

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY



Metropolitan Historical Commission
Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission
Sunnyside in Sevier Park
1113 Kirkwood Avenue
Nashville, Tennessee 37204
Telephone: (615) 862-7970

Metropolitan Historical Commission
February 24, 2025, 12:00 p.m.

Howard Office Building, Sonny West Conference Center,
700 President Ronald Reagan Way

- I. Call to Order, Roll Call, and Welcome Linda Wynn, Chair
- II. Approval of January Minutes Linda Wynn
- III. Public Comment Linda Wynn
The MHC holds a designated public comment period at each meeting. Members of the public in attendance may provide comments to the Board or its Committees during this designated time. Anyone wishing to speak about an agenda item will be allotted two (2) minutes to make comments.
- IV. Historical Markers Jessica Reeves
 - A. Islamic Center of Nashville (Participatory Budget)
 - B. Black Bottom (MHC)
- V. Preservation Awards: Honor Awards Nominations
Events/Special Projects & Nominations Committees
 - A. Achievement Award (2 - Dr. Kevin Smith and Ron Gobbell, FAIA)
 - B. Commissioners' Award (Nashville History Club)
 - C. Fletch Coke Award (Shain Dennison)
- VI. Discussion of BL2025-742, An Ordinance amending Chapter 2.128 of the Metropolitan Code pertaining to the Metropolitan Historical Commission and the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission and potential vote.
- VII. Vote on Resolution
- VIII. Director's Report Tim Walker
- IX. Other Business

X. Announcements

XI. Adjourn

Metropolitan Historical Commission
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Historical Markers, February 2025

Islamic Center of Nashville

Location: 2515 12th Ave. S

Funding: Participatory Budget

In the early 1970s local and international Muslims began meeting for weekly prayers at Vanderbilt University. By 1978 they established the Islamic Center of Nashville (ICN). In 1979 with help from Rock & Roll Hall of Famer Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens), the group bought a house on 12th Avenue S. as a place of worship. In 1989 they demolished the house for Nashville's first built mosque. It soon became a welcoming space for new arrivals from Kurdistan and around the world.

472 characters and spaces

{side 2} image with quote

“I visited the centre yesterday and found a great openness to share message of unity, love and peace which I had discovered. I am proud that the Centre in Nashville has become a beacon for understanding and sharing spiritual values.” Quote from Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens), a founding member of the mosque in 12South in 1979, in the *Tennessean*, September 26, 2016, before performing his 50th Anniversary Tour at the Ryman Auditorium. ICN entertains group and individual visits throughout the year.

Black Bottom

Location: 4th Ave S and Korean Veterans Blvd.

Funding: MHC

Named for the mud from frequent floods that darkened the streets, the Black Bottom neighborhood was home to a diverse mix of poor and working class African American and immigrant communities throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. It was often portrayed as an area of vice with brothels, gambling dens and saloons. During the Jim Crow era, many White residents left the area for the new streetcar suburbs, leaving African American residents in tenements such as Freedmen's Flats.

485 characters

Black Bottom was an African American cultural center with institutions such as Taylor & Company Funeral Home, Hubbard and Millie Hale Hospitals, Pearl School and St. Paul A.M.E. Anthropologist and author Zora Neale Hurston lived here briefly with her brother, Dr. Hezekiah Robert “Bob” Hurston, a 1913 Meharry graduate. In 1934 she described Black Bottom as “tough” and claimed its jook section inspired the Black Bottom dance. In the 1950s urban renewal destroyed most of the neighborhood.

490 characters and spaces

ACHIEVEMENT AWARD:

The Achievement Award is given to an individual in recognition of his or her extraordinary leadership in preserving Nashville's history—either through research and writing history, or through advocacy and raising public awareness of history and preservation. Past recipients of the Achievement Award include Dr. Reavis Mitchell (2008), Bob Tuke (2010), Ann Roberts (2012), Paul Clements (2014), and Dr. Carroll Van West (2016).

Name of Nominee: Dr. Kevin Smith

Dr. Kevin Smith, professor of anthropology at Middle Tennessee State University, has been a tireless advocate for the preservation of archaeological sites in Davidson County.

He has conducted a wide breadth of research in Nashville from prehistoric sites to frontier sites. He has worked on some of the most important sites in Davidson County including the Hooper, Gordontown, and Averbuch sites. Each of these sites were presented in technical reports, scholarly works, and shared at national, regional, or local conferences such as SAA, SEAC, Mid-South, and CRITA. For the past 15 years or so, Kevin has continued to evaluate what has been referred to as the Noel Cemetery in Nashville, an iconic area of extensive stone-box cemeteries. He has been researching the historic maps and references to better understand the prehistoric components of this site. Kevin has been involved with thematic studies that include specimens from Davidson County. An example is his work on crystalline objects from the Middle Cumberland region. His scholarly work is prolific. He is the 2025 recipient of the T CPA Career Achievement Award from Tennessee Council for Professional Archaeology

Dr. Smith has been a mentor to hundreds of students in the classroom and continues to direct an archaeological field school at Castalian Springs. Many of these students now are professional archaeologists conducting field work in Davidson County.

Additionally, he has built a strong rapport with many communities including the Indigenous community through years of consultation.

Because of his extensive research and scholarship, his tireless advocacy, and immense impact on student and public education, Dr. Kevin Smith deserves to be recognized for his contributions to Nashville and Davidson County's history.

