



Nashville, TN's historic pikes converge in Downtown.
Image source: NCDC

Reforming the Pikes: Streets that Move Cars and Create Great Places

Over the past 50 years, Nashville's Historic Pikes have passed through three stages: from multimodal mixed-use corridors, to high-speed, single-mode commercial arteries, to roads characterized by excess vehicle capacity and decayed and underutilized low density commercial buildings. We have tried to make these roads carry heavy traffic, yet zoned them almost entirely commercial. These goals work in opposition to each other.

Places and markets change. The belief that the commercial-only arterial is best must be rethought in favor of concentrated commercial nodes linked by higher density mixed-use corridors. There is much more property along our arterials zoned for commercial use than can be economically sustained.

An important challenge of *The Plan of Nashville* is to recapture Nashville's historic pikes-turned-arterials as the means to link and enhance all elements of the city. To reestablish our traditional pikes as great corridors we must do nothing more—or less—than apply the lessons of urban avenues and boulevards.

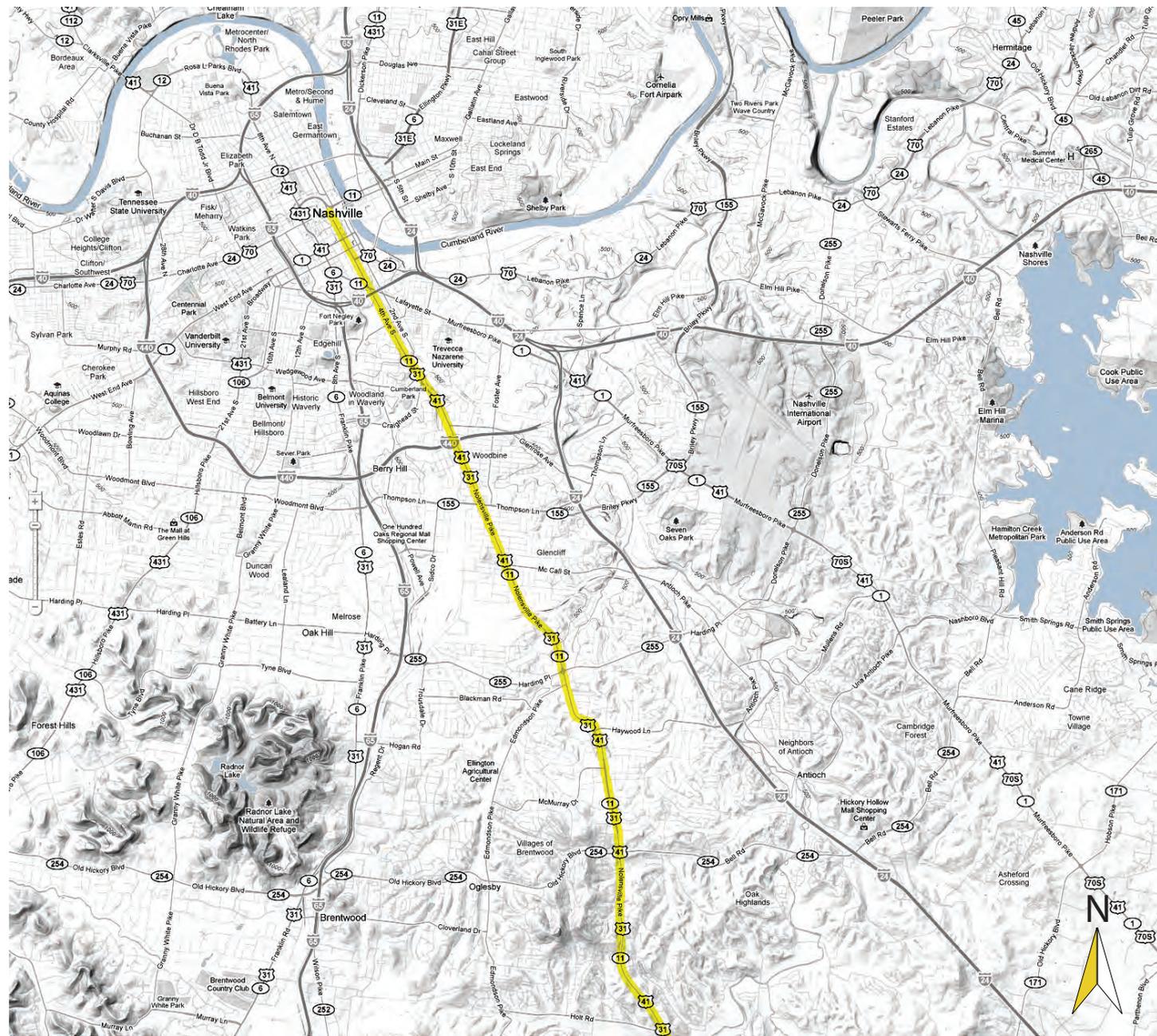
Great streets—such as King Street in Charleston, Mulberry Street in Boston, Washington Avenue in Miami, St. Charles

