



# FutureForward

FY26-FY27 Strategic Work Plan



FutureForward continues to serve as a dynamic two-year roadmap that will be used to guide the administration and operation of The Fairgrounds Nashville towards a financially sustainable and vibrant future.

## **MISSION, VISION, & VALUES**

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The Fairgrounds' statement of purpose:

### **Connecting our community with events.**

#### **Values**

The identification and definition of our core values are a reflection of our beliefs and commitment and is essential in communicating our operational philosophy to the public.

**Our Clients** – We commit to collaborate with and support our partners, vendors, and clients to provide our guests with fun, safe, accessible, and affordable experiences.

**Our Workforce** – We value our team, we are united and hardworking, we support one another and commit to providing the tools, resources, and training needed to be the best we can be.

**Our “Golden Rule” Service** – We are passionate, service-minded and committed to our customer-focused approach.

**Our Integrity** – We are fair and maintain a high standard for ethical and moral behavior in all that we do. How we act and what we do when no one is watching.



**FY26-27 STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES (SWOC)**

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<b>Strengths</b>	Location adjacent to downtown and along international corridor and primary transit route
Internal	Nashville as a destination city for entertainment, music, and sports
	Size of venue within Nashville is unique
	Variety of spaces offered
	Dedicated staff
<b>Weaknesses</b>	Lack of reliable vendor and event management systems
Internal	Lack of break-out space
	Lack of an operating reserve fund
	Staffing level and available budget matching event demand
	Lack of detailed cost of events to determine event profit/loss
<b>Opportunities</b>	Becoming a banquet and corporate venue of choice
External	Expanding rentable space by enclosing arena
	Constructing a parking structure adjacent to Expo buildings
	Establishment of a capital reserve fund funded through 50% property tax redirect from mixed use development
	Reduce reliance on electricity and reduce utility costs through solar investment
	Conversion to self-pay parking kiosks
	Maximizing partnership with NCVC and resulting event referrals
	Significant positive impacts to the surrounding community (e.g., connectivity, recreation)
<b>Challenges</b>	Managing through construction disruption
External	40+ acre floodway which limits use
	Flat surface parking is inefficient
	Neighborhood infrastructure insufficient to support density and increased activity
	Lack of direction on speedway which impacts future planning for The Nashville Fair and its sustainability as well as all other campus activities

- ❖ **Increase revenue by redefining event scheduling strategy to maximize expo facility and public space use, increase occupancy days, and consolidate single day events.**
  - The renovated Expo facility is capable of hosting large-scale, multi-day shows that maximize revenue through rental and service fees, commission on food and beverage sales, and parking.
    - *Outreach to large event organizers/producers (letters, emails, event RFP clearinghouses, current clients, NCVV, Chambers of Commerce).*
    - *Work with new food and beverage contractor to upsell services to increase catering opportunities and diversify menu options to appeal to individual event clientele and increase revenue.*
    - *Booking prioritization of large multi-day events and fill in schedule vacancies with smaller or single-day bookings.*
    - *Consolidating small or one-day events with other like events to free up weekends for larger bookings to increase revenue or potentially passing on booking smaller and one-day weekend events if consolidation or companion booking is not an option.*
    - *Consolidating footprint of the flea market if vendor numbers don't support use of all three buildings with the intent of booking a simultaneous event to increase revenue and minimize expenses related to operations.*
    - *Explore in-house production of large event(s) to maximize revenue generation.*
    - *Recommend an adjustment to the Fair Board bylaws to authorize the Executive Director to sign multi-year License Agreements.*
  - Diversify events
    - *Explore outreach strategy targeting underrepresented communities through community advocacy agencies and relevant departments within Metro to diversify events and increase revenue through new event bookings.*
  - Maximize partnership with Geodis Park, Nashville SC, and MarketStreet Enterprises to enhance programming, marketing, and advertising opportunities.
  - Develop branding and marketing strategy to enhance visibility and attract customers and new business.

