Candidate	David Briley	John Cooper
Age	55	63
Office sought	Mayor	Mayor
Town or city and ZIP code	Nashville	Nashville
Education	Georgetown University, B.A. History, Class of 1988 Golden Gate University School of Law, J.D., Class of 1995	BA in History from Harvard University MBA from Vanderbilt University
Job history	Coucilmember At Large (1999-2007) Vice Mayor of Nashville (2015-2018) Mayor (2018-present)	I have spent my career in finance, real estate development, and project management. I have spent the last four years serving as an at-large Metro Council member.
Family	Wife Jodie, Son Sam	I was born in Nashville and grew up in Shelbyville. I have lived here for over 30 years. My wife, Laura, is a former constitutional law professor, and we have three sons. Our oldest son is in college now. I am proud to have a long family history of public service.
Why are you running for this office?	As mayor, I've worked hard to make sure everyone in Nashville is given the chance to prosper and that no one gets left behind as we continue to grow. We know that Nashville's prosperity gives us more resources to make progress that will benefit Nashvillians. Equitable prosperity is the lens through which my team and I look at every decision. I plan to continue to take this approach as we keep working to build a stronger Nashville.	I am running for mayor to create a Nashville that works for everyone. In Chapter 1 of Nashville's growth, we spent a lot of public money creating a thriving downtown. We've done that. Now in Chapter 2, we need to invest in neighborhoods and schools. Our future depends on it. Nashville is at a crossroads. This administration has lost track of the public's priorities and lost the public's trust. In the time of our biggest boom, we are struggling to pay our teachers and first responders what they deserve. The current mayor's affordable housing plan is woefully inaccurate and misleading. As for transportation, the current mayor doesn't even plan to have a plan within the next four years. If I have the privilege of serving you as mayor, we will develop real solutions to the costs of growth. I will put the focus back on residents on our neighborhoods and schools.
What makes you qualified to hold this office and better qualified than your opponent (s)?	I have been in this role as mayor for 15 months, and I'm proud of what my administration has been able to achieve in that time in education, public safety, affordable housing, job creation, small business development and other areas. Before this, I served as a Metro Councilman At Large from 1999-2007 and as Vice Mayor from 2015-2018. My record is clear. I care deeply about this city, and I have the knowledge and experience to lead the city forward while ensuring no one is left behind. I respect my opponents' willingness to serve, but none of them have the same understanding of how Metro works or of how to get things done.	I might not have been the right mayor for Nashville 10 years ago and I might not be the right mayor 10 years from now, but given my financial background and experience on Metro Council, I am the right person to lead Nashville right now. I am uniquely qualified to provide sound financial management and rebuild trust in Metro government. Nashville needs better management and a mayor who will responsibly steward taxpayer dollars and public assets.