Avenue in New Orleans and even Second Avenue in downtown—are great places. Nashville currently has few great streets, and none of them are our major arterials. But all have the potential to become pleasant to drive on and, more importantly, reward pedestrian traffic.

Nashville's urban form was at one time seamlessly integrated with its pikes and avenues. They provided the means of commerce, communication, and community structure. The city's major streets were the conduit for walkers, streetcars, and automobiles and reflected the diverse urban experience. Our objective is to recapture that balance.

Rick Bernhardt, FAICP, CNU
Executive Director
Metropolitan Planning Department

-Excerpted from *The Plan of Nashville: Avenues to a Great City*



Nolen'sville Pike Case study extents. Image source © 2011 Google + NCDC

Healing the Historic Pikes of Nashville

The Plan of Nashville chapter entitled “Nashville and its Region: Making Connections” explored the concept of healing the historic pikes by coordinating land use and transportation planning policies. The article “Reforming the Arterials: Streets That Move Cars and Create Great Places” describes the effort of revitalizing the historic pikes as “the means to link and enhance all elements of the city. The following bulleted points outline the process of Healing the Pikes:

- Use a participatory process to develop a public consensus as to the redevelopment potential of individual corridors.
- Identify important commercial nodes. At these nodes create places where people feel comfortable, by slowing traffic and providing interesting uses and convenient access.
- Intensify the development flanking our corridors with increased residential and office activity connected with appropriate pedestrian linkages and mass transit service.
- Develop a plan that, in addition to recommending land uses, provides clear visual examples of how to enhance the physical environment through properly placed and scaled buildings, properly located parking, efficient access, and easy way finding.
- Develop strategies for the arterial street system that provide

for motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and mass transit with equal attention. Buildings placed next to the sidewalk, with direct pedestrian access from the primary street, encourage walking. Parking located to the rear shields the undesirable appearance of parking lots while leaving the street available for more interesting building frontage. The network functions best with few vehicular access points or curb cuts—except from alleys or lanes to parking in the rear—and short blocks (600 feet max, preferably 400 feet) with properly signaled intersections.

- Make it easy for builders and developers to do the right thing. All too often, developers support the vision of the community discussed above and would develop in ways that are pedestrian-friendly and supportive of transit use. But time is money. Unless the development review system is redesigned to speed up the process of obtaining permits for projects such as the community envisions, developers are forced to revert to previous building patterns because they cannot wait for more flexibility.

This study uses Nolensville Pike as an initial case study. Nolensville Pike is ideal as an initial study area because it has recently been the focus of several additional studies including: The Metropolitan Planning Department’s *Nolensville Road Corridor Study*, The Urban Land Institute’s Daniel Rose Fellowship *Corridor Economic Development Study*, as well as the Nashville Civic Design Center’s *Report on the public meetings, findings and recommendations for the future use of the TN State Fairgrounds*.



NW Naito Pkwy, Portland, OR. Image source: NCDC

Importance of Precedent

Studying projects in peer cities should play a major role in the design process, particularly when their successes can be directly related to a specific project(s) initiated by local governments. Peer cities of Nashville that have implemented successful projects in mixed-use development, complete streets, pedestrian connections and light rail include: Charlotte, NC; Denver, CO; Austin, TX; and Portland, OR.



New mixed-use development 12th & Paris Ave in the 12South Neighborhood.
Image source: NCDC

Mixed-Use Redevelopment

Throughout Nashville many new developments are emerging within historic urban neighborhoods. Many of these new projects are located along the main arterial streets and feature retail and commercial on the ground level with residential above.

