

# NASHVILLE OPEN SPACE PLAN



*Creating, Enhancing and Preserving the Places that Matter*

A REPORT OF **NASHVILLE: NATURALLY**

MARCH 2011





Photo Credit: Gary Layda



Photo Credit: Anita McCaig



Photo Credit: Anita McCaig

*“The quality of life of Nashville is intrinsically bound to its history and beauty.”  
— Mayor Karl Dean*



Photo Credit: Gary Layda



Photo Credit: Anita McCaig



# FOREWORD

*“The quality of life in Nashville is intrinsically bound to its history and beauty. Rolling hills, striking river bluff views, and serene forests are essential to the character of our city, including the country music for which Nashville is known. **That character is why people come to Nashville, stay in Nashville, and return to Nashville.** That is why it is so important for us to plan and invest smartly to make sure that character is never lost as Nashville continues to thrive and grow.*

*Great cities have progressive open space plans, and thanks to the generous support of the Martin Foundation, Nashville now joins those ranks. This plan, along with Metro Government’s partnership with The Land Trust for Tennessee, is a testament to how government can work together with the private sector to invest in our city’s future. It charts a course for ensuring that open space continues to enhance the environmental, social, and economic well-being of our city.”*

**–Karl F. Dean, Mayor**



Photo Credit: Hawkins Partners, Inc.



Photo Credit: Gary Layda



Photo Credit: Gary Layda



Photo Credit: Gary Layda

*“Places with abundant conserved green spaces help people to connect with each other and with nature. A plan as bold as this one requires the private community to work in unison with the government to achieve the vision. By private community I mean conservation groups, philanthropic organizations, developers, business owners, residents and anyone who enjoys the natural places that make Nashville special. It has been a privilege to be a part of this vision and I look forward to working together to make this vision a reality.”*

**–Jeanie Nelson, Executive Director of The Land Trust for Tennessee**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Project Partners

Office of the Mayor, Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County  
The Land Trust for Tennessee

## Sponsors

The Martin Foundation  
Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County

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Dedicated to all those who gave their time and ideas for this project.

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# INTRODUCTION







DEADERICK STREET | Downtown Nashville

Photo Credit: Hawkins Partners, Inc.

## PLANNING FOR CONSERVATION LIKE WE PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT

Nashville is a uniquely beautiful place. The wide Cumberland River winds around the river bends, forested hills and hollows blanket the Northwest, historic sites inspire reverence for the region, community gardens dot neighborhoods with color, and parks and lakes – both big and small – are havens for wildlife and for people looking to escape the hustle and bustle of the city. It is this character of place that draws residents, visitors and businesses here and it is the associated quality of life that compels them to stay. This plan is about ensuring this quality of life for future generations.

The creation of this plan was a top recommendation in the 2009 report of the Mayor’s Green Ribbon Committee on Environmental Sustainability. Shortly after the release of the report, Mayor Dean formed a public/private partnership between Metro Government and The Land Trust for Tennessee to carry out that recommendation.

The goal of that planning process, called **Nashville: Naturally**, was to inventory, evaluate – with guidance from the community – and develop an implementable vision for conserving and enhancing Nashville’s lands and natural resources.

As Nashville grows and attracts new residents, visitors, and businesses, this vision will provide the conservation lens that informs the resulting development plans.

This is not a plan that gathers dust. In fact, the focus of the project and the plan is on implementation. Realizing the vision will make Nashville more competitive economically, more viable ecologically, and will preserve and enhance the quality of life it offers. Open spaces affect every citizen in some way, from walkers, gardeners, historians, birders, cyclists, hikers, hunters, athletes, dog-walkers, or outdoor enthusiasts, to new parents, retirees, business owners, real estate developers, and other private landowners.

**Each and every Nashvillian has a stake in Nashville’s open spaces and a role in helping to realize this vision.**

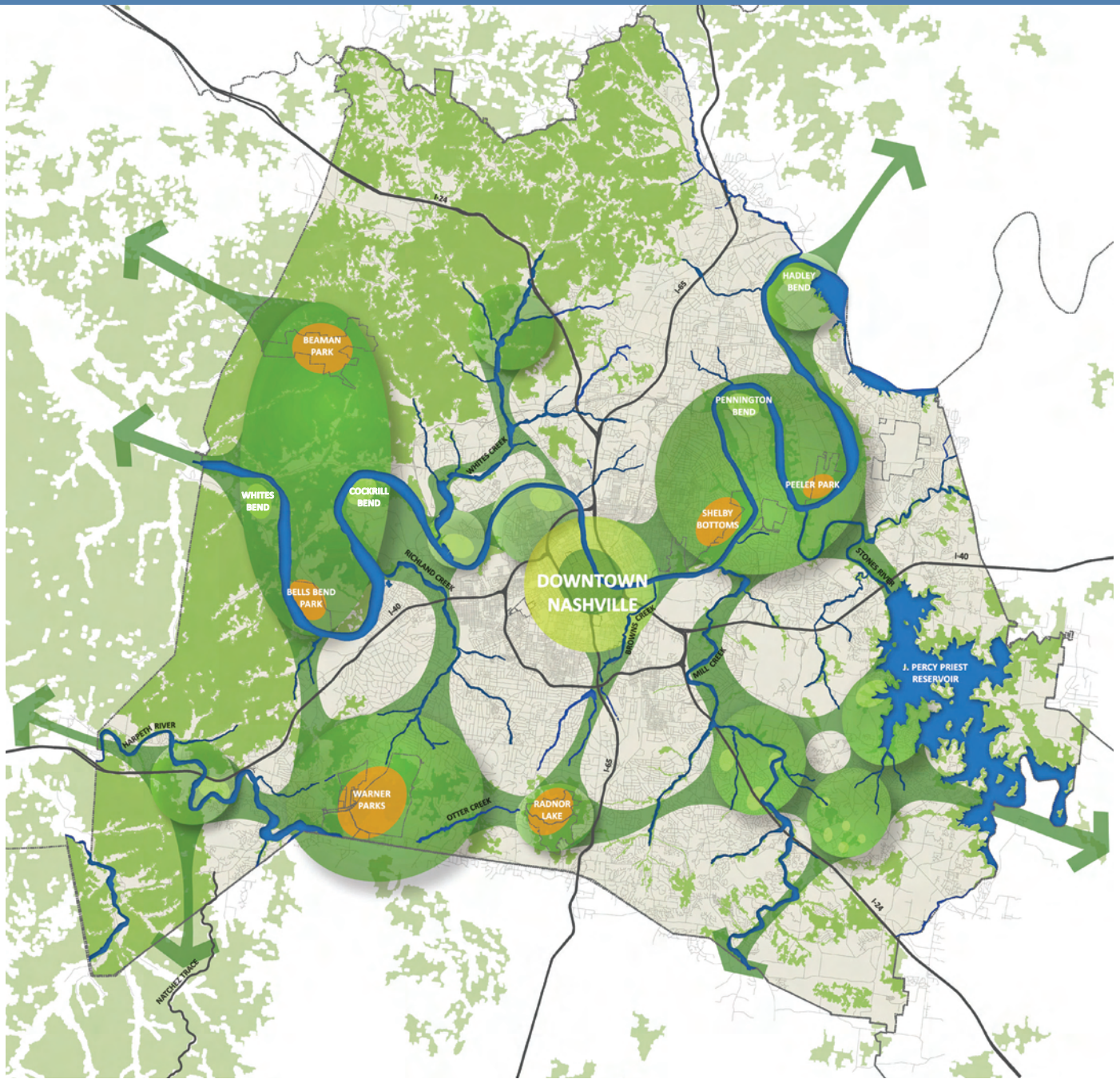


CUMBERLAND RIVER | Downtown Nashville

Photo Credit: Gary Layda



# OPEN SPACE VISION



## LEGEND

- Green Infrastructure Network
- Open Water
- Interstate
- Existing Open Space Anchor
- Potential Open Space Anchor
- Open Space Network Vision

*The conceptual map above illustrates Nashville's open space vision. It represents public priorities expressed during public forums, and is based on the latest peer-reviewed science, GIS research and analysis.*



# FOUR CORNERS, NINE BENDS AND A HEART OF GREEN

Envisioned are large reserves of protected open space in each of the **four corners** of the county that serve as anchors for the open space network. These open space anchors include:

**Northwest:** a corridor of conservation lands anchored by Beaman Park to the north and Bells Bend Park to the south.

**Southwest:** an arc of lands including the Harpeth River Valley, Natchez Trace Parkway, Warner Parks, the West Meade and Forest Hills forests and hilltops, and Radnor Lake State Natural Area.

**Northeast:** a network of conservation lands connecting several historic sites (including The Hermitage, Clover Bottom, Two Rivers Mansion, and Stone Hall), existing and potential parks along the Cumberland River (including Shelby Bottoms, an expanded Peeler Park, Two Rivers Park, Heartland Park, and Stones River Greenway), and protected farms and wetlands in Neely's and Pennington bends.

