

KARL F. DEAN
MAYOR



METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission
Sunnyside in Sevier Park
3000 Granny White Pike
Nashville, Tennessee 37204
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION
4107 Old Hickory Road, Bells Bend Park
June 17, 2015

Application: Historic Landmark Overlay for Bells Bend Park

Map and Parcel Numbers: 10100000100

Council Districts: 01

Applicant: Mayor Karl Dean

Project Lead: Robin Zeigler, robin.zeigler@nashville.gov, 615-862-7970

<p>Description of Project: Mayor Karl Dean requests that Bells Bend Park be designated as a Historic Landmark Overlay.</p>	<p>Attachments</p>
<p>Recommendation Summary: The Bells Bend Park meets the criteria of 1 and 4 of section 17.36.120 because of its archaeological potential and its association with the development of the area. Staff suggests that the Commission recommend to City Council a Historic Landmark Overlay for Bell Bend Park.</p>	

Aerial



Background:

Bells Bend Park is Located in western Davidson County, this park takes its name from a peaceful arc of the Cumberland River known as Bells Bend. Bells Bend Park opened to the public in 2007 after a decades-long dispute between residents and the city of whether or not to put a landfill in its location. The park is 808 acres of open fields and trails, making it the fourth largest park in Nashville behind Percy Warner, Beaman, and Shelby Parks. Despite being relatively new, Bells Bend Park is rich with history.

The land on which the park is located was originally part of a land grant given by the state of North Carolina to state senator, Dr. James White, in 1789. For much of the 19th century, the farmland belonged to a branch of the Buchanan family. Their 1842 home still stands in the park today and is known as the Buchanan House. Several barns and outbuildings from around this time can also be seen at various places throughout the hiking trails.

Dr. James White was far from Bells Bend's first resident. Evidence has been found that the small area north of the Cumberland River has had occupants for over 13,000 years. Archaeologists have excavated over 60 sites in the entire bend, many of which date back to the end of the Ice Age. Bells Bend Park, in particular, has produced many Paleo-Indian artifacts and more archaeological research has taken place there as a result than any other park in Nashville. A large dig took place in 2010 that, with the assistance of the flooding that year, uncovered several new historical finds from both the Paleo-Indian and Mississippi periods. In addition to pieces of ceramic, nails, charcoal from prehistoric campfires, and iconic Clovis point spearhead, burial sites of several pigs were found. Ironically several shell deposits were also unearthed. These piles of discarded snail and mussel shells prove that Nashville politicians were not the first to think the land would be a good place for trash.

Each year what is known about the prehistoric residents of Bells Bend Park grows. Unfortunately, so do the number of looters taking artifacts from the sites. While no human remains from prehistoric times have been found yet, the possibility still exists. In 1877, archaeologists with the Peabody Museum at Harvard discovered a burial mound in the area, but the exact location of that dig has since been lost. Bells Bend Park is a rare site containing history from the Paleo-Indians, to the Mississippians, and all the way through farmers in the mid-19th century, providing a holistic view of Nashville's history.

Applicable Ordinance:

Article III. Historic Overlay Districts

17.36.120 Historic Districts Defined. B. Historic Landmark. An historic landmark is defined as a building, structure, site or object, its appurtenances and the property it is located on, of high historical, cultural, architectural or archaeological importance; whose demolition or destruction would constitute an irreplaceable loss to the quality and character of Nashville and Davidson County; and that meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. The historic landmark is associated with an event that has made a significant contribution to local, state or national history;
2. It is associated with the lives of persons significant in local, state or national history;
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic value;
4. It has yielded or may be likely to yielded archaeological information important in history or prehistory; or
5. It is listed or is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Analysis and Findings:

The Bells Bend Park meets the criteria of 1 and 4 of section 17.36.120 because of its archaeological potential and its association with the development of the area. Staff suggests that the Commission recommend to City Council a Historic Landmark Overlay for Bell Bend Park.

PHOTOGRAPHS



