



imagine eastbank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

October 6, 2022 MPC



METRO
NASHVILLE
PLANNING
DEPARTMENT

NDOT





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“In the heart of our city’s thriving downtown sits an exceptional opportunity to build Nashville’s next great neighborhoods along the East Bank of the Cumberland River.”

Mayor John Cooper

View of Downtown Nashville, from behind the overgrown landscapes on the East Bank.

FOREWORD

Imagine East Bank is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to re-envision 338 acres of underutilized land in the heart of Nashville along the banks of the Cumberland River, and dream of what vibrant neighborhoods could emerge there. Few other projects of this scope and context exist in the United States today.

The urban renewal projects of the mid-twentieth century physically severed this area from its neighbors. The low-density, auto-oriented features that define it today are a result of this legacy. Characterized by asphalt parking lots and private, industrial uses, the East Bank is framed by the interstate and a steep, eroded, and overgrown bank that makes the Cumberland River — one of our city’s most unique features — almost imperceptible from a ground-level pedestrian perspective.

A place of contradictions, the East Bank is centrally located within a thriving city, but is perceived and experienced as an island. It is deeply bound to the interstate system and network of river bridges, yet is simultaneously disconnected. It is adjacent to bustling residential and commercial neighborhoods, but has a population of zero. In short, the East Bank does not live up to its potential by any common measure. The area is ripe with additional possibility and, with the development of the community vision reflected in *Imagine East Bank*, a new future is possible.

The Planning Department, in collaboration with expert consultants, has undertaken extensive technical analysis, urban design inquiry, and robust community outreach to shape this vision. Importantly, the infrastructure needed to support these new neighborhoods will also serve as a catalyst for regional mobility and open space networks. Ultimately, this is a vision to connect people and community.

The East Bank can become a place reclaimed for all Nashvillians to enjoy, with a public greenway along the riverfront for pedestrians and bicyclists, a boulevard providing multimodal access, and neighborhoods for residents. Realizing this vision has just begun in earnest and will take time, collaboration and leadership from all Nashvillians to create the community we desire.

Lucy Alden Kempf

Lucy Alden Kempf
Executive Director,
Metropolitan Government of Nashville and
Davidson County Planning Department

PLANNING CONTEXT

Several projects currently under development, in and around the East Bank, will add significant new opportunities in the form of housing, jobs, and dense mixed-use development. Existing policy supports this evolution of an industrial area adjacent to Downtown Nashville into dense urban neighborhoods. However, these proposals, if developed without a coordinated strategy, will strain existing systems such as road networks and stormwater infrastructure.

The *Imagine East Bank* planning study was initiated to outline strategies for coordinated development and to better understand how Nashvillians want the area to evolve with these changes. This approach proactively directs and manages growth, as opposed to defensively or retroactively planning for it at the margins.

While not exhaustive, the following projects under development and neighborhoods experiencing rapid growth, set the context for this vision plan.

large-scale planning catalysts

1 111 NORTH 1ST STREET
In May 2021, a Specific Plan (SP) for property located at 111 North 1st Street — the site of the existing TA Truck Stop — was approved by the Metro Planning Commission. The approved plan proposes a 15-acre, high-density, mixed-use development, with a maximum height of 30 stories and FAR (floor area ratio) of 5.0.

2 CAYCE PLACE
As Nashville grows, so does its need for affordable housing. In 2013-2014, MDHA spearheaded Envision Cayce — a master planning process to update Nashville's largest subsidized housing property, located on 63 acres in East Nashville.

The plan sets a vision for a mixed-income, mixed-use community with 2,390 units. It ensures a one-for-one replacement of existing affordable units. Construction is ongoing, with several of the projects already completed. The project will provide affordable, workforce, and market-rate units near the East Bank.

3 ORACLE
In the summer of 2021, tech company Oracle purchased almost 70 acres in River North, for a new campus that will host 8,500 employees and bring thousands around and through the East Bank daily. Oracle committed to paying \$175 million for Metro infrastructure upgrades — including new greenways and a new pedestrian bridge over the river.

4 TITANS STADIUM
The Tennessee Titans lease the Titans Stadium from the Metro Sports Authority — which owns 90 acres of land on the East Bank. The current lease runs through the 2028 NFL season. The Titans and Metro are currently exploring the cost-benefit scenarios of renovating the existing stadium or constructing a new stadium adjacent to the existing site. As of the release of this plan, a decision has not been made.

