Downtown Public Restrooms

A Public Health & Shared Infrastructure Model

October 27, 2026

Meet The Team

Project Team



Edward Henley III
Founding Principal



Atheeni Eacharath
Community Planning + Design Manager



Sam Milton
Community Development Strategist

Study Summary

Study Overview

The study is funded under an agreement with the State of Tennessee through the 2026 Downtown Public Safety Grant, which includes funding for resources dedicated to public health, sanitation, and community livability improvements.

The study is evaluating a public-private implementation model for providing public restroom access in Downtown Nashville. This evaluation of how public restrooms can be integrated into the mission of creating a clean, safe, active, and attractive downtown will be guided by an inclusive and transparent engagement process.

The engagement process will be ongoing, and summaries will be compiled into a final report. Our report will include recommendations informed by community input, operational considerations, and proven practices from peer cities with public restroom programs.

As the project partner and property owner, Metro Nashville will make the final decisions regarding the implementation and locations of public restroom facilities.





Study Elements

- Baseline Analysis & Community Kickoff
- Community Engagement & Guiding Principles
- Site Visits
- Plan Development
- Present Insights
- Review & Revise Plan
- Draft Report & Recommendations
- Revise & Finalize
- Publishing

Data Gathering & Guidance Phase

Analysis & Recommendation Phase

Publishing Phase

Study Schedule

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Background Analysis

- Community Outreach
- Site Visits

June - August 2026

Plan Development

- Site Visits
- Assessment of Environment / Inventory
- Accessibility and Infrastructure Considerations
- Impact / Synergy Considerations
- Operations Considerations

August - November 2026

Present Study Insights

- Present Findings to date
- Garner Additional Feedback
- Revisit and Revise Plan

October - November 2026

Draft Review

- Draft Segments of Report Made Available for Review and Comment

November - December 2026

Final Publishing

- Finalize Report
- Make Final Report Available

December 2026

Engagements

Engagement Snapshot

Public Meetings / Presentations

Online Survey

Popup Events

Site Visits

Stakeholder Interviews

Online Survey

- Gained perspective from downtown business owners, public officials, advocacy organizations, and downtown residents

Popup Events

- Riverfront Park, Downtown Neighbors Association, The District

Site Visits (Precedent Research)

- Evaluated public restroom facilities in 5 different cities: **Washington D.C., Austin, San Antonio, Cincinnati, Columbus**
- Sites selected based on similar access to entertainment districts, proximity to a major riverway, usage of Portland Loo facilities, and facilities in parks and urban streetscapes

Stakeholder Interviews

- Gained perspective from downtown business owners, public officials, advocacy organizations, and downtown residents

Public Survey Data

200+ Total Respondents (10/27)

- Average rating of public restroom availability downtown: **2 out of 5 stars**
- High percentage of respondents using the restroom at restaurants, bars, coffee shops, and hotels while downtown.
- Cleanliness and regular maintenance, safety and security listed as top priorities to consider for new public restroom facilities.

"More bathrooms with clear signage"

"More readily available restrooms in the most congested areas"

"I would like to see restrooms about every three blocks from each other…"

"Once more bathrooms are installed, I would provide a clear map or downtown restroom app."

Insights

Site Visits

Site visits included visiting five different cities with Portland Loo restrooms and analyzing them.

Key Takeaways

Park Space vs Urban Streetscape

- San Antonio has most restrooms placed in or near local parks throughout the city, while Columbus and Austin each prioritized restrooms in urban areas adjacent to major thoroughfares. Cincinnati, placed a restroom at a major pedestrian destination.

Restroom Designs / Amenities

- Columbus prioritized having visually appealing restrooms, with art and plants included in the design. They also had tampon and paper towel dispensers at the restroom facility.

Maintenance & Signage

- Most restroom units were in good condition, but some were closed for maintenance without signage to indicate how long they would be out of order.
- Several facilities had signage that provided information on events, services, and ways to report any issues with the restroom.



