



FutureForward

FY26-FY27 Strategic Plan



FutureForward continues to serve as a dynamic two-year roadmap that will be used to guide the administration and operation of The Fairgrounds Nashville towards a sustainable and vibrant future.

MISSION, VISION, & VALUES

The Fairgrounds' statement of purpose:

Connecting our community with events

Vision

Be the event destination of choice for everyone living in and visiting Nashville.

Values

The identification and definition of our core values are a reflection of our beliefs and commitment and is essential in communicating our operational philosophy to the public.

Our Clients – We commit to collaborate with and support our partners, vendors, and clients to provide our guests with fun, safe, accessible, and affordable experiences.

Our Workforce – We value our team, we are united and hardworking, we support one another and commit to providing the tools, resources, and training needed to be the best we can be.

Our “Golden Rule” Service – We are passionate, service-minded and committed to our customer-focused approach.

Our Integrity – We are fair and maintain a high standard for ethical and moral behavior in all that we do. How we act and what we do when no one is watching.



FY26-27 STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES (SWOC)

Strengths	Location adjacent to downtown and along international corridor and primary transit route
Internal	Nashville as a destination city for entertainment, music, and sports
	Size of venue within Nashville is unique
	Variety of spaces offered
	Dedicated staff
Weaknesses	Lack of reliable vendor and event management systems
Internal	Lack of break-out space
	Lack of an operating reserve fund
	Staffing level and available budget matching event demand
	Lack of detailed cost of events to determine event profit/loss
Opportunities	Becoming a banquet and corporate venue of choice
External	Expanding rentable space by enclosing arena
	Constructing a parking structure adjacent to Expo buildings
	Establishment of a capital reserve fund funded through 50% property tax redirect from mixed use development
	Reduce reliance on electricity and reduce utility costs through solar investment
	Conversion to self-pay parking kiosks
	Maximizing partnership with NCVV and resulting event referrals
	Significant positive impacts to the surrounding community (e.g., connectivity, recreation)
Challenges	Managing through construction disruption
External	40+ acre floodway which impacts use
	Flat surface parking is inefficient
	Neighborhood infrastructure insufficient to support density and increased activity
	Lack of direction on speedway which impacts future planning for The Nashville Fair and its sustainability as well as all other campus activities

FY26-27 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

HOW NASHVILLE WORKS
HOW NASHVILLE GROWS

❖ **Redefining event scheduling strategy to maximize expo facility and public space use, increase occupancy days, and consolidate single day events.**

- The renovated Expo facility is capable of booking large-scale, multi-day shows that maximize revenue through venue rental fees, commission on food and beverage sales, and parking
- Maintaining ability for smaller events to book through companion booking with other small events or relocation to an enclosed arena
- Explore community programming/use
 - Enhance agricultural education programming through The Nashville Fair
 - Explore partnerships with local schools and universities
 - Explore outreach strategy targeting underrepresented communities
- Develop branding and marketing strategy to enhance visibility and attract customers and new business

❖ **Complete campus renovation.**

- Complete infrastructure part 2:
 - construction of a new entrance off Wingrove Street
 - collaboration with NDOT to add sidewalks along Wingrove Street and Nolensville Pike to support connectivity and safe pedestrian access to the Fairgrounds property and the in-bound and out-bound transit stops along Nolensville Pike
 - collaboration with Metro Transit Authority on construction of a new in-bound transit stop along Nolensville Pike
 - construction of new roadway (Coliseum Way), sidewalks, and bridge connecting Craighead Street with Benton Avenue that will be ADA-compliant
 - Finalize a path forward for speedway renovation and programming. The speedway not only supports racing; renovations are critical for future success of The Nashville Fair and provides support for all other campus activities
- Secure funding for and construct a parking structure to support Fairgrounds campus events and activities
- Secure funding for the purchase and installation of solar panels for the Expo facility
- Complete renovation of lot 2 along Wedgewood to support The Nashville Fair and other activities and events on the campus

