



## GREEN HILLS EAST

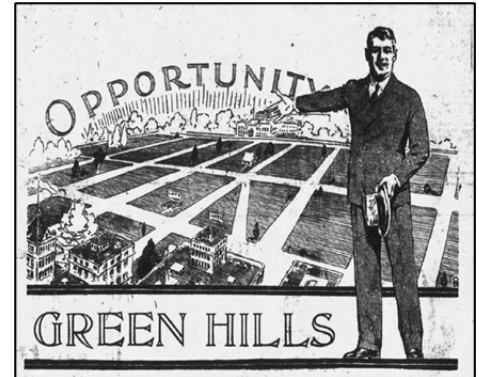
### A SHORT HISTORY OF GREEN HILLS EAST NCZO

This district is the namesake for the larger Green Hills area and is significant for its representation of the national initiative to promote home ownership and educate about modern materials and construction practices, beginning in the late 1920s.

The name of the new development, Green Hills, may come from the area's view of a collection of three hills about 1 mile south that includes Shy's Hill. Advertisements note that the development is on a "plateau that overlooks the knobs." The most likely origin of the name was a marketing tool to promote the clean air and beautiful land as an alternative to city living. The sentimental and arcadian use of the term in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century signified the nostalgia of 'home' and fertile land. Three examples are the poem "The Green Hills of My Fatherland" written by Laura M. Thurston in the 1800s and reprinted by the *Republican Banner* March 11, 1842, the 1829 song "Green Hills of Tyrol," and the opera "The Far Green Hills of Home" by Father Joseph Patrick Connor in the 1920s. The developer, John Calhoun, (who later developed Courts of Belle Meade and Manors of Belle Meade) would have wanted to promote the new development in a manner that differentiated this suburban paradise from city life. Archivist, Debbie Cox, in her Nashville Blog Post, noted that the *Tennessean* wrote that the development was promoted as being on the highest elevation in an area with a "wealth of big shade trees and plenty of luxurious grass. An advertisement for a house in the new neighborhood, led with "Where There is No Smoke or Dirt." The name likely was a part of what enticed potential buyers from urban neighborhoods to the beauty of the countryside and a neighborhood that met the idea of 'home.'

### Development

Calhoun filed two plats in 1926 and 1927 on land that on the 1907 Nashville map by W.Z. Hitt is noted as being owned by the Nashville Bible School (plat 1) and G. Lipscomb (plat 2). The first plat included N and S Observatory Drives where work first began on streets and infrastructure.



Partial advertisement from the *Tennessean*, 10 Apr 1927.



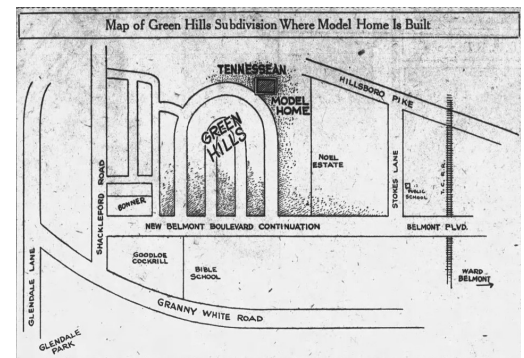
Green Hills Dr prior to home constructions. *Nashville Banner*, 5 May 1927.



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The Home Owners Institute took the lead on this movement, by publishing home plans and information first in the *New York Tribune* and then through syndication, publishing a plan book, creating a home ownership course, and selling sets of house plans, as well organizing model homes. Theodore Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, supported the fact that demonstrations would have a far greater impact on the nation's goals than articles and books alone. In 1926, construction began on 16 model demonstration houses in cities across the country under the guidance of the Homeowners Service Institute, Inc. The purpose of the program was to encourage home ownership, educate about the advantages of using standard nationally known materials and equipment and good construction practices. Nashville took part in the demonstration home movement with the first home constructed in the Green Hills subdivision, known as The Tennessean Model Home, located at 1637 S Observatory Drive.

The home is located on the center plot or the “bend in the largest horseshoe of the Plateau that overlooks the knobs” in the new subdivision. Both the construction process at 1637 S Observatory (lots 12 and 13) and the finished product were open to the public. Promotion of the construction of the home in the *Tennessean* was used not only to sell ideas but also materials and home goods. The home, designed by the Nashville firm of Tisdale, Stone and Pinson was completed in April 1927. (Significant additions have been constructed over the years but the house plan is also evident in the house constructed at 1612 N Observatory.) The firm designed other residential buildings in Nashville, the Eakins & Cavert School buildings, and the courthouses for Hickman County in Centerville, TN and Jackson County in Gainesboro, TN. The *Tennessean* described the new home as, “perfection in every detail, a combination of art and beauty and utility, a thing to be admired from the exterior, and a place of admiration and dreams on the interior....” The floor plan was approved by the national organization of model home builders and considered “near perfect as possible for small homes.” A later advertisement touted the neighborhood as place for “those who want an exclusive neighborhood in which to erect substantial homes.”



