



NASHVILLE CIVIC DESIGN CENTER

# EDGEHILL NEIGHBORHOOD

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2003

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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AREA OF STUDY

Overview of Edgehill neighborhood and surroundings



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the request of the Organized Neighbors of Edgehill (ONE) the Nashville Civic Design Center conducted a study of the Edgehill Neighborhood. The study area is to the south of The Gulch, north of Wedgwood Ave., west of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and east of the alley separating Villa Place and 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. ONE specifically requested the Civic Design Center to:

"Establish and maintain an identity and character as a strong, diverse, and viable neighborhood within the community, and determine its relevance to the surrounding neighborhoods and the city at large by:

- Maintaining a strong, viable community that continues to promote its historical diversity through its culture, economy and social structure.
- Mitigate commercial encroachment and zoning conflicts.
- Suggest options for retail and community services for the neighborhood.
- Improve traffic engineering and consider the use of traffic calming techniques.
- Develop affordable housing that adds to the unique character of the neighborhood.
- Assist residents in developing a unified vision for the neighborhood."<sup>1</sup>

A series of community meetings were organized to establish what the neighborhood perceived as the concerns and desires for the present and future of Edgehill. In addition, the advanced course in urban design taught at the Civic Design Center focused on the neighborhood as its research subject. Five public meetings were conducted in the Edgehill neighborhood; four at the E.S.Rose Community Center and one at the I.W. Gernert Homes Community Room. Two public meetings were conducted at the Civic Design Center. Personal interviews and archival research augmented the information gathered at the public meetings.

The Nashville Civic Design Center makes the following recommendations for the Edgehill Neighborhood:

- Redesign 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, through the Edgehill neighborhood, to become a pedestrian friendly boulevard.
- Encourage commercial and mixed-use development at the intersection of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Edgehill Avenue to create a strong "Neighborhood Center".
- Utilize, improve, and capitalize upon the numerous community assets.
- Reestablish an urban neighborhood scale retail and commercial uses along 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South.
- Hold future public housing revitalization programs to a high level of design and construction accountability.
- Introduce plans and programs that reduce the risk of encroachment and gentrification.
- Reestablish the network of streets, alleys and paths within the neighborhood, returning, where possible, to the historic street grid.
- Implement Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Principles listed in appendix C.

*Aerial of Edgehill neighborhood*



This booklet contains detailed information explaining and illustrating these recommendations. The following pages outline each issue that was raised during the community meetings, explaining information that was obtained through research by the Civic Design Center, and expands upon the recommendations given to the neighborhood.

## EXECUTIVE OUTLINE

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### FINDINGS:

1. 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South is a major concern for the neighborhood.

##### Our Studies found:

- The design of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South is that of an urban arterial.
- Traffic counts do not justify the layout and width of the avenue.<sup>2</sup>
- The presence of a turn lane along 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue S. between Edgehill Avenue and Horton Avenue, even though there are no places to turn.
- Residents feel that intersections and crossings are difficult.
- Low visual appeal.
- "12 South" and "The Gulch" projects have, or will receive significant street improvements, yet Edgehill, which lies along 12<sup>th</sup>, between both neighborhoods, has not seen comparable street improvements.

2. The Heart of the neighborhood is the intersection of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Edgehill Avenue.

##### Our study found:

- This intersection is also the physical center of the neighborhood
- The center is within a 1/2-mile walking distance to all parts of the neighborhood.
- The "Neighborhood Center" has a variety of uses: schools, park, grocery store, convenience store, and public housing.

3. Numerous community assets were pointed out as symbols of neighborhood pride: the Polar Bear Sculptures, E.S. Rose Park and Community Center,

Reservoir Park, the Edgehill Branch of the Nashville Public Library, the Edgehill Community Garden, I.W. Gernet Homes, the historic residential fabric and the long history as an African-American neighborhood. Although physically removed, Ft. Negley is also considered a community asset.

##### Our studies found:

- The Polar Bear Sculptures are a beloved and iconic symbol of the Edgehill neighborhood.
- Edgehill is a neighborhood with numerous parks and green spaces, unrivaled by many Nashville neighborhoods.
- E.S. Rose Park has magnificent potential as a public space, though currently it is not defined sufficiently.
- Reservoir Park is an underutilized resource.
- The Edgehill Branch Library is well utilized by the neighborhood.
- The vacant lot behind the Edgehill Branch Library, adjacent to Murrell School and the community garden, is designated to become a new community park.

4. The neighborhood lacks minimum necessary retail and commercial facilities.

##### Our study found:

- A lack of retail and commercial uses generally associated with a neighborhood of this size.
- A rich historical precedent of commercial and mixed-use density previously located along 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. S. and South Street.

5. Public housing and other non-ownership housing dominates the neighborhood.

##### Our study found:

- The ratio of owned homes to rented homes to be out of balance with good community design standards.

6. Residents are concerned about physical and economic encroachment.

##### Our study found:

- Adjacent districts and educational institutions have tried to change zoning laws to allow for expansion.
- The current tendency of the real estate market in Nashville is to gentrify neighborhoods like Edgehill, and inflate property taxes.

7. The network of streets is discontinuous and confusing in certain areas.

##### Our study found:

- There are several opportunities to reopen streets, making the network more coherent and logical.
- Street closings that were originally intended to keep Edgehill residents from accessing Music Row, now serve the opposite function, preventing cut-through traffic and protecting the neighborhood.

