

EVERY OVERLAY APPROVED: THE MHZC CONSERVATION-OVERLAY DECISION RECORD, 2010–2026

VERSION 1.0 · 2026-06-11 · ALEX PEMBERTON
 COMPANION TO "VENEERS OF HISTORY IN GREEN HILLS EAST", NASHVILLE SCENE

FINDING

The Metro Historic Zoning Commission recommended approval of every conservation overlay it voted on from 2010 to 2026: 24 districts, 26 recorded votes, 187 to 2. Both no votes were cast by one commissioner in 2025. Green Hills East was routine, not exceptional.

SUPPORTS IN THE ARTICLE

- *the MHZC has recommended approval of every conservation overlay it has heard*
- *Smith's Green Hills East dissent is one of only two no votes ever cast on a Nashville conservation overlay*
- *the commission approves conservation overlays as a matter of course*

ABSTRACT

Between 2012 and 2025 the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission heard twenty-four proposals for Nashville conservation overlay districts — thirteen new and eleven expansions — and recommended approval of every one. The cumulative roll call across twenty-six recorded votes runs 187 yea to 2 nay; both “no” votes were cast by a single commissioner, Matthew Smith, both in 2025, on Marlin Meadows and on Green Hills East. The record behind these figures is the Commission’s own archived meeting corpus — 196 monthly folders of minutes, Records of Decision, agendas, and staff reports for January 2010 through May 2026, with five meetings whose minutes are missing recovered from the Commission’s YouTube archive by direct viewing. Smith’s Green Hills East dissent opened with a question about whether the district’s central artifact, the 1927 Model Home, had been correctly identified, and the commission recommended the overlay over his objection without resolving the address.

METHODOLOGY

The corpus is the Commission’s own archived meeting record — 196 monthly folders of minutes, Records of Decision, agendas, and staff reports, roughly five thousand documents — for January 2010 through May 2026. Every decision and vote reproduced here is transcribed from the minutes and Records of Decision, born-digital documents read directly, not through OCR; the staff reports supply the classification of each item as a new district or an expansion of an existing one. Quotations are verbatim from the document of record and cited by meeting date. Historic Preservation overlays, individual Historic Landmark designations, and the multi-year design-guideline consolidation are different legal instruments, catalogued separately and excluded from the conservation count. Where a meeting’s minutes are absent from the archive — the record has

systematic gaps in 2012, 2023, and 2024 — the recorded vote was recovered from the Commission’s own meeting–video archive on the Metro Nashville Network, the head–count confirmed by direct viewing of the recording; the auto–generated captions, which mishear names and figures, served only to locate each item, never to count a vote, and no count is estimated.

SOURCES

All citations are the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission’s own documents of record, by meeting date: the monthly Minutes, Records of Decision, Agendas, and item Staff Reports for January 2010 through May 2026, together with the Commission’s public meeting–video archive on the [Metro Nashville Network](#) (YouTube playlist PL7A4ECO60F1230BC2, 2012–2026), the source for the five decisions whose minutes are missing. Decisions and recorded votes are quoted from the minutes or Record of Decision of the meeting named, or — for those five — read from the meeting video; the new–versus–expansion classification is taken from the corresponding staff report. The Green Hills East hearing and Commissioner Smith’s dissent are treated in the companion brief [Identifying the Model Home: 1612 North Observatory, Not 1637 South](#).

FINDINGS

THE COMMISSION HAS RECOMMENDED EVERY CONSERVATION OVERLAY IT HAS HEARD

Twenty–four distinct conservation overlay districts were proposed between 2012 and 2025 (the record carries none in 2010–2011): thirteen new conservation overlays and eleven expansions of existing ones, across seven different overlays, four of them extended more than once. The Commission recommended approval of every one it brought to a recorded vote. The only procedural deferral of substance was the second Bowling House expansion, in 2022, deferred one month and then recommended. The twenty–four proposals came to twenty–six recorded votes — the 2013 Eastwood expansion and the Belmont–Hillsboro expansion were each heard twice — and of those twenty–six, twenty–three were unanimous, and the non–unanimous outcomes number three.

THIRTEEN NEW OVERLAYS, EVERY ONE RECOMMENDED

Each was recommended for approval to the Metro Planning Commission and Council. Votes are verbatim from the minutes or Record of Decision of the meeting named.