What are your top 2 to 3 priorities for your new (or next) term in office?	Public education, public safety, and affordability will continue to be my top priorities.	My top priorities after taking office are: 1) Restoring public trust in Metro through transparency and accountability 2) Fiscal stewardship; rebalancing the city's priorities and refocusing our budget to address all neighborhoods' needs, not just a single area of the city. 3) Addressing the costs of growth by focusing our economic and community development efforts on people and not just buildings. I will invest in our schools and neighborhoods, create a real affordable housing plan, and address our transportation needs within my first term.
Do you think Nashville is headed in the right direction? Why or why not?	Yes, Nashville is moving in the right direction. But we need to be intentional about each step we take. Nashville will continue to grow, and that growth will create a lot of opportunities for the city and its residents. Our job is to use our prosperity to create a Nashville that leaves no one behind.	With its current leadership, I believe that it is not. Restoring trust is the key. We need a return to sound financial management. There are lots of examples of public business being conducted poorly. We need to prioritize our neighborhoods and schools again, rather than focusing all of our energy and resources on downtown development at this point in Nashville's growth. The rest of the county needs to see a dividend. We need a transportation plan and a real affordable housing strategy. Our schools need greater investment. With the right changes, our potential is unlimited.
What is your opinion on Nashville's growth and should it be sustained? If so, how?	As I said, Nashville is going to continue to grow. The challenges for us are a) to make sure that we use our growth to lift up all Nashvillians and b) to ensure that our boom doesn't take away what makes Nashville special. Meeting the first challenge has been a central part of my work over the last 15 months. This year's budget includes a \$101 million increase in revenue over last year's budget, and that's largely due to Nashville's continued growth and our careful management of expenses this year. That money goes back into our city: schools, infrastructure, libraries, etc. For instance, I allocated \$34 million of that \$101 million toward our school system so we can give all of our teachers a raise while continuing to pay down debt. Preserving what makes us special is an ongoing effort. When I pushed to convert the Greer Stadium site into green space last year (and succeeded), that was a good example of preserving an important part of Nashville's history (Fort Negley) instead of opting for more development. Similarly, we need to be smart and intentional about development in the Music Row area to make sure the heart of Music City is preserved. It's also important to point out that our growth has added to our culture in many ways. Over the last 15 to 20 years, we've seen an influx of new Americans relocating to Nashville, and now our immigrant communities represent more than 12% of the population. I'm a firm believer that a diverse and welcoming city is a strong city, and Nashville checks those boxes. Growth also has created more cultural opportunities for Nashvillians.	Nashville is going to grow more in the next five years than in the last five years. We need to welcome everyone who comes, and honor everyone who is already here. The job before us is preparing our kids for success in a growing city. The question is how we manage growth and deal with the costs of growth. Managing our growth means investing in our infrastructure and respecting what makes Nashville special. We've seen that growth brings traffic and higher rents, so we need effective transportation and affordable housing plans to address those costs of growth. We need to prioritize education and infrastructure that allows for sustainable, livable growth. As mayor, I will focus on economic and community development through human capital rather than incentivizing development and hoping that benefits trickle down.

In his State of Metro address, Mayor Briley said he wants Nashville to be the most equitable city in America. How do we get there and what barriers are holding the city back?

I have been working towards this goal since coming into office last year. An equitable city means a city in which every person, regardless of his or her zip code or demographics, is able to thrive in Nashville. They have access to a good education, a place to live and a well-paying job, and they feel safe living here. Right now, I would consider public education to be our biggest barrier. Nashville has 21 priority schools, schools that are among the lowest-performing in the entire state, and a lot of them are at low capacity. In some of them, less than 50% of the seats are filled, which hurts them badly in terms of the funding they receive from the state. We've also just seen a very tumultuous year for the school board.

The good news is, we're making progress. I have nothing but confidence in Dr. Adrienne Battle, the interim schools director, and I've told her she has my full support. The Kitchen Cabinet I appointed last fall is working to find best practices to lift up our priority schools. We've seen successes in individual schools like Napier Elementary, where Principal Dr. Watechia Lawless has started to turn things around.

The important thing to remember is that becoming the most equitable city will take time. I've been working toward it since Day 1, and I will continue to do so. Real progress takes dedicated effort and time.

When the current mayor stated that his goal was to make Nashville known as the "most equitable city," it was a tacit admission that Nashville is NOT equitable. In fact, Metro Government has too often contributed to inequities. The Mayor's Office's approach has been to incentivize downtown development and hope that benefits trickle down. Time and time again, Metro has been co-opted in the service of incentives that are no longer necessary. We can make Nashville more equitable by investing in our schools, paying our civil servants the wages they deserve, making affordable housing central to every decision we make, and investing in the forgotten neighborhoods of Davidson County.

What are you hearing most from voters about what they want you to accomplish, if elected?

Improving our public school system, transit and addressing affordable housing are consistently the top issues.

The issue that I hear about most often on the campaign trail is Metro's fiscal mismanagement. At every event, I receive some form of the same question: "How, in this time of unprecedented economic success, can we not afford to fund our priorities?" Many people don't know about Metro's deficit spending, our rising debt per capita, or that Metro has over \$100 million in new revenue this year.

Many people are frustrated that even with all this growth, we cannot fulfill the primary obligations of a city, which is to provide high-quality universal services. We fall short of these basic duties because we have prioritized tourism and development, often over residents and neighborhoods. This is the foremost issue that voters have asked me to address as mayor, and fiscal stewardship will be my first priority in office.

What is your position on economic incentives to private companies in the past and in the future?

Incentives have their place as a way to attract good jobs that can help more Nashvillians, including New Americans, share in the city's prosperity. And we'll pretty quickly recoup the investments we've made in Amazon and AllianceBernstein, which will bring a combined 6,000 jobs to Nashville. I plan to use incentives selectively and strategically -- and they won't necessarily be focused on downtown Nashville.

