



# Health, Livability, & the Built Environment

## goals & policies

### BE goal 1

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**All Nashville residents have a choice of vibrant, safe, and healthy neighborhoods across many different communities and contexts.**

Why it's important: Walkable neighborhoods and community centers consistently rate highly in the public input for NashvilleNext. They are also important for sustaining community, improving health, and supporting local businesses. The public also recognizes and appreciates the different kinds of places throughout Davidson County, from rural to Downtown, and seeks community centers and development that fit within their context and character. Though not a focus of this element, this also includes employment centers, which should match their context within the county. (For more on employment centers, see Economic & Workforce Development.) See the Character & Context Table (next page) to see example characteristics of different contexts in Davidson County.

Population growth and demographic shifts to younger households, childless households, and aging seniors are changing the kinds of housing that Nashvillians will be looking for over the next 25 years. Meanwhile, public input consistently supports protecting the character of existing neighborhoods, which are an asset for the city, its residents, and its economy. Striking the right balance between these two sometimes competing objectives – providing more housing and new housing types while preserving neighborhood character – is a critical challenge for Nashville.

Public spaces – access to buildings, streets and sidewalks, parks and public buildings – need to be designed to work for the young and old and for people with disabilities. At some point in their lives, every person is included in a limited mobility category

– unable to drive on their own, unable to navigate hazardous roads on foot, and the like. Children need safe spaces to learn to roam. People with disabilities need safe spaces to access work and live self-sufficient lives. Aging adults – particularly Baby Boomers who will account for a 32 percent increase in the number of people over the age of 65 in the next 25 years – need these spaces to be able to comfortably and safely live in their current neighborhoods as they grow older and less mobile. Designing our public spaces with a person's total lifecycle in mind will create places that are welcoming to everyone.

Crimes generally occur based on the opportunities available, such as access to buildings, opportunities to commit crimes out of sight, etc. Although violent and property crime rates in Nashville have declined substantially since the mid-1990s, incorporating Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into the design and regulations of buildings and public spaces can reduce the opportunities for crime. This is especially important in areas of the county with higher crime rates.

#### BE 1.1

**Preserve residential character in established neighborhoods, while accommodating housing options that meet Nashville's changing needs.**

#### BE 1.2

**Create safe, walkable community, retail, and employment centers across the county that fit within each community's context and character and work for people of all ages and abilities.**



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### BE 1.3

Encourage the development, redevelopment, or improvement of property, buildings, and landscapes to promote safety and reduce opportunities for crime.

## BE goal 2

Nashville promotes the safety and wellness of its residents, workers, and visitors.

Why it's important: The built environment includes all of the things people build in a city, such as buildings, streets, parks, water pipes, and sewers, and how those things relate to one another. The built environment shapes Nashvillians opportunities for health and wellness in daily life, whether it is minimizing exposure to air and water pollution, having inviting public spaces that encourage physical activity, or having access to healthy food. This goal brings together public health initiatives like NashVitality with Nashville's Open Space Master Plan to create a complete system for improving health and wellness in daily life.

For example, Nashville is struggling with obesity. A quarter of adults are obese, and another 37% are overweight. Obesity is connected to a host of diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, some cancers, and arthritis. Rates of obesity reflect poor diet and lack of physical activity. In Nashville, 28% of adults do not meet Federal recommendations for eating fruits and vegetables; in one survey, 27% of Nashville adults reported no physical activity in the last 30 days.

The way Nashville's places are built contribute to these poor health outcomes. Lack of safe places to walk to limits Nashvillians' ability to walk as part of

their daily activities. Access to healthy food is also critically important. One in five Nashvillians lives in a food desert (predominantly low-income areas with a high proportion of people without cars in which grocery stores are a mile or more away).

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### BE 2.1

Encourage physical activity and promote social and mental well-being by improving public spaces (such as public streets, sidewalks, and parks), reducing barriers to all pedestrians, and providing green space.

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### BE 2.2

Improve the healthiness of Nashville's air, water, light, and land, both outside and indoors.

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### BE 2.3

Improve mental health of Nashville residents through advocacy, education, research, and service.

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### BE 2.4

Ensure all neighborhoods have healthy food options — including locally grown food — particularly neighborhoods with low-levels of car ownership.

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### BE 2.5

Offer a network of greenways, creeks, and rivers that connects Nashville residents to nature throughout Davidson County.



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## BE 2.6

Host active and passive activities and amenities at community parks and open spaces for people of all ages.

## BE 3

Nashvillians have equitable access to goods, services, transportation, and public safety.

Why it's important: Nashville's infrastructure shapes what opportunities are available in daily life, as well as the support and safety services that residents, workers, and visitors rely on. Nashvillians have expressed a clear desire to add reliable and genuine transportation options like transit, walking, and biking to our current auto-oriented environment. Infrastructure also shapes safety services because of the way transportation routes affect response times.

Equitable access means that Nashville residents in similar situations have similar access to goods and services and that cost is not a barrier to access. For example, transit ridership is related to density. Places with high density tend to have higher ridership; low density places tend to have low ridership. Because of this, transit agencies typically provide higher service to denser areas. So providing more transit service to higher density areas than lower density areas would not necessarily be inequitable. On the other hand, providing very different service between two equally dense areas could be.