**Southeast:** an anchor park or network of smaller parks within the watersheds of Mill Creek, Seven Mile Creek and Browns Creek, connected to each other and to protected land around J. Percy Priest Lake by an expanded greenway network.

There should be protected land in each of the **nine bends** in the Cumberland River, which contain Davidson County's most fertile agricultural soil, offer recreational



Photo Credit: Gary Layda

opportunities with access to the river, serve as necessary buffers against floodwaters and help to improve water quality by acting as a natural filter.

In the center is downtown, which should become a **heart of green**. A green, thriving urban core will have more parks and greenways, a revitalized riverfront with a network of open spaces, a substantial increase in tree canopy, and innovations such as green roofs and rain gardens that capture and filter stormwater. This would build upon the existing green space in Bicentennial Mall, Public Square, Ft. Negley, and opportunities along the riverfront, such as the site of Nashville's former thermal plant.

Together, these resources should be **connected**. Gaps should be filled to link all of the four corners to each other and "pearls on the necklace" should be protected along stream corridors and greenways. By bicycle or on foot, one should be able to travel from one corner of the county to another and into downtown via greenways or bikeways.



Photo Credit: Hawkins Partners, Inc.



# OPEN SPACE GOALS







AERIAL | Shelby Bottoms Greenway

Photo Credit: Gary Layda

## OPEN SPACE GOALS

**The following near- and mid-term goals represent ambitious but achievable targets identified by the planning design team as consistent with this plan’s vision and the goal of making Nashville the greenest city in the Southeast. Just as the creation of this plan was the result of a public/private partnership and community input, achieving these targets will require a similar balance of public and private commitment and investment.**

- Add 3,000 acres of parkland in the next 10 years. This will increase the Metro Parks system by approximately 30%. Add another 3,000 acres of parkland by 2035.
- Privately conserve a minimum of 3,000 acres of Nashville’s green infrastructure network in the next 10 years, and an additional 3,000 acres by 2035.
- Protect an additional 10,000 acres of floodplain and other sensitive natural areas via low impact development, land swaps and regulatory innovations in the next 10 years.
- Of the above 22,000 acres, protect at least 1,500 acres for sustainable agricultural uses.
- Establish an anchor park, or series of parks, in Southeast Nashville in the next five years.
- Establish large-scale preserves or other protected land in every bend of the Cumberland River in the next 10 years.
- Improve key park and greenway linkages by adding 25 miles of new greenways in the next 5 years. Prioritize linkages in the Mill Creek watershed, the Gulch and connections from the riverfront to the convention center.

- Create a series of new small parks and landscaped gateways in the next 10 years in the downtown area.
- Double the downtown tree canopy in the next 10 years (85 acres).
- Transition 110 acres (20%) of the suitable impervious surfaces in downtown to pervious surfaces or natural plantings in the next 10 years.
- Establish a heritage tourism trail in the next five years that highlights Nashville’s historic and prehistoric landscapes and sites.
- Double the amount of local food produced in Davidson County and triple the number of Davidson County farms selling direct to consumers in the next five years.

The remainder of this plan describes Nashville’s natural resources, the planning process that generated this open space vision, and policy recommendations for bringing it to fruition.



EAST BANK GREENWAY | Downtown Nashville

Photo Credit: Gary Layda





# NATURAL HISTORY

→ *The Warner Parks, on the National Register of Historic Places, together are the largest municipally administered parks in the state with over 2,684 acres and are located 9 miles from the center of downtown. These parks receive over 500,000 visitors annually.*





Photo Credit: Hawkins Partners, Inc.

## NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

The essence of what makes Nashville distinctive and desirable is derived largely from its physical and cultural attributes. The natural character is distinguished by a series of 14 watersheds and topography of rolling hills, steep bluffs, gentle valleys and flat floodplains. The cultural identity of Nashville is characterized by a wealth of special historic and iconic places.

In 1963, the governments of Nashville and Davidson County consolidated into a single metropolitan government. As a result, this plan encompasses all of Davidson County. Davidson County was formed in 1783, making it the oldest county in Middle Tennessee. It is roughly hexagonal in shape and contains 526 square miles, 23.9 of which are water, primarily from the Cumberland River (which bisects the county into north and south portions), seven other smaller waterways and two man-made lakes. Nashville encompasses three eco-regions: the Inner Central Basin, the Outer Central Basin and the Western Highland Rim.

The County's ecological landscape is home to mature forests, mountain laurel-covered ridge tops, five kinds of forest habitat including rocky cedar glades (which are unique to this part of the world), river marshes, and the

extensive river and stream network. **Davidson County has 87 known caves, 30 species of breeding birds, and 108 rare terrestrial and aquatic species including the Nashville Crayfish**, an endangered species that is unique to Nashville's Mill Creek watershed.

Nashville was founded in 1779, and was originally called Fort Nashborough. Nashville's prime location, accessibility as a river port, and its major railroad system allowed it to grow quickly. It was incorporated and became the county seat of Davidson County in 1806. In 1843, the city was named the permanent capital of the state of Tennessee. **Today over 100 sites in Davidson County are on the National Register of Historic Places.** Those include The Hermitage, a nationally significant home of President Andrew Jackson, well known architectural landmarks such as Union Station and The Parthenon, and historic neighborhoods, rural farms and communities.

Development patterns in Davidson County are closely related to its topography. Much of what remains as open space is located in the northwest and far west portions of the county where the terrain is hilly and difficult to develop. In contrast, the remaining two-thirds of the county has comparatively little green space, particularly in the downtown.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- *Central Park in New York City received 7 million visitors in 1865. At that time the population of Nashville was less than 30,000.*
- *Nashville's replica of the Parthenon was built for the 1897 Tennessee Centennial Exposition. The preservation of the Parthenon after the closing of the Exposition created Centennial Park and initiated the city park movement in Nashville.*
- *The Nashville Crayfish is a federally listed endangered species whose only habitat in the world is in the Mill Creek watershed in southeastern Davidson County.*



Photo Credit: The Conservation Fund



A group of people, including a woman in a blue shirt and several children, are walking away from the camera on a dirt path through a dense, green forest. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a dappled light effect on the path. The path is surrounded by tall grasses and various plants.

# OPEN SPACE PLANNING

*"Just as a healthy community provides places for people to live and work, a healthy community also provides places for people to get outdoors, enjoy clean water and air and live vibrantly. That's green infrastructure."*

Lawrence Selzer, President and CEO, The Conservation Fund





Photo Credit: Gary Layda

## OPEN SPACE PLANNING AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The term 'open space' refers to natural areas that are important for recreation and socialization, places of scenic beauty, areas that provide habitat for plants and animals, land that absorbs and filters water before it enters our rivers, land that we farm, and land that is forested. Open space planning looks at these resources first and then plans development to complement these areas.

This can be thought of as two types of infrastructure: **gray** and **green**. **Gray infrastructure** refers to traditional built structures, such as roads, utilities, railways, airports and sewers. It is planned and maintained and is considered to be a basic necessity and an investment in the future. **Green infrastructure** refers to the services provided by open spaces. Green infrastructure includes tree-lined streets, community gardens, parks, greenways, pocket parks, farmland, forestland, waterways, and bluffs. These places, great and small, when connected, make a stronger network.

By identifying, planning and maintaining a healthy green infrastructure network, wise investments can be made that help the economy and improve quality of life.

### WHY NASHVILLE NEEDS TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE ITS GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

- *About 3% of Davidson County is in Metro parkland, making it one of the smaller park systems in the country. Charlotte, Indianapolis and Atlanta have city park systems with roughly 5% of their land area. The City of Austin has 16% of its land in metro parks.*
- *RTI International calculates that the annual costs of obesity-related disease is \$1,429 per person, which for Nashville means \$255 million per year in additional health care costs.*
- *According to the American Lung Association, Davidson County received a failing grade in 2010 for ozone levels and particle pollution, measured over a 24 hour period.*
- *According to a Metro Government assessment, the May 2010 flood caused over \$1.19 billion in damage to more than 11,000 properties. The county has over 38,000 acres of land in the floodplain, less than half of which is currently restricted from development.*
- *Of the approximately 350 miles of streams in Davidson County, roughly 14% are listed by the US Environmental Protection Agency as impaired (polluted) waters.*
- *According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, between 2002 and 2007, Davidson County lost over 45 farms totaling 9,000 acres of farmland.*
- *According to the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, the 10-county region will add another one million people by the year 2035.*
- *In 2008, Davidson County was ranked 1st in the state for tourism spending, with tourists spending over \$3.94 billion. Four of the top ten trip activities for tourists visiting Tennessee in 2008 involved nature or historical attractions, according to the TN Department of Tourism Development.*

Green infrastructure provides services related to all of these challenges and opportunities. It helps clean our water and air, creates recreational opportunities for active, healthy living, provides places for residents and visitors to gather, filters stormwater and mitigates flooding, and preserves community character. In short, it adds essential value to the community and requires the same level of attention, investment and care as traditional, gray infrastructure.





