

# CASE SUMMARY

## APPLICATION TYPE: PLAN AMENDMENT EAST COUNTY SECTOR PLAN AMENDMENT

KNOXVILLE • KNOX COUNTY

**M P C**  
METROPOLITAN  
P L A N N I N G  
C O M M I S S I O N

T E N N E S S E E

Suite 403 • City County Building  
400 Main Street  
Knoxville, Tennessee 37902  
865 • 215 • 2500  
F A X • 215 • 2068  
www.knoxmpc.org

File Number: 2-A-10-SAP                      Related File Number:  
Application Filed: 1/4/2010                      Date of Revision:  
Applicant: METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

General Location:  
Other Parcel Info.:  
Tax ID Number: 999 9999                      Jurisdiction: City and County  
Size of Tract:  
Accessibility:

### GENERAL LAND USE INFORMATION

Existing Land Use:  
Surrounding Land Use:  
Proposed Use:                                      Density:  
Sector Plan: East County                      Sector Plan Designation:  
Growth Policy Plan:  
Neighborhood Context:

### ADDRESS/RIGHT-OF-WAY INFORMATION (where applicable)

Street:  
Location:  
Proposed Street Name:  
Department-Utility Report:  
Reason:

### ZONING INFORMATION (where applicable)

Current Zoning:  
Former Zoning:  
Requested Zoning:  
Previous Requests:  
Extension of Zone:  
History of Zoning:

### PLAN INFORMATION (where applicable)

Current Plan Category:  
Requested Plan Category:

## **SUBDIVISION INFORMATION (where applicable)**

Subdivision Name:

No. of Lots Proposed:

No. of Lots Approved: 0

Variances Requested:

S/D Name Change:

## **OTHER INFORMATION (where applicable)**

Other Bus./Ord. Amend.:

## **MPC ACTION AND DISPOSITION**

Planner In Charge:

Mike Carberry

Staff Recomm. (Abbr.):

MPC staff recommends that you adopt the East County Sector Plan (an amendment to the Knoxville Knox County General Plan) and forward the plan to City Council and County Commission with a recommendation for adoption

Staff Recomm. (Full):

Comments:

Overview of the Plan

The last time that the plan was comprehensively revised was 2001 (adoption by MPC in December 2000, followed by adoption by City Council and County Commission, January 2001). Several factors, public viewpoints and trends were considered in drafting this 2010 document. They are outlined in this memorandum.

Tennessee law prescribes that regional planning commissions, like the Knoxville Knox County Metropolitan Commission, create the regional plan (in other words, the Knoxville Knox County General Plan). Under state law, MPC has the duty to make and adopt plans for physical development within Knoxville and Knox County, including economic development, uses associated with trade and housing, conservation of agricultural and forest resources, and provisions of utilities and facilities for schools, parks and open space, transportation and other infrastructure. That framework has been used in creating this East County Sector Plan, which along with the other sector plans is an element of the Knoxville Knox County General Plan.

In April 2001, the State approved the Farragut-Knoxville-Knox County Growth Policy Plan, which forms the framework for growth and conservation across the county. This 2010 update of the East County Sector Plan is consistent with the Growth Policy Plan; the Urban Growth Boundary, Planned Growth Area and Rural Area are referenced as basis for the land use designations in the plan that you are considering and no changes to those designated areas are recommended. The Rural Area contains 55 percent of the land in this sector.

In general, the land use plan is similar to the 2001 East County Sector Plan. The main differences are attributed to incorporating MPC's revised land use classifications that go into more detail than those used in the past. For example, the previous plan called for large areas of general commercial, however, the new plan goes into more detail in regard to the nature of commercial designations, whether they are rural, community, mixed use, or highway-oriented.

The land use plan identifies seven mixed use special districts. Each district contains a list of appropriate uses and recommended zoning to achieve the plan's goals. These special mixed use districts are located at major points on the landscape where road systems are generally good and where a variety of potential land uses may be appropriate. Because of site constraints such as topography, lack of internal street systems and environmental factors, zones requiring site plan review are recommended.