Name of Nominee: Ron Gobbell, FAIA

Reason for Nomination: career in architecture/public service/advocacy for historic preservation

Ronald Gobbell, FAIA, is President Emeritus of GHP (Gobbell Hays Partners)

2021, AIA TN William Strickland Lifetime Achievement Award Winner:

William Strickland Lifetime Achievement Award for the Profession of Architecture recognizes achievements of those architects who, by their skill, professionalism, dedication, ability, and

commitment, have consistently fostered quality in the built environment, creating a lasting influence on the theory and practice of architecture. The 2021 William Strickland Lifetime Achievement Award for the Profession of Architecture is awarded to Ron V. Gobbell, FAIA.

With a heart for the past and an eye for the future, Ron Gobbell paved an unconventional path throughout a career that has spanned nearly 50 years.

In 1977, Ron partnered with Steve Hays to found GHP and pioneered the role of architecture and environmental issues in the built environment. Ron recognized that an architects' ability to see the big picture but also to be able to scale down to the granular equipped them to bring architectural and environmental expertise to forensic issues in buildings. Ron became a leading national expert—co-authoring the book *Indoor Air Quality Solutions and Strategies*, instructed in Europe, and testified before the U.S. Senate and state legislatures. He was also involved in the design and testing of experimental modules to meet the complex requirements of NASA's space station.

Their work has affected more than 8,000 buildings from Alaska to Dubai ... and beyond.

While his career has been geographically far-reaching, his greatest impact and focus has remained in Nashville, where he has been devoted to the preservation and rebirth of downtown. His commitment to his hometown led to the rehabilitation of 108 renovation/construction projects in Nashville alone, including award winning landmark and legacy projects such as The Hermitage Hotel, Union Station Hotel, and First Horizon Park, among others. In the 90's, he was actively involved in the economic and community revitalization of three contiguous historic districts in downtown Nashville; Broadway, 2nd Avenue/Riverfront, and Printers Alley. In the 2000's, he helped spearhead the renovation of Nashville's 5th Avenue into the 'Fifth Avenue of the Arts', a center for art and culture.

Ron currently provides project management for The Fairgrounds Nashville and Major League Soccer Stadium. And one of the first calls Nashville Mayor John Cooper made, following the horrific 2020 Christmas Day Bombing of Second Avenue, was to Ron Gobbell asking him to spearhead the task force for the impacted area's future and recovery. In 2021, Mayor Cooper appointed Ron as Project Manager of the rebuild of Second Avenue crediting Ron's architectural expertise, in-depth knowledge of historic architecture and environmental issues within old buildings, and commitment to the community.

Resides downtown in a once-partially-abandoned historic building that he purchased and renovated for condos in the early 2000s. Former, long-time MHZC member.

COMMISSIONERS' AWARD:

The Commissioners' Award recognizes a group, program, or project that enhances Nashville's history and historic resources. It is designed to honor projects that do not fit within the traditional preservation award categories. Past recipients of the Commissioners' Award include the Nashville City Cemetery Association (2009), The Land Trust for Tennessee (2010), Native History Association (2014), and Friends of Fort Negley (2018).

Nominee: Nashville History Club

Started by Jean Roseman (Fletch Coke Award, 2018) as a way to continue the legacy of former MHC Commissioner Bob Allen and his work with the Bellevue History Club. Meets regularly on Tuesdays at Fort Negley, with an attendance of about 45-50. The group is led by volunteers and features talks by local authors and historians on a variety of subjects. Recordings of past programs are available on the Fort Negley Park YouTube channel.

Fletch Coke Award

The MHC recognized Fletch Coke, as “an indefatigable leader and activist for historic preservation in our community,” with the Achievement Award in September 1997. Years later, she remains a role model for volunteers and professionals alike. Her contributions have helped to preserve, fund, and restore many of the places and things that make our city unique. Without her intervention, many of our city’s landmarks may have been lost. The Fletch Coke Award honors her extraordinary efforts to preserve the history and historic landmarks of Nashville and Davidson County. Recipients are selected for their tenacity, curiosity, and excellence in historical research, writing, and promotion of Nashville’s local history and historic places, and include Debie Cox (2016) and Kathy B. Lauder/Mike Slate (2017).

Name of Nominee: Shain Dennison

Reason for Nomination: achievement in establishing historic zoning in Nashville and continued dedication to Nashville’s historic places

Shain, retired Greenways Director for Metro Parks, has over thirty years of productive public service in historic preservation, greenway development and land conservation. With a degree in historic preservation, her early career was as executive director of the Metro Historic Zoning Commission (1983-1993), where she was instrumental in the creation of conservation zoning, a tool that has since preserved thousands of Nashville’s historic neighborhood properties. As Metro’s first director of greenways, she served over twenty years in that role at Metro Parks, overseeing development of 91 miles of greenway trails and acquisition and conservation of over 7,000 acres of park land and greenway easements. She was key to the strategic efforts of Metro to acquire and protect Stone Hall, Ravenwood and the Moe Lytle 600 acres in Donelson and Hermitage, combining personal passions for historic preservation and conservation. Shain retired from Metro Parks in 2017. She is a member of the Friends of Two Rivers board and is excited that Friends of Two Rivers has added Stone Hall to its efforts that will now preserve and utilize both exceptional properties for the public’s enjoyment.