



## Agenda Item # 5

### MEMORANDUM

Date: December 6, 2006  
To: Planning Commission  
From: Mark Donaldson, Executive Director  
RE: **Amendment to the Knoxville Zoning Ordinance establishing a  
D-1 (Downtown Design Overlay) District - 12-A-06-OA**

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**Staff Recommendation:**

Approve amendment to establish a D-1 (Downtown Design Overlay) District as a new section in the Knoxville Zoning Ordinance.

**Background:** Earlier this year, Mayor Bill Haslam created a Downtown Design Steering Committee to pursue a recommendation from the Mayor's Downtown Improvement Strategy, which called for the creation of Downtown Design Guidelines.

The attached ordinance has been prepared as an initial step to enable the creation of a Downtown Design Overlay District, provide for the establishment of a review board and administrative procedures.

In order to create the D-1 Zoning Overlay District, another ordinance will be necessary, which amends the zoning map and adopts the Downtown Design Guidelines. The Mayor's Steering Committee, working with MPC and city staff, has held four workshops and meetings with downtown interests to draft the guidelines. MPC staff will publish the draft guidelines, notify property owners and provide an opportunity for further public review prior to future action by the Planning Commission and City Council to adopt guidelines and the boundaries of the overlay area.

**Amendment to the Knoxville Zoning Ordinance establishing a D-1 (Downtown Design Overlay) District as a new section to the ordinance:**

**Section 26  
D-1 Downtown Design Overlay District**

**A. GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

This overlay district is intended to foster attractive and harmonious development and rehabilitation in Downtown Knoxville that reflects the goals of adopted plans, and the principles of the Downtown Design Guidelines that are to be adopted when the zoning map is amended to create this district. Additionally, a Downtown Design Review Board will be established to review and approve the plans for public and private improvements in the district. Pursuant to procedures and conditions provided in this chapter, the Design Review Board shall work to realize the following objectives:

1. Promote downtown as a place for a viable mix of commercial, office, civic and residential uses, including street level development that creates a pedestrian-friendly environment.
2. Create quality publicly-oriented spaces, including streets, pedestrian ways, parks and squares that are safe and beautiful.
3. Create harmony in architectural and landscape architectural elements that provide a pleasing environment and continuous commerce and interest along sidewalks.
4. Create efficient processes for the review and approval of downtown projects.
5. Establish a means for design review for public improvements and building development and renovation to protect overall downtown investments.
6. Foster new development that complements adjacent historic resources.
7. Provide for the development of areas of special character, including the older grid street district (including such streets as Gay and Market streets and Clinch and Cumberland avenues), the Warehouse District (the Jackson-Central vicinity) and areas that are characterized by boulevard-like streets (such as sites along Summit Hill Drive and Henley Street).

**B. PERMITTED USES**

Permitted uses shall be determined by the base zone of the property (such as the C-2 or O-2 zoning districts).

**C. AREA REGULATIONS**

The dimensional requirements of the base zone, such as the five foot front yard setback and the open space requirement for taller buildings in the C-2 zoning district, will not always consistent with the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines. The Downtown Design Review Board may issue a Certificate of Appropriateness (referenced in subsection F) to avoid the need for variances in cases where a development has been

conceived to respect the historic context of the block, provide greater pedestrian activity at sidewalk level or meet other provisions of the guidelines.

#### D. DOWNTOWN OVERLAY DISTRICT DEFINED AND REQUIRED GUIDELINES

The Downtown Design Overlay District shall be shown on the City of Knoxville zoning map. Downtown Design Guidelines shall be adopted with changes to the zoning map to create boundaries for this overlay and shall be used by the Design Review Board as a basis of their recommendations and decisions.

Historic Zoning Overlay (H-1) Districts, which have their own boundaries and guidelines, shall not be included within the D-1 overlay.

#### E. DESIGN REVIEW BOARD: CREATION, RESPONSIBILITIES, MEMBERSHIP, AND ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

For the purposes of making decisions relative to the Downtown Design Guidelines, a Downtown Design Review Board shall be established. Administrative rules, including rules governing the board, terms of membership and application schedules, shall be approved by the Metropolitan Planning Commission. The responsibilities of the board and its membership are outlined below.

##### Responsibilities:

1. Review the designs for all public projects, including, but not limited to, street and sidewalk design, landscaping, park improvements, public facility improvements and public way-finding systems.
2. Review and approve private development plans, based upon the adopted design guidelines as set forth at the time of amendments to the zoning map.
3. Advise the Mayor, City Council, Metropolitan Planning Commission and Historic Zoning Commission on means to improve downtown design, incentives that could be used to foster good design, and programs that should be pursued to foster beautification, safety and related public purposes downtown.