Stakeholder Interviews

Downtown Business Owners

- Businesses concerned with having public restrooms placed too close to their storefronts; concerns include safety and smells
- Businesses see the need for public restrooms and would rather not have the responsibility of being the default restroom option downtown
- Recommend placing public restrooms in well-lit, pedestrian-heavy locations; ideas include Broadway corridor, Riverfront Park, the pedestrian bridge area, and Walk of Fame Park

Advocacy Organizations

- Believe that consideration of dignity and basic human need are essential to the plan; public restrooms should be welcoming to all
- Longer hours and more overall access is necessary – mention that existing public restrooms are locked, have inconsistent hours/availability and are often restricted to certain populations
- Encourage gathering input from the unhoused population downtown or people with lived experience

Public Officials

- Express the importance of a contingency plan if a public/private partnership goes awry; ensure that operational responsibility is clear
- Prioritize safety, cleanliness and accessible locations

Current Restrooms Downtown

Public (Listed by Metro Nashville)

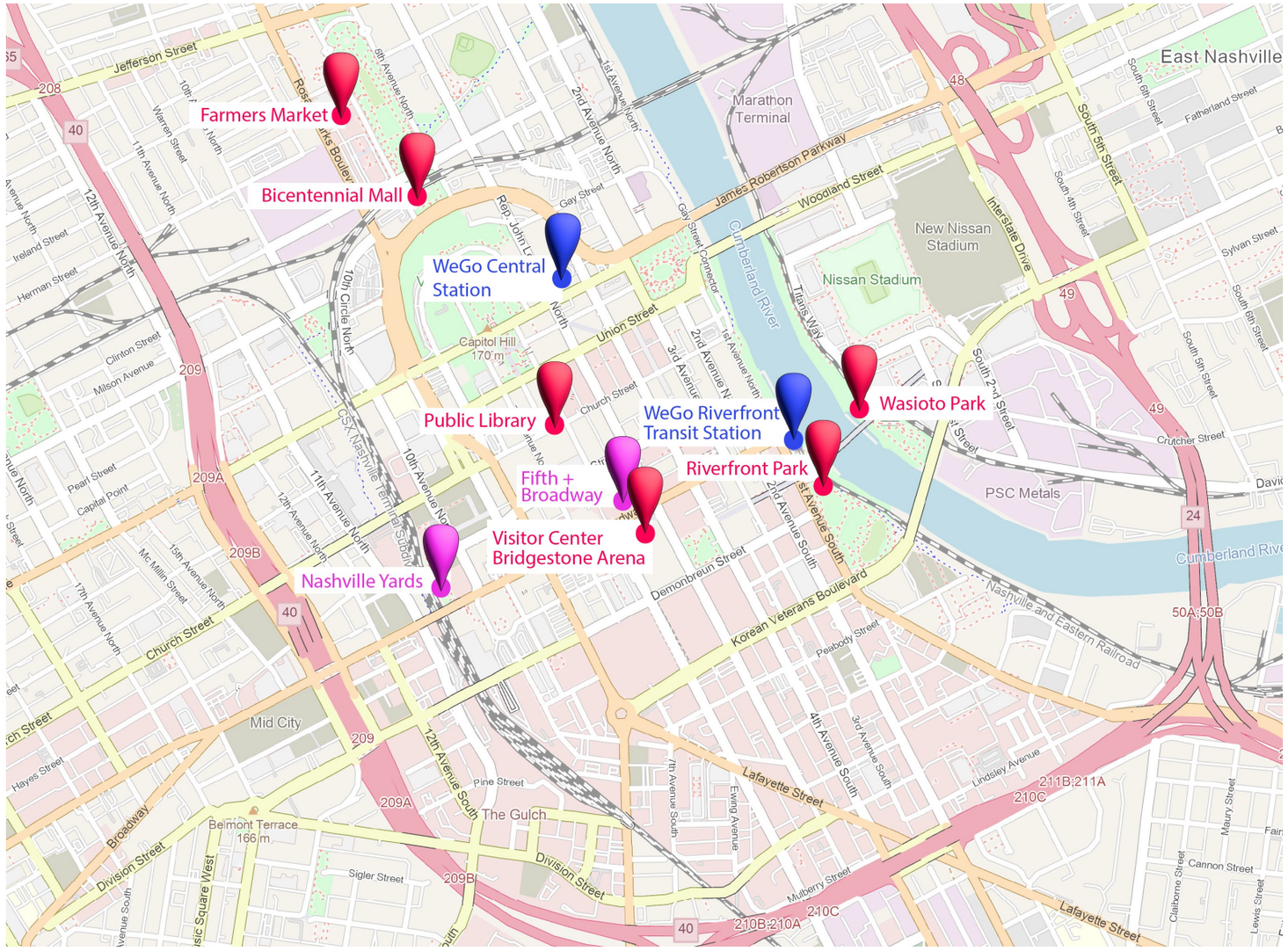
- Nashville Farmer's Market – 900 Rosa Parks Blvd
- Visitor's Center at Bridgestone Arena (often locked)
- Public Library
- Wasioto Park (often locked)
- Bicentennial Mall
- Riverfront Park (locked)

