sometimes complex issues and create holistic solutions.

With these principles in mind, Imagine Nashville has worked with partners to initiate the following:

- First and foremost, nothing can move forward without **strong leadership and dedicated resources**. The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee and the Mayor’s Office have agreed to co-coordinate the next phase of work with the goal of securing implementation funds and bringing together key partners to take the ideas for action outlined in this report forward.
- To ensure government, the business community, nonprofits, philanthropy, and neighborhoods work together on an ongoing basis, Community **Implementation Teams** will be formed for each of the four priority areas. Each team will be jointly led by a public and a private sector leader with significant experience and a deep understanding of that particular set of issues. Each group will be charged with developing a multi-year scope of work that aligns to clear, measurable success metrics. The goal of this approach is to create world-class public-private partnerships to advance each priority and make sure those active in the space are working together.
- A **Community Indicators Platform** will be created to track progress in real time. It will be an open-access, user-friendly platform that helps our community use real-time data to encourage innovation, shape strategies, and track investments and progress as we work to ensure Nashville is a place where its residents can thrive. Work is already underway on this in partnership with the Belmont Innovation Lab for Social Impact.
- We are asking stakeholders to **come together annually** to honestly discuss progress and agree on next steps. This practice provides mutual accountability to tangible results and creates an ongoing way to keep the community unified behind these crucial priorities.

We hope, of course, that this work inspires the actions of many others – collective and individual. We challenge every organization in the city to determine its role in advancing these ideas. Part of Nashville’s “secret sauce” has long been its ability to harness an uncanny collective spirit and commitment to make Nashville be all it can be. We hope this research and 10-year vision is simply the next verse in an authentically Nashville best hit.

Beyond imagination.

KEY INDICATORS

Transparency and accountability are non-negotiables for Imagine Nashville because they are key to realizing the vision set forth by the people of Nashville.

Interim indicators for each imperative are recommended here. The following indicators are important but not exhaustive to measuring progress on each priority. These indicators should be updated at least annually where possible to best inform strategies and service delivery improvements and decision-making.

All Nashvillians have meaningful and accessible pathways for a higher standard of living – an essential ingredient for a good life.

- ✓] # new businesses starting or moving to Nashville
- ✓] % of businesses that are locally and/or minority owned
- ✓] Small business growth
- ✓] # and % good and promising jobs created
- ✓] Unemployment and underemployment rates
- ✓] # and % of residents earning less than a living wage
- ✓] Average income level
- ✓] Average education level
- ✓] Unemployment and underemployment rates
- ✓] # of adults enrolled in or on a waiting list for adult literacy, basic education, or majority-language learning programs
- ✓] # of adults enrolled in a postsecondary program
- ✓] High school graduation rate
- ✓] # and % of high school students graduating with a high-wage, high-demand credential
- ✓] # and % of high school students graduating with college credits
- ✓] # and % of career academies meeting highest tier established by TDOE
- ✓] # of paid and unpaid internship and apprenticeship opportunities available
- ✓] # of high school students completing internships and apprenticeships
- ✓] # and % of middle and high school students completing career exploration programs
- ✓] Availability and accessibility of job training programs by type
- ✓] # and % of high-quality child care slots by ZIP code and age of child
- ✓] Progress on Child and Youth Master Plan goals

Our transit system allows us to move about the city safely and efficiently.

- ✓ Count and frequency of transit routes
- ✓ Transit ridership by ZIP code
- ✓ Rider perceptions of safety and satisfaction by routes
- ✓ % of households by commute-to-work method
- ✓ Average commute time by modality
- ✓ Average cost of commute
- ✓ Daily vehicle miles traveled
- ✓ Miles of bike lanes and greenways
- ✓ Miles of sidewalks by ZIP code
- ✓ # of pedestrian or cyclist-involved crashes and deaths
- ✓ % of transit stops with at least ½-mile of sidewalk coverage
- ✓ % of transit stops on thoroughfares with signalized pedestrian crossing
- ✓ % of transit stops with shelter
- ✓ % of Nashvillians living within a ½ mile distance of frequent-service transit stops
- ✓ % of Nashvillians living within one mile of a greenway
- ✓ Progress on Plan to Play Parks Master Plan goals

We have ample attainable and affordable housing options match demand and meet our needs.

- ✓ # and % of homeowners and renters paying more than 30% of income for housing
- ✓ # and % ALICE households
- ✓ Median home value and average rent by ZIP code
- ✓ Housing occupancy rates, owners, and renters
- ✓ Housing units per acre
- ✓ Increase in population vs. increase in supply of housing
- ✓ # and % of unhoused residents

Each neighborhood has a distinct character and fosters a high quality of life for residents.

- ✓ Number of after-school and summer recreation programs for children and youth
- ✓ Availability and accessibility of “third places” by ZIP code
- ✓ Quality of Life/Neighborhood Livability Index results
- ✓ Public library usage by ZIP code
- ✓ Community center usage by ZIP code
- ✓ Number of low-cost or free events available and attendance
- ✓ % residents living within 1 mile of a park, playground, and/or greenway by ZIP code
- ✓ Grocery stores by ZIP code
- ✓ # of childcare slots by age, ZIP code, quality, type of childcare
- ✓ Average childcare waiting lists by age, ZIP code, quality, type of childcare
- ✓ hubNashville requests by type and ZIP code
- ✓ Average length of resolution for hubNashville
- ✓ Resident satisfaction results
- ✓ Imagine Nashville survey results



For the Nashville of our dreams.

A CALL TO ACTION

Imagine Nashville was conceived as a community-led initiative. We understood that in order to build a bold and inclusive vision for the future of the city, every step in the process needed to be fully accessible and totally inclusive.

When we said, “We want to hear from you,” we meant it. We told Nashville, “We’re listening.” And we were. Our hope today is that you see yourself—your ideas, concerns, values, and dreams—reflected in these pages.

But the work is just beginning. From here, Nashville must do what we do best: Work together, with creativity, conviction, and concern for the collective good, to use what we’ve learned to shape the future of the city we love – the city where we all belong.

It will take all of us to give shape to and achieve the goals outlined here. And it will take all of us to hold each other accountable for real results. We’ve laid out clear priorities and specific ideas for action. We’ve outlined metrics that will tell us if we’re succeeding in decidedly human terms. We’ve also outlined an implementation framework to initiate the next phase of work – and secured the commitment of key partners to work together to do it.

We’re also asking every Nashvillian to commit to helping.

It will take all of us to make Nashville all that we know it can be. Policymakers, philanthropists, the nonprofit community, the business community, neighborhood groups, and residents: We all have a role to play.

We’re IN. Are you?

Join the movement at [imagenashville.org](https://www.imagenashville.org)

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