HOW NASHVILLE MOVES

HOW NASHVILLE GROWS

❖ **Complete campus renovation.**

- Complete infrastructure part 2:
  - *Complete construction of the new entrance off Wingrove Street and related work at the intersection of Wingrove and Nolensville Pike.*
  - *Construction of lower Coliseum Way to add sidewalks and a new bridge connecting Craighead Street with Benton Avenue that will be ADA-compliant and add hard surface parking.*
  - *Finalize a path forward for speedway renovation and programming. The speedway not only supports racing; renovations are critical for future success and financial sustainability of The Nashville Fair and provides support for all other campus activities.*
- Secure funding for and construct a parking structure to support Fairgrounds campus events and activities and improve efficiency in operations with dedicated storage reducing time and effort moving bleachers, livestock panels, and other large event items currently stored in other areas of campus. Proximate parking for events is anticipated to increase revenue due to increased event participation.
  - *Submit request and feasibility study to Mayor's Office for consideration of funding in FY26 CSP for construction of a parking structure adjacent to the Expo building.*
- Complete renovation of lot 2 along Wedgewood to support The Nashville Fair and other activities and events on the campus.
  - *Lot 2 improvements will generate revenue by adding ride space and midway support area for The Nashville Fair, add rentable event space to the inventory, and provide additional surface parking for events.*
- Study the feasibility of enclosing the arena and adding supporting amenities such as food and beverage locations and restrooms to increase revenue through additional event bookings.
  - *Prepare a proforma for this new space.*
- Collaborate with MarketStreet Enterprises to complete remaining phases of mixed-use development as required in ground lease with Walsh Management
  - *Additional mixed use block development will alter how The Fairgrounds currently operates. Timing on these projects impacts The Nashville Fair and all other campus uses and construction of a parking structure will assist in mitigating some of those impacts.*

## HOW NASHVILLE WORKS

- ❖ **Establish capital repair/replacement plan funded through Council-approved property tax diversion from mixed-use development to reduce Metro's need to issue general obligation bonds.**
  - *It is anticipated that The Fairgrounds will receive an estimated annual payment of \$1.2-\$1.6M. This figure is dependent on project completion and final assessed value.*
  - *The Fairgrounds Nashville will secure a firm to prepare a Capital Asset Management Plan for consideration by the Fair Board.*
  - *The Executive Director will prepare a list of new capital investments with a goal of increasing revenue and/or decreasing expenses for consideration by the Fair Board. If appropriate, the list will be provided to the Mayor's Office for funding consideration in a future budget.*

## HOW NASHVILLE WORKS

- ❖ **Complete documented internal policy and procedure manuals to strengthen processes, ensure equity, improve safety, and comply with Metro policies and procedures.**
  - *The Executive Director will draft and provide for training on the following safety and health procedures: Emergency Action Plan, Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens, and Hazard Communication.*
  - *Fairgrounds division managers will prepare procedures and provide training, as necessary, on internal processes (e.g., cash handling, workflow for purchasing, etc.).*

## HOW NASHVILLE WORKS

- Invest in technology upgrades to enhance both internal and external functionality and improve reliability:**
  - *Transition to a venue/vendor management system that has more reliable reporting functions, can interface with Metro banking and accounting systems, and streamline contracts and workflow.*
  - *Explore feasibility and cost of a mobile app to communicate event schedules, directions, access and parking availability, etc.*

- ❖ **Reduce budget deficit, moving The Nashville Fair towards sustainability, and grow operational reserve.**
  - *Refine accounting practices to establish accurate labor distribution and reliable profit/loss for each business unit.*
  - *Establish methodology to evaluate individual event P&L to be used as an aid in booking priority.*
  - *Eliminate budget deficits in flea market by evaluating budget, eliminating redundancies and discretionary funds while evaluating vendor recruitment strategies, customer outreach/marketing to reach new audiences, and maximize financial opportunities from flea market social media account to earn revenue from advertising or incentives.*
  - *Increase revenue in event services by implementing year 2 fee increases on move-in days (100% increase to reach 50% of per day rental fee), building rental fees (4%), and annual CPI increase (~2.5%), and identification of additional sources of event service charges to bring the total event service revenue to 30%-40% of event rental revenue as recommended in the 2023 Fee Study by Strategic Venue Solutions and authorized by the Fair Board.*
  - *Activate Fair Plaza in collaboration with campus partners to generate revenue to offset campus maintenance.*
  - *Increase outdoor event activations by reaching out to local promoters to market Fair Park, The Courtyard, and the speedway as potential concert/festival sites.*
  - *Reduce budget deficit in the fair business unit over the next 2 years:*
    - *reducing expenses by evaluating ROI on advertising and right-sizing the budget without risking attendance that would reduce revenue, utilizing existing equipment and fixtures reducing the need to purchase additional, install or construct permanent utilities that will reduce the expense of rental equipment.*
    - *increasing revenue by securing sponsorships and through collaboration/revenue share with campus partners to add a cornerstone event such as, but not limited to, a soccer game or concert.*
    - *Identify and secure agreement with 3<sup>rd</sup>-party outlet for advanced ticket sales*
    - *Continue to support efforts to secure dedicated and recurring State of Tennessee funding for TN fairs.*
    - *Request that Metro Council amend resolution RS2017-910 to authorize tax diversion funding to be used for operational funding for The Nashville Fair.*