One example can be found in the 12South Neighborhood at 12th and Paris Avenues. The project was built within close proximity to the street, offers on-street parking, a variety of shopping opportunities, pedestrian spaces for outdoor dining and socializing and beautiful landscaping.



Deaderick Street in Downtown Nashville, TN's first "Green Street."
Image source: NCDC

Complete Streets

A complete streets policy helps ensure that users of all ages and types are adequately provided for, not just vehicular traffic. Sustainability is also an underlying consideration.

Deaderick Street, in downtown Nashville, was Tennessee's first "green street," incorporating sustainable elements such as porous pavement, locally manufactured tree grates, infiltration zones/bioswales, LED lighting, recycled materials, native plants and high-efficiency irrigation systems.

On October 7th, 2010, Mayor Karl Dean signed an Executive Order mandating a complete streets approach in the city of Nashville. Future redevelopment efforts along Nashville's historic pikes will benefit from policies that will transform the streetscape.



Pedestrian Bridge, Portland, OR. Image source: NCDCC

Pedestrian Connections

How one gets from their home to a place of business or leisure should not be an afterthought in the design development process.

Pedestrian connections are primarily provided through the use of sidewalks and greenways. Many cities include pedestrian-only zones dedicated to walking and biking. Pedestrian access from neighborhoods to arterial corridors must be carefully considered as well. In Nashville, the greenway system will become increasingly useful in linking the historic pikes.

In Portland, OR, a pedestrian bridge links two sides of a development that is divided by rail corridors. Each end of the bridge opens onto a small pedestrian plaza that leads to the main road.



Tanner Springs Park, Portland, OR. Image source: NCDC

Greenfill

As urban infill development becomes more common, it is crucial that consideration for new green/open space plays a role in linking people to places. New parks, open/green fields, and natural habitats allow for leisure and recreation activities for new and existing residents—all qualities of a livable community. Recent efforts in Nashville include the *Nashville Naturally* open space planning process and the Tree Canopy Assessment.



Existing conditions along Nolensville Pike, Nashville, TN.
All images above by NCDC

Nolensville Pike

South Nashville’s concentration of office, commercial, industrial and parking uses creates a situation fairly unique in Nashville/Davidson County, what is called “jobs/ housing balance,” where there is significant employment in close proximity to residences. Office, commercial and industrial uses make up 38 percent of the land, while residential use represents 35 percent of land use. The remaining land is 17 percent community services and open space, and 8 percent vacant land. The result is that residents of South Nashville have more opportunities than most Nashvillians to live and work in the same community. In addition to lessening commuting times, this creates a unique sense of investment in the community. There is a diversity of housing types and settings in South Nashville, although on a smaller spectrum than the rest of Davidson County. Inner-ring neighborhoods such as Wedgewood-Houston, Chestnut Hill and Woodbine provide urban housing options, while Glencliff Estates, Patricia Heights, Raymond Heights, and others offer a more suburban setting. South Nashville residents are strongly committed to preserving the character of existing neighborhoods while providing additional housing options, primarily along corridors such as Nolensville Pike, to attract more businesses.

– South Nashville Community Plan



Public charrettes visioning areas along Nolensville Pike.
Image source: NCDC

“Give us clear vision that we may know where to stand and what to stand for—because unless we stand for something we shall fall for anything”

-Peter Marshall

A Vision for Nolensville Pike

No longer can our communities continue the same development patterns of the recent past. Sprawl brings a burden of cost and maintenance for the private sector, and especially for city governments. It leads to increased air pollution and makes service by public transit inefficient. It devours open space and creates congested roads and highways.

Recent trends of suburban migration to urban areas are forecast to continue and grow. Open spaces are now considered precious, as cities seek to maintain what is left of their natural resources. As cities look to where to grow in the future, they will be forced to look back to the underutilized commercial corridors as opportunities for development and growth. Investments in these corridors just makes sense.

A URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

4th Ave and 2nd Ave merge to create Nolensville Pike – an area in great need of improvement. Devastated from the May 2010 flood, the sites flanking this arterial street have potential to become a new gateway for the surrounding community.

B COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Businesses, residential neighborhoods and destination sites surround the intersection of Nolensville Pike and Harding Place. A change in the development patterns could transform this area into a more enjoyable town center.

B COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

Much like Harding Place, the intersection of Old Hickory Blvd and Nolensville Pike has many crucial assets to support the groundwork for new mixed-use development, creating a denser and more pedestrian-friendly environment.