River North is a post-industrial neighborhood that is rapidly urbanizing. Many dense mixed-use developments are planned or already under construction. An Urban Design Overlay (UDO) District, adopted by Metro Council in 2018 guides development. While not the focus of this plan, the area is interwoven with the *Imagine East Bank* vision.

Various recreational opportunities are envisioned for the East Bank.

COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

An East Bank for all Nashvillians begins with a goal to promote meaningful and positive change in partnership with the community. Equity is a foundational principle.

To move forward, we must acknowledge that urban planners have historically created and exacerbated barriers in our community. As a profession, we must take responsibility for damage done, learn from it, and promote policies and practices that benefit those previously left out.

The American Planning Association's (APA) equity statement argues, "This reflection must acknowledge the historical trauma of racism and discrimination inflicted on people of color, wrought by the planning profession itself, which led to structural disadvantages in housing, transportation, education and employment that last to this day."

The East Bank and its immediate context reflect the harmful legacy of 20th century urban revitalization projects. During the 1950s-1970s, new federal and state highways severed the neighborhoods of East Nashville from the river and downtown — leaving the East Bank as the concrete desert between them. Urban renewal policies of that same era cleared neighborhoods and displaced residents from their communities.

Today, the legacy of urban renewal persists: in addition to its interstate border, the East Bank is designed for cars rather than people. Its surface lots exacerbate environmental vulnerabilities. It contains no housing units and few human-scaled relationships or points of connection with adjacent neighborhoods.

Planning directors across the nation released a joint public statement, in 2021, to collectively address racial equity goals in their practices and policies, with a commitment to change their work toward the goal of equitable communities in the future. The statement reinforces the importance of addressing historic harms in new planning work. It lays out the principles for addressing the past and key principles that should guide change in cities moving forward.

It is for these reasons that so much of our East Bank work emphasizes the creation of human-scaled open, green space and mobility networks that serve all users: pedestrians, bicyclists, bus riders, and car drivers. Creating building blocks for neighborhoods that provide safe and comfortable access to goods, resources, jobs, and housing is a first step towards reclaiming the East Bank as a public asset and minimizing some of the man-made, super-scaled obstacles imposed on the area.

The planning for a new, multimodal boulevard is guided by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in its earliest phases to ensure that a data-driven approach informs the basis of our decisions, including community and environmental impacts. Therefore, understanding the natural and historical context of the East Bank — not just physically but from a people perspective — will inform decisions around some of the largest proposed investments, including infrastructure — such as the boulevard.

Other guiding principles in our work include, but are not limited to:

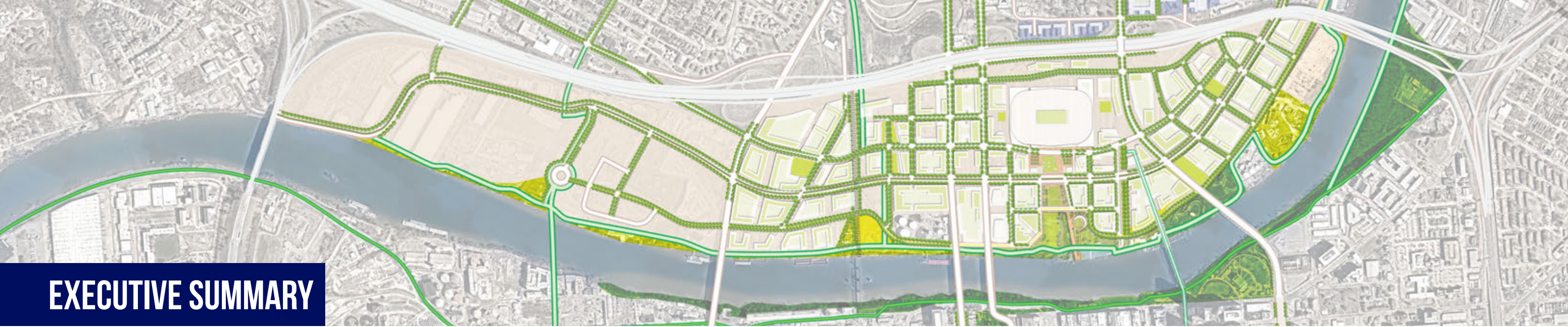
- » Environmental resilience, and with the future redevelopment of any industrial sites, environmental justice considerations.
- » A public open space network for everyone.
- » Land use standards that support multi-family housing and that do not support single family housing on the East Bank.
- » Land use standards that support a diversity of uses including housing, a mix of business types, and educational or cultural uses that benefit communities.