## NASHVILLE'S GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

*According to Metro Water Services, in the urban core alone, there are 475 acres of potential green roofs, 811 acres of suitable urban tree planting locations, and 1,175 acres of surface parking that could be made more permeable. Imagine the difference that could be made if these strategies were used throughout Davidson County.*



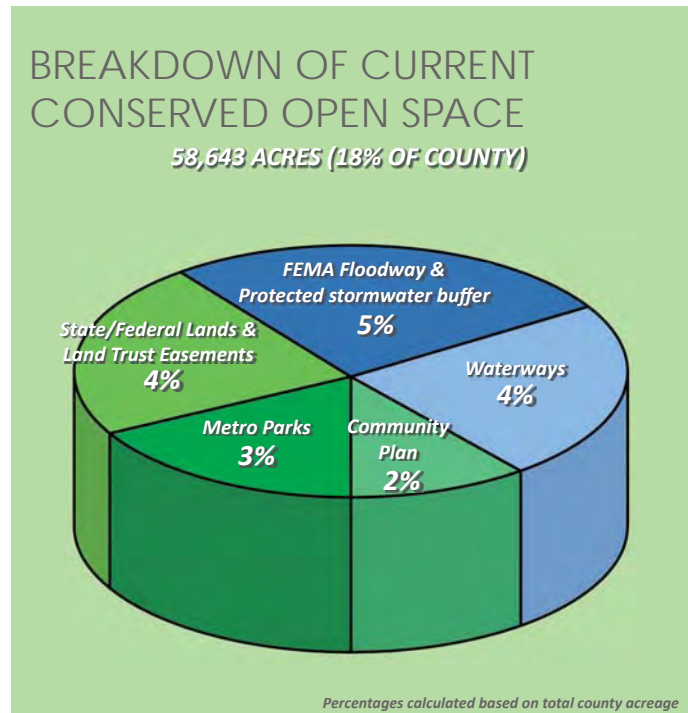
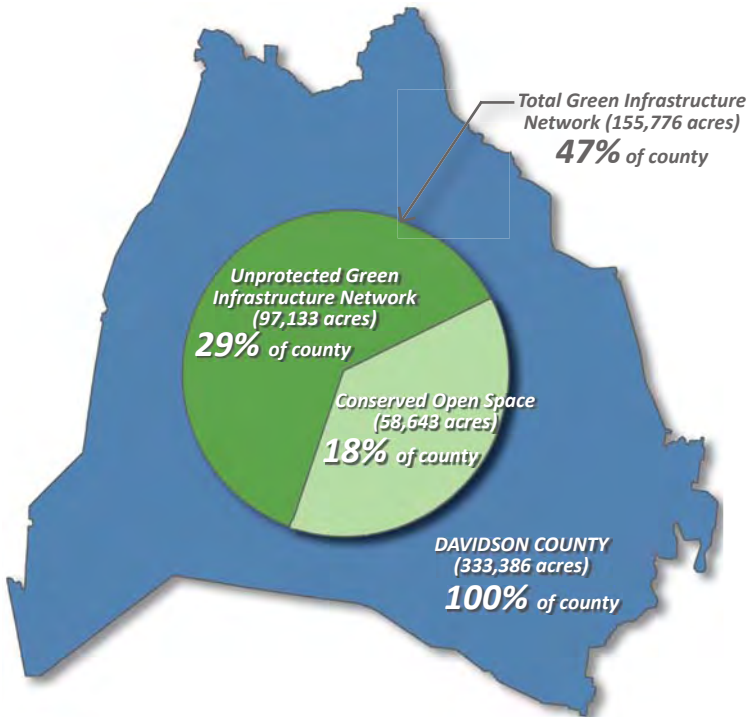


AERIAL | Davidson County

Photo Credit: Nashville Government

## INVENTORY OF LAND RESOURCES

This plan started with an inventory of Nashville’s natural resources – its green infrastructure network – to get a clear view of its current assets, understand what portion of them are currently conserved, which ones require a plan to conserve, and how they link across county lines to other natural areas.



The 97,133 acres of Unprotected Green Infrastructure is land that is currently undeveloped or partially developed, but has important conservation value (such as absorbing stormwater from a development and providing a park for a community).

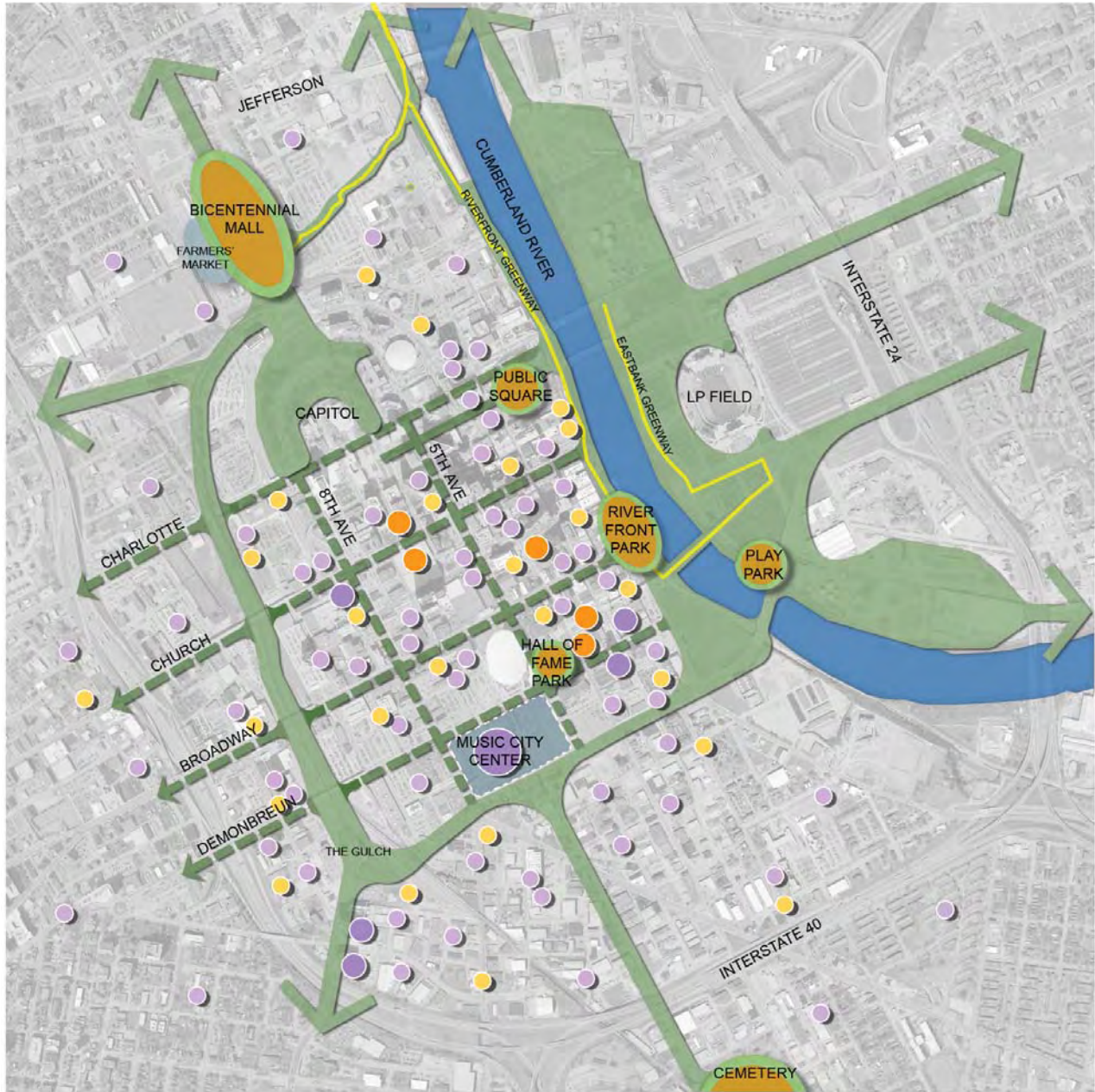
**This plan sets a protection goal of acquiring 6,000 acres of new public parks and green spaces, conserving 6,000 acres of privately protected land, and conserving an additional 10,000 acres through planning tools for a total of 22,000 acres of new conserved open space by 2035.**

**Although ambitious, this plan still leaves over 75,000 acres of our current green infrastructure network unprotected.** While some of that land is not suitable for development, Nashville has the opportunity, if not the imperative, to consider and preserve the environmental, economic, and social benefits provided by the remaining green infrastructure through best management practices and responsible development.

Not reflected in the inventory above are opportunities in developed areas (parking lots, roads, buildings) that could be restored to green space or made greener through planted medians, pervious pavement, and tree-lined streets.



