

# CASE SUMMARY

## APPLICATION TYPE: PLANNED DEVELOPMENT



**File Number:** 8-A-25-PD  
**Application Filed:** 6/23/2025  
**Applicant:** AMY SHERRILL

**Related File Number:**  
**Date of Revision:**

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

**General Location:** Northeast side of Galbraith School Rd, northwest of Taylor Rd  
**Other Parcel Info.:**  
**Tax ID Number:** 109 K G 023 **Jurisdiction:** City  
**Size of Tract:** 2.61 acres  
**Accessibility:** Access is via Galbraith School Road, a local street with a 21-ft pavement width within a right-of-way which varies from 40 ft to 50 ft

### GENERAL LAND USE INFORMATION

**Existing Land Use:** Rural Residential  
**Surrounding Land Use:**  
**Proposed Use:** Adaptive reuse of Galbraith Elementary School for 36 dwelling units as well as 8 additional townhouse units. **Density:**  
**Planning Sector:** South City **Plan Designation:** CI (Civic and Institutional)  
**Growth Policy Plan:** N/A  
**Neighborhood Context:** This neighborhood is comprised of a mix of single family and multifamily residential dwellings. South Doyle Middle School is directly adjacent to the subject property.

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

**Street:** 4333 GALBRAITH SCHOOL RD  
**Location:**  
**Proposed Street Name:**  
**Department-Utility Report:**  
**Reason:**

### ZONING INFORMATION (where applicable)

**Current Zoning:** RN-1 (Single-Family Residential Neighborhood)  
**Former Zoning:**  
**Requested Zoning:**  
**Previous Requests:**  
**Extension of Zone:**  
**History of Zoning:** A 2019 request to rezone this property from R-1 (Low Density Residential) to C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial) was withdrawn per applicants request (10-Q-19-RZ).

### PLAN INFORMATION (where applicable)

**Current Plan Category:** CI (Civic and Institutional)

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.:

### **PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION AND DISPOSITION**

Planner In Charge: Jessie Hillman

Staff Recomm. (Abbr.): Approve the Preliminary Plan for the Galbraith School Adaptive Reuse Planned Development, including approval of the requested exceptions to the underlying zoning's dimensional and use standards, subject to 3 conditions.

Staff Recomm. (Full):

- 1) Paving accessible parking spaces and drive aisles so that there is no obstruction to wheelchair access on any side of a vehicle parked in a handicap space.
- 2) Providing a second paved and accessible crosswalk connecting the townhouses to the main building and courtyard.
- 3) Including a minimum of 10 feet of pavement inside the property line where the gravel driveway meets the right-of-way, and ensuring the gravel is dust free (clean stone) and bound on all sides to prevent migration and rutting.

Comments: The purpose of a Planned Development is to encourage and allow more creative and flexible development of land than is possible under district zoning regulations. It should only be applied to further those applications that provide compensating amenities and benefits to the City and neighborhood. Standards for a Planned Development are codified in subsequent sections of Article 16.7 of the zoning ordinance. This staff report consists of five sections: Project Description, Zoning Exceptions, Community Benefits, and Criteria for Approval of a Planned Development.

#### **--PROJECT DESCRIPTION--**

This project proposes to adaptively reuse the Galbraith Elementary School on a lot zoned RN-1 (Single-Family Residential Neighborhood) for multifamily housing. The Galbraith school building was erected in 1930 and designed by architect Frank O. Barber. The building has remained vacant since the 1980s after the school was closed in 1977. This Planned Development (PD) seeks to preserve and restore this historic structure for 36 affordable dwellings comprised of one, two and three-bedroom units. A second phase of the proposal is to develop 8 townhouses on cleared open space in the southeast area of the 2.6-acre lot. There will be a strong emphasis on public art with a classroom-inspired mural on a portion of the school's exterior alongside other artistic programming intended to enhance engagement and aesthetics on this long-vacant school campus.

#### **--ZONING EXCEPTIONS--**

Per Article 16.7.D.2, exceptions from district regulations may be granted for planned developments if the exceptions:

- a. Enhance the overall merit of the planned development.
- B. Promote the objectives of both the City and the development.
- C. Enhance the quality of the design of the structures and the site plan.
- D. Will not cause excessive adverse impact on neighboring properties.
- E. Are compatible with the adopted Knoxville-Knox County General Plan and its component parts, including adopted sector plans, corridor plans, and related documents.
- F. Provide a public benefit to the City.

