

Nashville Consortium of HBCUs Creating Economic &
Community Development Growth
“Collaborating Together for Sustainable Change”

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March 7, 2019

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of the project is on an opportunity to collaborate between four Historically Black Colleges & Universities ("HBCU") to connect to address a challenge that is deeply entrenched in the city's diverse communities of North Nashville. These include American Baptist College, Tennessee State University, Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and the Watkins College of Art and Design.

This Consortium of HBCUs have been in conversation for the past 12 months to align institutions for this work. Because of the area of work and community locale, this fit is a positive one to support the work outlined.

Known as the Nashville Consortium of HBCUs, the consortium's collaborative work collectively to address and strategically focus on community needs and priorities identified by its community. The consortium desires to reinvigorate the facility, engage the community in improving its health and wellbeing, having the facility serve as a location where a variety of community-focused services are provided, and ultimately to achieve a sustainable financial model for the facility. Until a location is identified, the Consortium continues to meet at the American Baptist College to collaborate.

The consortium has collaborated to work to meet the community needs and focused areas through feasibility studies to create and improve in the areas of: 1) the creation of a business accelerator; 2) promote entrepreneurial and business development; 3) provide workforce training education and opportunities for community residents that will promote a vibrant quality of life; 4) work with local organizations and city and county government to pursue community improvements; 5) work to engage potential partners (i.e. Mayor's office; 4 HBCUs, etc. to implement a business model for other communities.

HISTORY OF COMMUNITY

The North Nashville community is located adjacent to downtown Nashville. Its boundaries include the Cumberland River to the north and east. A combination of Interstates (I-40), roads (Jefferson Street and Charlotte Pike), and railroads serve as the boundaries to the west and south. The North Nashville community contains approximately 8 square miles, about 1.5 percent of the land area in Nashville/Davidson County. It is the second smallest geographically of the community plans areas. Nashville's Community Plans provide history and context for Nashville's 14 Community Planning Areas, along with community-specific issues, strategies, and sketches of how different places in the community could change over time. Detailed Community Character Maps link the broad, county-wide Growth Concept Map to character policies that guide zoning and development decisions.

The North Nashville area is rich in Nashville's history and is one of the city's oldest communities. In the 1960s, North Nashville's community, churches, and universities served as the backbone of the Civil Rights Movement in Nashville.

North Nashville is located in central Nashville/Davidson County, easily assessable to Downtown and Midtown, two of Middle Tennessee's more diverse and rapidly developing communities with regards to jobs, amenities, and housing.

North Nashville is primarily urban residential in character with walkable neighborhoods that offer a variety of housing choices, commercial corridors, and some small neighborhood centers ripe for small business development. It also features the Metro Center business district and well known institutions of higher learning, its proximity to downtown (5-7 minutes) Nashville and its urban and mixed use neighborhoods create the diversity of North Nashville.

North Nashville's role in the region is unique. Its location—in close proximity to Downtown Nashville—makes it a desirable place to live, while its historic buildings and recent redevelopment are assets that the community can build upon over time. Despite its rich culture and history, there are challenges. The overall population continues to lack the discretionary income needed to attract desired investment in retail and restaurants. While parts of the community are thriving, there are still pockets of vacant and substandard housing and poverty from lack of access to living wage jobs or lack of access to training/education for the available jobs. North Nashville's stakeholders and community networks are initiating a process of collaborating to work together to build upon the community's current assets to create a healthy and sustainable local economy and improved quality of life.

North Nashville residents and businesses suffered displacement and isolation through the impacts of the Urban Renewal program and the construction of the Interstate system, which physically separated the community and razed entire neighborhoods. Today, North Nashville is experiencing a housing boom and again has become a desirable location for residents, entrepreneurs, and businesses. Homeowners are being drawn to the area, leading to an increase in economic growth and wealth.

The purpose of the joint consortium partnership referred to earlier is to foster collaboration so that the four HBCU entities can more efficiently and effectively use their resources and capital to promote growth through improved wellness and social involvement, job training, entrepreneur and business ownership, housing, and community and neighborhood engagement. While parts of the community are currently thriving, other parts are beginning to rebound and show signs of recovery. The desired outcome of this collaboration is to keep wealth in the community, attract jobs and businesses, and increase business ownership by people residing in the community.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

This consortium collaboration seeks to develop a strategic and marketing plan that will open opportunities to create a high “quality of life” for all residents in the North Nashville area of Davidson County, Tennessee. As the Consortium evaluates a high “quality of life” it will try to determine its occupancy rates, median incomes, pricing of housing, number of people, number of jobs, retail establishments, and affordable housing, etc. as our measurement. The Consortium plans to measure the quality of life factors over time to see if actions set forth by the consortium are making a tangible difference in the lives of the people living in the community. A critical component of this plan is **rebranding** the community and redefining the North Nashville/Bordeaux community as full of opportunity. This approach can have the potential to expand on the Nashville’s “It” city image.