HOW NASHVILLE MOVES
HOW NASHVILLE GROWS

- Study the feasibility of enclosing the arena and adding supporting amenities such as food and beverage locations and restrooms
- Collaborate with MarketStreet Enterprises to complete remaining phases of mixed use development

HOW NASHVILLE WORKS

- ❖ **Establish capital repair/replacement plan funded through Council-approved property tax diversion from mixed-use development to reduce Metro’s need to issue general obligation bonds.**

HOW NASHVILLE WORKS

- ❖ **Complete documented internal policy and procedure manuals to strengthen processes, ensure equity, improve safety, and comply with Metro policies and procedures.**

HOW NASHVILLE WORKS

Invest in technology upgrades to enhance both internal and external functionality and improve reliability:

- Transition venue/vendor management system
- High density user support network improvements
- Explore mobile app feasibility

HOW NASHVILLE WORKS

- ❖ **Reduce budget deficit, moving The Nashville Fair towards sustainability, and grow operational reserve.**
 - Explore feasibility of an economic impact study
 - Refine accounting practices to establish accurate labor distribution and reliable profit/loss for each business unit



THE PROPERTY AND CURRENT CONDITION

The Fairgrounds Nashville is located at 401 Wingrove Street in the City of Nashville, Tennessee. The property's ideal location is less than 2-miles from the heart of downtown Nashville and is in close proximity to multiple freeway access points, hotels, restaurants, and other points of interest. The property lies to the southeast of the Wedgewood-Houston neighborhood and solidly within District 17.

Since the first strategic plan, Forward5, was adopted over \$800,000,000 in campus improvements have been approved with several completed as of 2023. Many of the investments, including a new Exposition venue, MLS stadium, and community recreational green space and greenways are complete. Additional improvements including new roadways, intersections, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, greenways, lighting, utilities, plazas, connections, mixed-use development, and beautification continue.

The current master plan, finalized in 2020, is the realization of a revitalization of the historic property that aims to connect communities and activate the campus in unprecedented ways.

METRO NASHVILLE

While the City of Nashville and Davidson County continue to grow at steady pace, the City faced a daunting rebound due to the COVID-19 pandemic that forced closures, restricted activities, and impacted supply lines and movement that influenced revenues, expenses, and values across all industries. That said, Nashville ranked number 1 in the US for pandemic recovery among other large cities¹. In 2023, population growth in Nashville Metro area rebounded to 2016 levels with nearly 100 people moving into the metropolitan area daily.



Metropolitan government played a vital role in the response to the pandemic and invested funds towards recovery. The Fairgrounds was not an exception and received American Recovery Plan Act funding to subsidize its operations due to full and partial closure for 19-months spanning three fiscal years. Additionally, The Fairgrounds served as the City of Nashville's shelter and medical facility for the unhoused during the pandemic. While business ground to a halt, the facility, Metro staff, and partner agencies played a vital role during this unprecedented time.

Center City District (2023). Downtowns Rebound: The Data Driven Path to Recovery. Center City District, Retrieved November 30, 2023, from <https://centercityphila.org/uploads/attachments/clnaq4d140al4jzqdea151tiu-downtowns-rebound-2023-web.pdf> (centercityphila.org).

The Fairgrounds Nashville has undergone a significant evolution since 2017. Some have described the transformation as a necessary “rebirth” to secure a sustainable and vibrant future while others question the approach and doubted intentions. The Fairgrounds has always inspired passion - a passion for opportunity, evolution, preservation, and recognition.

