

CITY CHURCH
OF EAST NASHVILLE

*City Church of East Nashville seeks a candidate to fill the role of Lead Pastor
who is mature in his faith and sure of his calling to pastoral ministry.
He should be familiar with his own brokenness and treasure the abundant
grace found in the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

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EAST NASHVILLE

Fifteen years ago, urban ministry pioneer Robert Lupton published a book called “And You Call Yourself a Christian” (later renamed “Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life”). At the time the book was written, Lupton was living through rapid gentrification in urban Atlanta. Areas of the city that had been poverty stricken for years suddenly became desirable for affluent urbanites, complete with coffee shops, hip bars, and half-million dollar homes. Crime went down, but as the wealthy moved in, poor and middle-class residents that had lived in these areas for years, even decades, were displaced as property values throughout the core of the city skyrocketed. It is into this context that Lupton’s book explores the question of how a Christian should respond to the realities of this change. This book could have been written about East Nashville.

GEOGRAPHY

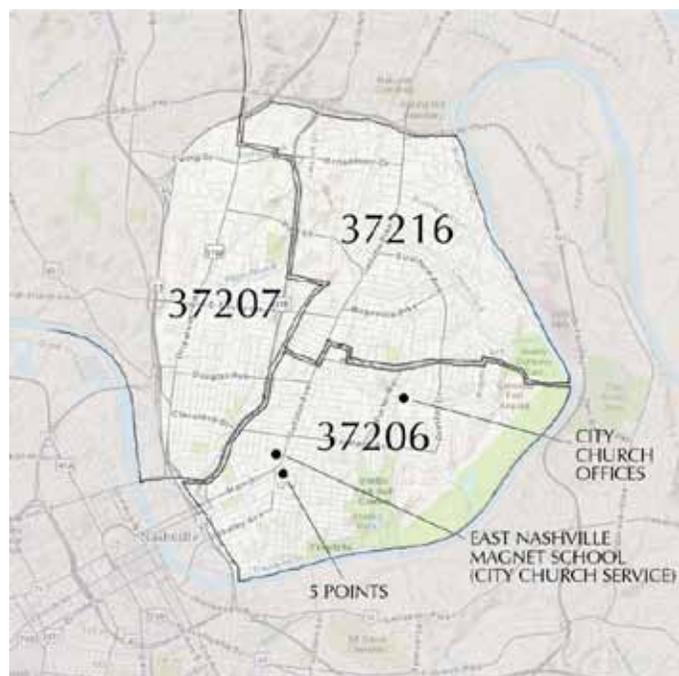
BOUNDARIES

You’ll never see a sign welcoming you to East Nashville. There are signs that say “Welcome to Inglewood” or “Historic Edgefield”, but there is no way to tell when you have actually entered East Nashville. That’s because it’s never been a defined neighborhood. East Nashville is really a large region of Nashville composed of about 20 smaller neighborhoods, many of which used to be their own municipality. The heart of East Nashville is the 37206 zip code, but most governmental organizations and residents include the 37216 and part of the 37207 zip codes. What is clear is that the Cumberland River forms the boundary to the south and east. The northern and western boundaries are usually defined as Briley Parkway and the interstate, respectively.

