



Southeastern Housing Foundation
An Initiative of KNOXVILLE LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION



February 11, 2009

Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission
City/County Building, Suite 403
400 Main Street
Knoxville, Tennessee 37902

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing in support of the rezoning application for Flenniken Housing (MPC File No. 7-L-08-RZ). Down-zoning of the subject property is consistent with the One Year Plan for the City, and I strongly urge you to approve the request at the February 12th MPC meeting.

The Ten-Year Plan and Permanent Supportive Housing

The Knoxville/Knox County Ten-Year Plan is part of a national initiative to end chronic homelessness through a "housing first" approach. As defined by HUD, a chronically homeless person is "an unaccompanied disabled individual who has been continuously homeless for over one year or who has had at least four episodes of homelessness within the last three years." It is estimated that Knoxville has approximately 800 chronically homeless. The Ten-Year Plan targets the chronically homeless population because, although they represent only about 15% of the total homeless population, they consume the most community resources. In Knoxville, for example, the average chronically homeless person living on the streets costs local taxpayers approximately \$40,000 per year.

Housing first is proven to be one of the most effective strategies for ending chronic homelessness and costs much less to develop and operate than allowing individuals to remain on the streets. The strategy first places chronically homeless individuals who have committed to leaving the streets into a safe, stable living environment. Substance abuse and/or mental illness issues are then addressed with the assistance of a professional case manager. This type of housing is called Permanent Supportive Housing because the residents sign a long term lease (1-year or longer) and receive supportive social services.

Southeastern Housing Foundation (SHF) is a local nonprofit developer of affordable housing. As a strategic partner of the Ten-Year Plan, SHF is charged with developing approximately 400 units of new permanent supportive housing throughout all sectors of the Knoxville area. SHF is also the developer for the proposed Flenniken project.

Flenniken Housing

Flenniken Housing is a proposed adaptive use project that would completely renovate the abandoned Flenniken Elementary School into no more than 48 efficiency and one-bedroom units of permanent supportive housing. The intent is to rezone a portion of the property from C-3 to O-1 and then obtain a favorable Use on Review that would permit multifamily use – specifically, permanent supportive housing.

Site Consideration Task Force / Project Timeline

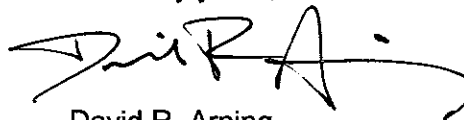
SHF identified Flenniken as a potential permanent supportive housing site in the spring of 2008 and began its due diligence – including public meetings – well before the concept of a task force was introduced. The task force is being formed to establish criteria that should be considered when evaluating and selecting future sites for permanent supportive housing. Task force members will represent a variety of community interests and will include Ten-Year Plan administrators, support services providers, permanent supportive housing residents, developers, neighborhood representatives, and City and County elected officials. Some City Council members and residents have requested that the project be postponed until the task force has completed its work. Time is of the essence, however, and we firmly believe that the task force and the Flenniken proposal can and should proceed concurrently.

It is critically important that the Flenniken rezoning application proceed for several reasons:

- The rezoning request is consistent with the City's One Year Plan and many South Knoxville residents and business owners have indicated a preference for down-zoning the C-3 portion of the property; some support residential use but specifically oppose permanent supportive housing;
- Knoxville has a great and immediate need for new permanent supportive housing;
- The property possesses several desirable characteristics of permanent supportive housing, including its location at the edge of commercial and residential areas and its proximity to public transit, social services and employment opportunities;
- The building currently is in severe disrepair – a blight and a liability to the community;
- SHF has already devoted considerable time and financial resources to the project;
- Flenniken Housing was recently awarded a competitive Affordable Housing Program grant of \$1,000,000 by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta; the privately-funded grant is specific to Flenniken and has strict deadlines by which to spend the funds and complete the project;
- Flenniken Housing still must secure competitive Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to finance the bulk of the project; applications are due May 1, 2009; awards are announced in September 2009;
- The timeline for rezoning and securing funding allows ample opportunity for public review and comment; SHF and the Ten-Year Plan have conducted six planned meetings with individuals, groups, business leaders, and the general public of South Knoxville; additional meetings will be scheduled and widely advertised; and
- The Site Consideration Task Force is not adversely impacted by the Flenniken proposal, and many of the considerations identified by that group can be applied concurrently to the Flenniken project.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important project. I look forward to addressing any questions or concerns you may.