We are committed to building a vision around these guiding principles, but are not limited to them. We are inspired by the Equity Statement within the 2021 [Affordable Housing Task Force Report](#) and used it to identify guiding principles for future housing goals, which subsequent phases of work on the East Bank will follow.

In conclusion, the vision outlined in this document is a first step of many towards a new future for the East Bank — equity is a principle that should be foundational for each subsequent step forward.

Racial inequity permeates Nashville's past and present — and housing is no exception. While existing Fair Housing policies are intended to protect vulnerable communities, many Black and brown Nashvillians still face housing discrimination. Current status-quo practices and policies continue to perpetuate harm, so we must intentionally work to design and implement solutions that are anti-racist both in outcomes and processes.

—Metro Nashville's 2021 Affordable Housing Task Force Report



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This illustrative plan depicts a vision of the East Bank comprised of four urban, mixed-use neighborhoods linked by a robust mobility system and network of riverfront outdoor spaces.

VISIONING GOAL

Craft a dynamic planning process that supports inclusive and meaningful engagement of all stakeholders in the creation of a forward-thinking, information-driven, and community-led vision for the future of the East Bank.

the vision

The East Bank’s emergence as new neighborhoods for Nashvillians requires it to re-establish itself within the city’s fabric, both in physical form and in its social, cultural, and economic aspects. Therefore, the goal of this project is to propose a vision for the building blocks of great neighborhoods, consistent with community guidance.

The vision should also accomplish a higher purpose: the East Bank must take its place in and participate in a larger city compact. That compact is a more accessible community for all Nashvillians — to have an equitable approach to community building where people connect to goods, services, and, ultimately, to one another through human-scaled and well-designed public places.

We believe the proposed vision accomplishes these purposes.

PUBLIC VISIONING PROCESS

Meaningful public engagement is the foundation of any successful planning project. *Imagine East Bank* represents a 21-month effort to meaningfully engage community stakeholders, understand their experiences, and craft a collaborative vision for the future of the East Bank.

These conversations directly shaped the infrastructure and design recommendations presented in this document. We thank the many community members, technical experts, businesses and property owners, and many others for their guidance in the creation of a forward-thinking, information-driven, and community-led vision for the East Bank.

vision concepts

During the engagement process, four concepts emerged that convey the community’s objectives for the East Bank and provide a framework for the future vision. They are, as follows:

1. EQUITABLE & AFFORDABLE EAST BANK

Advance equity, resiliency, and high quality of life for all Nashvillians through the creation of accessible and affordable places to live, work, and play.

Equity and affordability are promoted through a multi-pronged approach that includes housing, multimodal connectivity, economic development, resiliency, and land use. Several strategies and tools for advancing housing diversity on the East Bank are addressed, including dedicating a portion of Metro-owned land.

2. SAFE & SIMPLE MULTIMODAL CONNECTIONS

Provide a robust, multimodal transportation system enabling easy and equal access to and through the East Bank.

The proposed mobility plan prioritizes the experience of transit riders, cyclists, and pedestrians, while improving street connectivity. It identifies placement and sections for these networks. Close coordination with state and other local agencies is critical for successful outcomes.

3. RESPECT FOR THE RIVER

Re-center the river as a vital community amenity and bolster resiliency through enhanced floodplain and stormwater management.

The environmental strategy links flood resiliency and stormwater management with the creation of vibrant park spaces that provide a variety of river-oriented activities.

4. NEIGHBORHOODS FOR NASHVILLIANS

Create vibrant, livable, and authentic neighborhoods that prioritize the everyday needs of Nashvillians.

The East Bank is divided into four neighborhoods with unique contexts and characteristics. Objectives and guidelines are proposed for the development of buildings, streetscapes, and outdoor spaces.

METRO-OWNED LAND IN FOCUS

This chapter explores and illustrates key ideas and opportunities for Metro-owned land on the East Bank. Ideas include the creation of an East Bank Park — and advancing resiliency and outdoor space objectives through it. Furthermore, a potential extension of the John Seigenthaler Pedestrian Bridge, a mobility hub, and a site for cultural resources, among other ideas, are explored.



pressures and opportunities

The possibility of a neighborhood-centric East Bank should include place-based solutions and address relevant city-wide challenges. By investing in the creation of attainable housing, multimodal transportation infrastructure, mixed-use opportunities, and an accessible and active riverfront, we set the stage for East Bank neighborhoods that stand the test of time.