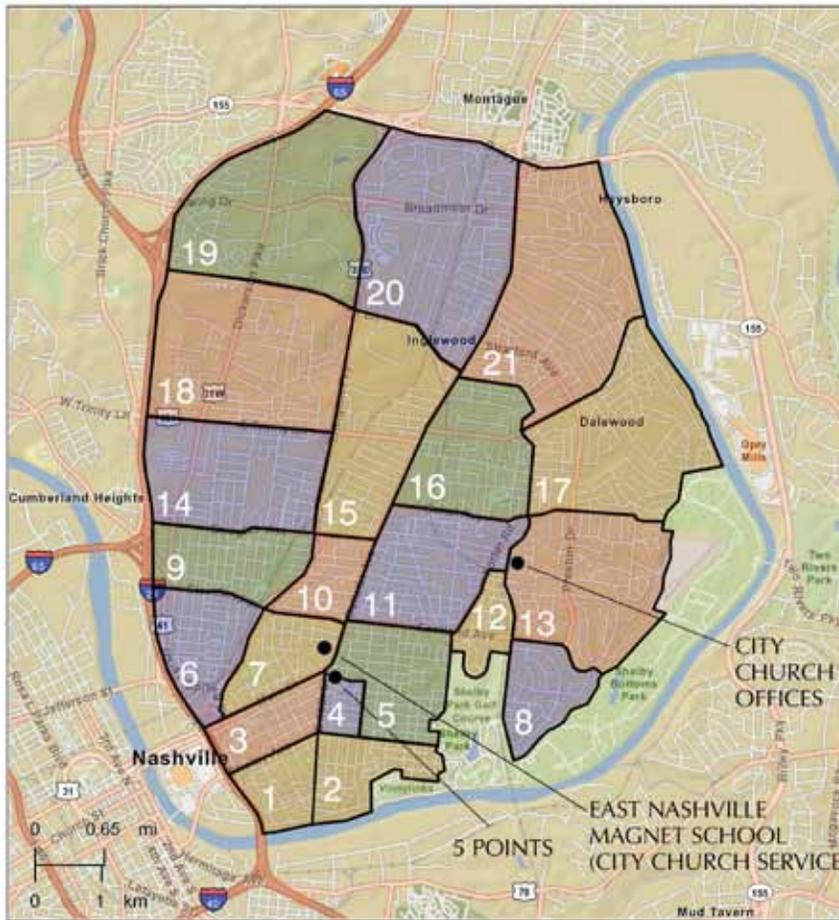
NEIGHBORHOODS

The best description of this region would be urban residential. It’s not “inner city,” given that the river separates East Nashville from the high rises of downtown, but it is certainly not suburban given its close proximity to the center of the city. And while there are some condos, townhomes, and apartment buildings, most residents live in single-family homes, complete with a yard and probably a dog or two!

There is a unified feeling of living in East Nashville, but the area is really a collection of neighborhoods, and many residents identify themselves even more specifically by their neighborhood. It is hard to generalize about East Nashville because the neighborhoods are so distinctive; each neighborhood has its own personality, demographics, and authority.



For example, Historic Edgefield is one of only two neighborhoods in metro Nashville that has the strictest possible historical overlay, whereas other East Nashville neighborhoods don't have any sort of historical building/renovation guidelines at all. Inglewood was its own municipality until 1963 and has a very residential feel, with rolling hills and ranch houses. Lockeland Springs was annexed into the city much earlier (1905) and has 1920's bungalows and an exciting nightlife. There are many active neighborhood associations that have significant influence, while there are other areas that have no unified representation at all. There is also the 64-acre, 2,400 resident James Cayce public housing project that immediately greets visitors as they exit the interstate and enter East Nashville.



1. Cayce Housing Project
2. Shelby Hills
3. Historic Edgefield
4. East End
5. Lockeland Springs
6. Cleveland Park
7. Maxwell Heights
8. Fortland Park
9. McFerrin Park
10. Greenwood Neighbors
11. Eastwood Neighbors
12. Rolling Acres
13. Rosebank
14. Highland Heights
15. East Hill
16. South Inglewood
17. South Inglewood
18. Talbot's Corner
19. Gra-mar Acres
20. Inglewood
21. Inglewood

HISTORY

To say that East Nashville has had an unstable demographic over the past 130 years is an understatement. East Nashville was an affluent area in the late 1800's - so much so that Edgefield was described as Nashville's most exclusive suburb. Even though currently East Nashville is often described as "urban," it began as an ideal location for residential development because the river offered a buffer from the hustle and bustle of downtown. Sidewalks connected residents with schools, parks, churches and other cultural amenities, which were all within walking distance. The strength of community made East Nashville an ideal and desirable place to reside. Then everything changed. A devastating fire (1916) and tornado (1933) destroyed many of the homes. Vanderbilt University made the decision not to build on the east side of the river (the land was cheaper on the west side – this is not true today). A massive low-income housing complex (Cayce) was built in the 1940's, bringing in thousands of poor residents and all of the problems associated with concentrated poverty. The combination of these factors (among other things) prompted the exodus of many of the residents to the west side of the river and led to decades of decline.

