



Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

File #: RS2024-351, **Version:** 1

A resolution requesting certain departments of the Metropolitan Government to provide a comprehensive analysis of recommended changes to increase the safety, security, housing resources for the unhoused, and cleanliness of the properties surrounding the Cumberland River within the downtown interstate loop.

WHEREAS, Metropolitan Government departments have already begun working to improve the safety, security, housing resources for the unhoused, and cleanliness of the Cumberland River riverfront, especially the area within the downtown interstate loop ("Downtown Riverfront"). The Council recognizes and appreciates these actions, and wishes to build upon these efforts; and

WHEREAS, on December 19, 2023, the Metropolitan Council adopted RS2023-156 recognizing the importance of access to the Cumberland River; and

WHEREAS, the Metro Government is currently undergoing a master development on the East Bank, which will draw more people to and on the river; and

WHEREAS, increased pedestrian and boat traffic along the riverfront, especially the area within Downtown Riverfront and the steep wooded riverfront area along Gay Street ("Gay Street Riverfront"), have raised safety and cleanliness concerns including those having arisen after the recent disappearance of Riley Strain and the subsequent fall and injury of a man days later, both along an area of the Downtown Riverfront with limited fencing and a steep drop off. As WSMV News 4 noted in a recent report, Nashville Fire Department said of this area "...it is dark outside and clearly an unsafe area if someone falls"; and

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Government must examine and consider measures to maintain and increase public safety, including the repair, maintenance, and installation of safety equipment, such as lighting, fences, and safe access points surrounding hazardous waterfront areas, along with other necessary safety measures to prevent future tragic incidents from occurring; and

WHEREAS, as Nashville and Davidson County continues to grapple with the broader issue of homelessness, the Office of Homeless Services must continue to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of the unhoused community surrounding the river, especially along the Gay Street Riverfront, due to the unique challenges faced as a result of their location and work to provide services and housing to individuals in this area; and

WHEREAS, additionally, the litter along the banks of the Cumberland River, especially along the Downtown Riverfront and Gay Street Riverfront, has continued to garner public concern and media attention, and the Department of Codes and Building Safety in conjunction with the Waste Services Division of the Department of Water and Sewerage Services should investigate and report on meaningful ways of remedying the issue. These efforts should be taken both with property owned by Metro, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and private entities. This river is a centerpiece of the Metropolitan Nashville area, especially in the Downtown core, and its cleanliness should be of top priority to the Metropolitan Government; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the departments listed herein provide a report to the Metropolitan Council addressing these concerns in order to increase the safety and security of the public around the Cumberland River.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF

NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. The Metropolitan Council hereby requests the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department, Metropolitan Department of Parks and Recreation, Nashville Department of Transportation and Multimodal Infrastructure, Metropolitan Public Health Department, Waste Services Division of the Metropolitan Department of Water and Sewerage Services, the Office of Homeless Services, the Public Property Division of the Metropolitan Department of Finance, Metropolitan Department of Codes and Building Safety, and any other department of the Metropolitan Government with property or authority along the Cumberland River Downtown Riverfront to provide a comprehensive report (the "Report") to the Council containing recommended actions and changes to improve the safety, security, and cleanliness of property owned by Metro, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and private entities surrounding the Cumberland River, a list of the owners and responsible parties of each parcel, and any anticipated costs associated with these recommendations. These departments should work with the Nashville District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Tennessee Department of Transportation in determining the best course of action in achieving this goal. A final Report should be submitted to the Council no later than March 8, 2025.

Section 2. The Report should include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Evaluation of the current safety infrastructure surrounding the Downtown Riverfront and an analysis of potential shortfalls, risks, and particularly hazardous locations around the riverfront. This should include but not be limited to an analysis of riverside lighting, fences, rails, walls, and landscape features that either directly result in a potential hazard or could be improved to reduce the risk to public safety. Care should be taken to not unnecessarily restrict access to or view of the riverfront, but to take steps to secure hazardous areas.
2. Analysis of the current levels of litter within and around the Downtown Riverfront and recommendations on strategy for removal of current litter and prevention of future litter. This analysis should include, but not be limited to, the sources of the litter, the variety and categories of items found in and around the water, steps that can be taken on property owned by Metro, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and private entities, and the impact this litter has had on public safety, public health, and local wildlife.
3. Review of the current unhoused population surrounding the riverbank, especially those living adjacent to the Gay Street Riverfront and on the nearby cliffside areas, an analysis of the conditions faced as a result of the proximity to a steep cliffside and moving body of water, consideration of housing of those in particularly hazardous conditions, and a proposed means of addressing the unique challenges faced by the community in this area, including an evaluation of the housing status of the individuals at these sites and efforts to provide services and housing to the individuals, along with a clear timeline and potential list of costs and challenges related to these goals.
4. Research and recommendations concerning current security coverage and blind spots surrounding the Downtown Riverfront, areas where the implementation of additional camera systems would be most beneficial and appropriate, and an analysis of how and when greater camera infrastructure could be added in the desired areas. This report should include current camera locations, recording and retention policies, and departments who have access.
5. Review by the departments of any changes to the Metropolitan Code of Laws necessary to assist in the goals outlined herein.

Section 3. Based upon the Report and the analyses contained therein as provided in Sections 1 and 2 of this Resolution, the identified departments should enact policy and regulatory changes consistent with best practices related to address these requested areas of concern.

Section 4. Due to the immediate safety and health concerns of the Downtown Riverfront, while the Report is being prepared, the Council further requests that immediate actions be taken to remedy the issues identified by this Resolution, including securing hazardous areas near the Cumberland River, especially by the Gay Street Riverfront, with temporary or permanent barriers, engaging departments, volunteers, and the district beautification commissioners in regular clean ups of the Downtown Riverfront, and engaging with the unhoused population near the Downtown Riverfront to provide services and housing to these individuals

Section 5. That this Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.