In the 21st century, infrastructure also includes convenient access to internet service, which is an increasingly important part of daily life. It is especially important for accessing educational services for young and old, information about government and private services and assistance, and

finding and applying for jobs. While more Nashvillians have internet access, many Nashvillians' primary mode of accessing the internet is through mobile devices or text services.

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## BE 3.1

Support access throughout the county for all users (including walkers, cyclists, and drivers) of roadways and greenways.

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## BE 3.2

Match transportation infrastructure to the needs of police, fire, and emergency medical personnel to maintain response times and keep residents, workers, and visitors safe.

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## BE 3.3

Ensure equitable access to high speed internet service throughout the county and adapt online services to mobile internet users.

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## BE 3.4

Use public buildings and facilities (such as libraries, schools, community centers, and police and fire stations) to support communities by diversifying the services they provide.

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## BE 3.5

Facilitate the location of health services to meet changing health care needs.



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### BE 3.6

Maintain infrastructure and programs to keep the public safe during emergencies.

## BE 4

Nashville is welcoming and our residents look out for and support one another.

Why it's important: Nashville's growth and increasing diversity is seen as a strength of the community. However, neighborhoods often experience friction as new and old Nashvillians may have different visions for the future and have different needs. Making intentional efforts to address these tensions by providing better government service, enhancing the uniqueness of Nashville's places, and making intentional efforts to increase familiarization across communities will help reduce exclusion and displacement.

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### BE 4.1

Recognize and bridge cultural differences and language barriers when providing services and engaging the public in community decisions.

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### BE 4.2

Ensure community involvement when locating locally unwanted land uses to reduce concentration of these facilities near low income and minority populations.

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### BE 4.3

Use the design of public space to enhance the unique identities of Nashville neighborhoods and communities.

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### BE 4.4

Celebrate Nashville's diverse faith communities and their role in shaping Nashville's history.

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### BE 4.5

Create opportunities to build familiarization and relationships throughout the county and in individual neighborhoods to increase fellowship as communities change.

## BE goal 5

**Nashville's buildings will be healthy, attractive, and affordable, supporting social, environmental, and economic performance.**

Why it's important: Nashville is projected to build or rebuild 117,000 new homes and 485 million square feet of nonresidential space. Nashville's built environment supports community goals when it provides safe, affordable, and healthy places, allowing residents, businesses, and workers to thrive.

High-performance buildings seek to improve economic, environmental, and social performance by building for the long-term. This applies to new construction, as well as preserving, maintaining, and updating our existing building stock, including historic structures and landmarks.

A high-performance built environment and architecture reduces costs by efficiently using materials and resources, with an emphasis on renewable and local resources. These buildings improve social and economic outcomes by reducing costs and improving affordability and by reducing or eliminating exposure to pollution, especially



indoor air pollution.

LEED is an example of third-party certification to assess how well buildings are performing and celebrating those that do particularly well. Strategic use of LEED in Metro buildings or as incentives for private buildings can help shift the entire industry to improving the performance of the built environment.

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### **BE 5.1**

**Encourage new construction and major renovations, retrofitting, and upgrading of existing buildings to improve environmental performance of the building and site.**

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### **BE 5.2**

**Encourage the creation of high-performance, quality architecture throughout Davidson County and in key centers of activity.**

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### **BE 5.3**

**Preserve historic structures and landmarks that represent our county's identity.**

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### **BE 5.4**

**Encourage flexibility in re-use and expansion of historic buildings to preserve character and maintain affordability.**

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### **BE 5.5**

**Require that new Metro buildings are third-party certified and support the communities in which they are located.**

## **BE6**

**Nashville will have safe, adequately maintained, and intentionally planned infrastructure.**

Why it's important: Infrastructure includes all of the different equipment, structures and facilities that Metro Nashville and major utility companies provide that link together services and support daily life. These are generally large-scale physical investments. Transportation infrastructure includes our roads, sidewalks, bike lanes, greenways, and bus routes and facilities. Energy infrastructure includes power lines and transformers (provided and maintained by Nashville Energy Service), as well as gas lines (provided and maintained privately). Water pipes, water plants, sewers, swales and ditches, detention ponds, and even roads are part of our water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure.

A review of Nashville's infrastructure found many areas where infrastructure needed to be improved, expanded, or maintained. (For an overview, see the NashvilleNext Public Infrastructure background report: <http://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/Planning/docs/NashvilleNext/next-report-Infrastructure.pdf>.) From another source, the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations projects that Davidson County needs \$4.4 billion in infrastructure spending over the next five years. To put this in context, Nashville has spent \$1.2 billion on capital projects over the past five years.

Nashvillians are most familiar with those parts of the city's infrastructure they use or that are near to them. Regularly reporting on infrastructure condition is important to helping Nashvillians understand how the quality of infrastructure near them fits into the broader county context. This, in turn, is important to supporting smart infrastructure investments.

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Infrastructure decisions can be controversial, in part because there is a long list of needed infrastructure improvements and because there may be a sense that investments are not made equitably throughout the county. As Nashvillians have a better sense of where investments are needed, it is also important to link decisions on new investments to community goals.

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### **BE 6.1**

Provide regular reports on the condition of Nashville's infrastructure and the cost of repair, upgrades in new infrastructure.

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### **BE 6.2**

Create infrastructure plans that are in line with community goals and growth strategies, recognize lifecycle costs of new infrastructure, and maximize and maintain existing infrastructure investments.