



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

April 10, 2025

The Honorable Freddie O'Connell
Mayor of Nashville
Historic Metro Courthouse
1 Public Square, Suite 100
Nashville, TN 37201

Dear Mayor O'Connell,

The City of Nashville and Davidson County possess an extensive, rich, and layered archaeological legacy that contains the physical traces of over 10,000 years of human habitation in the area. As Nashville grows, this heritage is increasingly under threat from destruction by development. It is our understanding that your office is considering an ordinance to require archaeological survey work prior to construction on Metro property. We strongly support this proposal and urge its enactment.

The SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 6,000 members, the SAA represents professional and avocational archaeologists, archaeology students in colleges and universities, and archaeologists working at tribal agencies, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. The SAA has members throughout the United States, as well as in many nations around the world.

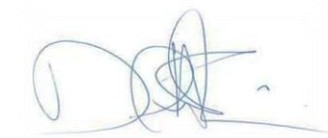
Currently, Nashville does not have an ordinance requiring the review of archaeological resources on Metro property or those impacted by Metro undertakings. Recently, this has resulted in the destruction of several important archaeological sites and with them the loss of irreplaceable evidence about the peoples who once lived there. The new Titans stadium in East Nashville, for example, sits above the foundations of some nineteenth-century Nashville buildings, but no archaeological survey work was conducted prior to construction. In another case, a private developer built a new Top Golf facility immediately adjacent to the site of the East Bank Mississippian mound group. Again, no survey was carried out, even though a critically important archaeological location was directly impacted.

The history of those who have called Nashville home over the centuries is vitally important to those who live there today. The heritage of our shared cultural past is an integral part of the fabric of our society, and its loss will result in the diminishment of our future. The important draft ordinance would help prevent that outcome. Those who object to this type of regulation

often claim that such rules impede economic growth. In fact, most archaeological sites can be quickly and efficiently documented ahead of development, preserving the information they contain while allowing construction to continue. Pima County and its capital of Tucson, Arizona, have long had a similar rule in place, and it has clearly not prevented expansion.

We wholeheartedly support your important efforts to protect the historical record in metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County by requesting legislation to establish an archaeological review process for Metro property and Metro undertakings. The archaeological resources of Nashville are a priceless resource for the city as well as for the entire country, and their protection will complement, rather than impede, economic growth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Sandweiss", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel H. Sandweiss, PhD, RPA
President