The Consortium project collaborates to work together to become a strong leading group of partners to ignite the fire and energy needed to assist in economic growth through its joint efforts in entrepreneur development and health and wellness through these community higher education institutions. As the city of Nashville continues to draw over 100 people and families on a daily basis, this effort could lead to increasing the share of the metro area’s growth within the North Nashville community.

Identified/Needed Partners

American Baptist College and the Tennessee District of the U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA) have entered into a formal agreement (Strategic Alliance Memorandum) outlining a shared commitment to work towards the primary goal of meeting the needs of prospective entrepreneurs and the small business community. Through this partnership, the Consortium represents an exceptional opportunity to aid, counsel, and assist small firms,

particularly those owned by minorities and women. Entrepreneurship will be strengthened and expanded through specific joint training and outreach activities. Also, Tennessee State University has a strong relationship with the SBA through the operation of the Small Business Development Center which allows the consortium opportunity to share in the future growth of North Nashville's growth.

Additional partner involvement such as the Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center, the Interdenominational Ministers' Fellowship, and the Metropolitan Nashville Public School System will be engaged. Letters of support will be provided during final negotiations and before contract awards are made. Other critical partnerships include area public and private educational institutions, nonprofits with shared missions, health organizations with a desire or mission to serve minority communities, corporate organizations with clear diversity and inclusion initiatives, and diverse social groups that work to empower communities. Other social entities, such as Greek letter organizations, 100 Black Women/Men, local chapters of The Links, Inc., etc. will be asked to build support into their budgets and connect Consortium activities with the components they adopt.

Leveraged/Current Partners

Collectively, the institutions in this consortium represent Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's). HBCU's are institutions of higher education in the United States that were established before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 primarily to serve the African-American community. During this time the overwhelming majority of predominantly white institutions of higher-learning barred African Americans from enrollment because of segregation policies. There are 101 HBCUs in the United States, including public and private institutions. Of this number, 27 offer doctoral programs, 52 schools offer master's programs, 83 colleges offer bachelor's degree

programs and 38 schools offer associate degrees. While, these institutions are referred to as HBCU's, students of all races, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds now attend, and are encouraged to attend. It is unfortunate that these HBCUs have not been in collaborative partnerships in the past but this opportunity brings great future potential. This Consortium offers the opportunity for a national model for neighborhoods and cities that have and are experiencing the “gentrification” squeeze as well as in the challenges found in the rapidly growing Nashville area.

THE FOUR HBCUs

American Baptist College

American Baptist College is a private historically black college where, founded in 1924, students have received a recognition around the country for its Christian education and preparation for leadership, ministry, and social justice. ABC offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs at its Nashville, Tennessee campus and globally on-line. The college alumni include Civil Rights champions, national leaders, and outstanding Christian ministers. The school's history during the 1960's and 1970's cultivated prominent leadership that was nationally acclaimed, while cultivating civil rights champions, national leaders, and outstanding Christian ministers who served on the front line of the Nashville Student Sit-In movement for justice and change. Under the tutelage of then Professor J.F. Grimmett, the late Rev. Kelly Miller Smith, and Rev Dr. C.T. Vivian, many of its students dared to sit down at lunch counters dramatically altering the quality of life for Americans living in the South. They sat, marched, and persevered through arrests and beatings before they were victorious in pursuit of justice and human rights. The campus itself was a popular command post for organizing and training students for social justice causes

throughout the city at the time. American Baptist College can boast that a number of its students from that period have gone on to become major names in civil rights history and American politics (e.g., Congressman John Lewis, Dr. Bernard Lafayette, Dr. Julius Scruggs).