- To date, forty-six (46) acres of public recreational space have been created and named Fair Park.
- A new exposition venue was completed in fall 2019. With over 132,000 square feet of indoor conditioned space, it provides clients flexible open space to create an atmosphere that is unique and showcases their special event.
- Construction of the nation’s largest soccer-specific stadium and home to Nashville SC, GEODIS Park, was completed and opened for play on May 1, 2022.
- An additional \$41,300,000 in infrastructure funding was appropriated to continue with roadway improvements, accessibility, and public plazas.
- 445 Park Commons, the first of three mixed use development blocks, opened for both residential and retail in summer 2024.
- Interest in revitalizing the historic Nashville Fairgrounds Speedway evolved to include a proposal from the Cooper administration and Bristol Motor Speedway to invest approximately \$100 million into the track, new grandstands and ancillary structures, and additional supportive infrastructure but was not advanced for Council consideration. The Fair Board approved the proposal in March 2023. The O’Connell administration is considering all available options regarding the speedway.
- In 2022, the Fairgrounds created and produced its inaugural divisional fair, The Nashville Fair, after the Tennessee State Fair relocated to Wilson County.
- A new Administration always brings new priorities. In response to Mayor O’Connell’s priorities of evaluating, improving, and investing in how Nashville Moves, Works, and Grows this Strategic Plan will categorize actions and intentions that align with these initiatives (Pages 3-4).



MANDATES

Mandates:

- Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, TN Charter, Article II, Fair Commissioners
- Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, TN Charter, Chapter 6, Metropolitan Board of Fair Commissioners
- Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, TN Code of Ordinances, Chapter 2.78, Board of Fair Commissioners

Other Relevant Codes:

- TN Code § 4-57-106 (2012)

In 1909, a Board of Fair Commissioners was created to establish policy, rules and regulations for the governance of the fairgrounds and was given authority to produce a divisional fair. There were updates to the charter in 1923, 1927 and 1931 that detailed board membership, duties and exclusions.

In 2011, a public referendum added language to the Charter mandating that certain activities be conducted on the premises including:

- A divisional fair
- Expo events
- Flea market
- Auto racing

In addition, no demolition of the premises can occur without approval by ordinance receiving 27 votes of the Metropolitan Council or amendment to the Charter.



PROGRESS ON 2017-2022 STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Substantial progress or complete
 Some progress with work/opportunity remaining
 No progress or not needed

How will we increase and stabilize our reserve fund?

- Complete a fee study and develop a pricing plan
- Adopt a revenue policy
- Establish cost-of-service for mandated services and other large-scale events
- Develop business plans for self-produced events
- Study the advantages and potential of a long-term tenant relationship

How will we position ourselves within the event market to become the venue of choice?

- Update marketing materials including building floorplans with amenities
- Establish relationships with community and cultural agencies
- Monitor event RFI, RFP sites to identify new business opportunities
- Research trends in venue and event management
- Establish a recognizable presence in the southeast event venue industry
- Support and energize our green space

What is our story and how will we tell it?

- Develop a fun and interactive social media presence to bring recognition to the property and engage visitors
- Develop a marketing plan
- Document the property's history
- Explore updates to the existing website to enhance user experience
- Calculate the economic impact of our events
- Publish an annual report

How will we maintain the property to fulfill our mission?

-  Develop a life-cycle inventory of our assets to aid in budget preparation, capital replacement, and preventative maintenance scheduling
-  Develop a plan for the removal of barriers to ensure equal access
-  Develop maintenance and care standards for buildings and grounds
-  Develop a fleet management plan

How will we improve process to be more efficient, effective, and provide consistent and reliable service?

-  Develop a comprehensive policy and procedure manual with timetable for review of documents
-  Develop a records management procedure to address retention, disposal, access, disclosure and distribution
-  Develop a contract compliance review plan and schedule
-  Become active members in industry groups such as venue management and exposition associations

How will we leverage available technology to improve processes?