Sincerely yours,



David R. Arning
Ten-Year Plan Housing Coordinator
Southeastern Housing Foundation

From: Victoria DeFreese <victorialynndefreese@hotmail.com>
To: <tbenefield@benefieldrichters.com>, <anders@holstongases.com>, <ubailey@esper.com>, <bartcarey@comcast.net>, <avc524@aol.com>, <cole5137@bellsouth.net>, <gewart@georgeewart.com>, <grafhomes@aol.com>, <s.johnson692@gmail.com>, <makane1@bellsouth.net>, <rebeccalongmire@hotmail.com>, <npavlis@chartercom.com>, <wstowers@stowerscat.com>, <bettyjo.mahan@knoxmpc.org>, <joseph49@bellsouth.net>, Mike Brown <brownm55@comcast.net>, <mayor@cityofknoxville.org>, Mike Ragsdale <mike.ragsdale@knoxcounty.org>, <ferrarr@knews.com>
Date: 2/9/2009 2:34:18 AM
Subject: re: Flenniken School zoning

Dear Honorable MPC Commisisoners:

I request that Flenniken School be left at with the current C-3 zone. Please deny the O-1 zoning.

Doesn't it seem odd that Jon Lawler would obstruct a task force to select suitable sites for housing for the homeless by delaying an appointment of a moderator? Doesn't it seem to be strange that Jon Lawler believes he can move forward on Flenniken school in spite of a moratorium on such projects?

Remember this in December of 2008:

"Jon Lawler, director of the 10-year plan, asked for at least five members between the two elected bodies to serve on a new task force to develop a definitive set of qualifications for choosing suitable sites as the plan continues to establish new housing throughout the city and county. Lawler said he hopes to assemble that task force and produce the list of criteria by March. Meanwhile, he said his office also would answer the elected officials' calls to take an inventory of all existing supportive housing in the area, including publicly subsidized sites and halfway houses, to be used in deciding where or where not to locate future housing.

"<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/dec/12/concerns-aired-at-workshop>

I fundamentally disagree with the designated use of this school as a transitional home for the chronically homeless to be mentioned in your CONFORMITY OF THE PROPOSAL TO ADOPTED PLANS!

#3 "The ultimate use of this site as housing for the homeless would be consistent with the Knoxville Knox County 10 year plan to address on Homelessness in the community."

I attended the meeting on Flenniken School last week conducted by Jon Lawler.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/feb/06/meeting-addresses-homeless-housing-status/>

I did not hear of a focus on any programs concerning employment or community service being expected from the residences at this transitional housing at Flenniken School. I did see that "The Salvation Army has taken the lead in preparing formerly-homeless people for employment." Does this mean that the Ten Year Plan (TYP) will rely on the Salvation Army to perform this reintegration component?

The Flenniken school is not near public transportation. The Flenniken school is not near The Salvation Army. There are not many employment opportunities surrounding this location.

The "Circles of Support", a program of the Compassion Coalition appears to leave restabilization efforts in the hands of local churches that will ultimately be responsible to "bring them into the community of faith to build healthy relationships with their neighbors." It does not seem logical that our local area churches are equipped to provide the services and reintegration that these chronically homeless. I believe that a wide range of diverse agencies would need to work together to serve particular groups among chronically homeless people that could join teams and referrals. We have not heard of any collaborative efforts to address issues often linked with homelessness: substance abuse, relapse, health care, mental illness, job training, or provisions of food. We were told in a pamphlet that "studies demonstrate that people in permanent supportive housing dramatically reduce their use of psychiatric inpatient services, hospital emergency room, jails, emergency shelters, detox centers and other such costly services. The costs associated with permanent supportive housing are offset by savings to organizations that deliver those services." Apparently, case managers will be on hand, but how long will they be funded? Can housing, churches, and case managers collectively be sufficient in addressing the needs of this relocated population?