Semi-Public (WeGo)

- WeGo transit stations

Private (Still available for public use)

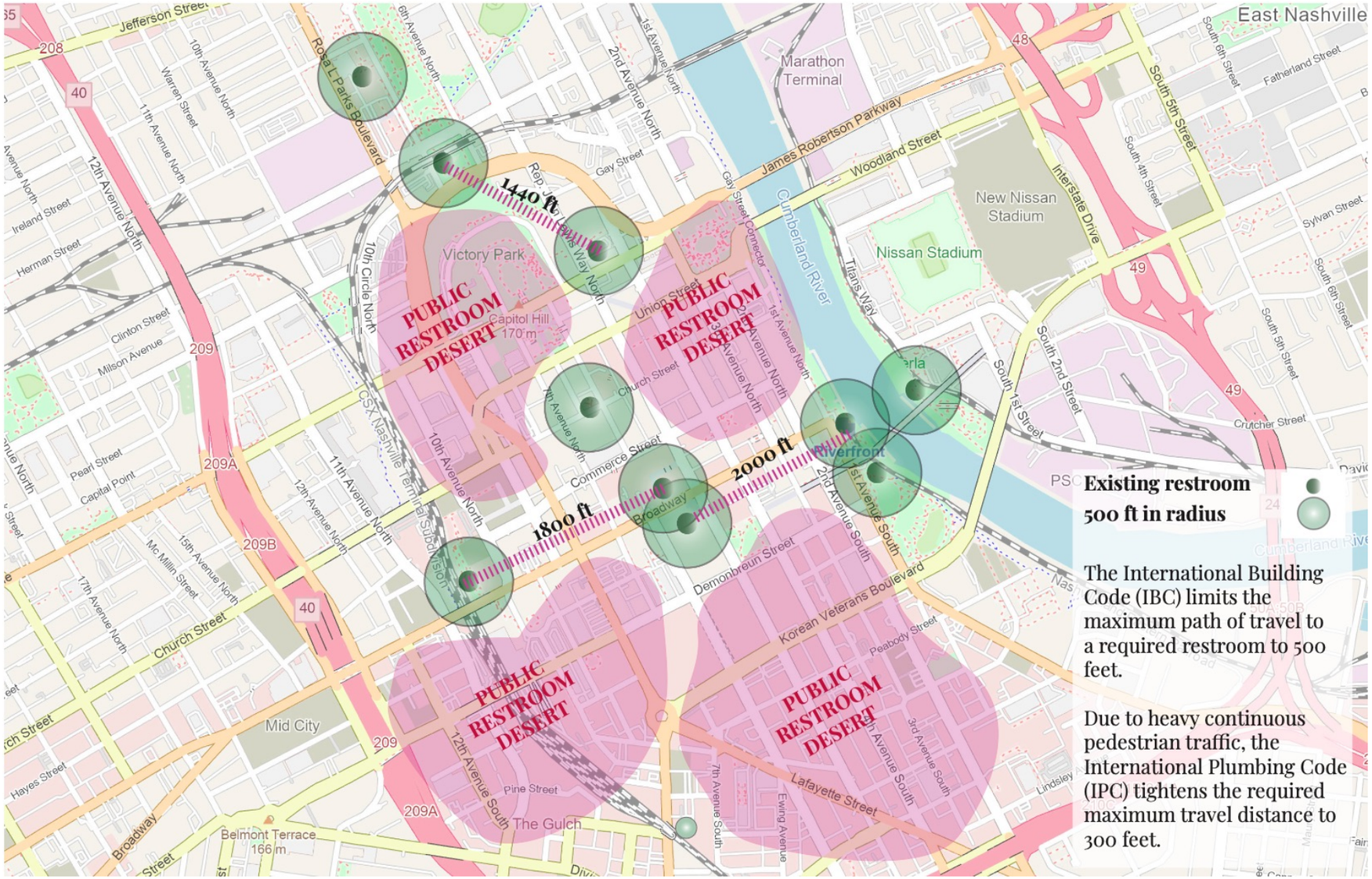
- Fifth + Broadway
- Nashville Yards



Current Restrooms Downtown

Restroom Facilities that are available during the day.

