

A banner for the Nashville Independent Venues Study. It features a dark background with vibrant, abstract patterns in shades of purple, blue, orange, and pink. The text "Nashville Independent Venues Study" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font across the center.

Nashville Independent Venues Study

Press Release

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The *Nashville Independent Venues Study* Kicks Off Listening Sessions with Nashville’s ‘Night Mayor’ and Independent Music Venue Owners

The Nashville Independent Venues Study (NIVS) had its official kick off in February 2023 with meetings with independent music venue owners, Nashville-area music and nightlife advocates, and Metro Nashville’s Planning Department

Under Metro Nashville’s Planning Department, the *Nashville Independent Venues Study* is led by [PennPraxis](#) working in collaboration with two other firms, [VibeLab](#) and [Culture Shift Team](#), and will inventory venues and speak with community members to better understand the challenges independent venues face. The project team will conduct quantitative and qualitative research about Nashville’s venues, land use policies, economic geography, music history, and culture to develop potential policies and ideas for action to be presented in early 2024.

The study’s kick off meetings with key influencers in the Nashville music and nightlife scenes provided the project team with a deeper understanding of the role that independent music venues play in Nashville’s one-of-a-kind ecosystem.

Through conducting independent venue site visits, the project team gained greater insight into the unique challenges that these venues face amidst growing pressures from Music City’s rapid growth and expansion, neighborhood change, rising costs and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The outcry from Nashville’s music industry continues to grow over closures of long-established independent venues—most recently, community music staples like Exit/In and Mercy Lounge. Independent venue closures do more than change the landscape of Nashville. Venue closures deprive independent artists from opportunities to perform and grow in their careers and they disproportionately impact small businesses owners, marginalized communities and communities of color. Local residents continue to voice the importance of protecting the art, history and culture that keeps Nashville known as the world’s “Music City”, which places concern and attention on independent venues. Understanding challenges that risk closures for independent

venues will help the *Nashville Independent Venues Study* identify specific steps that can be taken to protect independent venues in the long term as part of Nashville's cultural infrastructure.

In May and June of 2023, the *Nashville Independent Venues Study* will conduct small-group discussions, focus groups, and interviews with members of Nashville's music and cultural industries, event programmers, real estate developers, musicians, journalists, and other stakeholders.

This project arose from a resolution (RS2021-927) adopted by the Nashville Metro Council in May 2021, which was then developed into a request for proposals issued by Nashville Metro (RFQ 269260: Study – Sustaining Nashville's Independent Music Venues).

PennPraxis is the applied research, professional practice, and community engagement arm of the University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School of Design. VibeLab is a purpose-driven consultancy supporting cities around the world in the nighttime, nightlife, and cultural industries. Culture Shift Team, based in Nashville, is a multicultural marketing advertising and DEIAB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Access, and Belonging) implementation, education, and consulting agency.

For more information about the *Nashville Independent Venues Study* and to join the mailing list to stay informed about the study visit, nighttime.org/nashville-independent-venues-study

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