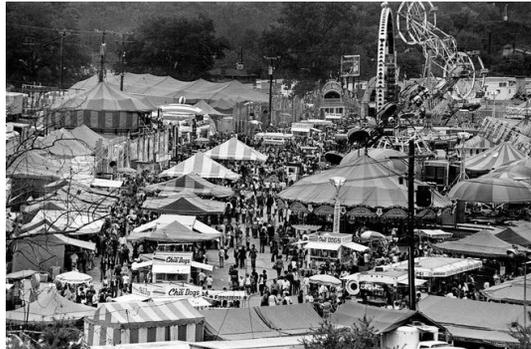
-  Implement new or updated software to help manage rentals, permits, event contracts, and reservations
-  Develop and implement a work-order system
-  Provide training for staff

What are the optimal organizational structure and workforce development investments needed for success?

-  Evaluate the use of temporary staff
-  Develop a staffing plan
-  Develop a compensation plan
-  Establish a procedure and format to ensure consistent approach to employee performance appraisals
-  Review and update existing job descriptions for all full- and part-time positions
-  Create and internship program and partner with local universities and schools

How can we best evaluate our services and processes?

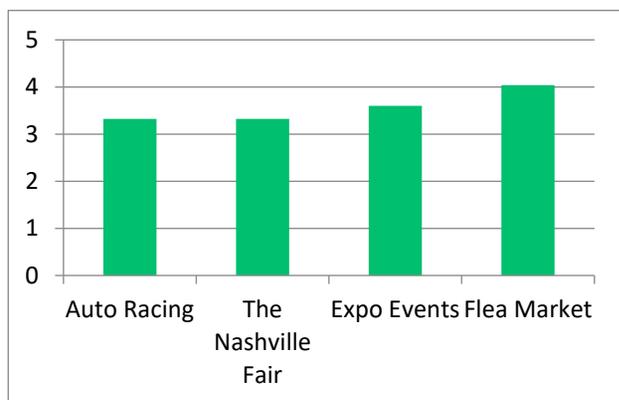
- Develop measures for monitoring performance against targets
- Develop a systematic evaluation process for events, facilities, operational and customer service
- Benchmark and evaluate like venues for best practices
- Engage neighbors, customers, guests, and other interested parties through public meetings and surveys



COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

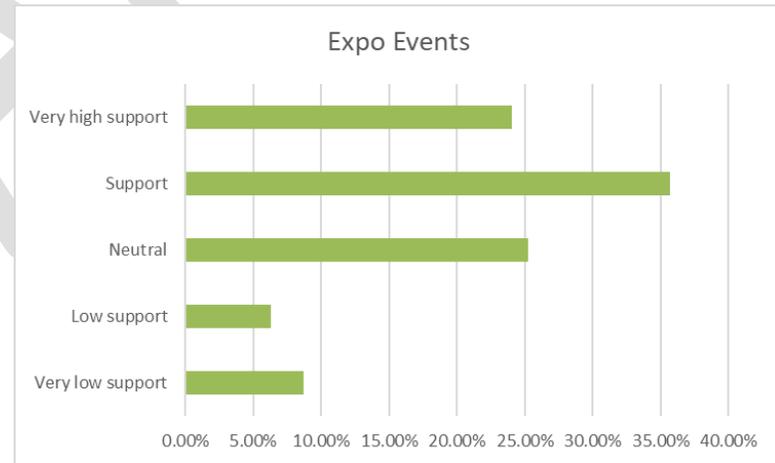
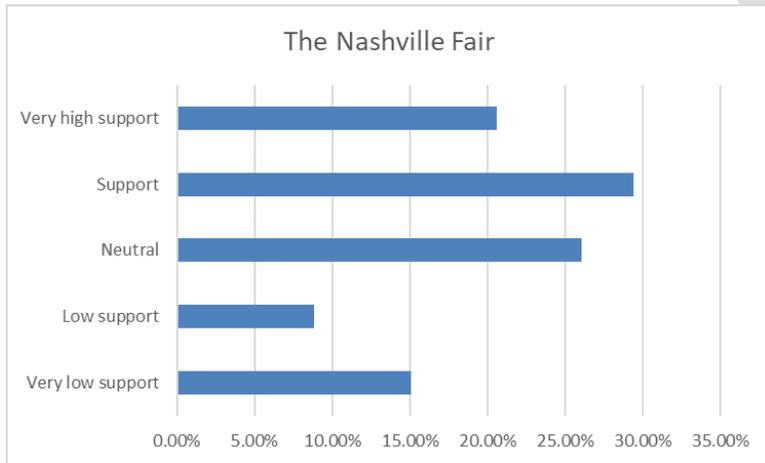
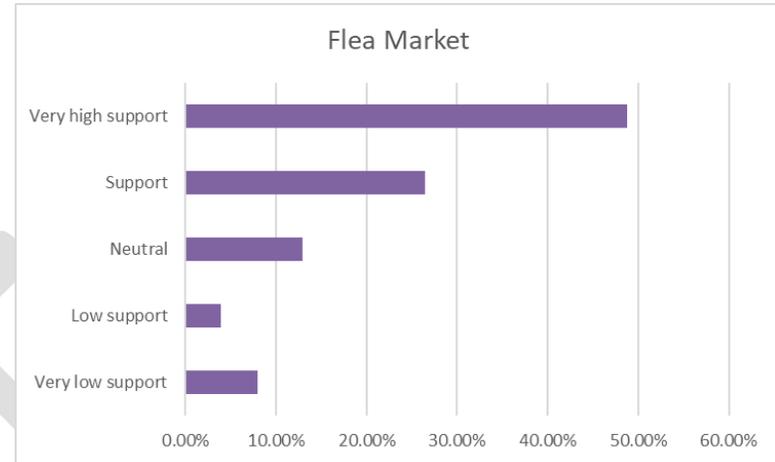
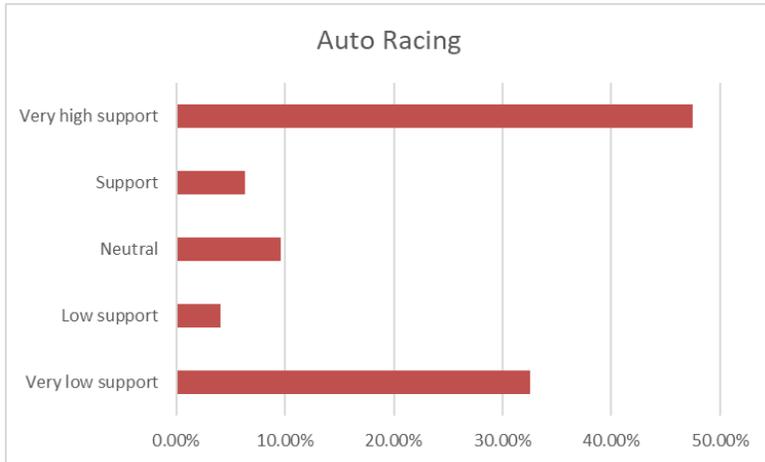
- Published October 14-31, 2024
- 533 responses

Support for charter-mandated activities (weighted average)