C SUBURBAN CENTERS

Lenox Village presents a hopeful step towards higher density residential communities, with some small retail and commercial development. Its success should serve as the framework for future suburban developments.



Image source © 2011 Google + NCDC

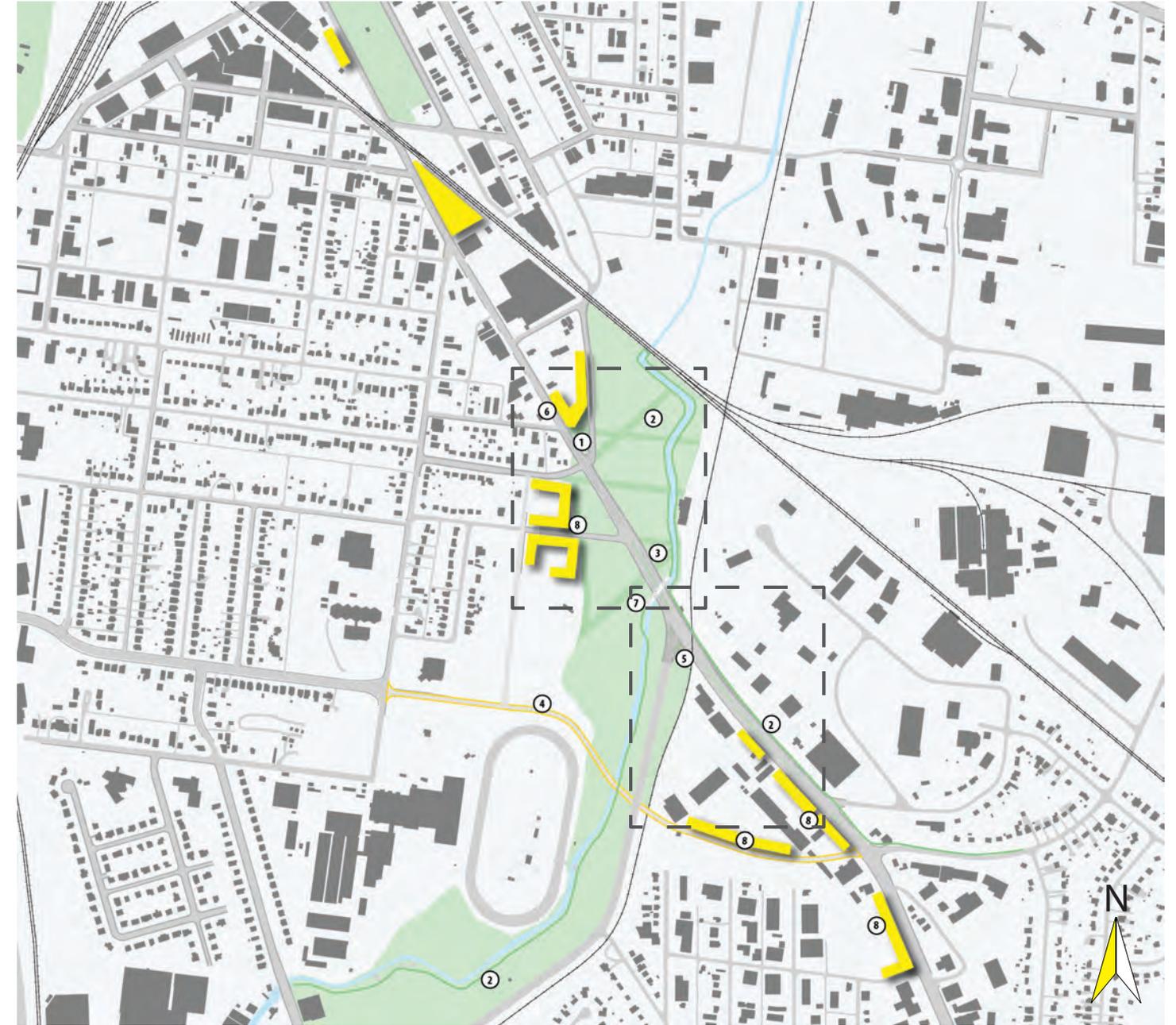


Urban Neighborhood

Nolensville Pike diverges at the point where 4th Ave. S. and 2nd Ave. S. meet, creating two one-way thoroughfares. The sites surrounding this split are underdeveloped and provide poor access for pedestrians. Much of this area had major damage from the 2010 flood, and redevelopment could include the Tennessee State Fairgrounds site. This corridor gives precedence to the automobile, providing little to no emphasis on the pedestrian. The businesses operating here are small, and were developed using conventional auto-centric standards for placement – parking lots separating sidewalks from building facades. The deteriorating sidewalks and lack of proper streetscaping create a blighted environment.