What had once been a prosperous and flourishing community was now plagued by high levels of poverty, crime, and a pervasive sense of despair. Yet, the infrastructure (sidewalks, Victorian homes, schools, churches, parks, etc.), the proximity to downtown, and the community feel of East Nashville made it prime for revitalization. Starting in the 1970's, urban pioneers, artists, and lovers of historic homes started moving back into the neighborhood. But it wasn't just individuals. City planners had East Nashville on their radar as an area ready and necessary to be revitalized if Nashville was to become a world-class city. Even now, the plans for the east side of the river are lofty and expansive. After another tornado swept through East Nashville in 1998, the city created a design to "not merely repair the damage caused by the tornado" but to "make East Nashville better than it has ever been" (R/UDAT – "A Plan for Nashville").

COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

DIVERSITY AND AUTHENTICITY

"The two greatest treasures that East Nashville offers are its diversity and authenticity. Throughout the nation, new 'neo-traditional' communities are being planned and developed in the hopes of replicating the feeling that this community offers. As one walks through the community, one is impressed by the sidewalks, the historic homes, and the grand vistas to downtown. The wonderful neighborhood retail corners in Edgefield, Lockeland Springs, and other East Nashville communities provide an amenity for residents that have all but disappeared from other urban neighborhoods. This community offers a rich variety of housing types where a person could move in as a single, marry, raise children, watch them grow old, and retire, all without leaving East Nashville" (R/UDAT – "A Plan for Nashville").

Nashville and specifically East Nashville has received a lot of press recently, and the majority of these articles highlight the trendy side of the city (*the New York Times* called us "a neighborhood thick with hipsters"). It's true that one should not trivialize the amount of creative talent in East Nashville, but that only paints part of the picture. There certainly are yuppies, hipsters, musicians, farm-to-table restaurants, organic grocery stores, vinyl record shops, and an inordinate amount of people who sit in coffee shops all day. But East Nashville's population reflects a broad mix of races, ages, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and income levels. The businesses and organizations display that diversity as well.

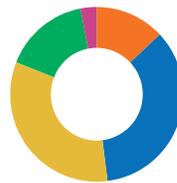
The fashionable people and places highlighted in magazine articles co-exist with teachers, blue-collar workers, engineers, entrepreneurs, retirees, the unemployed, used tire shops, payday loan stores, an auto-diesel college, and a Wal-Mart. You can attend St. Ann’s Episcopal Church, First Church of the Nazarene, Holy Cross Catholic Church, Tulip Street Methodist, or The Powerhouse Christian Center - five radically different congregations all within three blocks of each other. Lunch might be hot chicken (a Nashville original), BBQ, sushi, French-American fusion, or Burger King. You can purchase steak at Porter Road Butcher for \$20 a pound, you can shop at two different Krogers, or you can get five packages of meat for \$19.99 at Bill Martin’s Food Store. East Nashville has rightly been described as a “town within a city.”

Note: Our data focuses on the 37206 zip code since it is the heart of East Nashville, the geographic location of City Church and about 50% of its members, and the epicenter of the changes that are redefining East Nashville.



CURRENT POPULATION
27,445

WHITE	14,435 (53%)
BLACK	10,765 (39%)
OTHER	2,245 (8%)



HOUSEHOLD INCOME
(ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME)

LESS THAN \$10K	13%
\$10 – 35 K	35%
\$35 – 75K	33%
\$75 – 150K	16%
MORE THAN \$150K	3%



AGE (2010 CENSUS DATA)

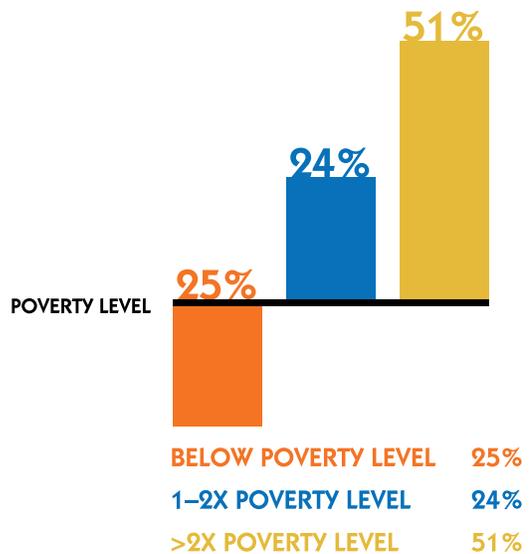
19 & YOUNGER	26%
20 – 29	19%
30-39	17%
40-49	14%
50-59	12%
60 & OLDER	12%