#	OVERLAY (NCZO)	MEETING	DECISION	RECORDED VOTE
1	Salemtown	Feb 20, 2013	Recommend approval	Unanimous
2	Waverly–Belmont	Nov 18, 2015	Recommend approval	Passed, all in favor except Commissioner Bell, abstained
3	Inglewood Place–Jackson Park	Dec 16, 2015	Recommend approval	Unanimous (<i>design guidelines adopted Jan 20, 2016, unanimous</i>)
4	Hillview Heights–Inverness	Dec 21, 2016	Recommend approval	ROD: "RECOMMENDATION APPROVED"; no dissent recorded
5	Eastdale Place	Apr 19, 2017	Recommend approval	Unanimous
6	Bowling House District	Jul 19, 2017	Recommend approval	Unanimous
7	Edgehill	Jun 20, 2018	Recommend approval	Unanimous
8	Kenner Manor	Feb 20, 2019	Recommend approval	Unanimous
9	Haynes Heights	Feb 17, 2021	Recommend approval	Unanimous
10	Lathan–Youngs	Nov 16, 2022	Recommend approval	Unanimous
11	Haynes Manor	Mar 15, 2023	Recommend approval	6–0 (meeting video; none opposed)
12	Marlin Meadows	Feb 21, 2025	Recommend approval	Passed, Commissioner Smith opposed, Chair Bell recused
13	Green Hills–East	Dec 17, 2025	Recommend approval	7–1, Commissioner Smith opposed

Selected verbatim record:

- **Salemtown** (Feb 20, 2013): "Commissioner Bell moved to approve the designation of the amended boundaries. Commissioner Mosley seconded and the motion passed unanimously."
- **Bowling House District** (Jul 19, 2017): "Commissioner Stewart moved to recommend to Metro Council a Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay for the Bowling House District finding the properties to meet the criteria of section 17.36.120.A.1 and 3 ... motion passed unanimously."
- **Edgehill** (Jun 20, 2018): "Commissioner Price moved to recommend approval of the Edgehill Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay, finding the area to meet criteria 1 and 3 ... the motion passed unanimously."
- **Kenner Manor** (Feb 20, 2019): "moved to recommend approval for the overlay as the district meets criterion 5 of section 17.36.120 ... the motion passed unanimously." ROD: "RECOMMENDATION FOR APPROVAL AND APPROVAL OF DESIGN GUIDELINES."

- **Haynes Heights** (Feb 17, 2021): “chair Stewart moved to recommend approval of the Haynes Heights Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay, finding the area to meet criteria 1 and 3 ... the motion passed unanimously.”
- **Marlin Meadows** (Feb 21, 2025): “Commissioner Price moved to recommend approval of the Marlin Meadows Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay to Metro Council ... the motion passed with Commissioner Smith in opposition and Chair Bell recused.”
- **Green Hills–East** (Dec 17, 2025): “Commissioner Cotton moved and Commissioner Cashion seconded to recommend approval of the Green Hills–East Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay ... The motion passed with 7 in favor and 1 opposed (7-1).”

ELEVEN EXPANSIONS, EVERY ONE RECOMMENDED

Seven existing overlays were extended, four of them more than once.

#	OVERLAY EXPANSION	MEETING(S)	DECISION	RECORDED VOTE
14	Eastwood	Sep 18, 2013 (initial); Mar 19, 2014 (revised boundaries)	Recommend approval (both)	Unanimous (both)
15	Eastwood (later extension)	Jun 20, 2018	Recommend approval	Unanimous
16	Hillsboro–West End (first expansion)	Jan 15, 2014	Recommend approval	9–0 (meeting video)
17	Hillsboro–West End (Blair Blvd)	Jun 18, 2014	Recommend approval	Unanimous
18	Lockeland Springs–East End (McEwen)	Apr 16, 2014	Recommend approval	7–0 (meeting video)
19	Lockeland Springs–East End (Lillian/Boscobel/Shelby)	Jun 18, 2014	Recommend approval	Unanimous
20	Park & Elkins → renamed Sylvan Park	Jun 18, 2014	Recommend approval	Unanimous
21	Belmont–Hillsboro (Cedar/Gale/Linden)	Apr 18, 2012; renewed Jun 21, 2017	Recommend approval (both)	6–0 three street votes (meeting video, 2012); unanimous (2017)
22	Whitland → renamed Whitland Area	Jul 19, 2017	Recommend approval	Unanimous
23	Bowling House District (expansion #1)	Sep 15, 2021	Recommend approval	Unanimous
24	Bowling House District (expansion #2)	Nov 16, 2022 (deferred) → Dec 21, 2022	Recommend approval, modified	7–0 (meeting video); 4600 block included, 4100 excluded

Selected verbatim record:

- **Eastwood** (Sep 18, 2013): “Commissioner Mosley moved to recommend the expansion to Metro Council and adopt the existing design guidelines ... the motion passed unanimously.” Revised

and re-recommended (Mar 19, 2014): “Commissioner Champion moved to recommend approval of the overlay expansion to Council ... the motion passed unanimously.” A later, separate Eastwood extension was recommended Jun 20, 2018: “Commissioner Stewart moved to recommend approval of the Eastwood Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay expansion, finding the area to meet criteria 2 and 3 ... the motion passed unanimously.”