Fisk University

Founded in 1866, shortly after the end of the Civil War, Fisk University is the oldest Institution of higher learning in Nashville, Tennessee. Fisk's outstanding faculty and students continue to enhance the University's national reputation for academic excellence. This is validated year after year by leading third party reviewers, as well as by talented applicants and the large percentage of alumni who complete graduate or professional degrees and become leaders and scholars in their fields. From its earliest days, Fisk has played a leadership role in the education of African-Americans. Fisk faculty and alumni have been among America's intellectual, artistic, and civic leaders in every generation since the University's beginnings. Fisk University produces graduates from diverse backgrounds with the integrity and intellect required for substantive contributions to society. Curriculum is grounded in the liberal arts. Faculty and administrators emphasize the discovery and advancement of knowledge through research in the natural and social sciences, business, and the humanities. Fisk is committed to the success of scholars and leaders with global perspectives. The motivation for Fisk and the other HBCUs to pursue this collaborative effort is because they are all inherently embedded in the community. Certainly, the global experience of Fisk and its resources would greatly enhance their surrounding community.

Meharry Medical College

Meharry Medical College is one of the nation's oldest and largest historically black

academic health science centers dedicated to educating physicians, dentists, researchers, and health policy experts. Founded in 1876 as the Medical Department of Central Tennessee College, Meharry was the first medical school in the South for African Americans. It was chartered separately in 1915. Today, Meharry includes a [medical school](#), [dental school](#), and a [graduate school](#); and is home to the [Robert Wood Johnson Center for Health Policy](#) at Meharry. The degrees include Doctor of Medicine (M.D.), Doctor of Dental Surgery (D.D.S.), Master of Science in Public Health (M.S.P.H.), Master of Science (M.S.), and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees. Meharry is a United Methodist Church-affiliated institution. A [2010 study](#) published in the [Annals of Internal Medicine](#) ranked Meharry as one of the nation's top five producers of primary care physicians. Meharry is also a leading producer of African Americans with Ph.Ds. in biomedical sciences. As with the other historical educational universities the global perspective and work of Meharry will greatly enhance its work in its community.

Tennessee State University

Tennessee State University is a comprehensive, urban, coeducational, land-grant university offering undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees. It was founded in 1912 after its organization in 1909 as the Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School; became a four-year teachers' college in 1922; elevated to full land-grant university in 1958; absorbed University of Tennessee at Nashville in 1979. TSU boasts 77 majors in eight undergraduate and graduate colleges and schools; Tennessee State University graduates the highest number of African American bachelor degree holders in agriculture, agriculture operations, and agriculture-related sciences The University's sponsored research budget exceeds \$32 million. As with the other historical educational universities, the global perspective and work of TSU it is presently serving and operating in this community of North Nashville and will greatly enhance its work in its

community. Also with the research budget of TSU this can be used to help this community grow this Consortium.

THE CONSORTIUM'S GOALS

The goals and outcomes of the Consortium are to identify solutions that: 1) address identified community needs, 2) preserve services like or similar to those currently delivered by the YMCA to the community, 3) significantly reduce or eliminate annual financial losses at the Northwest YMCA facility to become self-sufficient as the HBCU Y North Nashville, 4) offer long-term sustainability, through job creation and empowerment that is acceptable to the community's growth. These goals were decided based on a series of focus groups and meetings with all HUBCs involved. Each institution has agreed to participate and share its resources and services.

THE CONSORTIUM'S IDENTIFIED OUTCOMES

1. Diversity & Inclusion (all economic backgrounds will participate and benefit in the economic growth)
2. Medical Welfare & Health Services (research to assist with people living healthier lives through various assessments (obesity rate, number of hospital trips, results in a higher quality of life)
3. Community Leadership & Training (identifying leaders to take on roles in government entities, non-profit, etc.)
4. Entrepreneurial and Economic Growth (training for start-up business ownership)

Diversity & Inclusion

At the heart of this community, our goal is to seek to inspire and nurture the human spirit - understanding that each person and their family will bring a distinct life experience to this consortium and its programming. The northwest community has become diverse not only in gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion and age, but also in cultural backgrounds, life experiences, neighborhoods with services and amenities, and restaurants and retail that are within walking distance and/or are served by transit.