## MANDATES

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### Mandates:

- Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, TN Charter, Article II, Fair Commissioners
- Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, TN Charter, Chapter 6, Metropolitan Board of Fair Commissioners
- Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, TN Code of Ordinances, Chapter 2.78, Board of Fair Commissioners

### Other Relevant Codes:

- TN Code § 4-57-106 (2012)

In 1909, a Board of Fair Commissioners was created to establish policy, rules and regulations for the governance of the fairgrounds and was given authority to produce a divisional fair. There were updates to the charter in 1923, 1927 and 1931 that detailed board membership, duties and exclusions.

In 2011, a public referendum added language to the Charter mandating that certain activities be conducted on the premises including:

- A divisional fair
- Expo events
- Flea market
- Auto racing

In addition, no demolition of the premises can occur without approval by ordinance receiving 27 votes of the Metropolitan Council or amendment to the Charter.

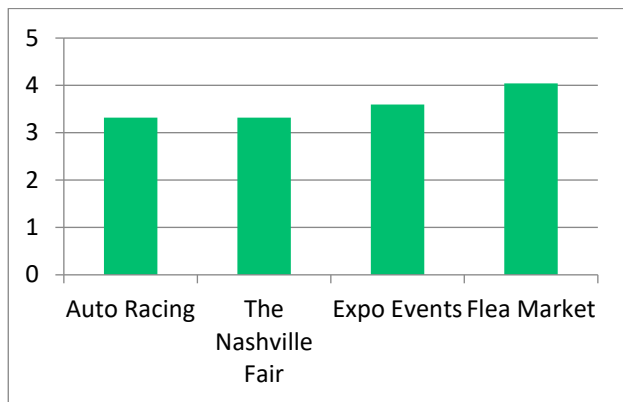




## COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

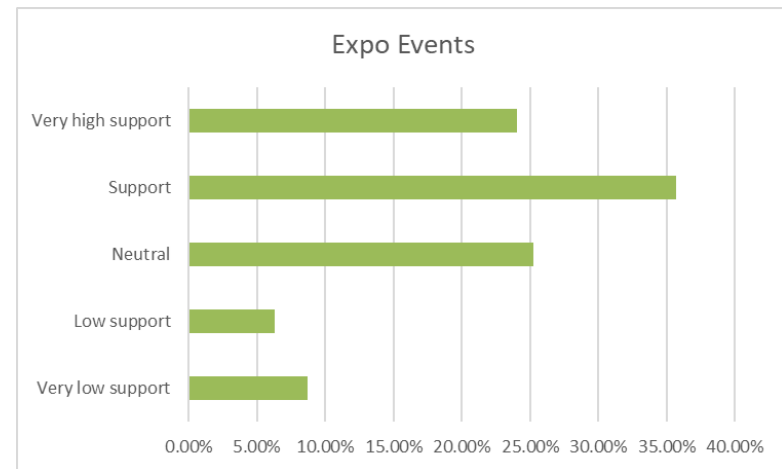
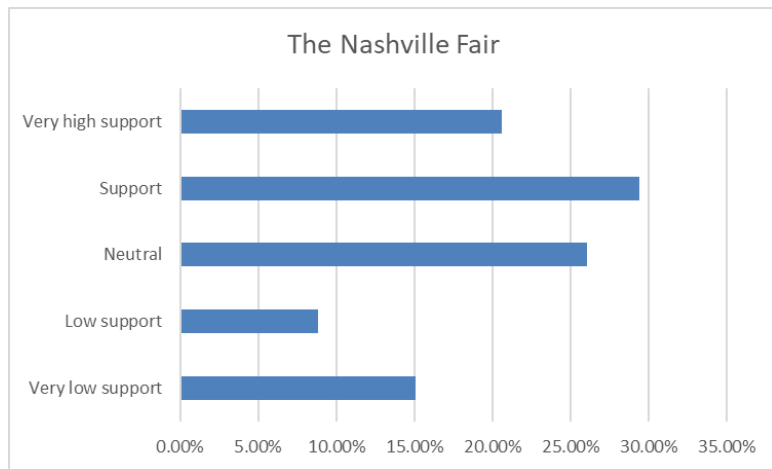
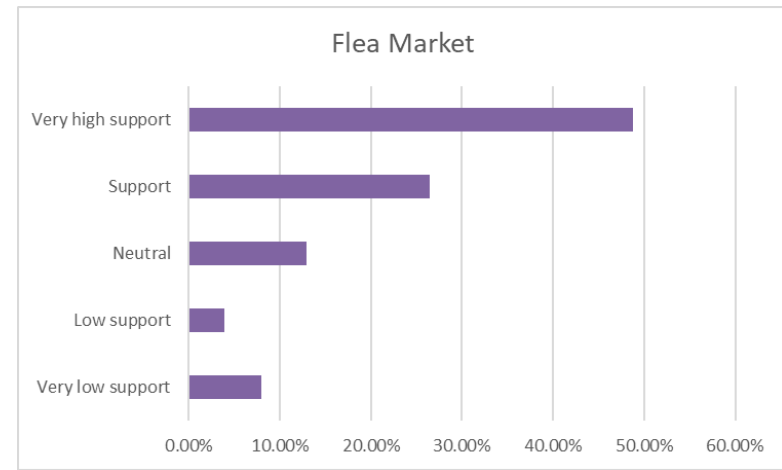
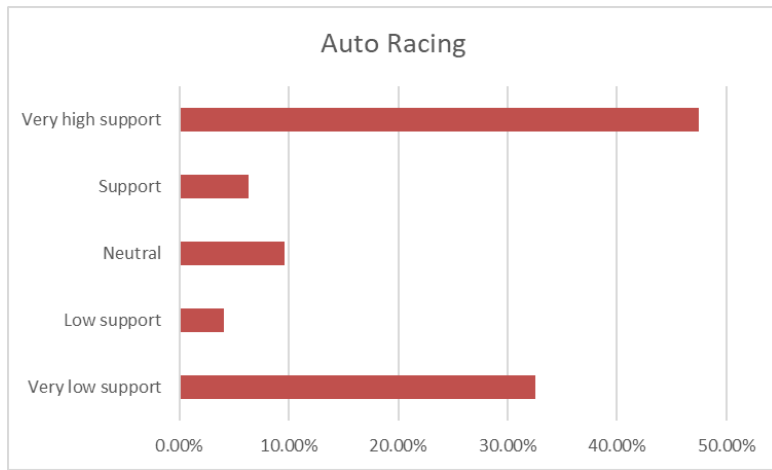
- Published October 14-31, 2024
- 533 responses