The plan also recommends the pursuit of overlay districts to create better design and conservation standards. Commercial highway and rural scenic overlays are proposed (for example, one addresses the need to improve John Sevier Highway and Asheville Highway as commercial corridor overlays, and another overlay is proposed for scenic rural corridors like Thorngrove Pike and Kodak Road).

A French Broad Conservation Overlay is also proposed to better ensure that the area's natural resources and historic resources are conserved. The conservation area includes approximately 5,000 acres on the north side of the French Broad River. While such a conservation area has been discussed in the past, the recommended boundary for the corridor is proposed in this document for the first time. The proposed boundary is based on the following factors: areas of prime farmland, the distribution of historic and archaeological resources, existing open space such as the Seven Islands

Refuge and the prominent edges of the scenic vistas in the corridor, which are defined by the ridge lines that frame the area. The plan identifies a wide range of programs that could be used in implementing the corridor plan (for example, additional farm conservation easements and conservation subdivisions) and the principles for developing design guidelines to foster new development that is keeping with its traditional rural character.

The proposals of the community facility and transportation plans are consistent with the recently adopted Knoxville-Knox County Park, Recreation and Greenways Plan and the Long Range Mobility Plan. A particular community need that is identified in the community facilities plan is an improved or new Carter Elementary School.

During the most recent public meeting, held January 25th, and throughout the process, MPC staff discerned through public discussion and written comments that most citizens were comfortable with most of the land use plan proposals with the exception being the Northwest Quadrant of the Midway Road interchange (see the following).

The Midway issues: Early in the public involvement process MPC staff heard opposition to consideration of a business park at Midway. MPC staff believes that the Metropolitan Planning Commission, City Council and County Commission should take into account the concerns of the area residents as well as a broader county-wide public, which has job creation and economic development as county-wide goals. The Knoxville Knox County General Plan provides a goals and principles related to economic development. Quoting from that plan and its agenda for quality growth:

1. Develop a strong economy: a sustainable economy that will provide good jobs, weather economic downturns and provide a high quality life for the largest possible segment of our population is the foundation for quality growth.

Under that goal, the General Plan contains a principle that is germane to both brownfield redevelopment and new economic development: "Economic development should be balanced across the county, with job opportunities created through development of new sites, redevelopment of older properties, and expansion of existing business." In keeping with that General Plan principle, MPC has looked to both redevelopment planning (ranging from the I-275 business park concepts, adopted in the Central Sector Plan to the identification of strategically well-positioned new sites, capable of sustaining long term economic development, like those locations identified in the East County Sector and elsewhere in the county).

Staff recognizes that the Midway Interchange area is well positioned for higher intensity development, particularly with its interstate highway access and fairly level topography. The land use proposals for the Northwest Quadrant of the interchange are made in recognition of those assets.

Off-site and onsite development concerns:

- Area residents expressed concerns about sanitary sewer extensions to the interchange and a potential sewer treatment plant on the French Broad River. The concerns centered on impacts to the concept of a conserved French Broad Corridor and the impetus to other development that would likely be sought with such infrastructure. MPC staff shares the concerns and responded with recommendations of no change to the Rural Growth Area, the creation of a French Broad Conservation Corridor and a recommendation of an onsite wastewater system, should development of the E Co-7 Midway interchange mixed use area be pursued. (At the September Roundtable meeting, the Development Corporation noted that such a system would be used if their project is allowed).

- Trucking terminal issues were brought up in the course of the planning process, including maximization of jobs issues and impacts to surrounding properties (the site rises slightly to the north and staff has concerns that expansive trucking yards cannot easily be buffered from surrounding rural and low density residential uses).