Embracing this diversity enhances the work culture, and also drives greater business success and opportunity. It is the inclusion of these diverse experiences and perspectives that create a culture of empowerment, one that fosters innovation, economic growth and new ideas. This group seeks to establish metrics and measurements designed around the outcomes of the identified outcomes that will identify the success of its work. The success of this Consortium's long-term sustainability will be linked to the community (people, businesses, etc.) to sustain its growth and quality of life. So it is the vision of the Consortium that **together we will** elevate the community and neighbors to create positive change. Through ongoing meetings and discussions with the Consortium group entities, all have expressed interest and their involvement in this project. Besides, based on the shared experiences of each university, it makes them a natural fit and all seek to develop a framework around this initiative. Tennessee State University will be largely associated with the Diversity and Innovation components of the project focusing on innovators, leaders and contributors to an inclusive society.

Medical Welfare & Health Services

Many factors influence health and well-being in a community, and many entities and individuals in the community have a role to play in responding to community health needs. The Consortium sees a requirement for a framework within which the community can take a comprehensive approach to maintaining and improving health, starting with assessing its health needs, determining its resources and assets for promoting health, developing and implementing a strategy for action, and establishing where responsibility should lie for specific results. The Meharry Medical entity has agreed to handle this component of the consortium because of its nature and its long tenure of training its students and hospital located in the heart of the North Nashville quadrant.

Community Leadership & Training

As we see out other partners who can assist the Consortium in its work and efforts, Memorandums of Understanding will be executed to work in tandem with the Consortium. Organizations such as Pathways, Inc., Nashville Organized for Action and Hope (NOAH), Center for Non-Profit Management, the United Way of Tennessee and other organizations and agencies that are focused on this project's work.

The NOAH organization is a faith-led coalition that is multi-racial and interdenominational comprised of congregations, community organizations, and labor unions that work to give voice to traditionally marginalized people. NOAH engages ordinary people in the political and economic decisions affecting their lives, acting as a unified voice for the faith and justice community to act on its values in the public arena. NOAH members and delegates gathered to decide the key focus issues of the organization. They are: affordable housing, criminal justice, and economic equity. The Northwest Consortium focuses heavily on economic equity and criminal justice. Why these areas? These two areas are the three that have been determined to be the most needed in the targeted Northwest area of Davidson County. Based on the resources these HBCUs bring, ABC's social justice and economic development programs of TSU are designated to be the two heavily focused topics. This neglect has created an increase in crime and targeted gentrification that has displaced and marginalized the community's citizens.

With the model that NOAH has used, it will assist in developing community leadership and training. The Fisk University will lead and give guidance to this objective with the Consortium. These entities are a natural fit which they are currently employing in the focused community of this project.

Entrepreneurial and Economic Growth

The work of this project is also designed to provide a community-based approach in programming that creates an entrepreneur environment. It further builds entrepreneurial and small business strategy into the community's overall economic development program and strategic plan.

The city of Nashville has taken surrounding communities through proven methods designed to establish an entrepreneur support program, help them better understand their existing entrepreneur environment, and develop sustainable, effective local strategies. This program may also apply to Northwest Nashville. This consortium's goals are focused on the work that has been done and involves the capital resources to assist in this design. Capital resources, resource funding, memberships, grants, leased space, and foundation and grant funds shall assist in the work of the consortium's growth and expansion.

This Consortium shall undergo a strategic planning process to help create long-term, sustainable small business development programs and professional development. This process is designed be driven by the American Baptist College and Tennessee State University through its university programming already in existence for support.

PLANS FOR COMMUNICATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It is the responsibility of the Consortium's leadership to educate the community on the need for a strategic plan and to show the stakeholders in the community (people, businesses, state and government, etc.) all of the benefits that a solid economic development strategic plan can bring to the community. The Consortium's plan for community engagement includes formation of a Community Advisory Board to be instrumental in guiding and developing programming, research, strategic planning, communication, and identification of community

needs. This Board is scheduled to continue meeting on a quarterly scheduled basis with a management team created and populated by the Consortium. The community and its leaders have to have involvement in the plan in order for it to be successfully implemented.

The Committee Advisory Board (CAB) is comprised of one representative from each of the HBCUs, representatives from the local business, community leaders, and stakeholders in the North Nashville area, the YMCA, and one representative of the community at large, for a total of ten members. The Committee has had ongoing meetings at least once per quarter; to ensure that the CAB is community-focused in its programs and services; and to continue to review the financials and resources ensuring the necessary sustainability of the project. The Committee shall conduct community meetings at least once each year to seek feedback on the work of the CAB and the programs and services being provided at the Facility.

The Committee intends to seek out grants on behalf of the project and participate in the development of mission-focused programs and services likely to result in the receipt of grant funding. The Consortium parties will need to agree to use their collective best efforts to support and maintain the program with established financial benchmarks for each year.