Photograph looking north at 4th Ave + 2nd Ave split.
Image source: NCDC

- 1 1-WAY TO 2-WAY STREET
 - 2 NEW GREENWAY+PARK
 - 3 COMMUNITY GATEWAY
 - 4 STREET REALIGNMENT
 - 5 CALMING INTERSECTIONS
 - 6 TREE LINED MEDIANS
 - 7 PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
 - 8 INFILL DEVELOPMENT
- [ENLARGED PLANS
SEE PG 242-243]



Conceptual Plan of a new Wedgewood extension and intersection.
Image source: NCDC



Enlarged Plan showing new development, new park and greenway, and realignment of the streets to eliminate the one-way traffic split. Image source: NCDC



Enlarged Plan showing new development, adaptive reuse, and proposed new greenway. Image source: NCDC

Urban Neighborhood

The point where 2nd Ave. S. and 4th Ave. S. come together is a highly prominent site that could be developed into a new urban neighborhood center. This plan proposes reconfiguring both avenues to two-way traffic. The site's access to major roads, public transit, the redeveloped Fairgrounds, new parks and greenways connections, as well as the existing surrounding neighborhoods would make it highly desirable for businesses, retailers and residents.

- 1 LACK OF STREET CALMING
- 2 FLOODPLAIN PROPERTY
- 3 POOR PEDESTRIAN ACCESS
- 4 CLUTTERED UTILITIES
- 5 INADEQUATE SIDEWALKS



BEFORE

Existing view of 4th + 2nd Ave split. Image source: NCDC

- 1 STREET REALIGNMENT
- 2 NEW GREENWAY+PARK
- 3 PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
- 4 BURIED UTILITIES
- 5 TREE LINED SIDEWALK
- 6 MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT
- 7 DEDICATED BICYCLE LANE
- 8 TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE
- 9 BIORETENTION



AFTER

Rendering of a potential scenario for the 4th Ave + 2nd Ave split. Image source: NCDC

Urban Neighborhood Gateway

The area adjacent to the TN State Fairgrounds and Brown's Creek, in particular, experienced severe flooding in May 2010. As a part of the city's efforts to prevent future flooding, the land located across Nolensville Pike from the Fairgrounds (seen in left of the existing photo) was purchased and can be converted into open space, connecting a 40 acre Fairgrounds Park and a restored Brown's Creek.

- 1 LACK OF STREETSCAPING
- 2 SPACE FOR BIKE LANES
- 3 POOR PEDESTRIAN ACCESS
- 4 CLUTTERED UTILITIES
- 5 FLOODPLAIN PROPERTY



BEFORE

Existing view of the main entrance to the TN State Fairgrounds site.
Image source: NCDC

- 1 TREE LINED MEDIANS
- 2 DEDICATED BICYCLE LANE
- 3 PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
- 4 BURIED UTILITIES
- 5 NEW GREENWAY+PARK
- 6 IMPROVED SIDEWALKS
- 7 COMMUNITY GATEWAY
- 8 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE



AFTER

Rendering of a potential scenario for the Community Gateway site.
Image source: NCDC

- 1 LACK OF STREETSCAPING
- 2 SPACE FOR BIKE LANES
- 3 POOR PEDESTRIAN ACCESS
- 4 CLUTTERED UTILITIES
- 5 SINGLE USE DEVELOPMENT

New Infill + Adaptive Reuse

Commercial corridors often have existing buildings that are worthy of renovation and reuse. These buildings help maintain some of the historic character of the streetscape while combining well with new construction, and reusing structures is inherently environmentally friendly. Existing structures can also be expanded with new construction along the fronts, bringing them closer to the street edge. Examples of adaptive reuse projects can be found throughout Nashville's growing urban neighborhoods.