“Map of Green Hills Subdivision Where Model Home is Built,” *The Tennessean*, 3 April 1927.

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This first home followed the English style of architecture and included three bedrooms, a living room with fireplace, dining room, breakfast room, lavender tile bathroom, pantry, kitchen, steel windows, and steam heat. The basement included stationary tubs, a servant's room and shower, and room for two cars. Phillips & Quarles provided the Richardson Multichrome shingled roof. The brick was painted to give it an antique finish. Regular full-page articles in the *Tennessean* provided updates on construction, designs and floorplans for homes, and helpful information on materials and construction. Fifteen thousand visitors toured the home on opening day on May 1, 1927.

The home was purchased later in May 1927 by Holt and Salome Stephenson Bean for \$12,000. Holt began his career as a tax inspector. He and his wife moved to Nashville from Lynchburg when he was promoted in 1918 to internal revenue agent. They moved to Lewisburg in 1920 when Holt was chosen to head the Marshall County Auto Co. In April 1925 he is listed in an advertisement as working as a Farm Loan Correspondent with the New York Life Insurance Co. (see fig. 6). At the time of his purchase of the Green Hills home, he is noted as correspondent for Union Central Life Insurance and later listed in the City Directory as owner of Bean Bros and Bean & Co. Holt died in 1960. The Beans also purchased the land that is now Observatory Court, platted in 1962 by Salome and John J Bean. Salome Bean moved to 1602-A Observatory Court sometime prior to her death in 1975.

The model home spurred sales of the newly platted lots in the subdivision. Five thousand dollars was the minimum building restriction; however, many are noted as being approximately ten thousand.

Sometime between 1927 and 1969, the first house was enlarge but the original design can be seen in the house at 1612 N Observatory. The *Tennessean* published multiple model plans that were available at a "low cost" but it appears that only one other of those design was constructed in the district. Different styles of the Plan No. 115-S can be seen throughout the neighborhood and primarily differ in terms of the design of the front entrance and the fact that they do not have the clipped gable seen in the



The house at 1637 S Observatory Dr as originally designed (*Tennessean*, 12 December 1926) and as seen in 1927, 1969 and 2024.

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plan. Some examples of similar designs may be seen at: 1700 Bonner Avenue and 1623 and 1629 S Observatory Drive. The revisions of both house plans showed how owners and developers customized stock plans to make the house their own. All of the historic buildings are similar to designs included in plans books of the era.

The neighborhood was developed and sold as being a respite from urban living and remains such today, with quiet streets, old growth trees and many of the original buildings. Alterations have taken place, as they do in any neighborhood, to address changing needs but the original architectural forms, designs and settings are still evident. Even new construction, for the most part, has been respectful of the character of the street. As the city evolved and a market developed that encouraged demolition of small and medium sized homes for ‘mcmansions’, both new residents and long-time residents were interested in preserving their hidden jewel of a neighborhood. Protection began with a neighborhood-led effort to down-zone the area to single-family in 2006 and discussions regarding a neighborhood conservation zoning overlay in 2024.



The house at 1612 N Observatory Dr as seen in 2024. The home was constructed using the same plan as the model home at 1637 S Observatory.

## SHORT HISTORIES BY STREET

### Bonner Avenue

Bonner Avenue is named for T.F. Bonner (1861-1939) whose farm constitutes a portion of this development. Bonner’s death certificate notes him as a “retired salesman” however, newspaper clippings paint him as more of an entrepreneur. In 1907, *The Tennessean* called him “one of Nashville’s most progressive citizens”.

The first resident on Bonner Avenue was Thomas A and Attie (Addie) Gene Humphreys Shriver at 1709 Bonner Avenue, appearing in the City Directories in 1930, having purchased their lot from Henry Goodpasture in 1929. Thomas and Attie married in 1926. Shriver, at the time he purchased the property, was an attorney with Shriver & Shriver, located in the Stahlman Building, along with his older brother Berry D. Shriver. In later years, he served as a chancellor judge (appointed in 1940 by Gov. Prentice Cooper) and 25 years as appellate judge (appointed by Gov. Frank G. Clement in 1955). Judge Shriver was a prime mover in the establishment

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of the Tennessee Natural Gas Co, as it was known at the time, and instrumental in the firm's acquisition of the Nashville Gas Co. Shriver may have known Bonner, as Mrs. Bonner is listed in 1897 as receiving a free gas cook stove from the Nashville Gas Co.

### **Burton Ave**

Burton Avenue was named after Andrew Mizell Burton (1879-1966), a supporter of Lipscomb University (as well as other colleges and universities), an owner of property in the subdivision, and the founder of Life and Casualty Insurance Company. Longtime resident Lee Maddux, says that 3810 Belmont, at the corner of Burton Ave and Belmont, was owned by Burton, and that the home also served as the home economics classroom for Lipscomb University in the 1950s-60s.

An early resident of Burton Avenue was Jas H and Minnie Sutton in 1931. Sutton was a salesman for Nashville Coal Co. The Suttons may have had the street to themselves for several years as the next resident to appear City Directories is Jas H and Elise M Allen in 1937. Both Sutton and Allen were salesman and both families appeared to be renting rooms to at least one other person by 1938.

