

City of Knoxville Zoning Map Update Guiding Principles

The development of the draft zoning map to designate the new zoning district classifications proposed by the draft updated zoning ordinance was accomplished by MPC staff with input by City of Knoxville staff. Certain principles guided the preparation of the draft zoning map. These guiding principles are:

- Vision versus past – The development of Knoxville has had interesting twists and turns, which in some cases has resulted in a mosaic of land uses. In cases where the past pattern of development makes identifying a zoning designation for an area challenging, the vision for that area as identified in City adopted plans and policies has been used as a guide for recommending a zoning designation.
- Use lot size in proposed residential districts to guide zoning designation – With the variety of lot sizes permitted by the proposed residential districts there is the ability to use lot size as a principle determinant of the residential zoning of an area. MPC staff assessed lot sizes of residential areas and, whenever possible, used the lot size as guide in assigning the residential zoning classification.
- Validation of existing uses – MPC staff identified the current use of property, and for multi-family dwellings the number of dwelling units, prior to beginning the drafting of the proposed zoning maps. Current use of the property was a determinant of the proposed zoning designation of the property.
- Limit the creation of non-conforming situations – In an effort to reduce the challenges to the use and reuse of property, staff strove to apply draft zoning designations that would limit the creation of non-conforming lots and non-conforming uses. While the creation of some non-conforming situations is unavoidable, this guiding principle ensures that the creation of non-conformities is limited.
- Uniform zoning of properties – Split zoning (more than one zoning designation for a single parcel) is not uncommon currently. The split zoning is due to a number of reasons, including the combination of parcels under single ownership and other adjustments to property boundaries. Where appropriate, split zoned properties have been converted to a single zoning designation. Properties on which split zoning was maintained generally are those on which the zoning was split for a purpose. It appears that the purposes for split zoning included protection of hillsides, to provide a buffer, and to provide a better transition between zoning designations
- Designation of corridors and nodes – With the identification of residential uses as permitted use in commercial districts, the (re)development of corridors represents an opportunity for developing mixed uses throughout the City. Currently corridors are often a patchwork of zoning designations. The draft updated zoning map will strive to smooth the zoning of corridors by using a single principal designation for sections of the City's corridors. Nodes at which higher intensity development is desired were identified along corridors. These nodes have been assigned a zoning designation that relates to that of the corridor but permits more intense development (greater heights, reduced setbacks).

- Designation of older residential neighborhoods – Residential neighborhoods such as Old North, Fourth and Gill, Parkridge, and Oakwood-Lincoln Park, have developed with a mix of uses and residential types that challenges the concept of a uniform zoning designation. The vision for these neighborhoods, as enunciated in plans, policies, and Council actions, was used to guide their proposed designations on the draft zoning map. In most cases the vision was for a stronger single family neighborhood and the proposed RN-2 designation of significant portions of these neighborhoods reflects that vision.
- Implementation of policy changes – The preparation of the draft zoning map was not considered an appropriate time to implement policy changes that would result in major revisions to the uses permitted in a certain area or in the development standards that applied to an area. While the updated zoning ordinance may provide tools that could facilitate the implementation of a new policy, it is felt that significant changes in the zoning of an area should provide for more focused review of the proposed change and greater opportunity for community input than that provided by the comprehensive updating of the zoning map.
- Floodway – Knoxville’s current zoning map uses the F-1 district as a base zoning district to designate areas within the floodway. The delineations of that district were based on data that is several decades old. New FEMA flood hazard mapping, based on new technology and improved data, replaces the F-1 district in the form of an overlay. This approach requires a base zoning district to be assigned to areas that were previously designated F-1. In most cases, the portion of a parcel that fell outside the F-1 area was extended to cover the entirety of the parcel. In a few cases where parcels were wholly located in the designated F-1 area, the surrounding parcels and plan districts were used to assign an appropriate zoning designation.
- Commercial design standards for planned zoning districts – Several zoning districts are designated as “planned development districts” in the current zoning ordinance. These districts include the shopping center districts and planned commercial zones. Development in these districts require Use on Review approval by the Metropolitan Planning Commission. For these areas, zoning districts that specify commercial design standards were assigned to maintain consistency with the existing ordinance.