As described in Chapter 2, the unique location and current conditions of the East Bank present opportunities to address the following city goals:

1. Meet the increased demand for housing and other city services
2. Create connections to and through the East Bank, to increase mobility
3. Accept our responsibility to combat climate change and to better understand living with the Cumberland River

coordination with property owners

The East Bank comprises both public and private properties. Each property in the study area is unique, and owners have a variety of objectives for their sites.

Several large properties in and around the East Bank are planning redevelopment — including Cayce Place, Oracle, 111 North 1st Street, and Titans Stadium.

In order to develop a common vision, we collaborated with property owners and tenants, emphasizing the public systems — infrastructure, mobility networks, parks, and river engagement — necessary to support the East Bank’s future. In each case, our goal was to ensure that plans meet the community’s vision and objectives while respecting the rights and interests of private property owners.

This illustrative plan of the Central Waterfront neighborhood depicts Titans Stadium in a new location on the East Bank — directly east of the existing site. This outcome will be referred to as “Option A”, in this plan.



This illustrative plan of the Central Waterfront neighborhood, developed early in the planning process, shows Titans Stadium in its existing location. This outcome will be referred to as “Option B”, in this plan.

the future of titans stadium

Imagine East Bank evaluates the urban planning and design of the entire 338-acre East Bank study area, including the site of Titans Stadium. At the outset of the project, the planning work considered Titans Stadium as it exists in its current location. A vision for the Central Waterfront neighborhood, incorporating road alignment, development scenarios, infrastructure placement, and allocation of land for park space was developed, based on this premise (above).

However, during the planning process, the Tennessee Titans began evaluating the option of building a new stadium — directly to the east of the current stadium — in lieu of pursuing upgrades to the existing structure. This new scenario necessitated a rethinking and rearranging of the elements of the plan — adjusting for the new location (left).

Many of the maps and drawings in this plan depict potential planning outcomes that result from either option. For example, we would pursue similar street sections under either condition; and, our aspirations for the greenway network could be similar under both scenarios. However, because constructing a new stadium is a new condition, we conducted a deeper analysis of how this alternative would affect certain outcomes, particularly around open space planning, placement of the boulevard, resiliency, and urban design. This analysis yielded a better understanding of environmental impacts, including human health, economic, and social effects of proposed actions.

At the time of publication of this plan, no formal announcements have been made regarding the future of the stadium’s placement. The ultimate decision has many considerations — financial, operational, and strategic — many subject to approval by Metro entities, such as the Metro Sports Authority and Metro Council. The stadium decision is an important one, and will shape planning outcomes within the East Bank.



The 2010 Nashville flood severely impacted the East Bank and Downtown Nashville.

acting now: public interest in a proactive vision for the future

It is important to be mindful of the individual development potentials and trajectories of public and private properties on the East Bank. However, there is an immediate need to protect and invest in the public infrastructure necessary to create a more connected, resilient, and equitable future for Nashville within the East Bank and beyond.

In particular, the East Bank is a potential linchpin for local and regional mobility networks defined in the [Metro Nashville Transportation Plan](#). The vision for connectivity on the East Bank relies on forward-thinking, strategic leadership and investment promoting public interests.

Given market expectations, development costs, and the significant zoning entitlements on the East Bank, future property development will reflect a high-cost, high-demand urban environment. Early right-of-way acquisition is particularly necessary to ensure a strong future mobility network can be preserved.

The proposed East Bank Boulevard (described further in Chapter 5), for example, provides one strategy to complete missing and/or stressed north-south connections in Nashville's core.

The proposed boulevard is not a complete answer for system needs: this investment should work in concert with [Connect Downtown](#) and the [Metro Nashville Transportation Plan](#) to evaluate additional improvements necessary to support our city's multimodal future.

There is an important public interest in shaping a resilient and equitable future for the East Bank now, with multimodality at the forefront. With that in mind, Metro and TDOT have partnered and begun the initial steps to protect that future via right-of-way acquisition for the boulevard.

key plan components and priority action items

Imagine East Bank proposes an ambitious vision that will take years, if not decades, to be fully realized. Many components of the vision are interdependent, requiring careful consideration of priorities, phasing, resources, and other factors like additional feasibility or subsequent planning studies.

The recommendations presented in this document cover a wide range of next steps from small-scale to ambitious capital improvement projects. Four priority recommendations — foundational to the implementation of the vision — are listed below.