- **Park & Elkins / Sylvan Park** (Jun 18, 2014): “Commissioner Fletcher moved to approve the expansion of the district and recommendation to Council ... Motion passed unanimously.” The staff report records the dual action: “extension of the existing Park & Elkins ... and the renaming of the district to the Sylvan Park Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay.”
- **Belmont–Hillsboro** (Jun 21, 2017): “moved to recommend to Metro Council that the Belmont Hillsboro Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay be expanded ... the motion passed unanimously.” The same Cedar/Gale/Linden blocks were first sought on April 18, 2012, in three separate street votes that each carried with none opposed (6–0 on the meeting video).
- **Whitland** (Jul 19, 2017): “Commissioner Jones moved to recommend to Metro Council that the Whitland Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay be expanded ... the motion passed unanimously,” with the district “revised from the Whitland NCZO to the Whitland Area NCZO.”
- **Bowling House expansion #1** (Sep 15, 2021): “chair Stewart moved to recommend the expansion of the Bowling House District to Metro Council ... the motion passed unanimously.”

THE ONLY DISSENT IN THIRTEEN YEARS IS COMMISSIONER SMITH’S

Across all twenty-six conservation overlay votes on record, the complete inventory of non-unanimous outcomes is three, and it concentrates in a single commissioner and the final two years:

1. **Commissioner Bell abstained** — Waverly–Belmont NCZO, Nov 18, 2015.
2. **Commissioner Smith opposed; Chair Bell recused** — Marlin Meadows NCZO, Feb 21, 2025.
3. **Commissioner Smith opposed (7–1)** — Green Hills–East NCZO, Dec 17, 2025.

The only “no” votes ever cast against a Nashville conservation overlay were Commissioner Matthew Smith’s two dissents in 2025, on Marlin Meadows and Green Hills East. The Green Hills East dissent is documented in [Identifying the Model Home](#): Smith opened deliberation by questioning whether the district’s central artifact, the 1927 Model Home, had been correctly identified, then cast the lone dissenting vote, and the commission recommended the overlay over his objection without resolving the address.

THE CUMULATIVE ROLL CALL RUNS 187 TO 2

The decision-level tally is lopsided — every overlay recommended, none rejected — and the individual-vote tally is starker. Each meeting’s roll call is reconstructed from the *Commissioners Present* headcount in the minutes — “passed unanimously” means every member present voted yes, net of any noted recusal or abstention — yielding, across all twenty-six recorded votes:

187 yea to 2 nay — with 1 abstention and 1 recusal.

About ninety-nine percent of every vote ever cast on a Nashville conservation overlay was yes, and both “no” votes belong to one commissioner, Matthew Smith, both in 2025 (Marlin Meadows and Green Hills East). For the five meetings whose minutes are missing from the archive — Hillsboro–West End’s first expansion (9–0), the Lockeland Springs–East End/McEwen expansion (7–0), the 2012 Belmont–Hillsboro extension (6–0, three street votes), the second Bowling House expansion (7–0), and Haynes Manor (6–0) — the head-count was read from the Commission’s meeting video and confirmed by direct viewing; none is estimated. The lone abstention (Commissioner Bell, Waverly–Belmont, 2015) and the lone recusal (Bell, Marlin Meadows, 2025) are the only other departures from unanimity in thirteen years.

DECISION	PRESENT	YEA	NAY	NOTE
Belmont–Hillsboro expansion (Apr 2012)	6	6	0	meeting video; three street votes, each 6–0
Salemtown (new)	8	8	0	
Eastwood expansion (Sep 2013)	8	8	0	
Hillsboro–West End, first expansion (Jan 2014)	9	9	0	meeting video
Eastwood expansion, revised (Mar 2014)	7	7	0	same expansion, re-voted
Lockeland Springs–East End / McEwen expansion (Apr 2014)	7	7	0	meeting video
Hillsboro–West End / Blair expansion (Jun 2014)	9	9	0	
Lockeland Springs–East End expansion (Jun 2014)	9	9	0	
Park & Elkins → Sylvan Park expansion (Jun 2014)	9	9	0	
Waverly–Belmont (new)	7	6	0	Bell abstained
Inglewood Place–Jackson Park (new)	7	7	0	
Hillview Heights–Inverness (new)	9	9	0	
Eastdale Place (new)	5	5	0	
Belmont–Hillsboro expansion (Jun 2017)	7	7	0	renewed; recommended
Bowling House District (new, Jul 2017)	7	7	0	
Whitland expansion (Jul 2017)	7	7	0	
Edgehill (new)	6	6	0	
Eastwood expansion (Jun 2018)	6	6	0	separate, later extension
Kenner Manor (new)	6	6	0	
Haynes Heights (new)	9	9	0	
Bowling House expansion #1 (Sep 2021)	5	5	0	
Lathan–Youngs (new)	9	9	0	
Bowling House expansion #2 (Dec 2022)	7	7	0	meeting video; 4100 block excluded
Haynes Manor (new, Mar 2023)	6	6	0	meeting video
Marlin Meadows (new)	8	6	1	Smith opposed; Bell recused
Green Hills–East (new)	8	7	1	Smith opposed (recorded 7–1)
Total (all twenty-six votes)	—	187	2	1 abstention, 1 recusal