The maximization of jobs issue should be a significant concern. As an example of potential warehouse distribution use employment, the Development Corporation points to the 250 jobs that were created on the Sysco site (an area of 48 acres), which translates to approximately 5 employees per acre. In Appendix C, you will find the Institute of Transportation Engineers nationwide data, examining averages of employment generation per type of use; truck terminal and warehousing uses are the lowest generators. Other uses should be sought for Midway Northwest Quadrant E Co-7 development as outlined in this plan.

- When MPC staff was asked to update the 2002 Office and Business Park Study, staff asked the Development Corporation if office park sites should be included. The Corporation felt that was not needed because the private sector can address meeting those needs. MPC staff agrees; several major projects, like Dowell Springs and Century Park have come on line and there are numerous opportunities to absorb office growth in and around downtown. By the same token, MPC staff believes that commercial retail development can be handled by the private sector and that the Midway

Northwest Quadrant is best suited to a mix of uses proposed in the plan, which does not include a separate conventional highway-oriented commercial area. Should a business park be permitted, the appropriate zone (as noted in this plan) is the Employment Center (EC) district, which allows up to 20 percent of an EC-zoned area to contain retail that is incidental to the project.

Some interests have said during the planning process that there have been no changes that would warrant consideration of a Midway area plan amendment. MPC believes that there are several changes and considerations. These are outlined in Appendix D. A summary of the changes follows:

1. Growth Policy Plan approval: State approval of the Farragut-Knoxville-Knox County Growth Policy Plan (April 2001), established the County's Planned Growth Area (PGA) to the northwest of the Midway interchange, the City of Knoxville's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) to the previously incorporated area to the northeast and southeast of the Midway interchange and the designation of the Rural Area to the south and east of the PGA and UGB designations. Both the PGA and UGB designations allow low to higher land use intensities related to residential, commercial and economic development uses. The Rural Area designation was conceived to conserve land for agriculture, protect natural resources, and meet future growth needs.

2. Population and work force growth: during the 2000 to 2008 period, the County's population grew by approximately 48,000 and the work force (those over 15 years of age) grew in approximate proportion to population growth. Looking to the 15 year horizon of this plan, an additional 52,000 residents can be estimated and, likewise, a proportional increase in the work force out to 2025 (the 15 year horizon of this plan). The implication is that the city and county have seen demographic changes related to economic stability and should consider a variety of opportunities to maintain a county-wide balance in economic development. Of potential concern is the loss of manufacturing jobs over the last few decades whereby that manufacturing share is roughly seven percent of the county's employment (versus almost ten percent nationally), and the rise of retail sector employment to 26 percent of county employment (appreciably above the national average of 20 percent).

3. Loss of land zoned for or planned for (via previously adopted plans) other purposes than industrial or business park development: Between 2000 and 2010, over 700 industrial-related acres were rezoned for non-industrial purposes; almost 400 acres of land designated for industrial or business park uses were changed through sector plan amendments to non-industrial (almost always residential) uses. The most significant of these was the loss of a 70 acre area of a proposed Business Park designation in the 2001 East County Sector Plan to residential, effectively eliminating a 365 acre opportunity for economic development purposes.

4. Continued reduction in the land base for business park development: Beyond the preceding points, there has been an 'infilling' of economic development sites since 2001. Virtually all of the land of the earliest industrial parks has been absorbed, primarily through sales to and development by private interests. What might have appeared as vacant tracts a few years ago were expansion-related opportunities for various firms (for example, Green Mountain Coffee's development and Philips metal recycling in Forks of the River).

5. Changes in utility technology: Larger scale on-site wastewater systems have been made possible in the decade, avoiding the need to extend conventional facilities. The approval process for such systems is now in place through state environmental review.

6. The addition of a new zoning district (the Employment Center district): Prior to a few years ago, there were few tools (that is, zoning districts) in the Knox County Zoning Resolution, which required site plan review and transparency in the types of uses that would be approved. In view of this shortcoming, MPC staff developed the Employment Center Zone (EC) zoning district, which establishes the means to assure design standards and specific acceptable uses, and requires additional public and MPC review (via the use-on-review process).