MARITAL STATUS (AGE 15+)

NEVER MARRIED	41%
MARRIED	37%
DIVORCED	15%
WIDOWED	7%

HOUSEHOLD COMPARED TO FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL
(\$22,350 FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR 2011)



Income, race, and age are only the beginnings of the diversity. Perhaps the most diverse part is the variety of beliefs. From the suburbs, East Nashville looks like an extremely liberal, progressive neighborhood. While it would be correct to generalize that Democrats usually win elections (this is true for Davidson County in general) and that there is a liberal bend on social issues such as sexuality, environmental sustainability, and social justice, it would be overreaching to say that all East Nashvillians identify as liberal/progressive. While the exact distribution of beliefs is unknown, suffice it to say that ideologies and lifestyles span the spectrum, and East Nashvillians proudly embrace their differences.

POVERTY AND CRIME

Even as the above data highlights remarkable diversity within East Nashville, it also reveals a major problem: a significant portion of the population lives at or near poverty. Combine that with the fact that 23% of East Nashvillians age 25 or older have no high school degree or equivalent, and you have a notable segment of the population that is barely getting by. This bondage to poverty has led to crime rates in the area that are significantly and consistently higher than national averages.

The positive side is that there is a downward trend of criminal activity in East Nashville and in Nashville in general. Neighborhoods have become more vigilant in reporting incidents of crime and monthly East Nashville crime watch meetings are open to the community to discuss ways to sustain the current trend. In 2012, crime in East Nashville was down 35% from 2004 levels. On top of that, crime dropped 24% in the past year alone. However, East Nashville still has a relatively high crime rate, and a significant amount occurs in the Cayce housing projects.

JAMES A. CAYCE HOMES

It is impossible to have a conversation about East Nashville and its future without discussing the James A. Cayce Homes. Built between 1941 and 1954, at a time when housing projects were hailed as a good solution to poverty, the Cayce Homes accommodate 2,400 residents in 710 rental units on 64 acres. It's the largest public housing project in Nashville, and its residents struggle even when compared to residents of other public housing projects.

- 65% of residents age 18 to 61 are unemployed
- Average annual household income is \$6,175
- 90% of households are headed by a single female
- 44% of adults lack a high school diploma
- 4 times more aggravated assaults per 1000 than the Davidson County average

For 60 years, the Cayce Homes have been a significant part of the East Nashville landscape, but that is all about to change. The future of Cayce is being discussed in the form of a very large-scale redevelopment plan that has created both excitement and apprehension. Certain crowds recognize the extremely high value of the land and the potential created by the surrounding growth. However, residents and others in the community fear that massive change will bring about a completely new dynamic, one void of the residents that have called Cayce home for so long. Promises are being made of a true mixed-income community, but the future is unknown. The reality is that not even the largest public housing project in Nashville is immune to the pressure of gentrification happening all around East Nashville.

GENTRIFICATION

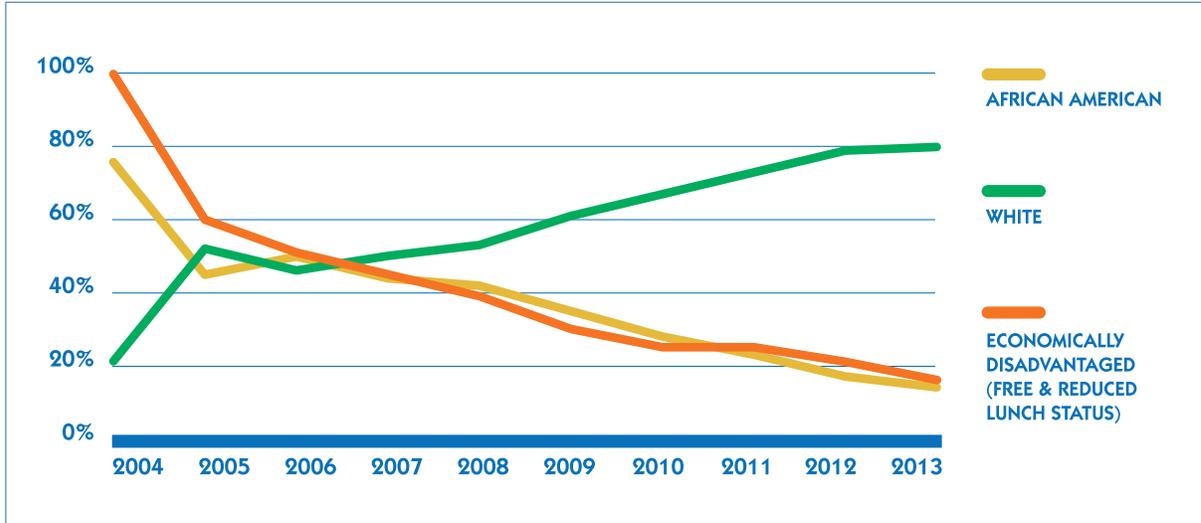
Great neighborhoods with affordable rent attract creative, entrepreneurial types – and once that happens, those neighborhoods rarely stay affordable. It happened this way in East Nashville. Affordable rent in a neighborhood with huge potential attracted artists, musicians, and other creative types to the east side in the early 1990s. Other Nashvillians visited the Radio Café or the Slow Bar, caught the vibe, and started moving in. Restaurants, music venues, art galleries, and other cool ventures started opening. Developers sensed what was happening and started buying houses for cheap. Landlords sold or rented their properties for far more than they had ever dreamed. Soon people from out of town heard about what was going on and started moving in. Fast forward 10 years, and you have the East Nashville of 2014.