### **Eden Avenue**

Using the verdant and rural location as a selling point, may have also been the reason behind the naming of Eden Avenue, possibly after the Garden of Eden.

The first occupants in 1930 were: Leonard J. and Gladys Davis (Deaderick & Davis Electric Co), Andrew P. and Josephine Martin (A.P. Martin & Son, real estate, loans, chain store specialist and one of the realtors of Part 2 of Green Hills), Buford G. and Grace Wilson (stocks and bonds).

### **Green Hills Drive**

Green Hills Drive is listed in City Directories shortly after the subdivision but names of residents do not appear until 1930. Some early residents were: Cliff W and Alma Beasley (wire chief with L&NRR), Elmer C. and Wilma Hicks (Mrg Chamberlin Metal Weatherstrip Co), Samuel A and Lucy High,

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(Union Grocery Co), Issac B. and Ruth Hime. 1606 (operator at Paramount Theater), Vaden M and Mildred Lackey (Lackey Coal Co), Erwin J. and Fannie Sain, 1600, (jeweler), William D Shouse, Frank and Lillie Thomas, and Walter W. and Lula Wilson, 1610.

### **Observatory Drive**

Because the neighborhood was advertised as being a high point with views, naming a street “Observatory” might have been a way to instill the value of the views from these lots. This was the first street to be developed so it is not surprising that by 1946, it had the most residents of all the surrounding streets. In early City Directories, there is no distinguishment between North and South Observatory until 1949.

Where the earliest residents lived is difficult to determine as house numbers were not included in City Directories until 1942 and the numbering was irregular without the current distinction between North and South. Early residents included: Rev Hall L. and Mary Etta Calhoun (Pastor Belmont Ave Church of Christ), Robert H. and Jane Chilton (RH Chilton Auto Machine Co.), Ward and Elizabeth S DeWitt (Spt Rock City Construction Co.), Miller and Virginia Dismukes (Dismukes-Niles & Co, wholesale hats and caps), Otis P Grant, Dr. Frederick H Hall, Edwin L and Brinda R Kuykendall (slsmn), John Milas, Jas Ogler, Horace and Mary Powell (circulation mgr Nashville Banner, John R Stephenson, Sam H. and Frances E Vaughan (collr Hilary E House Furn Co.), Frank C. and Cloie Womack (Dist Mgr L&C Insurance Co.).

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### SUMMARY OF HISTORIC CONTEXT

(This information is not a part of the design guidelines. It is provided for planning purposes and may change over time, as more information is learned and the district ages. This information is general for the entire neighborhood. A more immediate context is used for guiding infill design.)

**Period of Significance:** 1927-1960

**Number of Stories:** Infill should be one or one and one half stories. (There are only four historic two-story buildings in the neighborhood.)

**Typical Roof Forms:** The most common roof forms in the neighborhood are cross gables and side gables.

**Typical Building Forms/Styles:** The styles and form include: Bungalows, English Cottages, Minimal Traditional, Colonial Revival, Tudor Revival and Ranch.

**Entrances:** Entrances are varied with projecting porches with gable or flat roofs, hoods over doors, and vestibule entrances. There are also many stoops with no covering.

**Cladding:** The most appropriate primary cladding for infill is brick or stone as the majority of buildings have brick facades.



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### **GREEN HILLS DESIGN GUIDELINES**

#### **GH-A. MATERIALS**

1. New construction of infill should have at least 80% brick or stone as the primary cladding material.

#### **GH-B. NEW CONSTRUCTION-ADDITIONS-MASS SCALE & CONNECTION**

1. The following design guidelines replace Part I, VI(B)(4). Rear additions may extend wider than the historic building on one side with the following conditions:
  - The addition is designed to leave the corners of the building visible and intact and does not wrap around a corner.
  - Eaves and ridges of addition do not exceed the main corresponding elements of the historic building.
  - The portion that extends beyond the side wall does not exceed one-story or the height of the historic building, whichever is less.
  - The portion that extends wider shall not be considered in the footprint calculation.

#### **GH-C. NEW CONSTRUCTION-ADDITIONS-MASS SCALE & CONNECTION**

1. Front dormers added to building should follow the design guidelines in Part I for side dormers. (See Part I.VI.E.5.)

#### **GH-D. NEW CONSTRUCTION-DETACHED OUTBUILDINGS & GARDEN STRUCTURES-MASSING & FORM**

1. Ridge heights for detached outbuildings, as measured from highest corner-point of existing grade facing the rear property line, shall not exceed the height of the primary structure, as measured from top of finished floor/slab, or 23' whichever is less.
2. Garages may be attached or detached. If attached via a rear addition, the 20' rear setback shall be met. Detached garages shall meet the set-



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backs of section VII.C of Part I of the Turn-of-the-20th-Century design guidelines.

3. If garage doors are facing the street, garage doors should be one-bay in width.