



Historic Preservation Questions for 2023 Mayoral Candidates

1. The preservation of Nashville’s historic buildings and sites gives our city its unique character and “sense of place” and is an important planning tool in building economic, environmental, and social and cultural stability. Given our current growth, how important do you consider preservation as a goal for the next administration? How would you suggest we protect the historic resources that are most likely to be demolished for new development?

From the recent PlaceEconomics study, we know that heritage tourism is a key part of our destination economy. We will have to use a mix of tools—from our recently created rebate incentive, to preservation easements, to transfer of development rights—and occasionally landmark specific buildings and leverage overlays. There are times that adaptive reuse or facade preservation will wind up being our best options.

2. Many of our city-owned historic sites have been in a state of deterioration due to lack of funds allocated for their maintenance. Examples include Fort Negley, Fort Nashborough, Nashville City Cemetery, Shelby Park’s Naval Reserve Center, Lock 2 Park, several Metro Schools, among others. Do you think it is important to demonstrate leadership through funding annual maintenance of Metro-owned historic sites, and if so, what plan would you put in place to accomplish this?

I do think we need a broader fiscal tool for ongoing maintenance that goes beyond just historic sites; we need it for parks and other facilities, as well. Right now, we have very few dedicated tools, but we recently created a fund balance policy, and I think it would be good to have something like the 4% fund that specifically attempts to quantify our annual maintenance needs.

3. Nashville’s Music Row is internationally known for its history in the creation of music that is heard around the world and has given us the monikers of “Music City” and “Songwriting Capital of the World”. Since the 1950s, this area has nurtured an environment where all disciplines of the music industry (songwriting, publishing, recording, record labels, entertainment attorneys, artist managers, etc.) are gathered and have flourished. The importance of this area of Nashville has led to its having been identified as a “National Treasure” by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Currently, buildings that were formerly home to music industry businesses are being demolished to make way for new housing developments, threatening the area and its synergy as a place to create music. What is your stance on this issue, and what type of plan would you put in place if you hope to change the current course?

I've worked for years with Metro Historic, Metro Planning, partners, and property owners and stakeholders in the area to craft a Music Row Vision Plan. I hope that we codify this as a Music Row Code that creates stronger incentives for preservation, specifically with an eye toward retaining music-based businesses.

4. Many states and cities offer economic incentives to owners of historic properties when they make appropriate repairs and renovations to their buildings. These incentives include property tax abatements, grants, fee waivers, to name a few. Knoxville established a historic property grant program in 2017 that has proven successful, and although a pilot property tax abatement program has been established in Nashville, its funding is limited and applies only to commercial buildings. If elected, how would you create new incentives for owners of historic properties, both residential and commercial, in Davidson County?

We need to review the capacity of the current incentive program to see if it should be expanded. It will be imperative to continue working to also establish a state historic preservation tax credit.

5. In addition to its appeal as “Music City,” some of our city’s best but least utilized assets for tourism are the stories and sites that tell our history – from geologic formations and natural history, Native American sites and early white settlements, slavery in Civil War era Nashville and the Civil Rights movement, as well as the more recent and underrepresented histories of ethnic minorities (Kurdish, Laotian, Hispanic) and other social groups (LGBTQ). How can we raise the profile of our past and celebrate the historic sites and our underrepresented histories to enhance our attractiveness as a tourism and convention destination? What are your thoughts on the need and manner in which to elevate the public’s awareness of underrepresented histories?

The Nashville Sites program is a wonderful way for people to explore historic sites. There is considerable interest in Nashville investing in a civil rights museum, and I think this would be critically important to permanently putting a focus on our important civil rights legacy, especially if it were housed in the Morris Memorial Building.

6. Jefferson Street is a major North Nashville corridor that was home to the “Black Music Row” and even today is home to more than 50 Black-owned businesses and links to three of the four HBCUs in Nashville. There are stories to be told, but there also needs to be a multi-faceted preservation approach that may include historic zoning, National Register listings, historical markers, tours and more, in addition to beautification projects and infrastructure investments by the city. Documenting and recognizing the complex and

significant history of this area is a foundational step in its eventual revitalization. Would you support a plan to direct resources to preserving and sharing the historical and cultural resources of this important area, and if so, what specific investments would you propose?

Yes. I have already led efforts to keep Fisk University from demolishing the historic Boyd House and participated in fundraising efforts to preserve it. Similarly, I worked to incorporate historic elements in what is now Kossie Gardner Park. But we have more to do.

7. The preservation of historic buildings is an inherently sustainable practice. What are your thoughts on prioritizing the retention of historic building stock and incorporating sensitive modifications to reduce energy use and limit waste and debris from demolitions?

I'm supportive of doing these things. We have many historic buildings in Metro, Metro Schools, and MDHA, and we should want to take new techniques in building efficiency and apply them in renovations.

8. The Metro Historical Commission has been working with Metro Planning, Metro Archives and other local preservation nonprofits over the last two decades to draw attention to the loss of historic cemeteries, especially those in the rural area of the county. These cemeteries are important records of our history. How important is it to fund repairs and maintenance at historical cemeteries?

As the Council member who has represented Mt Olivet for 8 years, I think our cemeteries are an incredible part of our overall heritage sites and should be funded. See my thoughts on maintenance funding above.

9. Many cities have planning tools in place that support the preservation of historic resources. They include:

- Demolition Regulations: Ordinances for demolition by neglect; Penalties for illegal demos; Mandatory documentation before demo; Lengthy delays prior to demo; Increased demo fees
- Development Tools: Modifying the downtown bonus height program; addressing the transferable development rights (TDR) program shortcomings for historic preservation; Exploring land banking models
- Valuation/Financial Resources: Adopting "use value" to determine assessment for historic properties; Waiving permits/fees (fast-tracking preservation permits, waiving parking regulations, or a fee waiver for building permits of a historic property)

Is it important for our city to explore and adopt preservation planning tools that have a long-term impact, and if so, what specific tools would you look to adopt?

Yes. I want to create a mature market for TDRs. I think we could explore other tools as we review fiscal impact.