TENSION

What's the issue? Isn't this a good thing? Home prices go up, businesses move in, crime goes down - all good things. But can socioeconomic diversity survive the process of gentrification? More pointedly, do the new residents find diversity valuable enough to be maintained? An example is Lockeland Design Center, a public elementary school right in the heart of 37206.

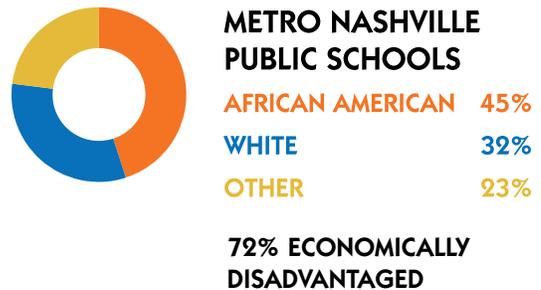
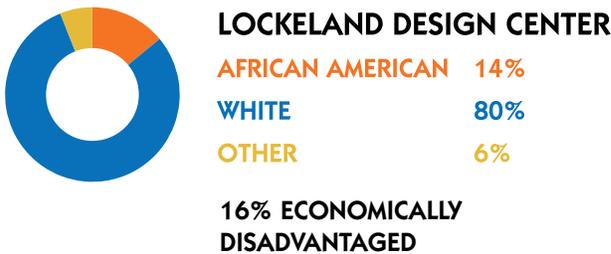
Schools in East Nashville have a bad reputation. Many of them are failing, unsafe, and falling apart. One beacon of hope for residents with small children has been Lockeland Design Center. After many years of teetering on failure, it has become perhaps the best elementary school in Nashville. In fact, for the last 2 years it was given "Reward" school status for being in the top 5% in the state. Teachers are creative and held to high expectations. Students are involved in the neighborhood, and art and physical fitness are stressed right along side the core subject areas. Parents are involved and have worked very hard to make this a great school. For good reason, almost every family with a child in the priority zone tries to get them into this school. But this is not just a story about an improving school; a closer look tells the story of a changing neighborhood as well.

LOCKELAND DESIGN CENTER DEMOGRAPHICS



Note: Test score data is not included because a radical shift in scoring has made pre-2009 and post-2009 data impossible to compare.

The factors that lead to a failing or successful school are multifaceted and complicated. Even how success or failure is determined is controversial. But it is impossible to ignore the almost complete demographic shift over the past 10 years and the corresponding improvement in test results. As LDC moved from a majority African American/low income school to a majority white/affluent population, the school went from having mediocre or poor scores to earning statewide recognition. So did the school get better, or did its population change?



Also, note the striking contrast between the demographics of this school and that of the school district in general. This should raise the question: how can a public school in a neighborhood that is racially and economically diverse not reflect that diversity? One big part of the answer is real estate.