This development proposal includes 3 requested exceptions from the RN-1 (Single-Family Residential Neighborhood) zoning district, which are described below with staff analysis.

- 1) Increasing the impervious surface maximum in the RN-1 district from 40% to 51%

Staff Analysis: The impervious footprint on this campus already appears to exceed the 40% maximum standard. The site plan indicates that proposed development will largely stay within areas that have been previously paved.

- 2) Permitting the use of multifamily and townhouse dwellings.

Staff Analysis: Permitting more intensive residential uses will enable the redevelopment and

rehabilitation of this dilapidated school campus in a way that residential uses permitted by right cannot.

3) Permitting more than one principal structure on the site.

Staff Analysis: The additional, small-scale development of townhouse dwellings will further activate empty areas of the vacant lot and provide a transition of residential intensity between the existing South Doyle Middle School campus and the multifamily units within the subject school building and the adjacent single-family lots to the south and southeast.

#### --COMMUNITY BENEFITS--

Per Article 16.7.D.3, an exception to zoning district regulations cannot be granted unless the applicant demonstrates a substantial benefit to the City. Design characteristics and amenities to be considered in this determination include, but are not limited to, the following:

A. Community gathering spaces and amenities including plazas, public art, formal gardens, places to congregate, and pedestrian and transit facilities.

B. Improvement of existing on-site and off-site infrastructure.

C. Use of sustainable design and architecture, such as green roofs, white roofs and other energy efficient design concepts, new building technologies, and approval of buildings and developments that meet established standards such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), Energy Star, Earthcraft, etc.

D. Preservation of existing environmental features, including additional protections for steep slopes (15% or more slope).

E. Preservation of historic features and adaptive reuse of existing buildings.

F. New open space and recreational amenities such as recreational open space, including parks and playgrounds, natural water features and conservation areas, jogging trails and fitness courses, dog parks, skate parks, and similar recreational features.

G. Provision of public car and/or bike share facilities.

H. Affordable housing set-asides. Affordable housing must comply with the standards for affordability approved by the Knoxville Community Development Department.

I. Senior housing set-asides.

This PD proposes 2 benefits to the City, which are described below along with staff analysis.

1) The preservation and adaptive reuse of a historic building in dire need of restoration

Staff Analysis: The preservation of this historic structure is a cultural benefit to the City that could not be enforced through other means in the zoning ordinance. If this property were rezoned to the RN-4 or RN-5 (General Residential Neighborhood) districts to permit the zoning exceptions being requested, there would be no way to prevent this historic educational building from being demolished. This is the type of public benefit that the PD process is specifically designed to enable. Staff recommend that a historic zoning overlay also be considered on the property to further ensure this historic preservation effort.

2) The addition of public art and murals to enhance the community surroundings, to be enjoyed by both residents and neighbors

Staff Analysis: The incorporation of public art and creative programming throughout the property indicates that there will be engagement of the general public and beautification of the site beyond the rehabilitation of the historic building. This benefit enhances the proposal and aligns with the first benefit listed as an example of what can be considered in Article 16.7.D.3.

PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 16.7.E.3.e, THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE KNOXVILLE-KNOX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION AND DECISION OF THE CITY COUNCIL MUST MAKE A FINDING THAT THE FOLLOWING STANDARDS FOR A PLANNED DEVELOPMENT HAVE BEEN MET:

#### A. THE PROPOSED PLANNED DEVELOPMENT MEETS THE PURPOSE OF A PLANNED DEVELOPMENT (Article 16.7.A)

This proposed development is directly aligned with the intent of the Planned Development process because it is an innovative rehabilitation project that cannot be easily ensured through any other means in the zoning ordinance. The adaptive reuse of the Galbraith Elementary School for affordable multifamily housing, with beautification through public art programming, is a benefit to the City that is commensurate with the limited zoning exceptions requested to accomplish the project. Critical to this consideration of benefits is input from the City's Urban Design and Development division. This team evaluates projects for their alignment with the City's Key Development Priorities, and they have substantiated the public benefit of this PD with a letter of support provided as Exhibit A.

#### B. THE PROPOSED PLANNED DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE INJURIOUS TO THE USE AND ENJOYMENT OF OTHER PROPERTY IN THE VICINITY.

