



Knoxville Tennessee Branch

# NAACP

**To: MPC**

**Re: Recode Knoxville Affordable Housing**

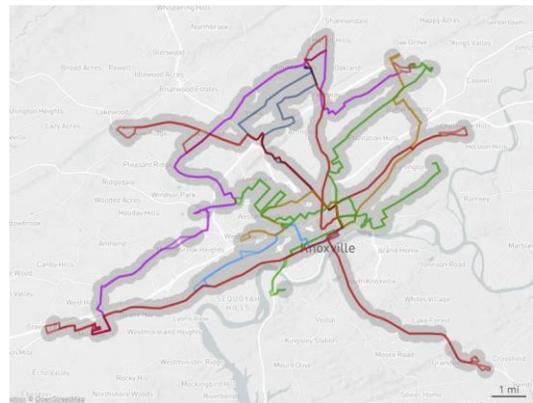
**October 31, 2018**

The Knoxville Branch of the NAACP continues to support RN4 zoning to permit by right affordable and accessible small multifamily housing along the core and local KAT bus routes throughout the city. We view the combination of affordable housing and affordable transportation as a ladder to economic opportunity, connecting people to home, work, education, healthcare, and myriad other destinations.

Lower income households have the most reliance on busses for mobility. They use busses more than car-reliant residents, reinforcing the need for affordable housing along bus routes.

Transit needs sufficient density along bus routes to increase their efficiency and sustainability. The population per acre along most of the bus routes is low. Knoxville can increase the viability of public transport and other urban services by promoting more intensive use and reducing total infrastructure requirements.

45% of Knoxville's population lives within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile of a bus route. Those living within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile of a bus route are five times more likely to take a bus than those living further away. By placing RN-4 zoning within the  $\frac{1}{4}$  band, as shown in the map, Recode will allow the development of more affordable small-multifamily housing. While the proposed Recode map allows small multifamily on the transit corridors, the land on those major arteries are the most expensive. Those cost of the land would diminish the affordability of small multifamily housing built on it.



Historically zoning partly arises from impulses for exclusion by class and race and continues to severely limit housing construction within cities, widening the gap between supply and demand. The Knoxville Recode process has a bias to protect property values of single family homes in a city that has a majority of residents who rent.

As indicated by our previous comments, we are concerned that the limited ability to develop multifamily housing will result in:

- the inability to create density at a rate that will support an efficient public transportation system and anticipated population growth,
- lack of housing options for “workforce” populations that may not be in a position to afford single family housing, and

- lack of housing options for populations not interested in or suited for single family housing, such as students, empty-nesters, or single professionals.

While we understand the expressed desire to avoid concentrations of poverty or other demographic indicators by developing large low-income housing complexes in designated areas, the NAACP advocates for greater inclusion of low to moderate income individuals within communities across the city by changing the zoning code to promote affordable housing options made accessible through a range of small multi-family housing options.

While single family residences are traditionally presented as achieving “the American Dream,” many in our community are unable to pursue, or uninterested in, home ownership. Minorities have been historically discriminated against in zoning and lending practices, making home ownership an overwhelming undertaking. As residents age, it often becomes too difficult or expensive to independently maintain a single-family home.

Tennessee has a disproportionate number of minimum wage workers, whose incomes cannot support the purchase or rental of large single-family homes. Generations X and Y (Millennials) are not prioritizing home ownership. As has been indicated in previously submitted comments, THDA reports that more than half of Knoxville’s population are renters.

Density should be appropriately focused along our corridors. This will provide more affordability and encourage more walkable, connected communities. The KAT bus route system has the necessary infrastructure and service to support growth and increased density. By focusing density along existing bus system routes throughout the city, we can greatly increase affordable housing options for both homeowners and for renters.

The Knoxville NAACP continues to advocate for the inclusion of small multifamily housing in the revised zoning code. Specifically, we encourage the City to:

- Revise the recode zoning map to provide opportunities to build small multifamily housing (2-20 units) by right (RN-4) within ¼ mile of transit routes.
- Provide ample opportunities for small multi-family (RN-4) within ½ mile surrounding development nodes and other major intersections.
- Reduce the required lot size for duplexes within single-family districts and RN-4.
- Develop design standards for new construction that ensure new housing types are consistent with existing housing.

This position is consistent with positions in previously submitted commitments and in support of proposals made by Knoxville Area Transit. Allowing such development will sensibly increase density in areas that are better equipped to support population increases, while providing a broader range of housing options to a more diverse demographics of our population and increasing the opportunity for preservation of the unique character of our neighborhoods.

LaKenya Middlebrook co-chair  
Housing Committee  
Knoxville Branch NAACP