

MATT WILTSHIRE



Policy Priorities: *Quality of Life*



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- Add more affordable housing units

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- Partner with leaders in South Nashville to transform Nolensville Pike and The Global Mall



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Policy Priorities: *Quality of Life*

“I think you’ll hear a number of the same priorities from the different candidates for Mayor. Where you’ll find the biggest difference is who has specific ideas, who has taken on big challenges and who has actually delivered results – that’s what sets me apart.” – Matt Wiltshire



I. Introduction

Matt grew up in Nashville, and he has a long-term vision to tackle our city’s biggest challenges. As Mayor, Matt will partner with community leaders, the private sector, and nonprofit organizations to meet a singular shared goal: making Nashville one of the nation’s best places to live, work, and raise a family.

“In less than three years at MDHA we had some real success. MDHA opened more than 500 units of mixed-income housing and assisted the development of an additional 3,500 units of affordable housing by the private sector.”

WKRN, 05/09/23

II. Affordable housing

Nashville is becoming an increasingly expensive place to live. The cost of living here has risen in large part because the supply of housing hasn’t kept up with the growing demand. Matt knows we can’t let rising costs squeeze out the people who built this city. He will help cost-burdened seniors age in place and ensure that Nashville is a city where their kids can afford to stay and raise their families, too.

In 2019, Matt helped create an ambitious affordable housing plan and left a great job in the Mayor’s Office to move over to MDHA, the city’s public housing authority, to implement it. As the **first affordable-housing expert** to serve as Nashville’s Mayor, Matt will focus on solutions that help more Nashvillians stay in their homes and add more affordable housing units to the pipeline.

“Nashville is facing an affordability crisis. A 2021 analysis showed nearly half of Nashville renters were cost-burdened, paying more than 30% of their monthly income in rent.”

WKRN, 05/09/23

Help Nashvillians stay in their homes

Seniors aged 65+ are the [fastest-growing](#) age group in the city. And today [more than half](#) of them are experiencing “livable income poverty,” which means they operate with fixed monthly incomes that don’t cover basic living expenses such as housing, transportation, food, or medical care.

Building Affordable Homes

New council homes for rent

MATT
WILTSHIRE
FOR MAYOR





To keep more low-income seniors in their homes, Matt will **streamline Metro’s tax-freeze program and help more people apply for it.** To qualify today, seniors must show that all owners of their home collectively earn no more than [\\$60,000](#) each year, be up-to-date on their current property taxes, and recertify their eligibility every year. Matt will streamline the application process, and increase Metro’s outreach to seniors who might benefit from it. He will also connect seniors with other Metro resources – like [Home Uplift](#) and our [Financial Empowerment Center](#) – that can help them lower their utility bills and manage their financial futures.

Matt will also work to increase all eligible Nashvillians’ access to programs that can help them stay in their homes. He will partner with the Metro Trustee’s Office to increase outreach around its [tax-relief programs](#), which are available not only to seniors, but to homeowners and veterans with a disability. And he will continue to partner with nonprofit organizations like The Housing Fund, whose instrumental [Housing Resiliency Fund](#) helps low- and moderate-income homeowners afford increases to their property taxes.

Add more affordable housing units

Matt has a proven track record of creating affordable housing for Nashvillians. As Mayor, he will move aggressively during his first year in office **to increase and create sustainable, demand-based funding for the Barnes Fund**, which makes competitive grants to nonprofit housing developers to increase affordable housing options for Nashvillians.

Matt will **accelerate the implementation of MDHA [Envision’s program](#)** to transform areas of concentrated poverty into thriving mixed-income neighborhoods through Metro funding and by aggressively pursuing public-private partnerships. He also will **pursue public-private partnerships** with churches, nonprofit landholders, large institutions, and even schools to construct affordable housing on underutilized land. This proven model [has worked](#) for Nashville in the past, and Matt will expand on it.

Further, Matt will work with Metro Codes to **streamline the permitting process** for affordable housing projects and ensure that those projects are prioritized for review. He will ensure that, **before Metro sells any land to a private developer**, it first considers whether that space could be appropriately used for affordable housing.

“We must make investing into affordable housing a top priority. That starts with strengthening the Barnes Housing Trust Fund” - Matt Wiltshire





“Wiltshire’s campaign prioritizes public infrastructure and finding funding for affordable housing and education.”