We need someone at the table who represents the people of Nashville, saying 'no' to bad deals and 'yes' to good deals that will benefit everyone. As anyone who has heard me speak publicly can attest, I believe we have dramatically over-used incentives. I've voted for economic development incentives when they provide a good return on investment and bring benefits that we would otherwise miss out on. But in deal after deal, City Hall has governed by giveaway, shepherding public land and money into private hands. Tax increment financing has been awarded for development that often would have happened anyway. Metro government is stuck in a 1980s approach to economic development: subsidize buildings and hope the benefits trickle down to our schools and neighborhoods. Today's challenge is addressing the costs of growth and lifting up the whole county.

How involved should the mayor and Metro Council be in governing Metro Nashville Public Schools?

I am already playing a much bigger role in our public school system than any previous mayor. I am working with Dr. Battle to write a memorandum of understanding between MNPS and the city that will lay the foundation for a new relationship that involves higher Metro involvement in operations, finance and human resources. Outside of the MOU, I want to work to build community support for meaningful improvements in our school system, and I want to help grow confidence in our school board. Great things happen in our schools every day. I know because I've visited many of them as mayor and before as a member of council. We just need more great things to happen more often for more kids.

Education is the most important thing we do as a city. Instead of swinging around making threats, we need a mayor who listens and can bring out the best in everyone. I would work with the school board and the community to make sure that we find the best person to lead our school district. In the meantime, I plan to give Dr. Battle and the current board the support that they deserve and to do my best to find ways to refocus more of our city's money on our school system. I am passionate about proper fiscal management because that is the mechanism through which we will find additional funds for education. Support from the mayor will be crucial for the next phase of putting schools first.

Do support increasing the property tax rate for Metro Nashville residents? If so, why? If not, why not?

I do not support increasing the property tax rate for Nashville residents this year, and there are a few reasons why. First of all, our low-income residents can't all shoulder a tax increase right now. During Nashville's last property reappraisal, our poorest population was hit the hardest in many areas. These are people living paycheck to paycheck, and we owe it to them not to add to their expenses any further.

Secondly, I'm confident that we can live within our means right now. This year, as I mentioned, we saw a \$101 million increase in Metro's revenues. If we can continue this kind of growth, we will be able to run our city and provide adequate funding where it's needed.

There are good reasons to raise taxes, but we can't raise them every year. Any effort to raise property taxes should support our fire, police, transit, affordable housing, education and all areas that matter to residents. We need to have a calculated plan for where the money goes, and the people of Nashville deserve more than two to three weeks to consider it. The recent proposals in the Council to raise taxes would only leave us wanting to raise taxes again in a few years, and it would be harder to do it then.

No. Metro has over \$100 million in new revenue for fiscal year 2020. A properly managed city should be able to thrive with a 4.5% revenue increase. Metro needs a return to fiscal stewardship. I don't feel good about asking taxpayers to pay more in taxes when we aren't properly managing the money we already have.

Although the transit referendum of 2018 failed, how should Metro approach transit and transportation issues into the future?

We need something on the ground now that can serve as a model for successful transit alternatives. That's why we're working with federal, state and local leaders to develop better transit systems for corridors like Dickerson Road, Murfreesboro Pike and Nolensville Pike. Dickerson Road, especially, is a route where we can build a transit system before the area is overwhelmed by development.

There are also steps I am already taking to ensure that Nashville's transit continues to improve. In last year's capital spending plan, we allocated \$85 million towards streets, paving, sidewalks, greenways, traffic calming, traffic management and transit. The traffic calming projects are in progress in eight key areas around Nashville to ease congestion and make our roads safer.

We all agree that Nashville has traffic and transportation problems. Time spent in traffic is increasing. Pedestrian deaths are on the rise, less than half of our streets have sidewalks, and we have an inadequate and under-resourced bus system. Voters rejected last year's transit plan supported by this mayor because it cost too much and delivered too little. Last year's vote was on a specific plan and therefore should not be interpreted as a lack of countywide interest in funding the right plan. Instead of listening to these criticisms and developing a new plan, Mayor Briley has announced that if he is reelected there will be no plan in the next four years. Nashville can't wait five more years for transportation solutions. As mayor, I am committed to developing a people-first transportation plan that is focused on helping you get to where you work and where you live in a timely, safe, and cost-effective manner. My transportation policy statement is available on my website at https://johncooperfornashville. com/transportation/

What is your position on the future of scooters in Nashville?