# IMPORTANCE OF GREENING DOWNTOWN



## LEGEND

- Potential Pocket Park\*
- Existing Pocket Park
- Existing Green Roof
- Potential Green Roof\*
- Existing Major Open Space Asset
- Open Space Network Vision
- - - Conceptual Green Corridor\* (i.e. green street, street tree plantings, etc.)
- Existing Greenway

\*Proposed improvements are not to be site specific, intended to illustrate inclusion in "Heart of Green" Concept

*There is an imperative to make downtown a greener and more pedestrian-friendly and bike-friendly place to live and work. This concept map illustrates some of these opportunities.*



# THE IMPORTANCE OF GREENING DOWNTOWN

As Nashville: *Naturally* evolved, it became clear that “greening” the downtown area was an essential element of an open space strategy for Davidson County. Analyzing the opportunities and constraints in downtown warrants a separate project due to the complexity of the area and the many projects in process (such as the construction of the Music City Center, the development of Riverfront Park, and the creation of the Bicentennial Mall master plan, the Long Term Community Recovery Plan, and the Stormwater Management Manual).

What was evident during this process was the desire to **improve connectivity and create green corridors around and through downtown**, on which one could travel from the riverfront to the new convention center, over to the Gulch, around to Bicentennial Mall, and back to the Cumberland River. Also evident was the need for balancing significant infill development with additional parks to meet the recreational and social needs of the growing number of downtown residents and workers. Additionally, there is a need for strong green connections from downtown to the gateways of the city and beyond these gateways to existing assets like Fort Negley, the fairgrounds property, and over the river to East Nashville.



AERIAL | Downtown Nashville

Photo Credit: Gary Layda



CHURCH ST. | Downtown Nashville

Photo Credit: Gary Layda



# PUBLIC INPUT and PRIORITIES

**CONNECT** WILDLIFE AND WATER NETWORKS

**SUPPORT** URBAN AND RURAL FARMING



**CONNECT** PEOPLE TO THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

**PRESERVE** HISTORIC AND ICONIC RESOURCES



# PUBLIC INPUT

The inventory of Nashville’s critical resources conducted during the **Nashville: *Naturally*** planning process included a review of existing plans and reports and the use of GIS mapping technology. The resulting map-based inventories were presented throughout the public engagement process and updated with new information as a result of public review.

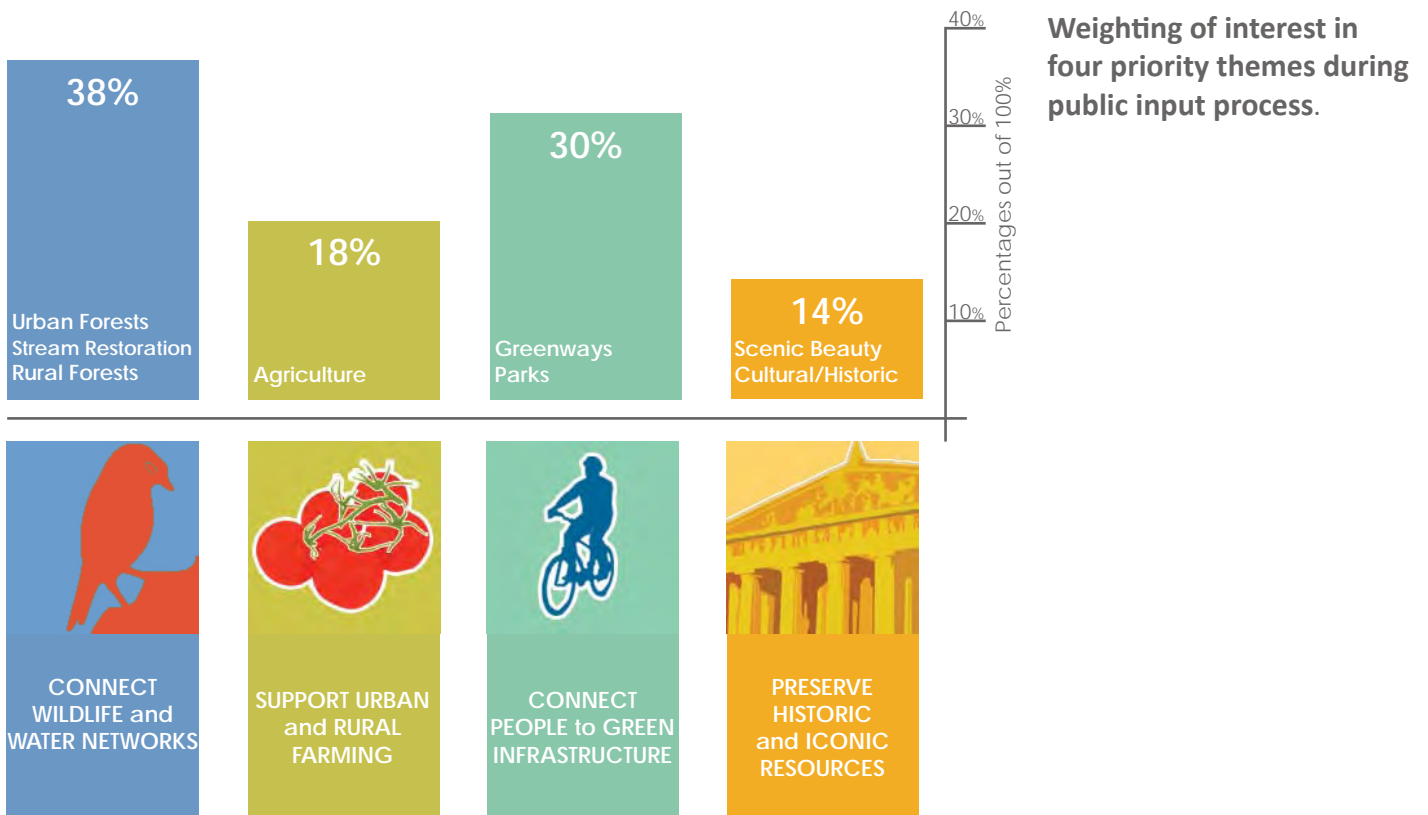
Public input was collected in a number of ways. A 31-member advisory committee, representing many of the leading organizations, institutions and governing agencies in the region, met monthly and provided guidance and input throughout the project. The Land Trust for Tennessee engaged the public through a blog site that provided periodic updates on the project and opportunities for comment. Interviews with focus groups were conducted to help understand public attitudes and potential “hot button” topics. Two public forums were held in June 2010 at Belmont University, at which residents rolled up their sleeves in small groups and outlined their open space visions on county maps. Another public forum was held that September at the Nashville Farmers’ Market, at which residents voted on the priorities that emerged throughout the process.



Photo Credit: The Conservation Fund

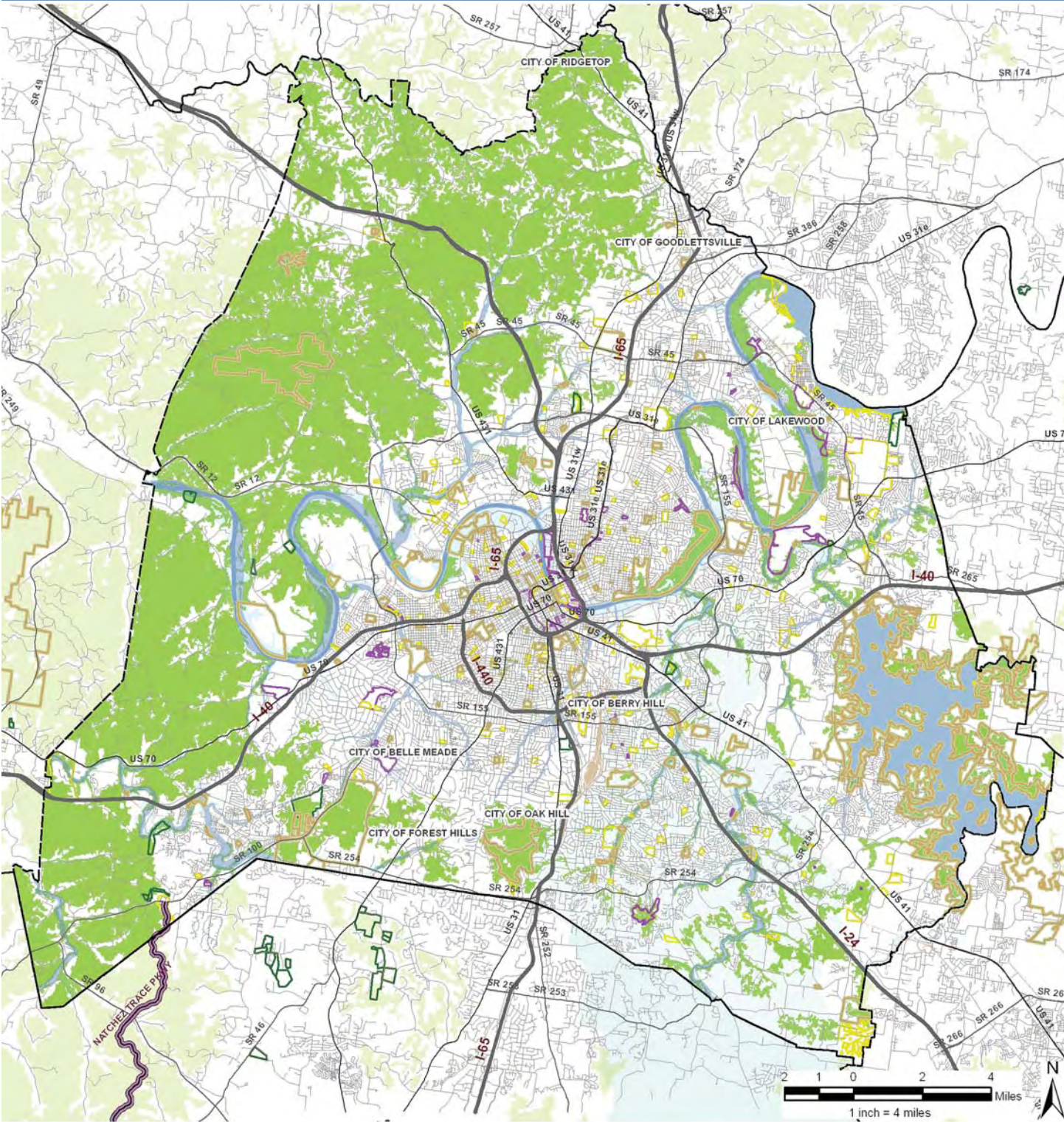
*“That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics.”*  
 — Aldo Leopold