WPLN, 04/18/23

III. Transit and Infrastructure

Nashville has been making transit and infrastructure plans for years. And in that time, traffic has gotten worse. [1,200](#) of our bus stops still lack shelters. And a [recent](#) survey ranked our transit system among the least used in the nation. Nashvillians are ready to move from plans to action, and Matt is the strong leader who can make that happen.

Nashville has fallen behind our peer cities when it comes to public transportation. In fact, we’re the [last city](#) of our size without dedicated funding for transit. In the long-term, finding a source of sustainable funding [will be key](#), and Matt will work with advocates to determine the optimal time to go to voters. In the short-term, Matt will prioritize transit projects that help build a culture of mass transit, along with investments that offer better service to current riders and help bring in new ones.

Build gold-standard mass transit along Murfreesboro Pike to the airport

Before the end of the year, Matt will prioritize and accelerate the process to bring **dedicated-lane mass transit to Murfreesboro Pike** along a route that connects downtown to the airport. And because Matt knows that transit and affordable housing go hand in hand, he will lead efforts to put **affordable housing options near the transit stops** along that route. That way, workers can get to jobs downtown or out to the airport, which is a large employer, without getting stuck in traffic or having to pay up to \$40 for parking.

Carrying 4,000 people a day, the Murfreesboro Pike route boasts WeGo’s [highest daily ridership](#). Building a premium transit line here will pull traffic off the interstate and help build a culture of mass-transit in Nashville. This project, which the airport can help pay for, [has been](#) included in Nashville’s transit plans for years. Matt will move beyond planning and start building. This project is well-positioned to receive funding for up to 70% of the cost from the federal government and the Airport Authority can pay for all of the infrastructure from the airport to the first transit stop. The remaining cost for Metro government is well within the city’s existing financial capacity.

Provide more buses, more often, along with better transit centers in more places

Matt will bring Nashvillians the bus system they deserve. With more buses running more hours each day, riders’ commute times will be shorter. Increased crosstown bus routes will mean they are able to reach their destination without having to transfer downtown. And new neighborhood transit centers with upgraded bus stops will improve riders’ overall experience and help spur transit-oriented development.

WeGo has been pushing to upgrade our bus system for years, but plans have faltered under a lack of funding. As Mayor, Matt will lead the way – and direct the resources – to move from plans to action.





IV. Parks, Greenspace, Greenways and Sustainability

Nashvillians came together in 2017 to create [Plan to Play](#), a ten-year vision for Metro parks, greenways, and green space. It outlines the investments needed to take care of what we already have while growing our parks system intentionally, equitably, and sustainably.

In the years since, Nashville has lagged behind our peer cities when it comes to investing in our park system. While Atlanta's investment is \$206 per person each year, and Austin's is \$178, Nashville's is only \$52. Our city has been under-investing in our parks system just when we've needed it most. Thanks to this lack of funding, our parks today [rank](#) in the bottom ten in the nation. As Mayor, Matt will turn this around and finish what Plan to Play started.

Ensure that every area in the urban core is no more than a ten-minute walk to a greenway

Nashvillians have [identified](#) greenways as the parks amenity they want most. About 100 miles of them criss-cross Nashville today. As Mayor, Matt will expand greenways so that every Nashvillian in the urban core lives within a ten-minute, or half-mile, walk to one. He will start by **accelerating the completion of the [City Central Greenway](#)**, a planned 23-mile loop that will connect neighborhoods, schools, parks, business districts, and transit stops.

Matt understands that greenways are a critical part of our transportation network. With construction in Nashville continuing at a record pace, Matt will **partner with private developers to ensure their co-investment** in the greenways that will help residents connect to transit options.

Expand our parks system

Parks encourage Nashvillians to live active lifestyles, which reduce or prevent many physical and mental health problems. They improve public health by cleaning the air, and they make Nashville more resilient to flooding and other components of climate change. [Plan to Play](#) found that, while Nashville has by no means completed our work to protect large rural properties, we must become equally adept at acquiring and developing smaller urban parks.

As Mayor, Matt will make good on this finding by **prioritizing the restoration of Fort Negley**. A piece of Civil War and civil rights history in the heart of our urban core, the fort has presided over Nashville's evolution from a frontier town to a bustling metropolis. The [master plan](#) completed in October 2022 envisions an open-air museum that preserves the fort's history while fully engaging with the community. When completed, Fort Negley's restoration will add 64 acres of parkland to our urban parks system – a rare and valuable opportunity.