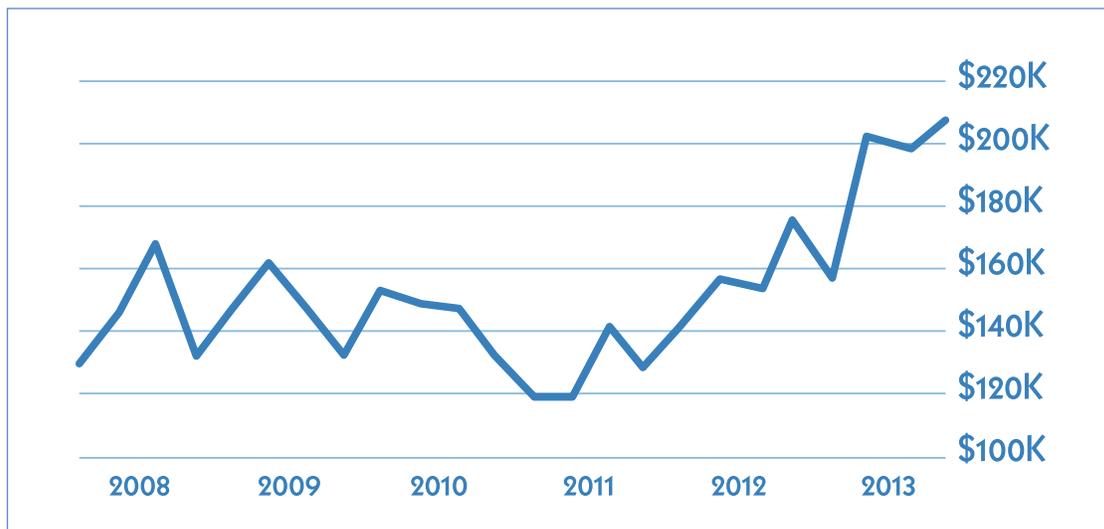
REAL ESTATE

In early 2013, there was a tiny abandoned duplex by Shelby Park in Lockeland Springs. The windows were boarded, the doors were kicked in and the “unfit for human habitation” sign was covered with graffiti. One day, the house was demolished and replaced with a real estate sign. In an off-the-record conversation, the realtor revealed that the new home was to be 2,400 square feet and would have a price tag of “about \$425,000.” Four months later the house went on the market...for \$490,000. It sold within 24 hours.

Much of the demographic data that we have used for this report is from 2010 and is lagging behind what many residents view as a seismic acceleration in the gentrification of East Nashville. A report on quarterly median home price begins to quantify the trend that many see happening.

There is no sign that this trend is going to slow. The \$212,000 median home price for the first quarter of 2014 represents a 25.6% increase from the previous year, and the average list price for a single-family home in 37206 for the week ending on March 12, 2014 was \$335,786. Homes in Lockeland Springs, Historic Edgefield, and East End are the most expensive, but neighborhoods further away from 5 Points - while more affordable - are experiencing similar growth rates. This is fantastic for homeowners, but rising home values are not only keeping many families from home ownership, they have caused higher rent and fewer rental options. Many of the people who have helped build this neighborhood suddenly find it economically untenable to remain in East Nashville.

37206 MEDIAN HOME PRICE



THE FUTURE

East Nashvillians are proud. They are perhaps the only population in our city who specifically claim their neighborhood (East Nashville) as home and not just “Nashville.” Residents think that everyone should want to live here, but not everyone deserves to get in. East Nashville has its own festival (the Tomato Art Festival), Running Club (East Nasty Running Club), magazine (“The East Nashvillian”) and bumper stickers (“37206: We’ll steal your heart and your lawnmower”). But the neighborhood is changing. East Nashvillians are experiencing a dramatic time of growth and excitement, but recently it has been tinged with uncertainty and trepidation.

Will longtime residents experience the benefits of gentrification or just become casualties as more affluent residents take over? Do the people who built this neighborhood have a say in what it will look like in the future? Is density a good thing? Who is going to keep the developers in check? What is the future of Cayce, and how will it impact the diversity that has defined East Nashville for so long?

These are only some of the tensions that are bubbling to the surface as the future of East Nashville unfolds. The questions are even deeper for Christians. Is there a unique way that Christians should react? How should a parish model church such as City Church get involved? In “Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life,” Robert Lupton doesn’t give any easy answers, but he concludes his introduction by saying, “It seems to me that an important role of the Kingdom minded person is to walk in the midst of those tensions, advocating the well-being of the community and the interests of the most vulnerable, both at the same time. Ours is a vision of not only a thriving community, but a just one as well.”

