



MEMORANDUM

Agenda Item # 12

Date: March 28, 2007
To: Planning Commission
CC: Steve Wise
From: Mark Donaldson, Executive Director
RE: Cumberland Avenue Corridor Plan (4-B-07-SAP)

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE

I recommend that you adopt the [Cumberland Avenue Corridor Plan](#) and forward it to the City Council with a recommendation for adoption. A resolution is included for that purpose.

BACKGROUND

This study was initiated in the summer of 2006 to investigate ways to improve the corridor by developing an alternative street and streetscape configuration that would support the long-term vision of the corridor as a mixed-use, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly environment. With input from the stakeholders along the corridor, a transportation and urban design plan was developed. An advisory committee made up of merchants, property owners, residents, and representatives from government, the hospitals and the university have guided the project and will continue meeting as implementation moves forward.

In addition to 24,000 to 32,000 motor vehicles per day including hundreds of transit vehicles, thousands of pedestrians from the University and hospitals use this corridor every day and night. Unfortunately, vehicular and pedestrian use has been at odds for years. With no center turning lane, frequent back-ups caused by parked delivery trucks, and narrow sidewalks with numerous curb cuts, Cumberland Avenue is unsafe and inefficient for vehicles and pedestrians alike.

As the “front door” of a growing public university and regional medical centers, Cumberland’s vehicular role needs to be better balanced with the corridor’s overall transportation needs.

After evaluating several cross-sections, a three-lane street configuration is recommended, along with updated design guidelines in the C-7 district and an extension of the existing

C-7 district. Other recommendations include improvements to Mountcastle Park that would provide a good connection between the UT campus and Cumberland Avenue.

In addition to creating a center turn lane to ease traffic congestion, the three-lane configuration will allow for wider sidewalks with pedestrian-oriented amenities, as well as loading zones for delivery and transit vehicles. New design standards will be organized around the form of the buildings and the nature of the street that they front on. According to traffic simulation models, slight increases in travel times during peak hours (less than 60 seconds) will be greatly outweighed by increased safety, the ability to make left-turns, the relaxation of one-way restrictions, and the ability to reclaim part of the street width for uses other than vehicular traffic.

The consultants hired to analyze alternatives for the corridor estimates that an eight million dollar public investment in the street reconfiguration and streetscape improvements could trigger approximately \$280 million of private investment in new residential, office and retail space. The investment potential demonstrated in the analysis has already sparked interest from private developers, prompting the City to pass a temporary moratorium on new building permits in the study area until design guidelines can be updated. MPC will expedite the development of new design standards so that when new development proceeds, it is consistent with the overall vision plan.

It is anticipated that funding will be set aside in the City's Five Year Capital Improvements Plan for a portion of the additional planning required, and for pursuing partnership opportunities between the public and private sector entities to cover anticipated construction costs. The City, MPC, and the University of Tennessee anticipate leveraging available planning dollars with significant commitment of in-kind staff resources, and are currently considering options for creating additional staff capacity dedicated exclusively to plan implementation. The use of public financing tools such as tax increment financing (TIF) and the creation of a business improvement district are also being explored.

The end result will transform Cumberland Avenue from a dysfunctional roadway to a "complete street" that works for motorists, bus riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians, including people with disabilities.

Next steps include:

- Streetscape Design and Engineering Plans
- Revision and Implementation of the Design District Regulations
- Fort Sanders Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan
- Utilities Master Plan
- Comprehensive Parking Study

**KNOXVILLE-KNOX COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION
A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE
CUMBERLAND AVENUE CORRIDOR PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, a regional planning commission established pursuant to state statute, has the duty to make and adopt plans for the physical development of Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, a study of the corridor to address transportation issues, development opportunities, and beautification was needed; and

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Planning Commission sought funding for and contracted with the consulting firm of Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin, Inc. to prepare a transportation, land use and urban design plan for the corridor; and

WHEREAS, an advisory committee made up of merchants, property owners, residents, and representatives from government, the hospitals and the University of Tennessee was assembled to guide the study; and

WHEREAS, public meetings, workshops and design charrettes were carried out to identify community issues and needs and a long-range vision was developed for the corridor; and

WHEREAS, a thorough transportation analysis was undertaken to determine the best street configuration for the corridor; and

WHEREAS, the final product "A History of Connections – the Cumberland Avenue Corridor Plan" contains recommendations which take into account the comments of citizens, property owners and city and county departments which serve the area, and will be used to guide future land use, transportation, community facility and capital improvement needs; and

WHEREAS, meetings were held in the community to review the plan,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE KNOXVILLE-KNOX COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION:

SECTION 1: The Commission hereby adopts the Cumberland Avenue Corridor Plan, dated March 2007.

SECTION 2: This Resolution shall take effect upon its approval.

Date

Chairman

Secretary