

State & Local Legislation

We tackled two of Tennessee's biggest affordability challenges - housing and transportation - this year. We supported a statewide effort to pass legislation authorizing incentives for affordable housing development, and we advocated for Nashville's transit referendum with data-driven research reports, blog posts, and outreach efforts.



Voluntary Zoning Incentives Pass to Encourage More Attainable Housing

With the passage of HB 2623/SB 2496, municipalities can now offer developers voluntary incentives such as expedited permitting, reduced setbacks, and density bonuses to help lower construction costs and build more housing.

ThinkTennessee helped convene a statewide working group with city staff from Chattanooga, Knoxville, Franklin, Jackson, and Kingsport that identified voluntary zoning incentives as their top legislative priority. The working group serves as a model for cross-state collaboration and a pathway for policy change that we are eager to explore again in the future. ThinkTennessee also published *Tennessee Cities Have a New Housing Tool*, a policy brief to help local governments understand and utilize the new law to build more attainable housing in their communities.

Nashville Approves Transportation Improvement Program

This year, Nashville Mayor Freddie O'Connell introduced a transportation improvement program (TIP), called *Choose How You Move*, and asked Davidson County voters to approve a half-cent sales tax increase to fund the plan in a referendum on November's ballot. We leveraged our research, convening power, and expertise to share critical information with voters. The TIP passed with overwhelming support (65%) and thousands more Nashvillians will now have access to safe, affordable, and reliable multimodal transportation options.

ThinkTennessee created a map of dedicated local transit funding, one of the most cited statistics by pro-transit coalition members and in the media; a research report *Investments Today Matter Tomorrow: Transit Lessons from Other Metro Areas*; and a blog post outlining the steps required by the 2017 IMPROVE Act to establish dedicated funding for transit. A series of videos with ThinkTennessee president Erin Hafkenschiel debunking common anti-transit myths also garnered almost 15,000 views on our social media accounts in the lead up to the vote.

This was the first success of any city in Tennessee - and a second chance for Nashville - since the 2017 passage of the IMPROVE Act. We see immense opportunity to take the lessons learned from this process and bring dedicated funding for transit to more cities across the state.

GAVE

56 PRESENTATIONS
TO MORE THAN

3,000

POLICY, ADVOCACY, AND
CIVIC LEADERS

A **300%** INCREASE
OVER LAST YEAR

PUBLISHED

43 REPORTS,
BRIEFS, BLOG
POSTS, AND
NEWSLETTERS

INCREASED

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

BY

30%

APPEARED
IN THE MEDIA

50
TIMES

ALMOST

4x

MORE THAN
LAST YEAR

HOSTED

74 CIVIC LEADERS
AT **3** LUNCHEONS

MET WITH

17 ELECTED
LEADERS

Gatherings

We engaged more than 3,000 policy, advocacy, and civic leaders in policy discussions, including through a summer series on affordable housing development for faith institutions, an event featuring the Nashville mayor and a world-renowned transit expert, and our annual civic luncheons with community leaders across the state.

Nashville Faith & Housing Initiative

In November 2023, a ThinkTennessee and Urban Institute report highlighted the significant potential in Nashville for affordable housing development on land owned by faith-based institutions. Building off of those findings, we partnered this year with local groups to create the Nashville Faith & Housing Initiative (FHI).

The FHI hosted three summer meetings and created three housing resource guides (available on our [website](#)) sharing information and resources and providing partnership development opportunities for faith-based institutions interested in developing housing. The project will transfer to the Metro Nashville Housing Division starting in 2025.



A Conversation on Transit with Mayor Freddie O'Connell & Janette Sadik-Khan

As part of our effort to provide education opportunities in advance of Nashville's transit referendum, ThinkTennessee hosted our first-ever featured speaker event, It's Time to Choose: A Conversation on Transit with Mayor Freddie O'Connell and Janette Sadik-Khan. Janette, one of the world's foremost authorities on urban transportation policy, examined the city's growing transportation issues and shared lessons learned from around the world, and Mayor O'Connell shared his own "transit story" and highlights from his Choose How You Move plan to the more than 125 Nashville-area residents in attendance.

Civic Leaders Luncheons

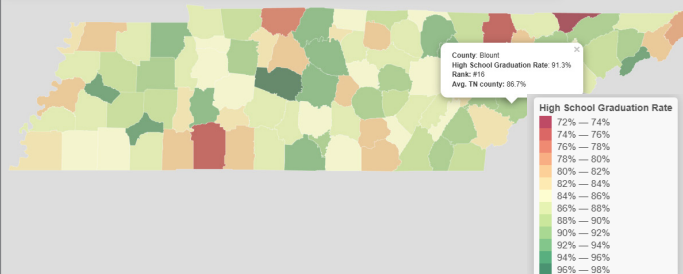
We held our second annual civic luncheons in Memphis, Chattanooga, and Knoxville, bringing 74 local community leaders together to discuss the issues most important to them. Common themes included affordable housing, childcare, civic engagement, and education. These conversations have helped us form new partnerships and identify areas of shared need.

Research

We developed comprehensive, data-driven reports and research products on dozens of topics this year, including our first-ever county dashboard, which provides over 9,500 pieces of data through an interactive map, and a five-part series on voting in Tennessee.

High School Graduation Rate

High School Graduation Rate: The percentage of students who completed all required coursework and graduated with a diploma within four years and a summer in his or her original graduation cohort.
Source: Tennessee Department of Education (2023)



State of Our Counties Dashboard

This year, we launched the *State of Our Counties Dashboard*, an interactive, web-based tool providing access to county-level data for local leaders, community advocates, and Tennesseans across nine issue categories - children, criminal justice and the courts, economy, environment and energy, education, elections and civic life, health, housing, and infrastructure and mobility.

The tool has garnered immense attention and interest, with more than 3,000 website views since it launched, 10 invitations by local chambers and other organizations across Tennessee to present county-level findings, and requests for additional metrics from partners.

2024 Tennessee Voter Education Series

This year, Tennessee voters had the opportunity to participate in municipal, state, and federal elections, including a transit referendum in Nashville. To help inform voters, ThinkTennessee released a five-part *Voter Education Series* covering key pieces of Tennessee's voting and elections process: (1) how and when to register to vote or update your voter registration; (2) the types and timings of certain elections and how to cast a ballot; (3) who is eligible to vote absentee and how to request and cast an absentee ballot; (4) the complicated process of having one's voting rights restored after a felony conviction; and (5) the measures Tennessee takes to ensure the security and integrity of its election administration and voting machines.

We shared the series broadly, reproducing them in large print and text-only formats for those with print disabilities, translating them into Spanish and Arabic language, and distributing around 1,200 Voter Education postcards to partners, local coffee shops, businesses, gyms, apartment buildings, and community events.