CITY CHURCH OF EAST NASHVILLE

City Church of East Nashville is a group of believers who desire to follow Jesus in the city, specifically in the area of Nashville known as East Nashville. As broken people who desperately need the transforming power of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we hope to be used for the advancement of His kingdom in the midst of the cultural, economic, racial, and ideological diversity that exists in this specific part of our city.

CORE VALUES

While City Church has changed in various ways over the last 10 years, its core values have not. The core values listed below represent the hours of prayer and discussion that were conducted by our Founding Pastor and the City Church launch team that worked with him, many of whom are still leaders in our body today.



GOSPEL-DRIVEN

We believe that God has intervened in our world to restore all things to their rightful order through the power of the Gospel - that is, the teaching and historical reality of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth. The righting of the relationships between God and humanity, humanity and humanity, and humanity and creation comes from God through Jesus Christ. Therefore, the person and work of Jesus Christ must fuel all of our relationships and ministries.

PRAYER-DEPENDENT

We believe the Gospel secures our access to God so we can enjoy communion with Him. Prayer is that communion. It is our first and continual resort, not just a last resort, as the Spirit of God leads us into praise, repentance, thanksgiving, and requests. We pray for God's kingdom to come and will to be done in our neighborhood and city. Therefore, we are committed to and dependent upon bold, specific, concerted, and continual prayer.

PARISH-DIRECTED

We believe that through a Gospel culture, the Spirit of God creates a new community of transformed lives through geographic and relational proximity. God values and loves uniting diversity into his family more than we ever will. We believe that we are in East Nashville to promote the beauty, prosperity, justice, and overall well-being of our neighborhood and, through that, the city of Nashville. We are committed to sacrificially give of ourselves and our resources for our neighborhood and city.

In addition to these core values, City Church possesses other distinct characteristics that reflect the priorities and personality of its membership:

- Openness to questions; willingness to sit in the weightiness of the Gospel and its implications
- Vulnerability in relationships; willingness to bear one another's burdens, sharing in both joy and suffering
- A strong sense that the Gospel transcends "denominational branding"
- A desire to live out the Gospel in a rapidly changing, gentrifying neighborhood

HISTORY

City Church's first corporate worship service was held on September 4, 2004 at a YMCA-owned facility in East Nashville with approximately 70 people attending. For eight months prior (January-August), a launch team of 30 people led by pastor Craig Brown met and prayed together weekly to discuss and plan for the founding of this new work. Craig had been serving as a pastor at Christ Community Church, a suburban Nashville church, but he discerned God's call to plant a church in East Nashville after becoming "captivated by the images and the descriptions of the kingdom of God consummating in an urban reality as found in Revelation 21-22." As Craig further explained, "What would it look like to 'do church' or 'be a community' that lived our lives based on this vision? We [Craig and his wife, Jana] soon realized that it was about being located in a specific place and with specific people. To actually love God and love our neighbors, we knew we had to be neighbors."

As a result, a small group of people was infused with this vision for "a Gospel-driven, city-directed church community in East Nashville" and committed with Craig and Jana to move into the neighborhood and start City Church. City Church's original vision statement reads "City Church of East Nashville exists to reconcile the diversity of East Nashville by enjoying and displaying Jesus Christ through worship, teaching, and city-focused communities to, for, and from Nashville to the nations of the world."

Over the last 10 years, City Church has met in three locations in East Nashville, each shift being necessitated by a growing congregation. The staff has grown over time to fit the evolving needs of our church body. In September 2013, Craig stepped down as Lead Pastor of City Church to pursue a calling with Church Multiplication Ministries. We continue to cherish and pray for Craig and his family as they move into a new and exciting calling!

Though much of the critical DNA of City Church has remained 10 years later (e.g., core values, city orientation), there have been some challenges and difficulties along the way. One of the first changes that City Church went through was moving from a "relief" based model of ministry in the community to a "development" based model with an aim to restore dignity to those in need. Drawing from principles of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), City Church began to offer classes on job preparation and resume writing and trained up mentors to help community members reenter the work place. At the same time, we began to limit relief funds to those in urgent need of temporary assistance to reduce immediate suffering from natural or manmade crises.