Scooters as they exist right now have been a failed experiment. If they have a future in Nashville, we are going to need drastic improvements. That means more accountability from scooter companies, harsher penalties for violations (both for riders and the companies), and better enforcement from the scooter companies. Last month I wrote a letter to all of the scooter companies in Nashville declaring that I will file legislation to ban them unless I see serious improvements from them. Scooters can be a first-mile/last-mile solution for some residents, but right now, the risks and inconveniences that come with 4,000 scooters on our streets and sidewalks outweigh the benefits.

Scooters need to be effectively regulated, and that starts with enforcing existing regulations. Scooters may be a useful mode of transportation, but we need to make sure they aren't blocking sidewalks and that we are facilitating safe operation. Building out our protected bike infrastructure is a big part of that.

How should Nashville address the affordable housing scarcity? And what is your position on **Mayor Briley's** Under One Roof initiative?

The Under One Roof 2029 initiative is the unprecedented commitment to affordable housing that we need so we can balance growth with an investment in our people. Not only is it Nashville's biggest-ever investment in affordable housing, but it also addresses affordability on several levels: from housing the homeless to providing workforce-priced housing. These 10,000 new units over 10 years will deconcentrate poverty by creating mixed-income communities, which studies have shown greatly improve a person's chance of getting out of the cycle of poverty. Under One Roof also brings the private sector to the table. Affordable housing affects everyone in our city, and we can work together to address it.

Our current mayor is on the record disagreeing with this statement, but Nashville is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis. I know how to manage large, complex projects. No one in the mayor's race understands the real estate market better than I do. My full affordable housing policy statement is on my website, but here are the key things that we need to do. We need to increase transparency and improve the functioning of MDHA. We need to improve residents' access to services. We need to bring real expertise to housing policy and get it out from under the political purview of the Mayor's Office. As your mayor, I will create a real 10-year plan to preserve and create a meaningful number of affordable housing units at an appropriate price. I will also establish a revolving loan fund for affordable housing.

After four years on the city council, I've also seen what Metro is doing to address the problem. The answer is not much. In the past couple of months, this administration has talked a lot about its affordable housing plan. Look closely, though, and you will see a plan that is all sound bite and no substance. The mayor's supposedly three-quarter billion dollar housing investment is made up of unsecured promises for private contributions and a reframing of pre-existing funding and development plans. It is important to note that Mayor Briley's current budget proposal does not include any new funds for the Barnes Fund. You can read the breakdown on my site: https: //johncooperfornashville.com/affordable-housing/

What is your position on a proposal to privatize parking enforcement in the downtown and surrounding areas?

I still support an upgrade to our current parking system, but I want us to have time to educate the public about the proposal and keep this issue from getting overly politicized. This topic was raised well before I was mayor because it is smart and important. Nashville is way behind some of our peer cities when it comes to how efficiently we use and manage on-street parking, and it still needs to be addressed in the future to make parking not only affordable but also accessible. It's important for everyone to know that Metro won't be selling any meters or other assets, and we'll remain in control of parking policy, such as setting parking rates and approving placements of new meters. The plan is simply to hire a company to manage the system, which would remain Metro's system - and would generate much more revenue for the city than it does now.

The plan has lacked detail and transparency at every step of the way, and given their track record, we have to question whether this administration is even competent enough to award a 30-year parking contract. Other cities that have privatized parking have regretted it, and Nashville should not go down that path.

Our current mayor's "parking modernization" plan would result in private management of our street parking, an increase in fees and fines, and a doubling (at the very least) of the number of parking meters. The real purpose of the plan was to raise \$30 million to plug a hole in this year's budget. This is short-term thinking at its worst. However, even this was botched. The first time the parking deal was awarded. Metro miscalculated the bids and released an intent to award to a company that bid \$74 million less than another company. The next iteration also had serious problems. One was the lack of details. The parking plan did not include a business plan, finalized rates, a map of where new meters would go, or a firm commitment to the number of additional metered spaces. I and many others objected to this proposal. In response, Mayor Briley announced that he was "hitting the pause button" on his parking plan. However, his budget continues to include the parking meter proposal.