- 1 TREE LINED MEDIANS
- 2 DEDICATED BICYCLE LANE
- 3 PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
- 4 BURIED UTILITIES
- 5 INFILL DEVELOPMENT
- 6 COMMUNITY GATEWAY
- 7 NEW GREENWAY+PARK
- 8 PARALLEL PARKING



Existing view of area south of Craighead St. Image source: NCDC



Rendering of a potential scenario for the area south of Craighead St. Image source: NCDC



Photograph looking south on Nolensville Pike at Wal-Mart.
Image source: NCDC

Commercial Corridors

At the Harding Place intersection, Nolensville Pike becomes an oversized arterial street, further emphasizing the automobile and leaving very little room for pedestrians. Some transit infrastructure is in place, however the connections to and from bus shelters and transit stops proves to be difficult for riders to access. Development along this section of Nolensville has transitioned from the original functions, now providing various services dissimilar to the initial uses. Several “big-box” retail stores exist here, each equipped with oversized parking lots, set far back from the road and sidewalks.

- 1 TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE
 - 2 NEW GREENWAY+PARK
 - 3 INFILL ADAPTIVE REUSE
 - 4 INFILL NEW DEVELOPMENT
 - 5 CALMING INTERSECTIONS
 - 6 TREE-LINED SIDEWALKS
 - 7 PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
- ENLARGED PLANS
SEE PG 254-255



Conceptual Plan of the Harding Place intersection. Image source: NCDC



Commercial Corridors

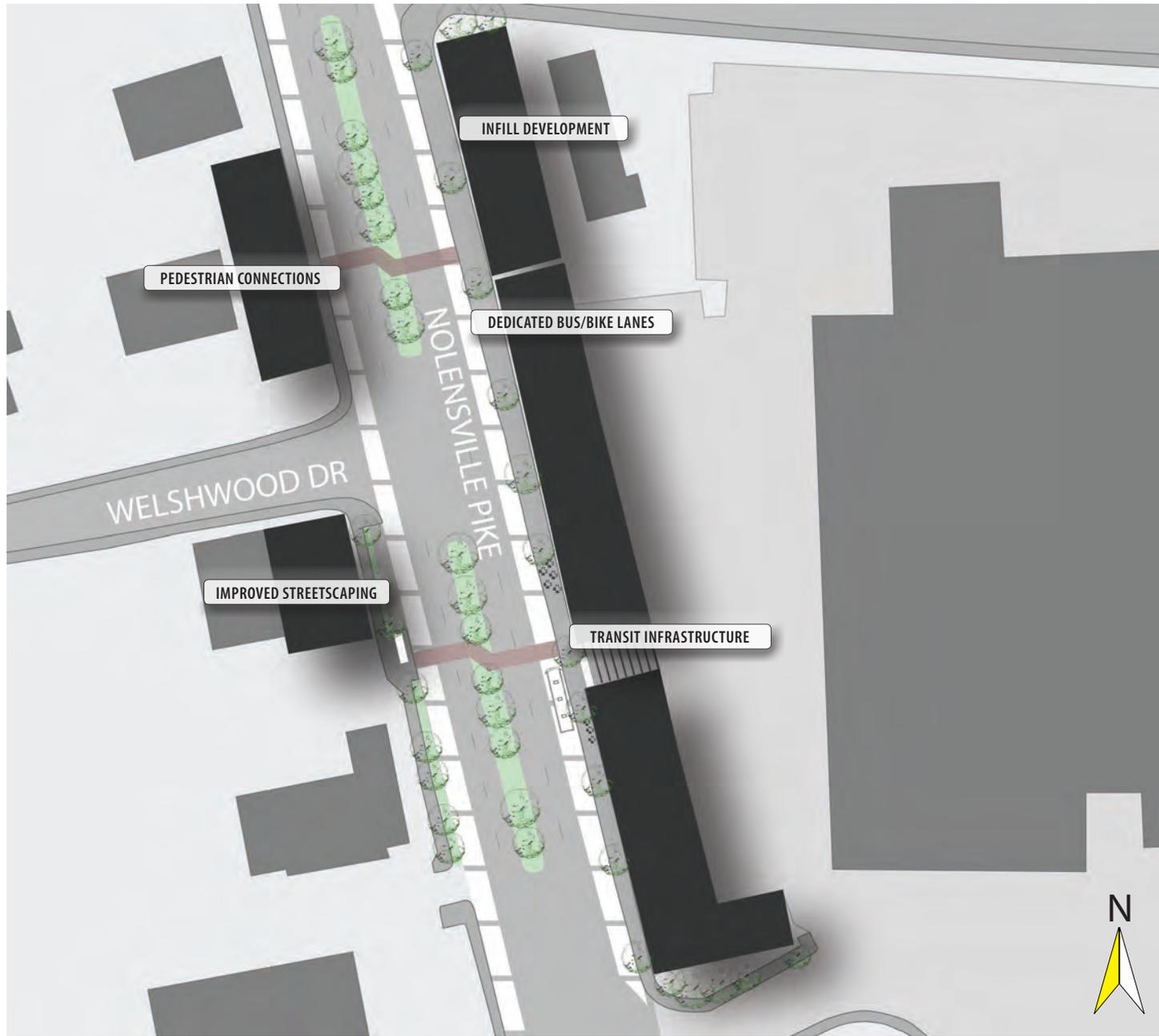
With many similar characteristics to the Harding Place intersection, the area around Old Hickory Blvd and Nolensville Pike shows fewer signs of transition of uses, and a higher level of economic prosperity. Three large “big-box” retail stores, strip malls and stand alone facilities occupy sites within a close proximity of the site. As with Harding Place, prominence is given to vehicular traffic. Sidewalks are present, in most cases, however crosswalks occur only at major intersections. Many apartment buildings and condominiums outline the area, with single-family suburban cul-de-sac developments beyond.