1. Develop an East Bank implementation strategy

- » Set forth a clear process for the redevelopment of Metro-owned property on the East Bank, consistent with the vision.
- » Following the adoption of the vision plan by the Metro Planning Commission, new zoning change requests should be evaluated in accordance with the vision.
- » Create design guidelines for Metro-owned property on the East Bank.
- » Establish a design review and approval process — such as a design review committee — to ensure proposed developments meet the intent and standards of the vision.
- » Set aside land on Metro-owned properties for key public resources outlined in the vision, including park(s), greenways, rights-of-way, affordable housing, a mobility hub, and cultural assets.
- » Determine the needs for Metro services, such as fire safety, and plan for appropriate allocation in future development agreements.

- » Acquire, or negotiate through agreements, land for public infrastructure.
- » Explore feasibility of creating a Business Improvement District (BID), to support public services and manage assets on the East Bank.
- » Develop a parking operational plan — that incorporates the needs of the city, mixed-use developments, and the Titans Stadium — that also aligns with the mobility strategy.

2. Advance livability through implementation

- » Utilize the policies and procedures of land development — such as zoning reviews, lease negotiations, and development incentives — to address community needs like housing, fresh food, and childcare.
- » For each phase of development, establish clear housing benchmarks — consistent with the *Imagine East Bank* vision and the city's Unified Housing Strategy — for which Metro is a landowner or a participant in an agreement with private landowners. See pg. 56 for Phae I benchmarks.
- » Engage the Affordable Housing Task Force and the community to assist in establishing affordability goals for each phase of development to include a mix of income ranges, including goals for deep affordability.
- » Explore strategic funding or policy models and partnerships that link development with community objectives for equitable and affordable housing, workforce development, and educational attainment.
- » The city's new Office of Economic Growth and Small Business Development should

deploy strategies that lead to long-term, stable opportunities for small, local and minority-owned businesses on the East Bank.

3. Place multimodal transportation at the forefront

- » Continue feasibility exploration, planning, design, and construction of the East Bank Boulevard.
- » Dedicate lanes for transit service, in accordance with NDOT and WeGo operational standards.
- » Dedicate lanes for bikeways, sidewalks, and streetscape improvements that are consistent with the vision.
- » Prioritize a separated and safe bicycling experience through detailed design and operational standards.
- » Coordinate with NDOT and WeGo to ensure the East Bank Boulevard creates safe, reliable connections to and through the East Bank, and between adjacent neighborhoods and corridors, such as extensions to Dickerson Pike and Murfreesboro Pike.
- » Negotiate and acquire rights-of-way needed to advance the mobility network, including for the East Bank Boulevard and other streets.
- » Develop and approve streetscape design standards to ensure the creation of complete streets on the East Bank.
- » Partner with TDOT to prioritize key improvements, such as renovation or replacement of state bridges, the arrival of Ellington Parkway, and improving the interstate on- and off-ramps.
- » Continue the exploration of a mobility hub on the East Bank, and evaluate opportunities to co-locate housing and other services with the Mobility Hub.

4. Invest in performative and resilient outdoor spaces

- » Lay-back the Cumberland River bank in various locations on the East Bank and in River North, and provide (on Metro-owned land) or encourage (on privately-owned land) various waterfront programming and amenities as desired by the community, such as open space and/or boating investments.
- » Set aside land for a riverfront park on Metro property that expands access to outdoor recreational amenities, engages the river, and improves resiliency through riparian edge management.
- » Establish a resiliency framework that sets goals and benchmarks for environmental design and performance — such as outdoor space requirements and minimum elevations for development.
- » Collaborate with Metro Parks and Greenways to explore the feasibility of developing an implementation plan for parks and greenways on the East Bank — including financing mechanisms for design, construction, and ongoing operations and maintenance.
- » Develop an implementation plan for district stormwater management for the Central Waterfront neighborhood, in coordination with Metro Water Services.
- » Develop an operational plan, feasibility/market analysis, and capital strategy to coordinate boating investments on the East Bank and its broader river context.

The East Bank will provide opportunities to observe and interact with the natural environment, including the Cumberland River.

THE VISION
ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN: OPTION A
accommodates relocated stadium

- legend**
- East Bank
 - River North
 - Cayce Place
 - Existing Parks
 - Planned Parks
 - Potential River Lay-Backs
 - Existing Greenways
 - Proposed Greenways

This illustration reflects a vision of streets, parks, a relocated stadium, and other infrastructure. It does not reflect final or detailed plans.