Funding is a key component in ending chronic homelessness. One of the biggest problems for homeless assistance providers is assembling the funds to be able to offer all the various services that chronically street homeless people with disabilities are likely to need. Area residents, homeowners, doubt the track record of transitional housing for the chronically homeless to be effective in our neighborhoods. Many people in South Knoxville feel that the TYP prototype at Flenniken school lacks substantiated proof that such a project will be successful in financial feasibility and stabilizing long-term operations.

South Knoxville has concerns that this transferred population into their neighborhood could risk their safety. Yet, they were told in a Q&A that at Flenniken housing, "in signing the lease the resident agrees to be a good neighbor. Failure to be a good neighbor can lead to eviction." How would a "good neighbor" be defined in court? Would not being a "good neighbor" be a valid reason under local laws for evicting the tenant? This further illustrates why local residents do not believe that this project at Flenniken school will improve or protect their neighborhood.

It seems as though South Knoxville does not represent an exclusive cross section of the county to help in solving this problem. Why not spread the solution throughout other areas of the county equally? Better yet, why not place these transitional housing units downtown near the family justice center, the courts, hospitals, public transportation, the Salvation Army, and all of the other sources of services that this unique population requires?

In reviewing your TYP, I noticed that,

“The housing work group and the entire task force were impressed with the Common Ground projects in New York City. The president and founder of Common Ground, Rosanne Haggerty, led a retreat in Knoxville focusing on her group’s work and held a lively discussion on Common Ground’s successes and challenges. Of particular interest was the purchase and renovation of the Times Square Hotel into a 652-unit supportive housing facility with on-site social services. In addition to providing social services and a place to live, Common Ground provides on-site job training and employment opportunities through street-level retail and food service outlets. The hotel houses a diverse population with a wide range of needs and levels of resources. While the task force did not make a specific recommendation to replicate such resources. While the task force did not make a specific recommendation to replicate such a facility, there was a strong interest in exploring a small-scale version of this type of project.”

That seems totally sensible to have a centralized transitional housing unit near supportive services and many places of employment. Flenniken Housing plans are far from the projects of Common Ground.

I also read in the TYP: “In developing the ten-year plan, the task force received considerable input from neighborhoods about public intoxication, loitering, and panhandling. Some neighborhoods, especially those in the inner-city, felt that they experience a disproportional amount of problems associated with the chronically homeless population. The actions that have been identified in the plan, including moving to a housing first strategy, better coordination of services, and establishment of a detox facility, will reduce or eliminate many of these concerns.”

It seems that South Knoxville is substantiated in their cause for concerns about Flenniken Housing being in their neighborhood. South Knoxville does not desire to be a place for a relocated chronically homeless population. The public meeting last week did not adequately discuss a coordination of services for the chronically homeless. They only mentioned case workers and churches. We did not hear anything concerning an establishment of a detox facility. This neighborhood is not the place for such a project.

I feel certain that the residents of South Knoxville would agree with the TYP conclusion:

“Homelessness is a major challenge for Knoxville and Knox County. While there are no simple solutions, the complexity of homelessness underscores the need for all sectors—social and health services, government, businesses providers and consumers, neighborhoods, and churches—to work together toward solutions.” However, we do not agree that the Flenniken Housing in South Knoxville will be a successful project in the “Ten-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.”

Please deny the O-1 zoning.