# FOUR PRIORITY THEMES





# — CONNECT WILDLIFE and WATER NETWORKS —



## LEGEND

### References

- Davidson County - 336,386 acres
- Railroads

### Roads

- Interstates
- US Highways
- State Highways
- Other Roads
- Natchez Trace Parkway

### Public Conservation Lands

- 21,649 acres
- Land Trust Easements
- 945 acres
- Community Plan Dedicated Open Space
- 6,430 acres

### Community Plan Potential Open Space

- 2,197 acres
- Green Infrastructure Network
- 115,776 acres
- Regulated Floodway + 75 Foot Buffer
- 16,086 acres

### FEMA 100 and 500 Year Floodplain

- 38,824 acres
- Mill Creek Watershed
- Nashville Crayfish Range
- Open Water
- 13,267 acres





## CONNECT WILDLIFE AND WATER NETWORKS

**Nashville must protect its interconnected natural land and water network. It is this network that provides clean air, clean water, and significant economic, environmental, and social benefits for people and nature.**

Water quality of the Cumberland River must be improved by limiting development in the floodplain of the river and its tributaries. A comprehensive program of variable width stream buffers, stream bank restoration, reforestation, impervious surface reduction near impaired waters, and the use of cost share and floodplain easement programs should be intensified.

### Reading the Map:

The northwestern part of the county currently contains large forest blocks that provide excellent plant and animal habitat, provide income to landowners who manage the forest for timber, and clean the surrounding air and water.

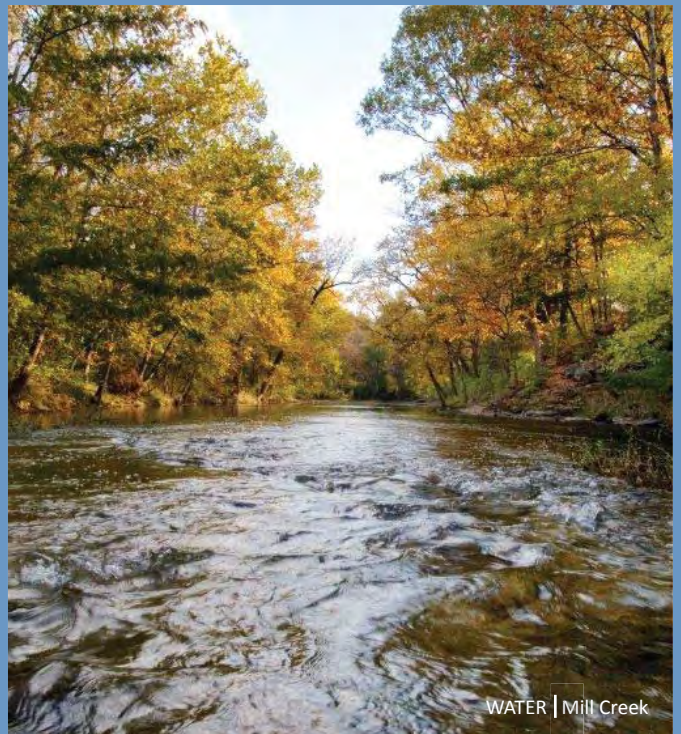
There is a conservation corridor that runs in an arc, or “C” shape, from Beaman Park through Bells Bend, through West Meade, to Warner Parks and Radnor Lake. This is a key corridor for wildlife and recreation.

The Cumberland River, the most defining feature of Davidson County, provides drinking water for all residents and provides habitat and a migration path for aquatic animals, birds and other wildlife.

The Nashville Crayfish, a federally listed endangered species lives in a highly developed area around Mill Creek. This intense development and associated pollution of the stream threaten this habitat.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- *100% of the drinking water in Davidson County comes from the Cumberland River. Land preservation along the rivers and streams is the least costly and most effective way to improve water quality.*
- *Air quality is improved and air temperatures are moderated by forest cover. Forests in the northwestern and western areas of the county are fragmenting due to sprawl.*
- *Vegetated buffers along streams remove pollutants from the water, reduce soil erosion, and protect against flash flooding by slowing down stormwater runoff.*
- *89.9% of Tennessee residents view protecting water quality in rivers and streams as extremely important according to a 2009 poll conducted by the Human Dimensions Research Lab at University of Tennessee*

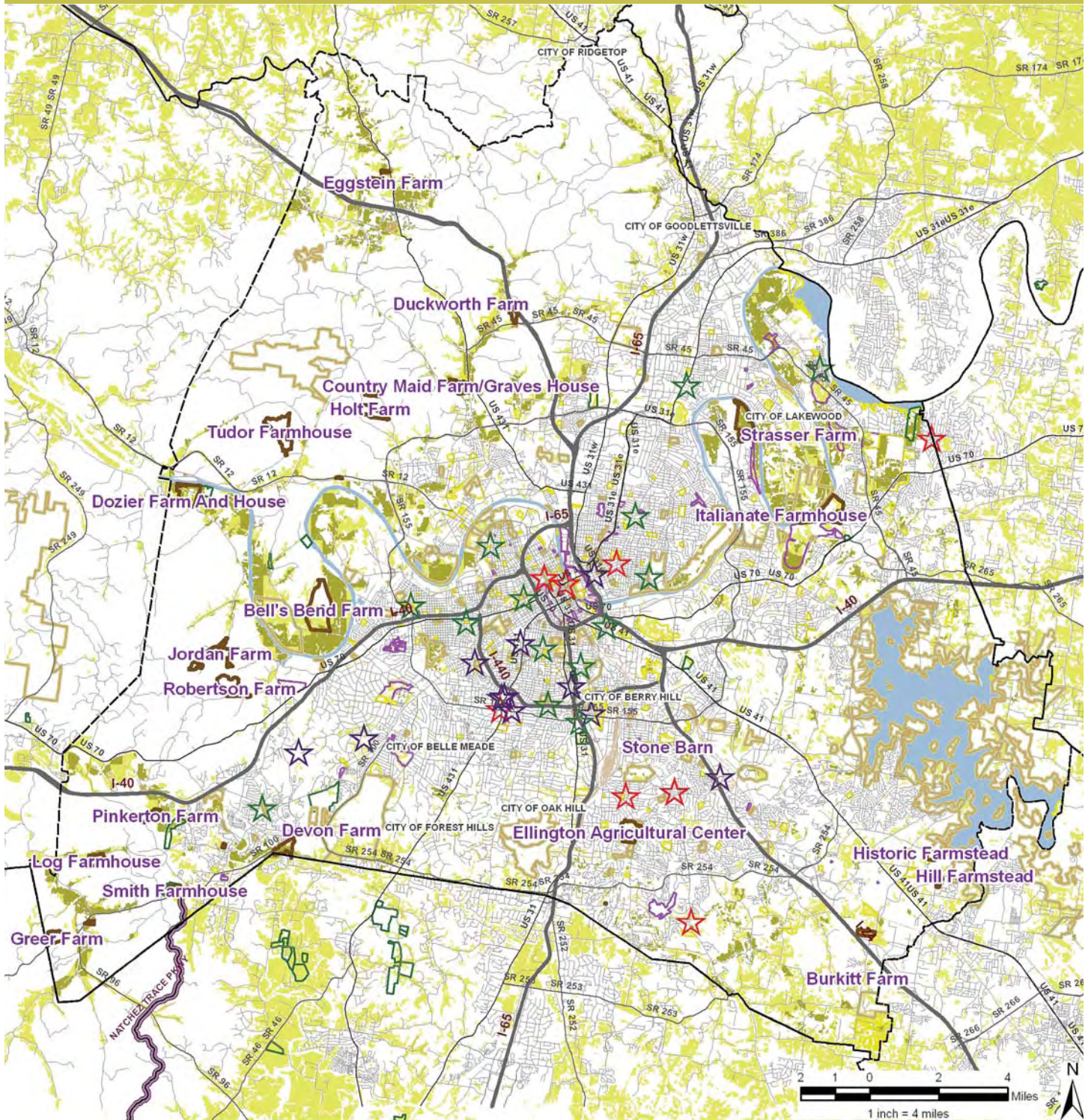


WATER | Mill Creek

Photo Credit: Nancy Rhodes



# SUPPORT URBAN and RURAL FARMING



## LEGEND

### References

- Davidson County - 336,386 acres
- Railroads

### Roads

- Interstates
- US Highways
- State Highways
- Other Roads
- Natchez Trace Parkway