Photograph looking north on Nolensville Pike at Old Hickory Blvd.
Image source: NCDC

- 1 TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE
- 2 GREENWAY CONNECTION
- 3 INFILL ADAPTIVE REUSE
- 4 NEW INFILL DEVELOPMENT
- 5 CALMING INTERSECTIONS
- 6 TREE-LINED SIDEWALKS
- 7 PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS



Conceptual Plan of the Old Hickory Blvd intersection. Image source: NCDC



Enlarged Plan showing infill development along Nolensville Pike, utilizing unused property on "big box" site. Image source: NCDC



Enlarged Plan showing changes to the Harding Place intersection, incorporating traffic calming techniques and improved pedestrian connections. Image source: NCDC

Completing the Street

Transitioning from conventional development practices to those incorporating mixed-uses and complete streets will require city leadership, community support and political will. Changes in zoning policies, improved transit infrastructure and most importantly, the mind-set of drivers, shoppers and residents towards acceptance of higher density structures, are all critical in creating walkable, bikeable, pedestrian friendly and economically vibrant commercial corridors.

- 1 LACK OF STREETSCAPING
- 2 SPACE FOR TRANSIT LANE
- 3 POOR PEDESTRIAN ACCESS
- 4 CLUTTERED UTILITIES
- 5 SINGLE USE DEVELOPMENT



Existing view of area north of Harding Place intersection.
Image source: NCDC

- 1 TREE-LINED MEDIAN
- 2 DEDICATED TRANSIT LANE
- 3 PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
- 4 BURIED UTILITIES
- 5 INFILL DEVELOPMENT
- 6 TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE
- 7 OUTDOOR SEATING



Rendering of a potential scenario for infill development occurring near the Harding Place intersection. Image source: NCDC



Suburban Centers

Beyond the conventionally sprawling developments around Old Hickory Blvd two very different faces of new development flank Nolensville Pike. One is the conventional “asphalt islands” approach (buildings surrounded by parking on all four sides), the other with development that fronts the sidewalk and parking located in the rear. This new type of development – focused on higher density, walkable neighborhoods – is known as Lenox Village.

It is clear from these two examples (located across the street from one another) the importance consistency among development types plays in the functionality of a place. When planning policy does not dictate the form, proximities, pedestrian access, or vehicular control, the pedestrian suffers in the equation.

