

Bill Purcell



From September 2008 to July 2010, Bill Purcell (William Paxson Purcell III) was the Director of Harvard's University's Institute of Politics at the Kennedy School of Government, and a Lecturer in Public Policy. He has spent more than 30 years in public service, law, and higher education. During his eight-year tenure as Mayor of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee (1999-2007) the city saw unprecedented economic expansion, an increase in Metro school funding of more than 50 percent, and the development and preservation of more than 26,000 affordable housing units. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Purcell is the second native Northerner to serve as Mayor of Nashville. He was elected to his second term as mayor by a record-setting 84.8 percent of the vote. Purcell's accomplishments as a civic leader earned him "Public Official of the Year" honors in 2006 by *Governing Magazine*. He has served as a trustee of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and has remained active with the association. Following his service as mayor, Purcell was a Harvard University (Kennedy School of Government) Institute of Politics Fellow in 2007. He then served as founding Dean of the College of Public Service and Urban Affairs at Tennessee State University before returning to Harvard's Institute of Politics in 2008.

A decade earlier, he was founder and director of the Child and Family Policy Center at Vanderbilt University (1996-99), a nationally-recognized center building a bridge between academic research, politics, and best practices to benefit children and their families. Previously, he served five terms as a legislator in the Tennessee House of Representatives (1986-96) and as Majority Leader (1990-96); and before that Purcell worked as a senior assistant public defender in the Nashville Metro Public Defender's Office (1981-85). He earned his bachelor's degree at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York and his law degree at Vanderbilt University School of Law, where he has been honored as a Distinguished Alumnus. In December 2009, Purcell was appointed by Harvard University President Drew Faust as co-chair of the Work Team for Allston and now serves as Special Advisor on Allston. In these roles, he recommends strategies for achieving a cohesive academic and learning campus environment situated in Allston.