Ochs Center Report: The Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies, working with the French Broad Preservation Association, has offered an alternative to the Midway development proposal (see the Ochs Report in your packet). MPC staff has recognized that their recreation and cultural development scenario merits further consideration within the identified French Broad Conservation Corridor. MPC staff sees the potential for realizing higher intensity economic development uses at the interchange and fostering tourist-oriented development close to the river.

#### Public meetings and hearings

MPC staff held various public meetings concerning the update of the East County Sector Plan. These meetings included two advisory committee meetings, five East County Sector Plan meetings, and one Midway Area Roundtable discussion and meeting. The various meetings are presented in chronological order. At each of these meetings MPC staff was available to answer questions and staff also utilized comment cards throughout the process to gather community input.

Advisory Committee Meetings: The advisory committee was formed by MPC because some residents were dissatisfied with MPC's staff use of a survey as the initial step in gathering public input for the plan update. After two meetings in the summer of 2008, several members of the Advisory Committee made recommendations on the types of meetings that they would prefer: MPC proceeded accordingly.

Sector Plan Meetings: First Sector Plan Meeting (July 31, 2008): At the request of the advisory committee, MPC staff held the first East County Sector Plan Meeting to review MPC's comprehensive planning program and provide an overview of the plan adopted in 2001.

Second Sector Plan Meeting: Held during October of 2008, MPC staff, TPO staff, and county staff served as facilitators of small break out groups that identified issues pertaining to rural areas, employment areas, commercial development, transportation improvements and community facilities.

Third Sector Plan Meeting: Held during June of 2009, MPC staff presented draft recommendations, including no proposed changes to the Growth Policy Plan, town center and other mixed use development approaches, economic development strategies, park concepts, and French Broad conservation concepts.

Fourth Sector Plan Meeting: Held during July of 2009, MPC staff presented draft policies and plan recommendations concerning land use, community facilities, and transportation.

Fifth Sector Plan Meeting: Held January of 2010, MPC staff presented the draft East County Sector Plan and the French Broad Preservation Association presented the Ochs report that looked at alternatives for economic development in the area.

Roundtable Meeting: The roundtable discussion meeting was set up at the request of the residents during the third sector plan meeting. The meeting, held on September 29, 2009, was facilitated by a third party, Professor Becky Jacobs and Professor Brian Krumm of the UT Law School. The Midway Road Interchange area landholders and stakeholders were invited to the meeting as were representatives of the French Broad Preservation Association, Thorngrove Community Club, Eighth District Preservation Association, TVA, KUB, MPC and the Development Corporation of Knox County. Each group was asked to talk about their interest in the area.

In addition to the MPC public hearing, there will be three additional public hearings; two before City Council and another before County Commission.

**Action:** Approved **Meeting Date:** 2/11/2010

**Details of Action:**

**Summary of Action:** MPC staff recommends that you adopt the East County Sector Plan (an amendment to the Knoxville Knox County General Plan) and forward the plan to City Council and County Commission with a recommendation for adoption

**Date of Approval:** 2/11/2010 **Date of Denial:** **Postponements:**

**Date of Withdrawal:** **Withdrawn prior to publication?:**  **Action Appealed?:**

## LEGISLATIVE ACTION AND DISPOSITION

**Legislative Body:** Knox County Commission

**Date of Legislative Action:** 11/15/2010 **Date of Legislative Action, Second Reading:** 12/15/2010

**Ordinance Number:** **Other Ordinance Number References:**

**Disposition of Case:** Postponed **Disposition of Case, Second Reading:** Denied

**If "Other":** Postponed 3-22 thru 11-15-2010 **If "Other":**

**Amendments:** **Amendments:**

Postponed 3-22 thru 11-15-2010 Denied 12/17/2010

**Date of Legislative Appeal:** **Effective Date of Ordinance:**