8. Crime is a mainly a localized problem within the neighborhood.

##### Our Studies found:

- Crime occurs in areas that correspond to poor urban design standards.

## EXECUTIVE OUTLINE

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

After conducting public input and consulting with the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency, the Office of the Mayor, transportation engineers, the Metro Planning Department, Metro Public Works, Affordable Housing Resources, and Bank of America CDC, the Nashville Civic Design Center makes the following recommendations:

1. Modify 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South through Edgehill to become a pedestrian friendly boulevard.

- Create design guidelines related to architectural types and building placement that reinforces the role of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South as the neighborhood "Main Street."
- Reconfigure 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South to allow for on-street parking and bicycle lanes during off peak hours. Peak hour travel can be accommodated through flexible use of the roadway.
- Realign necessary intersections and signals to create greater ease of use for pedestrians.
- Create a planted median along 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South.
- Install lighting and landscaping that is consistent with the designs for "12South" and "The Gulch."
- Upgrade Edgehill Avenue between 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South using similar design guidelines as those along 12th.

2. Concentrate initial commercial and mixed-use development at the intersection of 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Edgehill Avenue, creating a strong "Neighborhood Center".

- The Edgehill neighborhood should work with the Metro Planning Department to create

a Detailed Neighborhood Design Plan that reflects the recommendations of this report.

- Focus federal, state, and local funds to strengthen the "Neighborhood Center" concept.

3. The numerous community assets should be utilized, improved, and capitalized upon.

- Incorporate the Polar Bears into the new Edgehill Community Park or a similar setting appropriate to the scale and history of the statues.
- Make E.S. Rose Park more accessible and better defined by extending a low use road through the park. The edges of the park also need better definition.
- Expand the E.S. Rose Community Center to meet additional needs.
- Open more of reservoir Park to the public. Usage could be encouraged by offering community activities such as "movies in the park" or better playground equipment.
- The Edgehill Branch Library is an excellent resource; expand the library over time to accommodate community needs.
- Expand the library uses to an outdoor area in the adjacent Edgehill Community Park, where outdoor activities could take place.
- Coordinate community garden summer activities in conjunction with the library.
- Reconfigure I.W. Gernert homes over time to better define the public and semipublic spaces.

4. Reestablish urban neighborhood scale retail and commercial uses along 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, beginning with the intersection of 12th and Edgehill Neighborhood Center.

- Discard generic suburban designs in favor

of fine grained storefront traditional urban architecture.

- Do not allow off-street surface parking in front of buildings.

5. Require future public housing revitalization programs to maintain a high level of design/construction accountability.

- Develop economic assistance programs to aid in home ownership.
- Develop infill housing that is affordable, of good quality, and has an architectural style consistent with the neighborhood.
- Reconfigure or rebuild public housing with an architectural quality that contributes to the urban qualities of the neighborhood.
- Integrate future public housing with private housing.
- Require public housing units to remain consistent with the neighborhood's requirements
- Phase reconfiguration/rebuilding efforts of the public housing such that no one is displaced from the neighborhood.
- Require mixed-use development in future public housing reconfigurations.

6. Introduce plans and programs that reduce the risk of encroachment and gentrification.

- Adaptation of Alabama's Property Senior Tax Exemption Programs. Seniors over 65 who make under a certain level of income could be exempt or have their property tax rates frozen at current levels. This would reduce the possibility of seniors being forced to sell their homes because they cannot afford the increased property values.
- Expansion of Inclusionary Zoning Law

## EXECUTIVE OUTLINE

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

projects (ex. Row 8.9 Housing). Inclusionary zoning laws gives incentives to government or private developers to develop affordable properties for owners and renters earning less than 50 percent of the area's median income. As a result, these new developments typically include households earning a wide range of income.

- Mayor Purcell's HoPE Program (Home Ownership Preservation Effort) provides funding to homeowners whose income is less than 60% of the median income with houses valued less than \$125,000.
- Historic areas of Edgehill (Villa Place) could obtain a Historic Conservation Zoning Overlay to help prevent the demolition of historic homes. This overlay also governs additions and new construction, which might not fit the character of the neighborhood.
- Neighborhood Landmark Overlay could be used to protect important neighborhood buildings.
- Attending Metro Zoning and Planning Commission meetings and working closely with city council members is also highly recommended. This allows residents the opportunity to become aware of what is being proposed for their community, and also gives developers a chance to familiarize themselves with the specific development needs of the Edgehill Neighborhood.

7. Reestablish the network of streets, alleys and paths within the neighborhood, returning, where possible, to the historic street grid.

- Mega-blocks, created during Urban Renewal, should be reconfigured when housing types change.
- A pedestrian bridge connecting Edgehill to Ft. Negley should be considered.

8. Implement Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Principles listed in appendix C.)

- Buildings that do not promote the "eyes on the streets" concept should be reconfigured or replaced.
- High quality lighting should be standard throughout the neighborhood.
- Cul-de-sacs and discontinuous streets should be eliminated in certain areas within the neighborhood to eliminate pockets of crime.

<sup>1</sup> Taken from the Proposal Nomination Form submitted April 19, 2002 page 2.

<sup>2</sup> Metro Public Works conducted car counts showing a daily count of 14,385 cars on 12th Avenue South at Edgehill Avenue compared to 29,729 cars on 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. in Hillsboro Village's. 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue S. has much less design capacity than 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.