Support for charter-mandated activities (weighted average)

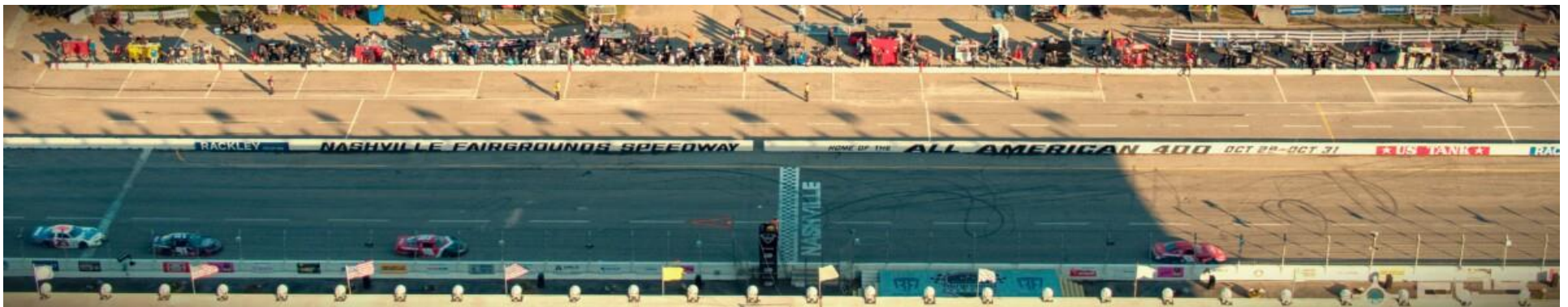
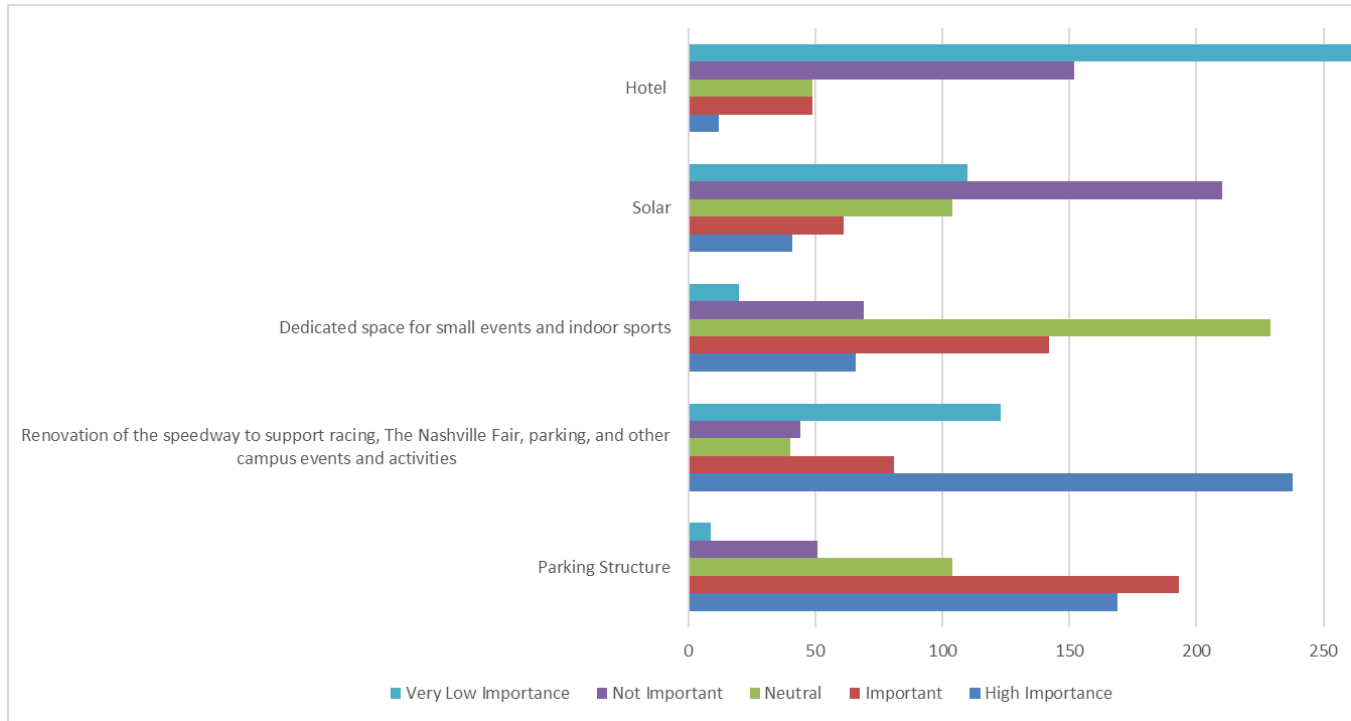


<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<b>Infrastructure Needs</b> (Parking, roadways and sidewalks, and transit)	<b>Development and Growth</b> (mixed-use potential and affordable housing and green space)
<b>Event Operations</b> (recruitment of vendors for the flea market, affordable fee structures for vendors and visitors, balancing speedway renovations vs. removal with community sentiment)	<b>Event Diversification</b> (expanding expo events and markets to attract diverse audiences, investing in advertising for the flea market to increase attendance and vendor participation)
<b>Community Dynamics</b> (concerns about gentrification and potential displacement of nearby residents, mixed opinions on soccer and related developments)	<b>Enhanced Accessibility</b> (improving transit connectivity and reducing neighborhood congestion)
<b>Government and Politics</b> (navigating political challenges around speedway decisions and neighborhood impacts)	<b>Community Engagement</b> (strengthen ties with Nashville SC and other stakeholders, leveraging positive sentiment about improvements and the Fairgrounds' future)

## Level of support for each Charter-mandated activity



# Ranking of potential capital improvements



Planning Team:

Laura Womack, Executive Director  
Diego Eguiarte, Board of Fair Commissioners  
Clifton Peay, Director of Performance Management, Mayor's Office

Board of Fair Commissioners:

Jasper Hendricks, Chair  
Todd Hartley, Vice-Chair  
Diego Eguiarte, Commissioner  
Anthony Owens, Commissioner  
Vacant, Commissioner

Special thanks and recognition for their support:

Employees of The Fairgrounds Nashville  
The Honorable Freddie O'Connell, 10<sup>th</sup> Mayor of the City of Nashville and Davidson County  
Terry Vo, Councilmember, 17<sup>th</sup> District



This document was adopted by the Metro Board of Fair Commissioners on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of April 2025.