CHURCH PROFILE

Perhaps the main struggle for many of our members has been the ongoing tension around the founding vision. Many congregants were attracted to City Church's mission to "reconcile the diversity of East Nashville" and hoped that our body itself would evolve into a diverse racial and socioeconomic congregation. However, current demographics of the church indicate that most attendees are college-educated, white neighborhood residents in their 20's and 30's.

This tension has raised the following questions:

- Were our expectations to have a strong cross section of cultures and economic groups represented in our congregation too high?
- Have there been decisions made and actions taken that have made City Church less welcoming to people of diverse backgrounds?
- How do we not just care well for our community, but also for the families and members of our congregation?

CURRENT STRUCTURE

City Church employs one full-time staff: a Lead Pastor, a Children's Director, and a Ministry Assistant who oversees communications, basic operations, and the benevolence ministry. There are two part-time employees who oversee the music ministry and bookkeeping. City Church employs a part-time Youth Director to work with the youth in grades 5-12. In addition, we have a community development intern who, with his wife, is ministering across economic and racial barriers in their immediate neighborhood in East Nashville through Bible studies and life skills classes. A total of three elders comprise the session of City Church.



City Church meets for corporate worship from 10:00-11:30 am on Sunday mornings in the auditorium of a local middle school. Our worship incorporates a liturgical structure and culminates in the weekly celebration of communion. One might hear various musical styles from week to week at City Church. After all, we are in Music City and our congregants and worship leaders are both musically diverse and talented.

In keeping with the parish model of ministry, there are 12 "Neighborhood Groups" (ranging in size from 10 to 25 people) that meet three times a month in various homes located throughout East Nashville. These groups are grounded on five principles: Bible study, worship (not limited to music), prayer, fellowship/shared life, and community service. Our Neighborhood Groups are prioritized and function as the lifeblood of City Church. They are structured to foster localized community and to provide care for members of the church body. The rich intimacy shared by many of our congregants begins with Neighborhood Groups. The Neighborhood Groups are overseen directly by our Pastor of Congregational Care and elders. Group leaders attend a monthly Ministry Leaders Meeting in which vision is cast and leaders are shepherded.

While City Church has never aimed to be extraordinarily programmatic, we have seen great interest and reward in men's and women's Bible studies as well as a monthly congregational prayer meeting. With respect to community-focused ministry, City Church has always placed emphasis on preparing and equipping the church body to get involved in things that are already taking place in the community rather than starting its own ministries to serve a similar purpose.

As a result, City Church's investment in the neighborhood has broadened over time and includes (but is not limited to) the following opportunities:

- Weekly tutoring at a community center that serves 35+ neighborhood children
- Weekly tutoring at East Nashville Magnet School (where City Church meets) with 15 middle school students
- *Jobs for Life* – a national, Biblically-based job training program
- Involvement with the local refugee community through supporting and coaching a local soccer team with Congolese refugees
- *YoungLives* – a Young Life ministry to teen moms in neighborhood schools

Additionally, a large number of our congregants work in non-profit organizations that are focused on education and community development. City Church is also home to many artists of a variety of mediums and as such, the church highly values support of the arts and the artistic community in Nashville.

The demographic of City Church in the planting stage was mostly singles with a small percentage of married couples and even fewer couples with children. Over the last 9 years, City Church's demographic has shifted to approximately 75% married, 25% single, and over 100 children, the oldest being young teenagers. Presently, City Church has 210 active members and the average attendance for the Sunday worship service is approximately 150 adults. Our annual budget is around \$500,000.

GOALS

So where is City Church headed? We are praying and seeking God's direction and leading. Here are some elemental principles that we know that we are still called to live out as followers of Jesus in East Nashville.

- Never abandon our heart and engagement for the poor
- Continue to advance the Gospel of the Kingdom through prayer, preaching, and deeds of justice and mercy
- Build up and strengthen neighborhood group leaders in order to multiply neighborhood groups throughout East Nashville
- Continue to have a warm and inviting atmosphere where "belonging before becoming" is the norm, not the exception; lead with "come with me as I go to Christ"
- Emphasize humble, decentralized leadership that is not personality driven
- Grow in grace, mercy, and size as it pleases Him

We joyfully and prayerfully anticipate seeing where God leads us in this next season of growth for City Church!