### Food Assets

- Community Gardens
- Farmers' Markets
- CSA Distribution Locations

### Historic Farms

- Agricultural Land with Prime Farmland Soils
- Cultivated Crops and Pasture/Hay Land Cover
- Public Conservation Lands
- Land Trust Easements

### Community Plan Dedicated Open Space

- 6,430 acres
- Community Plan Potential Open Space
- 2,197 acres
- Open Water
- 13,267 acres





## SUPPORT URBAN and RURAL FARMING

**Nashville needs to conserve land for a sustainable, local food system. This system includes rural farms, neighborhood farms, community gardens, backyard gardens, and edible plantings on public land.**

*“Urban gardens are essential to introducing healthy food choices for Nashville.”*

— *Keith Rawls, Metro Public Health*

### Reading the Map:

The richest (prime) soils are in the bends of the Cumberland, Harpeth and Stones River. These are the areas that should be prioritized for agricultural uses.

Large farms can be found in nearly every non-urban area of the County, but these farms are disappearing or shrinking in size.

There are a handful of farms, farmers’ markets, community gardens, and community supported agriculture distribution locations in the urban part of the county. Community gardens in particular need to be better coordinated and expanded to include all neighborhoods.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- According to USDA Census data, farming in Davidson County generated over \$11.5 million in sales in 2007 and the average farm size is 80 acres.
- A 2007 initiative by the American Farmland Trust (AFT) analyzed 128 studies completed in 25 states between 1989 and 2007. They found that every dollar generated from residential development cost a community \$1.16 in services while every dollar spent on farms saved the community 63 cents.
- Community gardens provide an accessible educational opportunity for school children to learn about the environment and develop lifelong good nutrition habits.
- Nashville has three identified food deserts (places where there is little or no accessibility to healthy food): East Nashville/Cayce Homes, Edgehill, and North Nashville/Charlotte. Developing large community gardens in these areas would provide a sustainable source of fresh, healthy food.

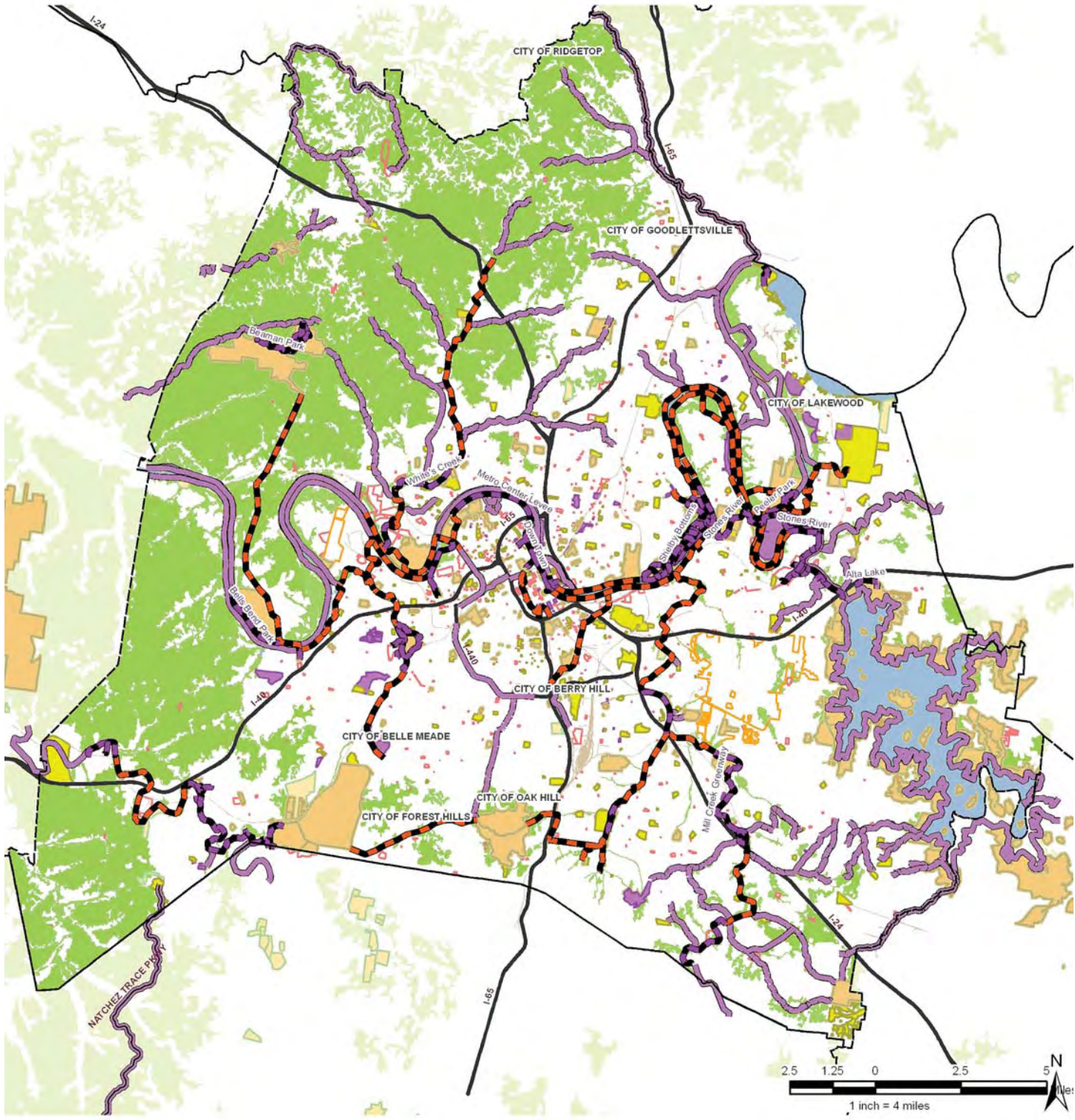


GROW | Hope Community Garden

Photo Credit: Gary Layda



# - CONNECT PEOPLE to GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE -



## LEGEND

### References

- Davidson County - 336,386 acres
- Interstates
- Natchez Trace Parkway
- Railroads

### Greenway Corridors and Trails

- Existing or Underway Greenways - 76 miles
  - Greenway Corridors for Open Space Vision - 112 miles
  - Other Greenway Corridors - 388 miles
- Green Infrastructure Network**
- 115,776 acres

### Public Conservation Lands

- 21,649 acres
- Land Trust Easements**
- 945 acres
- Community Plan Dedicated Open Space**
- 6,430 acres

### Community Plan Potential Open Space

- 2,197 acres
- Other Public Land**
- Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority
  - Metro, State, and TVA Land





## CONNECT PEOPLE TO GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Nashville should expedite development of an interconnected network of parks and greenways to promote active, healthy lifestyles, link residents to community open spaces, and provide alternatives to motor vehicle transportation.

### Reading the Map:

In addition to the 76 miles of existing or underway greenways, there are over 300 miles of potential greenway trails (identified in various local government transportation and recreation plans) based primarily along the main rivers and streams of Davidson County. Of these, there are 112 miles of planned greenway corridors that are essential to protect in order to maximize connections to adjacent neighborhoods, downtown, and anchor parks.

The community planning process has identified over 6,000 acres of existing (but not protected) open space and 2,000 acres of potential open space distributed throughout 14 community planning areas. These 8,000 acres currently are unprotected.