The traffic impact of 44 dwelling units on this property is no more intensive than the types of uses that could be considered in accordance with the subject property's CI (Civic Institutional) land use classification in the South City Sector Plan and the One Year Plan. If this property were rezoned to the

INST (Institutional) district to better align with adopted future land use plans, uses permitted by right would include a hospital or a correctional facility, which could have more severe environmental and traffic impacts than the modest residential redevelopment proposed.

**C. THE PROPOSED PLANNED DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT IMPEDE THE NORMAL AND ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF SURROUNDING PROPERTY.**

The subject property is surrounded on two sides by the built-out and established South Woodlawn Neighborhood. This rehabilitation project should not trigger any significant development changes in that community. The other two sides of the subject property are open space owned by Knox County Schools that extend from South Doyle Middle School. The rehabilitation of the Galbraith school building may spur future investment in these surrounding institutional properties.

**D. THERE IS PROVISION FOR ADEQUATE UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE, DRAINAGE, OFFSTREET PARKING AND LOADING, PEDESTRIAN ACCESS, AND ALL OTHER NECESSARY FACILITIES**

One concerning aspect of the PD is that the parking lot is proposed to be replaced with gravel, which can make accessibility on the site challenging. ADA compliant parking spaces are shown, and one condition for approval is that ADA spaces and access aisles remain paved. Another condition is that a secondary paved ADA crosswalk be provided to connect the townhouses to the main building and courtyard. The driveway access point to Galbraith School Road must be paved to a minimum of 10 feet inside the property line to buffer the street from loose gravel. The gravel must be dust free (clean stone) and bound on all sides to prevent migration and rutting, which typically requires a grid framework installation. These conditions improve safety, access and long-term viability of the parking lot.

**E. THERE IS PROVISION FOR ADEQUATE VEHICULAR INGRESS AND EGRESS DESIGNED TO MINIMIZE TRAFFIC CONGESTION UPON PUBLIC STREETS. THE KNOXVILLE-KNOX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION AND/OR CITY COUNCIL MAY REQUIRE A TRAFFIC STUDY TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE THAT THE CIRCULATION SYSTEM IS ADEQUATE.**

The traffic estimated to be generated by 44 new units does not meet the threshold of 750 ADT (average daily traffic) to warrant a traffic study request by staff. Decatur Drive is a closed right-of-way that is owned by Knox County Schools, and it is not currently slated to be accessed by this development. The development will utilize an established access point on Galbraith School Road that has been evaluated by City Engineering and is deemed to be adequate.

**F. THE LOCATION AND ARRANGEMENT OF STRUCTURES, PARKING AREAS, WALKS, LANDSCAPE, LIGHTING, AND OTHER SITE DESIGN ELEMENTS AND THE USES ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD AND ADJACENT LAND USES.**

The site plan shows a landscape buffer between the townhouses and the single-family lot to the southeast, which will provide beautification and screening for privacy between these two properties. Should the redevelopment of the parking lot be considered a "new" parking lot by the City, a parking lot perimeter landscape yard may be required. This can be clarified in the final plan stage when more a more detailed landscape plan is provided. Most trees on the site are being retained, and there will be further enhancements to this location through public art and new vegetation.

Pedestrian circulation is supported throughout the site and connects to existing sidewalks on two sides of the property. The noted condition about a second ADA crosswalk will improve accessible circulation within the site.

This Planned Development is compatible with the residential and institutional context within which it is located.

**Action:** Approved with Conditions **Meeting Date:** 8/14/2025

**Details of Action:**

**Summary of Action:** Approve the Preliminary Plan for the Galbraith School Adaptive Reuse Planned Development, including approval of the requested exceptions to the underlying zoning's dimensional and use standards, subject to 3 conditions.

**Date of Approval:** 8/14/2025 **Date of Denial:** **Postponements:**

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

## **LEGISLATIVE ACTION AND DISPOSITION**

**Legislative Body:** Knoxville City Council

**Date of Legislative Action:** 9/2/2025

**Date of Legislative Action, Second Reading:** 9/16/2025

**Ordinance Number:**

**Other Ordinance Number References:**

**Disposition of Case:**

**Disposition of Case, Second Reading:**

**If "Other":**

**Amendments:**

**Date of Legislative Appeal:**

**If "Other":**

**Amendments:**

**Effective Date of Ordinance:**