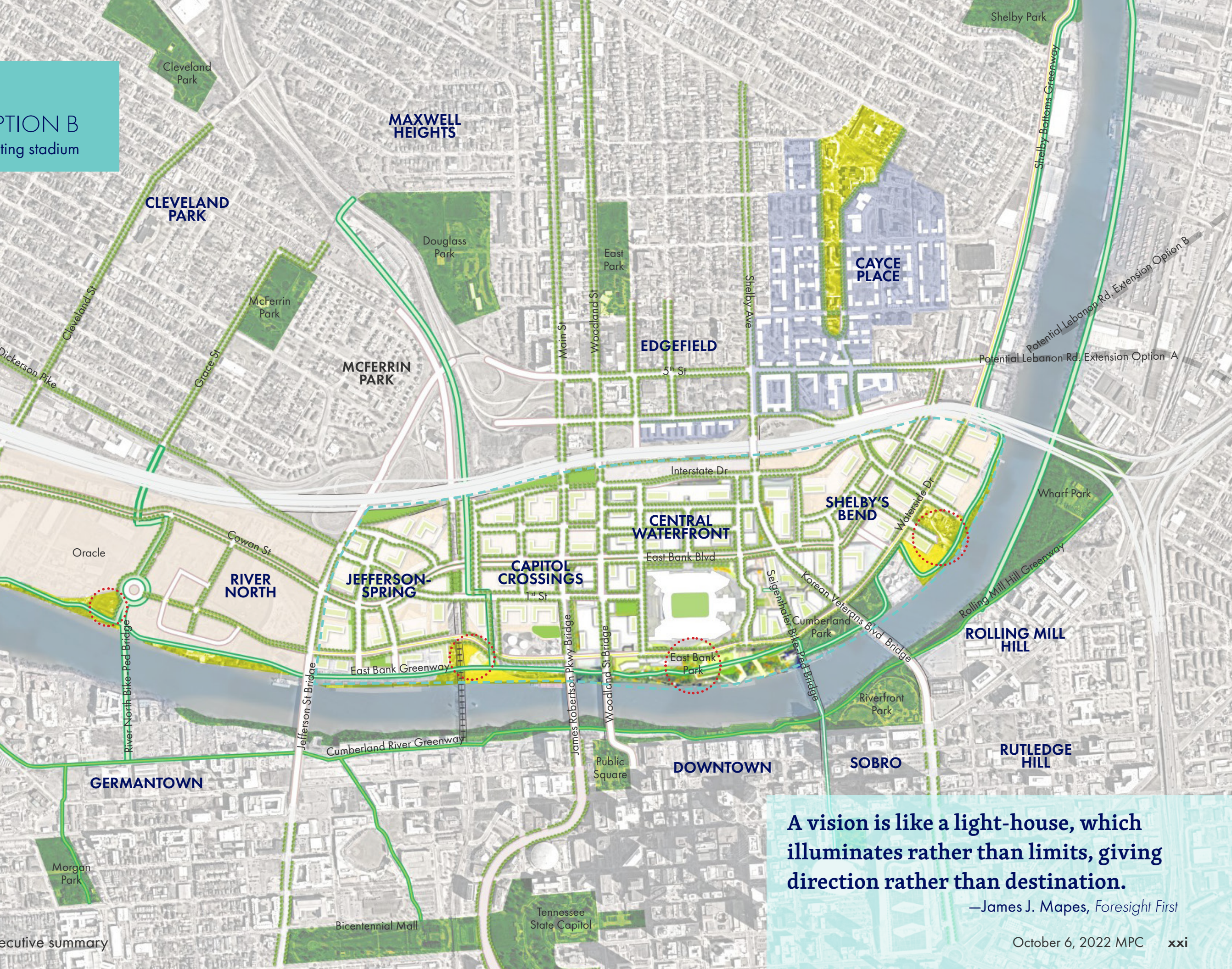
A vision is like a light-house, which illuminates rather than limits, giving direction rather than destination.

—James J. Mapes, *Foresight First*

THE VISION
ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN: OPTION B
accommodates renovation of existing stadium

- legend**
- East Bank
 - River North
 - Cayce Place
 - Existing Parks
 - Planned Parks
 - Potential River Lay-Backs
 - Existing Greenways
 - Proposed Greenways

This illustration reflects a vision of streets, parks, the existing stadium, and other infrastructure. It does not reflect final or detailed plans.



A vision is like a light-house, which illuminates rather than limits, giving direction rather than destination.

—James J. Mapes, *Foresight First*



imagine eastbank

A VISION PLAN FOR NASHVILLE'S NEXT GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS

October 6, 2022 MPC

METRO NASHVILLE **PLANNING** DEPARTMENT