For a vote recorded only as “passed unanimously,” the yea count is the meeting’s *Commissioners Present* headcount (five to nine members), less any recusal or abstention noted for that item, since the minutes do not print per-item roll calls; where one meeting heard several overlays (three on June 18, 2014; two on July 19, 2017; two on June 20, 2018), each is counted as its own roll call. Green Hills East is the single decision carrying an explicit numeric tally (“7 in favor and 1 opposed (7-1)”). The twenty-four proposals produce twenty-six recorded votes because the 2013 Eastwood expansion and the Belmont–Hillsboro expansion were each heard twice.

NOT COUNTED: PRESERVATION OVERLAYS, LANDMARKS, AND THE GUIDELINE CONSOLIDATION

These appear in the same record but are not conservation overlays and are excluded from the counts above:

- **Historic Preservation Zoning Overlays (HPZO):** Broadway expansion (Jun 2014); Germantown (Sep 2017); Marathon Village (Apr 2019, re-heard Feb 2020); the Downtown HP overlay expansion (recommended Jul 19, 2023 — “motion passed with Commissioner Mayhall recused”); and the Rock Block / Elliston Place item, which is filed among the conservation overlays but whose application reads “Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay for a portion of the Rock Block on Elliston Place” — an HPZO, not a conservation overlay, with no vote in the archived minutes.
- **Historic Landmark overlays** (single buildings): Concord Baptist Church (Dec 2016) and a 2021–2023 cluster (606 & 700 8th Ave S, 435 Old Hickory, 815 Nella Dr, 5797 Mt. View, the Buchanan Log House, among others).
- **Consolidation of the NCZO design guidelines** (2019–2025): a guideline–merger project, not a district. It was deferred at essentially every meeting from September 2019 through 2021, then adopted in pieces — the Lockeland Springs–East End chapter (Apr 2025), “Turn-of-the-20th-Century Part II” (Dec 2025). It accounts for the dozens of “Consolidation of Neighborhood Conservation Zoning Overlay ... DEFERRED” lines in the minutes, which are not overlay–district decisions.

LIMITS

Five meetings’ minutes are missing from the archive — the record has systematic gaps in 2012, 2023, and 2024, where months survive mostly as agendas, not minutes — so their votes were read from the Commission’s own meeting–video archive: Hillsboro–West End’s first expansion (Jan 15, 2014), the Lockeland Springs–East End / McEwen expansion (Apr 16, 2014), the Belmont–Hillsboro extension of April 18, 2012, the second Bowling House expansion (Dec 21, 2022), and Haynes Manor (Mar 2023). For each, the head-count was read by direct viewing of the recording, with the auto-generated captions used only to locate the item; no figure is estimated, and the recovered outcomes match the surviving staff recommendations and agendas — Haynes Manor, for one, appears as a fully adopted overlay in the November 20, 2024 minutes. The vote tally is rarely numeric — the minutes usually record “the motion passed unanimously” without a headcount, and “unanimous” reflects the commissioners present and voting, not a fixed nine–member board. The new-versus-expansion and conservation-versus-preservation classifications rest on each staff report’s own “Application/Description” wording. And the scope is the archived corpus for January 2010 through May 2026; overlays created before 2010 — Whitland, Eastwood, Lockeland Springs–East End, Hillsboro–West End, Richland–West End, and others, in their original boundaries — predate the record and appear here only where later expanded.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Pemberton, Alex. "Every Overlay Approved: The MHZC Conservation–Overlay Decision Record, 2010–2026." Research Brief M6, *Veneers of History in Green Hills East*.

alexaustinpemberton.com/journalism/veneers-of-history/#mhzc-conservation-overlay-decision-record. Accessed [date].