- Mostly starting after 8 or 9 am
- Mostly closed after 5 or 6 pm
- While hours may be posted, not all facilities are reliably available during those hours.
- Some locations are closed often or indefinitely.



Current Restrooms Downtown

Restroom facilities that are available during evening and night.

- Only two (2) locations.
- Several instances where visitors have stated that they must plan to stay near *Fifth + Broadway,* as it is is the only downtown area with reliable public restroom access.



Initial Recommendations

Key Considerations

Visible Locations

- Consensus around having public restroom facilities in higher-visibility, well-lit areas for both safety and ease of access purposes
- Consensus that Riverfront Park is a good option for a restroom location
- Additional and effective signage for where new and existing restrooms are is important to all stakeholders

New Facilities vs Updating Existing Infrastructure

- How viable / suitable are some of the existing restrooms for increased operations and improvements?
- What percentage of the grant funding should be allocated to new restroom infrastructure vs. existing restrooms in place (Ex. Bridgestone Arena / Visitors Center, Riverfront Park, Bridge Building)?

Unhoused Population Access to Restrooms

- Important to consider how to balance needs for restroom accessibility and availability with safety / security concerns. Prioritize the health and social benefits of restroom availability in decision making.

Oversight Responsibility

- Important to delineate responsibilities between NDP and Metro when it comes to restrooms placed in parks and on public property - - contingency plans if restrooms are (re)moved or operations are modified as grant funding ends.
- Well thought-out program for installation, servicing and securing facilities, including any actions needed associated with improper use, damages, maintenance, or funding that would remove a facility from service.

Initial Recommendations

Accessibility for All

- Important to consider how to cater restroom infrastructure to all communities - residents, visitors, the unhoused population, those with disabilities, people with medical conditions, and all age groups.
- Certain areas in downtown Nashville are “public restroom deserts”. This should be accounted for when determining where to place new public restroom locations to ensure a more even and impactful distribution.
- Consider improvements and increased operations to existing facilities. Upgrades / amenities should strive for inclusivity and greater accessibility.

Operations and Maintenance

- Consistent monitoring and maintenance are essential to restroom facility upkeep and is expressly supported by the community.
- New facilities will have extended hours of operation and adjust existing public restroom hours of operation - heavy foot traffic downtown occurs outside of currently offered hours.
- Cleaning and monitoring will need to be prioritized to ensure the optimum experience for public restroom users. This has been achieved by dedicated funding for, and well coordinated staff or contractors, performing and presenting a consistent presence related to the public restrooms.

Initial Recommendations

Funding Strategies

- Public / private partnerships could enhance the impact of downtown public restroom access. Prominent local businesses and faith-based organizations have expressed willingness to support this effort.
- Delineating and budgeting out responsibilities is essential (Metro, NDP), and planning for initial costs and operations should be prioritized.
- Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), or other grants could be options to allocate future funding beyond current grant funding.

Branding and Awareness

- The public restroom facilities are an opportunity to showcase Nashville's character by having local artists design murals on restroom facilities. This creates a sense of integration into the urban landscape.
- Facilities can provide access to local resources via signage and QR codes for the community be informed and empowered report any maintenance needs and safety concerns.
- A dedicated resource, landing page or application, for downtown Nashville's public restroom facilities should be developed. The lack of awareness for current public restroom facilities should be a thing of the past.

Questions?

Next Steps

- Continuing **Public Engagement**
  - Sign in if you haven't already
  - Visit each of the stations this evening
  - Share any comments with us

- Collecting Feedback in the **Online Survey**
  - Complete the survey if you haven't already
  - Please share with your network and encourage others to complete the survey by November 5th

- Developing the **Draft Report**
  - Available in November for review and comments



Scan the QR Code to go to the Public Restroom Study webpage