*“It is by riding a bicycle that you learn the contours of a country best, since you have to sweat up them and coast down them.”*

— Ernest Hemingway

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Davidson County has over 83 miles of paved trails, and 107 miles of unpaved trails.
- A 2010 research synthesis by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation concluded that, in general, urban parks, natural areas and preserved open spaces have positive effects on property values.
- A 2001 study by Lutzenhiser and Netusil found that homes in Portland, Oregon, located within 1,500 feet of open space had a higher value than those that were not. Homes near natural areas showed an average property premium of \$10,648. Homes near urban parks showed an average property premium of \$1,214.
- A 2005 Economic Impact Analysis of Chicago’s Millennium Park concluded that the park added \$1.4 billion in value to residential development in the area around the park.
- According to an article by Cornell, Lillydahl and Singell, in Boulder, Colorado, the overall value of a greenbelt (a belt of parkways, parks, or farmlands that encircles a community) was approximately \$5.4 million and contributed \$500,000 annually to neighborhood property tax revenue. With the greenbelt costing approximately \$1.5 million, the additional tax revenue would pay for the greenbelt in three years.

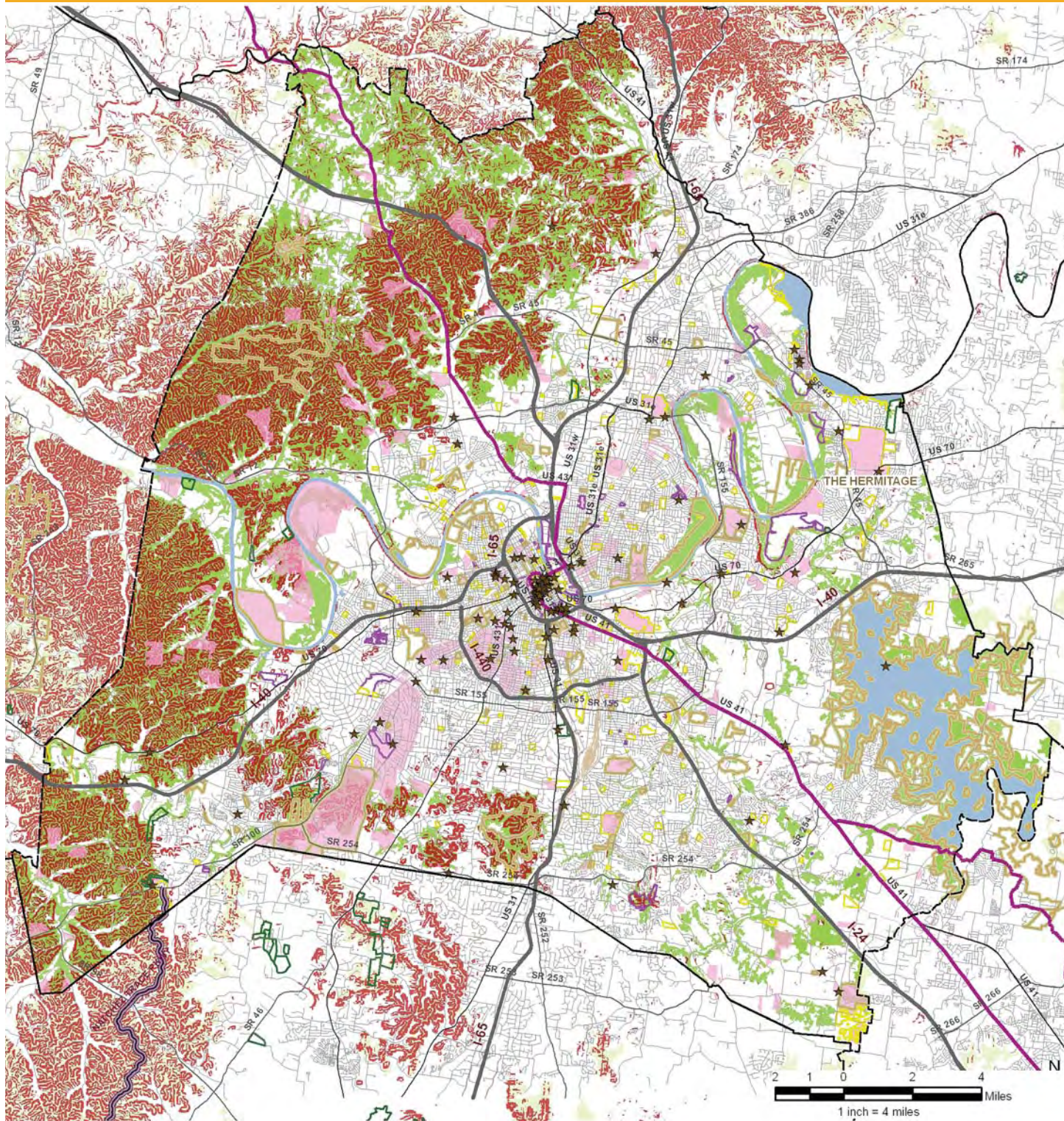


EXERCISE | Shelby Bottoms Greenway

Photo Credit: Gary Layda



# — PRESERVE HISTORIC and ICONIC RESOURCES —



## LEGEND

### References

- Davidson County - 336,386 acres
- Railroads

### Roads

- Interstates
- US Highways
- State Highways
- Other Roads

### Historic and Iconic Resources

- National Register Buildings
- Trail of Tears
- Natchez Trace Parkway
- Historical District Properties
- >25% Steep Slopes and Riverfront Bluffs

### Green Infrastructure Network

- 115,776 acres
- Public Conservation Lands
- 21,649 acres
- Land Trust Easements
- 945 acres

### Community Plan Dedicated Open Space

- 6,430 acres
- Community Plan Potential Open Space
- 2,197 acres
- Open Water
- 13,267 acres





## PRESERVE HISTORIC AND ICONIC RESOURCES

**Nashville needs to preserve the scenic and historic beauty that provides inspiration to musicians, artists, residents, and tourists. It is the context of a historic site that tells its story. Many of the most notable historic places and vistas are under development pressure.**

*“It has been said that, at its best, preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future.”*  
— William J. Murtaugh

### Reading the Map:

There are over 11,000 historic district properties in Davidson County. Of those, 109 are on the National Register of Historic Places. These are the places that tell the story of Nashville—from the prehistoric times through the founding of the city, the Civil War, all the way to the present.

Some of the most amazing vistas are from bluffs on the Cumberland River (identified in red). Most of these bluffs are not protected from development.

The Trail of Tears, the route the Cherokees followed during the fall of 1838 as part of their government-enforced removal from their eastern homeland, traverses the county from the southeast to the northwest, traveling through the downtown.

The terminus of the Natchez Trace Parkway, a 444-mile scenic and historic unit of the Federal Park system is located in southwestern Davidson County.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- An exhaustive 2001 study by Robin Leichenko, Edward Coulson and David Listokin found that local historic district designation had a positive effect on property values in seven of the nine Texas cities they studied (in the other two cities, results were inconclusive). Historic designation, they found, increased property values by 5-20 percent.
- Nashville contains 40 miles of the Trail of Tears, a National Historic Trail that is over 2,200 miles long and traverses nine states.



PARTHENON | Centennial Park

Photo Credit: Hawkins Partners, Inc.



# REALIZING THE VISION

Conservation and development are a part of Nashville's future and need to be evaluated together, not in isolation. Outlined below are policy recommendations and outreach strategies that will strengthen Nashville's open space anchors, protect its waters and critical wildlife habitats, green the downtown, and improve connectivity.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:



- Designate a department within Metro, and an individual within that department, who is responsible for identifying strategic parkland acquisitions and managing a 'Surplus to Open Space' program that analyzes and prioritizes Metro-owned and distressed properties for open space conservation. This individual should coordinate with The Land Trust for Tennessee and other applicable private organizations on broader open space conservation efforts.
- By 2012, designate a full time Metro staff person to develop and manage an urban forestry program (to manage urban tree planning, planting and maintenance as well as work to improve tree ordinance enforcement and coordination with non-profit tree groups such as the Nashville Tree Foundation, Trees Nashville, and the Tennessee Urban Forestry Council).
- Integrate Metro department activities related to forest and water resource protection issues, specifically tree planting and maintenance, community parks and gardens, public works streetscape improvements and parks and greenways planning.
- Create incentives to encourage best stormwater management practices through green infrastructure on private properties.
- Educate landowners on best management practices for their lands. Promote the use of incentive programs, such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Conservation Reserve Program, to reward private landowners for sound environmental management.
- Establish a stronger variable stream buffer and no adverse impact policy to protect against future flood hazards and to protect and enhance water quality.
- Create an overlay zone for the Mill Creek watershed for the enhanced protection of the Nashville Crayfish based on a variable 100-foot buffer. Impervious surfaces, floodplains, wetlands and extreme slopes above 25% should not count against buffer width, with certain exceptions for existing development. Encourage Williamson County to adopt this Mill Creek Watershed overlay or similar regulations.
- Require all wetland impacts that occur in Davidson County to be mitigated in suitable areas in Davidson County that are identified directly or through a mitigation bank.