##### Composition:

1. Membership: The Design Review Board shall be appointed by the Mayor with the approval of a majority of the City Council and shall be composed of permanent staff and other rotating members set forth as outlined below.

##### Staff (Permanent Members):

- (a) Metropolitan Planning Commission Executive Director (or designee)
- (b) City's Director of Policy Development (or designee)

Other (Rotating Members):

- (c) One architect (from a slate recommended by AIA Knoxville)
- (d) One urban design professional with a background in architecture or urban planning (selected from nominations from AIA Knoxville and the local chapter of the American Planning Association)
- (e) Two downtown residents
- (f) Two businesses, development or real estate professionals whose work is largely focused upon Downtown
- (g) A member of the Central Business Improvement District Board (from a slate proposed by the Board)
- (f) A member of the City's Historic Zoning Commission.

Ex-Officio Members:

The following may be called on to serve as non-voting members when cases require their technical and professional expertise.

- (a) Metropolitan Planning Commission and Historic Zoning Commission staff
- (b) Building Official (or designee)
- (c) City Engineering Director (or designee)
- (d) Central Business Improvement District staff
- (e) Knoxville Utilities Board staff
- (f) Knoxville's Community Development Corporation staff.

*Administrative Rules:* The board shall adopt administrative rules and shall submit the rules to the Metropolitan Planning Commission for adoption. The rules shall outline the terms of Board members, election of its Chair, its schedule of meetings, voting procedures, application requirements regarding certificates of appropriateness, and appeal processes to the Planning Commission.

F. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Public Improvements

1. The design of projects that are initiated by the City and Knoxville Utility Board, such as improvements to or new construction of streets, sidewalks, way-finding and other signs, lighting, parks and civic buildings, must be submitted to the Review Board for approval. The Board shall send a report to the Mayor and City Council, and utility board director regarding their findings.
2. The Board may request the Mayor's assistance to pursue Board review of other public projects, including those of county, state and federal governments.

Private Development:

The Board must issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for new construction, major structural changes and parking facility improvements, before a building permit can be issued. The following procedures are to be utilized:

1. The developer shall meet with staff (see Subsection E) to discuss preliminary concepts of the proposed development; staff may waive this provision should they

find the project to be of a minor nature (such as window, door or sign board replacement) or if the renovation is not oriented to a publicly-oriented space (such as a street, plaza or pedestrian way). Sketches, draft architectural drawings or photographs of similar projects are means which may be used to provide an understanding of the project. Staff, in turn, will discuss the implications of the design guidelines relative to the proposed concept. A brief report will be provided to the developer.

2. An application for a Certificate of Appropriateness shall be filed with the Metropolitan Planning Commission and shall include the application form and the following information for the Review Board's consideration:
  - a. a site plan, including property lines, sidewalk location, building footprint, landscaping, and parking and access points (as applicable);
  - b. building elevations, showing entrances, windows, sign(s), construction materials and parapet or other structures to avoid visual or noise problems associated with heating/cooling or other utility units (other drawings, such as perspectives are encouraged, but not required by the Review Board); and
  - c. a written description, stating the intended uses for the floors of the building(s); these may be presented as notes on the elevation(s).
  
3. Certificates of Appropriateness will be issued in accordance with the following:
  - a. all applications for Certificates of Appropriateness shall be considered by the Review Board, which shall have the power to approve, approve with conditions or deny Certificates of Appropriateness. When Certificates are issued, approval or denial of Certificates may be appealed to the Metropolitan Planning Commission within forty-five (45) days after the staff decision.
  - b. no permit shall be issued for the following activities without issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness by the Design Review Board:
    - (1) new construction,
    - (2) façade changes to a publicly-oriented space or interior changes that would obscure windows and doors (such as drop ceilings or display cases), and
    - (3) parking facility development or redevelopment.
  - c. exemptions to the Board's review include ordinary repairs, removal of signs (without replacement), temporary signs or structures, emergency safety repairs and interior alterations that do not obscure windows.
  - d. staff may approve the following when they find that the design conforms to adopted guidelines: new signs, replacement of windows at ground level with transparent glass, or other replacements of building features that are consistent with the Design Guidelines.
  - e. the Review Board shall, within thirty (30) days following the availability of sufficient data, grant a Certificate of Appropriateness with or without attached conditions or deny said Certificate, and shall state the reasons for denial or the conditions attendant with the granting of a Certificate in writing.
  - f. appeals of the Review Board's decision shall be directed to the Metropolitan Planning Commission within 16 days of the notice of the Board's decision. Such

appeals will be considered by MPC, consistent with their Administrative Rules and Procedures, which are established by the Review Board and approved by the Planning Commission.