Matt will also prioritize opportunities to preserve Nashville's [Highland Rim Forest](#), which arcs around Nashville and connects a wide range of Nashville's parks, among them Randor, Warner, West Meade, Bells Bend, Beaman and Whites Creek. This vast urban forest plays an important role in reducing greenhouse gasses and reducing climate change.

Stay focused on sustainability and environmental justice

Matt knows that climate change [is making](#) Nashville hotter, and that our hottest neighborhoods are some of our [least resourced](#) and most vulnerable. Matt understands that **climate issues are equity issues**. He will keep Metro's commitment to reducing [carbon emissions](#), generating more [solar energy](#), and planting [half a million trees](#) by 2050.

V. Equitable Economic Development

In 2011, Matt left a successful career in the private sector to take on what at the time was one of the city's biggest challenges: unemployment. Over the next eight years, working with three different mayors, he helped bring the city's unemployment rate down from more than eight percent to two percent, the lowest of any city in the country. During his tenure, Nashville added 42,000 jobs, and the city developed incentives for small businesses that invested in diverse neighborhoods.


While Nashville's economy has continued to grow, today far too many people are being left behind. Matt knows that different times require different tools and different strategies. As Mayor, he will work with community leaders to craft equitable economic-development initiatives that will revitalize key corridors in North and South Nashville.

Matt is deeply familiar with the economic-revitalization tools Metro has at its disposal. As appropriate, he will pursue strategic land swaps, target affordable housing developments, and work to expand opportunities for BIPOC-owned businesses.

Partner with HCBUs and other leaders to envision and implement the Jefferson Street Academic Mile

The Jefferson Street Academic Mile is home to three HBCUs: Fisk, Meharry Medical College, and TSU. Leaders at these historic universities [have spoken](#) of redeveloping the Academic Mile in a way that enhances the economy, the health, and the social vibrance of North Nashville. As Mayor, Matt will **partner with these leaders and marshal Metro's resources** to help plan for and accelerate this transformative vision.





MDHA operates public housing at Andrew Jackson Courts, which is adjacent to Fisk University. Matt will work with MDHA and Fisk University to pursue a redevelopment of Andrew Jackson Courts in a way that will add mixed income housing, including student housing, that Fisk desperately needs as it continues to grow and thrive. In addition, Matt will pursue opportunities to create a world class collecting art museum with Fisk University and community stakeholders to help show off the incredible art the university already has. At the other end of the Academic Mile there are 100 acres on the North side of TSU's campus that are ideally situated to house a federal research campus and develop new corporate pipelines to employment for TSU students.

Partner with leaders in South Nashville to transform Nolensville Pike and The Global Mall

One of the most racially and ethnically diverse corridors in the state of Tennessee, the Nolensville corridor [is home](#) to the largest number of immigrant families in Nashville. The vibrant area plays home to landmark destinations like the Nashville Zoo and Plaza Mariachi, along with a cornucopia of BIPOC-owned businesses and some of our city's best ethnic restaurants. But a [2022 NDOT study](#) found that most people do not feel comfortable walking or biking along Nolensville Pike, and with good reason: 18 people have died due to traffic crashes there since 2014 – and 40 percent of the victims were pedestrians. Large swaths of the corridor lack sidewalks, streetlights, and safe crosswalks. As Mayor, Matt will **partner with community leaders and immigrant-focused nonprofits** to ensure that this invaluable corridor gets the **resources it deserves**.

Though those who grew up in Nashville may remember it as Hickory Hollow, the shopping district now known as The Global Mall at the Crossings has begun a transformation in the years since it was a struggling shopping mall. Today it is home to the Southeast Branch of the Nashville Public Library and the Southeast Regional Community Center, along with a satellite campus for Nashville State Community College and the Ford Ice Center. As the southern terminus on the Murfreesboro Pike corridor that Matt has prioritized for gold-standard mass transit, the site has a world of potential and is ready for a reinvention. This summer, Metro will complete a [master plan](#) that builds on community ideas to guide future development at The Global Mall. **As Mayor, Matt will partner with community and private-sector leaders to explore commercially viable development opportunities** that align with community goals.



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