For the implementation of the project to work, it will rely heavily upon the input and commitment of the Consortium. Those persons and entities who will need to be involved in the projects earliest stages will be invited to the strategic planning process. This strategic planning process has been discussed for incorporation into each of the University's overall planning framework to assure the accomplishment of goals and outcomes are achieved. University Presidential leadership will be asked to allocate its resources that reflect the goals of the strategic plan (facilities, financial resources, time for meetings, promotion, use of universities media, etc.)

Once the project has been framed and executed, it will be necessary to evaluate the actions and adjust when and if necessary. In the training session of Dr. Kolzow's lecture on strategic

planning, he emphasized the importance of effective strategic planning. Effective strategic planning is evident when measurable outcomes are projected, measured, and met. The Committee will assist in this happening and adjusting when necessary.

The evaluation process is an ongoing and evolving process which identifies the only way the Consortium can assess if the goals set are being achieved. If the goals are not being met, the Consortium will need to know and then make adjustments. Should operating deficits exceed established benchmarks, HBCUs collectively shall share equally the responsibility for covering the increased subsidy.

Finally, to evaluate the strategic planning efforts appropriately, there will need to be a focus on the outcomes that can provide measurable results. It should be noted that the desired outcomes are going to directly reflect what needs to be changed or adjusted.

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

Several factors influence the sustainability of the proposed plan. Program design and implementation, client utilization, marketing and communications, and community engagement all play a vital role in the sustainability of the Consortium-HBCU partnership. The chart below illustrates the sustainability factors and outcomes that can be undertaken to increase the potential for long-term success and viability.

These factors have been developed based on conversations with the group representatives through meetings.

Sustainability Factor	Objective	Actions
Community Involvement and Support	Garner the buy-in of community members who will dictate, in some part, the success of the Organization	<p>Develop a community board</p> <p>Develop HBCU board</p> <p>Recruit project champions with strong community ties</p> <p>Recruit community bodies (schools, civic organizations, government agencies, etc.) to be involved in the development and implementation of proposed program</p>
Create multiple sources of funding	Attracting and retaining student/faculty customers as well as community patients	<p>Recruit student and faculty clients</p> <p>Recruit patients from within community</p> <p>Fully integrate current services with new services</p> <p>Document successes in the form of program evaluation and disseminate to stakeholders, including current and potential funders</p>
Develop health clinic utilization (brick and mortar)	Address health concerns in the North Nashville community	Partner with city government to offer bus stops, bike lanes, and other avenues for transportation to the community center
Stabilization of leadership	Create a sense of belonging and stability among community clients/patients	Maintain the ownership

What are the risks to sustainability associated with the project?

The risks associated with sustainability are inherent in the proposed partnership when considering the history of community backlash to changes in the operation of the Consortium.

The likelihood of community push-back is high without integration of their participation. Also, the Consortium's base support is currently senior citizens. Without community partnership and buy-in, the success of the program may be compromised. In an effort to achieve success, the Committee will continued to meet with the constituents in the North Nashville community and engage with the city of Nashville for future opportunities that will support its program(s).

The Consortium seeks to assume a role in the North Nashville community and take advantage of the resources presently in the area to support its goals and mission. As stated, this area is on the rise to draw businesses, people, and capital that seek to provide for income generation.

CONCLUSION

Initial meetings have occurred with all the Consortium HBCUs and community leaders to discuss specific involvement and the collective work. As stated, the immediate area(s) of focus will be economic development, medical and health concerns, economic inclusion, and faith-based leadership involvement. The project seeks to promote accessibility to neighborhood health care for its community, it seeks to empower a stronger culture of entrepreneurial focus for its community, and it seeks to serve as a strong point of reference for diversity and inclusion from the surrounding Nashville area.

The project timeframe for launching this project would be sometime in mid-March with several community meetings and strategy planning sessions.

This type of project is in the research stage and affords the potential to be sustainable and to support unmet areas in this community. Through the efforts and the objectives of this Consortium, our collective work will viewed in relationship to the work of the city of Nashville to engage community partnerships for growth.

RESOURCE MATERIAL

1. Course material from the University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services Economic Developer Program.
2. North Nashville Community Urban Study.
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7. Improving Health in the Community. National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1997.
8. HBCU Consortium, Nashville, 2018.