- 1 TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE
- 2 GREENWAY CONNECTION
- 3 INFILL ADAPTIVE REUSE
- 4 NEW INFILL DEVELOPMENT
- 5 CALMING INTERSECTIONS
- 6 TREE-LINED SIDEWALKS
- 7 PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS



Conceptual Plan of Lenox Village area. Image source: NCDC



COMMUNITY SPACE



RETAIL ON SIDEWALK



PEDESTRIAN-ONLY SPACES



PARKING STRUCTURE



MIXED USE



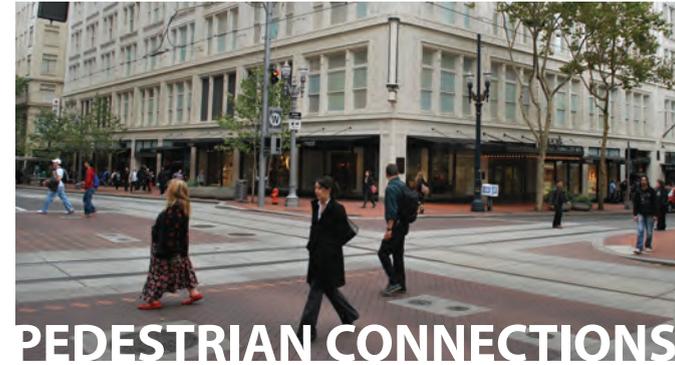
View of recently completed development in Lenox Village.
Image source: NCDC



COMPLETE STREETS



TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE



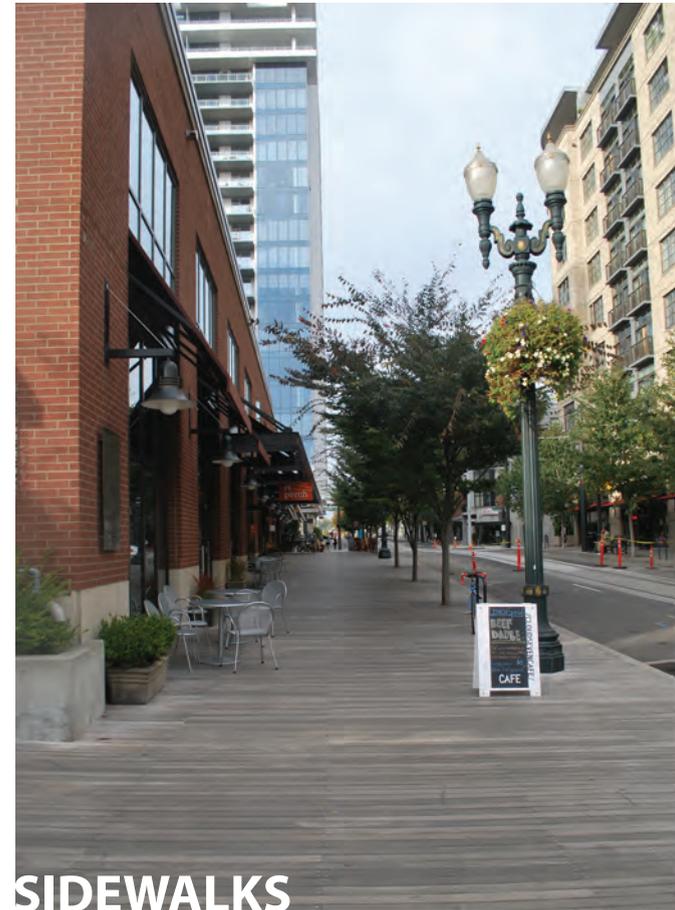
PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS



GREENWAY NETWORK



MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT



SIDEWALKS



SUSTAINABILITY



BIKING AS COMMUTING

Toolbox

The components that create successful communities can be likened to a “kit of parts” that, when used correctly, produce vibrant public spaces. Careful attention must be given when applying these various tools, ensuring quality of design and functionality. These components can function together in a cohesive plan, creating a new type of streetscape, catering to all users in the area.

To maintain the level of quality design throughout each phase of a streetscape project, many cities have developed a checklist to be followed until construction is complete. These “Complete Street Checklists” serve as a vital tool for future development and ensure the design components are not left out in the construction process.

Top: NW Naito Pkwy, Portland, OR. Image source: NCDC
Middle: Tanner Springs Park, Portland, OR. Image source: NCDC
Bottom: “Green Street”, Nashville, TN. Image source: Sitephocus

Top: Bus Shelter Portland, OR. Image source: NCDC
Middle: 12th + Paris, Nashville, TN. Image source: NCDC
Bottom: “Bike Boulevard”, Portland, OR. Image source: NCDC

Top: Crosswalks, Portland, OR. Image source: NCDC
Bottom: Pearl District Sidewalk, Portland, OR. Image source: NCDC