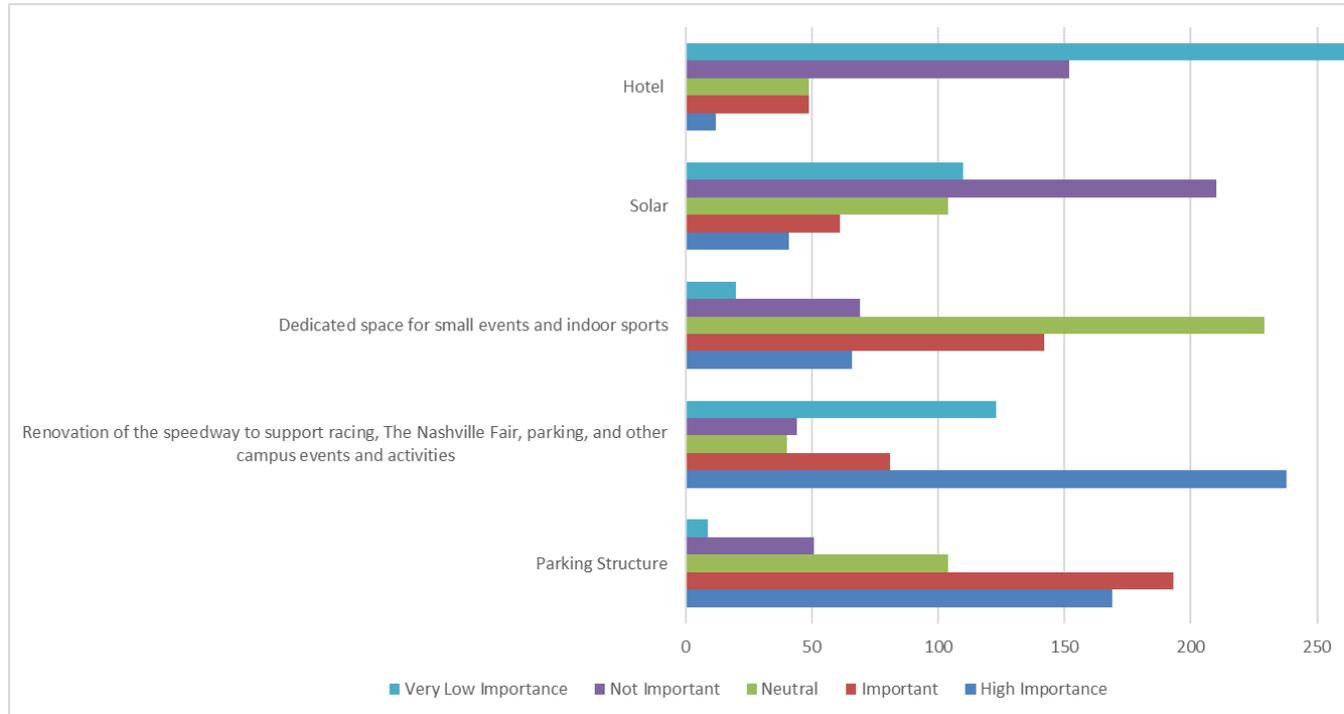


Challenges	Opportunities
Infrastructure Needs (Parking, roadways and sidewalks, and transit)	Development and Growth (mixed-use potential and affordable housing and green space)
Event Operations (recruitment of vendors for the flea market, affordable fee structures for vendors and visitors, balancing speedway renovations vs. removal with community sentiment)	Event Diversification (expanding expo events and markets to attract diverse audiences, investing in advertising for the flea market to increase attendance and vendor participation)
Community Dynamics (concerns about gentrification and potential displacement of nearby residents, mixed opinions on soccer and related developments)	Enhanced Accessibility (improving transit connectivity and reducing neighborhood congestion)
Government and Politics (navigating political challenges around speedway decisions and neighborhood impacts)	Community Engagement (strengthen ties with Nashville SC and other stakeholders, leveraging positive sentiment about improvements and the Fairgrounds' future)

Level of support for each Charter-mandated activity



Ranking of potential capital improvements



The process used in preparation of this document was the Bryson Model due to its focus on public sector planning. The planning team came together over the course of several months to perform a thorough analysis of the Fairgrounds' current condition and visioning of its future.

Planning Team:

Laura Womack, Executive Director
Diego Eguiarte, Board of Fair Commissioners
Clifton Peay, Director of Performance Management, Mayor's Office

Board of Fair Commissioners:

Jasper Hendricks, Chair
Todd Hartley, Vice-Chair
Diego Eguiarte, Commissioner
Anthony Owens, Commissioner
Vacant, Commissioner

Special thanks and recognition for their support:

Employees of The Fairgrounds Nashville
The Honorable Freddie O'Connell, 10th Mayor of the City of Nashville and Davidson County
Terry Vo, Councilmember, 17th District



This document was adopted by the Metro Board of Fair Commissioners on _____