## *SUPPORT URBAN AND RURAL FARMING*

- Develop and manage an urban agriculture program that integrates various Metro departments and private initiatives. This program should emphasize community gardens and neighborhood parks in high-need and high-demand areas. An advisory group from the private sector should be developed in conjunction with this program.
- Establish community gardens on suitable public vacant or right of way land throughout Nashville's neighborhoods.
- Establish a process and criteria for enabling public property subleases for farming where appropriate.
- Create an agricultural overlay district for selected prime soil areas where farming currently occurs, such as Bells Bend and Pennington Bend.
- Conservation organizations should prioritize large tracts and economically viable agricultural lands for purchases or donations of development rights.



## *CONNECT PEOPLE TO GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE*

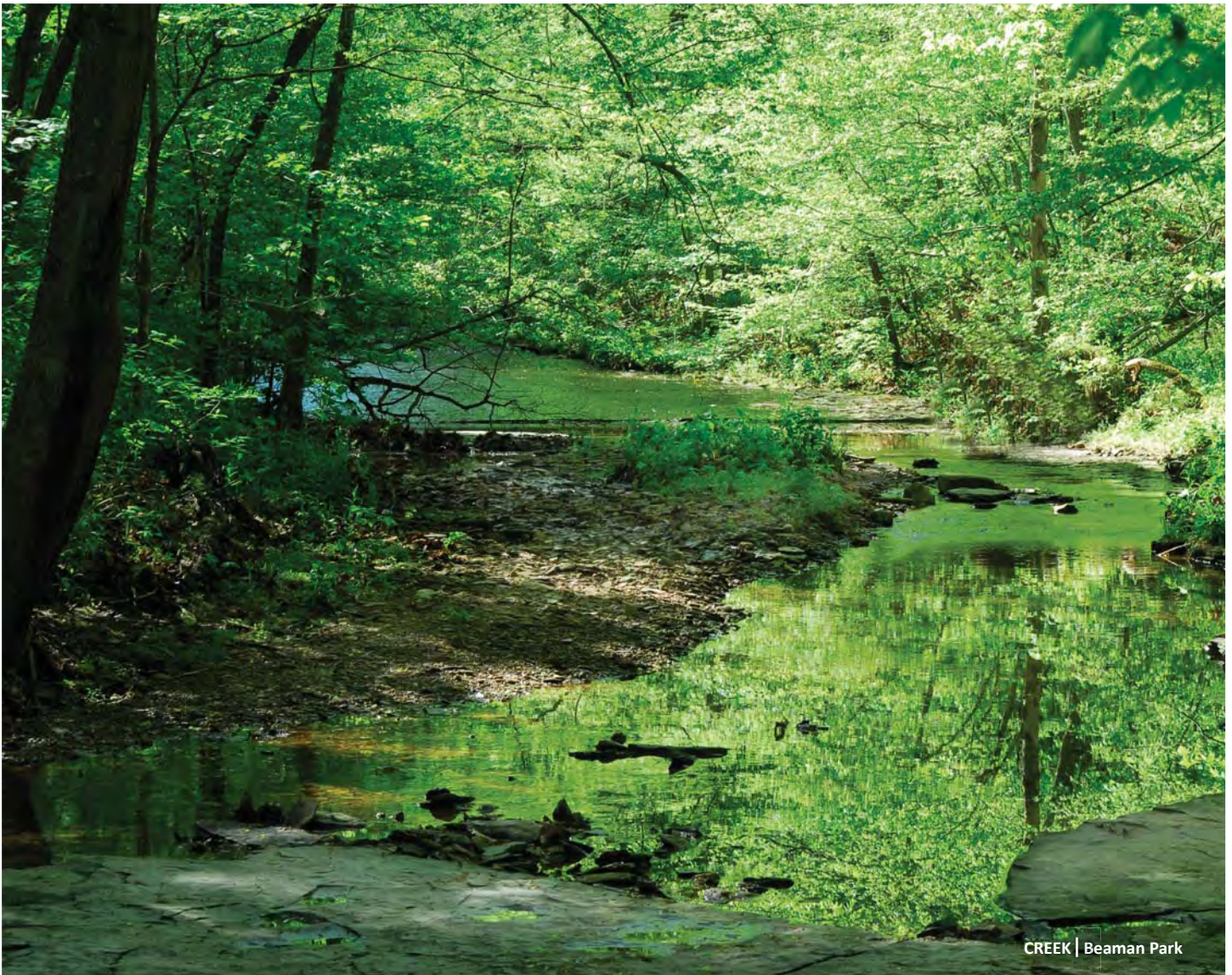
- Establish a No Net Loss of Open Space policy for Metro Park lands by 2012.
- Enact a conservation subdivision by right ordinance by 2012.
- Make effort regularly to replenish the Metro Open Space Fund (currently at \$5 million).
- Aim to leverage all Metro open space investments with federal, state, and private dollars.
- The Land Trust should establish an open space fund – working with other land conservation organizations and the philanthropic community – to facilitate strategic land acquisitions and conservation easements.
- Expand the riverfront revitalization project beyond downtown to include the entire river. Encourage Sumner and Cheatham counties to create similar projects that link to Davidson County's Plan.
- Recommend a regional open space plan to the Mayor's Caucus that would link natural and cultural areas and align future development plans.
- Explore sustainable open space funding and incentive programs, such as a development project fee that could be offset by the creation of green space, including green roofs in dense urban areas.
- Explore a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program that identifies appropriate receiving areas first.
- Implement the existing greenways master plan, adopted community planned greenways and parks, and new greenways identified as part of the open space planning process as funds become available.





## *PRESERVE HISTORIC AND ICONIC RESOURCES*

- Complete a Scenic Resource Inventory through the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission and integrate into the existing historic site inventory.
- Install way-finding signage linked to the Trail of Tears, a Civil War trail or other county-wide cultural trail.
- Expand historic resource protection priorities to include iconic landmarks and landscapes and protect them through voluntary land acquisition, conservation easements and designation as local historic districts.
- Create incentives for protection of properties that have received local designation through the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission. Identify other funding mechanisms for preserving historic places, especially as they relate to civil war sites, national landmarks, and federal and state parks.



CREEK | Beaman Park

Photo Credit: Gary Layda



# ABOUT THE PROJECT

After a competitive national search, The Conservation Fund, in partnership with ACP Visioning+Planning, Hawkins Partners, Inc. and Clarion Associates, was selected as the project team. This project, called Nashville: *Naturally*, had three major phases of public involvement.

## GENERATIVE PHASE

Existing plans and reports were reviewed and mapping information was collected to ensure this project built upon the work completed by earlier initiatives. The Land Trust for Tennessee formed a 31-member advisory committee, representing many of the leading organizations, institutions and governing agencies in the region. The advisory committee met monthly and provided guidance and input throughout the entire project.

In March 2010, interviews with focus groups were conducted to help understand public attitudes and potential “hot button” topics. To help engage with the public throughout the planning process, The Land Trust for Tennessee maintained a blog site, providing periodic updates on the project and opportunities for comment.

## ANALYTICAL PHASE

Engaging the public in a robust and rigorous dialogue over the future direction of development and conservation was the main goal of this stage of the planning process. With help from the public and local experts, the Conservation Fund compiled an inventory of critical natural and cultural resources. These map-based inventories were used throughout the public engagement process and updated with new information as a result of public review.

In June 2010, one month after Nashville’s historic flood, residents came together for two public forums held at Belmont University. Participants heard presentations on the role of nature-based tourism, how Nashville can diversify its tourism sector to be more resilient, and how green infrastructure provides services to local communities. Facilitated small groups addressed six key topics on the future of Davidson County over the next 50 to 100 years. After recording their overarching goals, definitions and criteria, participants rolled up their sleeves and outlined their vision on county maps. The four priority themes discussed on page 16 came out of the June public forums and subsequently were adopted to guide the **Nashville: *Naturally*** project.

Following the June public forums, The Conservation Fund mapped Nashville’s green infrastructure network. This science-based planning method used the latest peer-reviewed literature, principles of landscape ecology, conservation biology and wildlife management.

## DELIBERATIVE PHASE

In September, the green infrastructure network was unveiled at the Market Place of Ideas public forum at the Farmers’ Market. Preliminary implementation ideas were outlined for the four themes.

After hearing a short presentation, attendees circulated around four stations, asking questions of the project team and advisory committee members, providing their thoughts on implementation, and pledging their support.

Based on the research and public input received, a series of recommendations and technical reports were created to provide an implementation quilt, which is available at [www.nashvilleopenspace.wordpress.com](http://www.nashvilleopenspace.wordpress.com). These reports detail how government programs, nonprofit organizations, and local institutions can, with modest adjustments to their existing programs, implement this Open Space Plan in the course of pursuing their own missions.



INPUT | Farmer's Market

Photo Credit: The Conservation Fund





Photo Credit: Gary Layda



Photo Credit: Gary Layda



Photo Credit: Gary Layda



Photo Credit: Hawkins Partners, Inc.

*Music City is known for innovation and creativity. Together the private and public sectors can implement these recommendations and make Nashville a greener, healthier, more prosperous place to work, live and visit.*

WE ARE **NASHVILLE: NATURALLY**