What is your position on the future of the Nashville Fairgrounds?

I believe the Fairgrounds is here to stay. That's what the voters decided. But the property can be more appealing to more people - and thus more productive. The Major League Soccer stadium is part of that solution, and I'm proud of the work my administration and the Metro Council did to complete that agreement. The new Fair Park is a strong addition, too. A mix of long-term and newer uses, from the state fair, flea market and auto racing to MLS, recreational soccer fields and an already popular dog park, make the Fairgrounds a revitalized place that can serve residents for decades to come.

I believe that the historic uses of the Fairgrounds need to be valued and protected. Our Fairgrounds is a valuable part of our county's entertainment portfolio. Protection of public land has to be a strategic priority. A responsible city needs to evaluate opportunities systematically and openly. That didn't happen when Major League Soccer came to Nashville. Instead of running a site selection that invited public input, City Hall offered to build the stadium in Fairgrounds, with no consideration of its impact on such current uses as the State Fair. Then, to the surprise of the city council, it gave 10 additional acres to the developer. Building the stadium itself should have been enough of an incentive for a soccer team. We should not have included a bonus of ten acres at the Fairgrounds beyond the incentive of the stadium. At the same time Mayor Briley was patching a budget hole with ill-advised one-time property sales, his administration steered ten acres at the Fairgrounds into private hands. City Hall sold land with its right hand and awarded it away with its

How could Metro better balance the needs and wants of downtown and the outlying neighborhoods

What we need to do - and what we're already doing - is to reinvest the money from our booming downtown into our neighborhoods. Tourism and business are thriving in our urban core, which means increased sales tax and property tax revenue. In my FY20 budget, we are reinvesting this money into our neighborhoods. That means things like a new library in Donelson, a new community center in Bellevue, a new police headquarters and a budget for our school system that exceeds \$1 billion in operating, capital and debt service funds.

We also need to ensure that we aren't spending unnecessary resources downtown. Our new deal with the Predators is a perfect example of that. The Nashville Predators and Bridgestone Arena have grown into extremely successful entities that are downtown anchors. They no longer need taxpayer support. In their new lease at Bridgestone Arena, which will keep the Predators here through 2049, the Predators will no longer receive any Metro subsidy.

Nashville has built a thriving downtown and that should be celebrated. That said, we don't need to keep subsidizing a boom. A property owner in Bordeaux or Donelson should not be paying for the costs associated with downtown. As mayor, I will make sure that tourists' dollars are spent on residents, not residents' dollars spent on tourists. We have 157 schools and each school represents a neighborhood. Neighborhoods are the most important part of our city's future success, and they deserve meaningful investment. All across the county, we should be building bus stops and community centers, improving stormwater and intersections, and increasing livability and walkability.

When visitors ask you, "What should I do in Nashville?" what are the top 3 things or places you recommend?

I recommend getting out and about a bit for a bike ride or hike in one of the Warner Parks or Shelby Bottoms, which are incredible natural resources within our city limits. A trip to the Ryman Auditorium or the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum is good for an understanding of what "Music City" means. And I realize it's where I work, but visiting Metro's historic courthouse and the Public Square out front will give anyone a sense of how regular people, working together across gaps in age, race and class, can create real change, as the civil rights activists of the early 1960s did when they sat in and marched.

The first place I would recommend they visit is Fort Negley. It is Nashville's most important historical landmark, and it offers stunning views of our city. Once they've seen the Ryman, I'd recommend the cheeseburger platter at Brown's Diner. And finally I'd suggest visiting Plaza Mariachi, the cultural gem on Nolensville Rd.

Is there	After I left Nashville to go to college in the 1980s, I	I'll do the math and I'll tell you the truth. This is the
anything else you would like us to know about you, your values and priorities?	lived in several different cities and even other countries before returning to my hometown to help contribute to the progress I was starting to see here. I learned another language (Spanish), but, more importantly, I learned a lot about what does and	moment to rebalance our city's priorities. I'll work with you to develop real solutions to the costs of growth. And I'll put the focus back on you and your neighborhood.
Will you	Yes	Yes
commit to being civil in how you		
present yourself and the way you		
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opponents and		
others? (Our		
definition of civility is being		
a good, active,		
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