Victoria DeFreese

From: Orin Mudrich <orborbital@gmail.com>
To: <contact@knoxmpc.org>, <mark.donaldson@knoxmpc.org>, <buz.johnson@knoxmpc.org>, <deeanne.reynolds@knoxmpc.org>, <dan.kelly@knoxmpc.org>, <ken.pruitt@knoxmpc.org>, <tom.brechko@knoxmpc.org>, <michael.brusseau@knoxmpc.org>, <emily.dills@knoxmpc.org>, <marc.payne@knoxmpc.org>, <pat.phillips@knoxmpc.org>, <kelley.schlitz@knoxmpc.org>, <ann.bennett@knoxmpc.org>
Date: 2/5/2009 10:09:17 PM
Subject: Rezoning Flenniken School

Hello,

This is in regards to the rezoning of the Flenniken school from a C3 to an O1. I heard information that the purpose of the rezoning is to put in a half way house for the chronic homeless in place of the old school. I think that this is not a good idea for the community of Flenniken and Vestal. I have talked to people around the neighborhood, and I could not find a single person that believed that this would help our community. I think that the plan for the project is not strong enough to help the homeless. The project is scheduled for 10 years. My questions are what happens after 10 years? What happens to the people if something happens to the funding? Also Chronic homeless is a person that is disabled. If a person is technically disabled, how can they find work? The people that are interested in starting this project have not given a solid answer to any of these questions. I feel that the only way that this project is going to work is by the support of the community, which is not there. I have heard of revitalizing downtown vestal into a shopping center. I think that this is a good move forward to help the community receive jobs and enrich the beauty of South Knoxville. This is why I feel that the rezoning of the Flenniken school should reflect this project for Vestal. I believe that the Flenniken school should be rezoned to an O1, but with restrictions to only allow offices and no residents. This will help to make the Flenniken school prosper for business offices in the future, and it will help with revitalizing downtown Vestal.

Thanks
Orin

From: <seay426@aol.com>
To: <bettyjo.mahan@knoxmpc.org>
Date: 2/5/2009 3:00:31 PM
Subject: Rezoning of Flenniken School Property

MPC,

This communication is concerning the rezoning of the old Flenniken School Property located at 115 Flenniken Avenue. The rezoning request is scheduled to be heard February 12, 2009.

The Mayor's Task Force to End Chronic Homelessness has requested that this property be rezoned from C1 to O1. Their primary purpose to rezone to O1 is not for their potential use of future office space, but to get this property out of C1 zoning so they can proceed to establish housing units for the homeless. Why they did not come out and request residential zoning is beyond our understanding, or maybe they are trying to pull the wool over our eyes.

Our community and neighborhood request that when you rezone this property to O1 that you at the same time put restrictions on it that would prohibit any multi-family dwellings.

We are 100% against any homeless housing in this old school building and it should be zoned as to prohibit any multi-family occupancy.

Newman Seay

President, Vestal Community Organization(VCO)

577-4593, Seay426@aol.com

From: Ken Pruitt
To: Betty Jo Mahan
Date: 2/9/2009 7:59:16 AM
Subject: Fwd: 10-Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness-Flenniken School (South Knoxville)

>>> "Karen Welch" <welchk2@bellsouth.net> 02/08 10:53 PM >>>

There is supposed to be a vote by MPC this coming Thursday to rezone the Flenniken School in South Knoxville for offices. I attended a meeting at the Boy's and Girl's Club in South Knoxville last week where we were told by Jon Lawler and the developer, please excuse me I didn't get his name, that they were told to ask for rezoning for office buildings instead of what they actually intend to use this site for, the developer said that someone on the MPC board advised him to do it this way because it would be easier and would pass, which seems sort of backdoor to me. I would like to inform you, if you don't already know, that Mr. Lawler and the developer are asking for this rezoning in order to place a forty eight housing unit for the chronically homeless, which meeting after meeting the residents of South Knoxville and business leaders/owners have stated that they do NOT want. We even offered suggestions to Mr. Lawler at our meeting last week, however, he told us that this would go through, all they were waiting on was the funding, to which he crossed his fingers on both hands and looked up at the ceiling. I would hope that you as MPC will take into account what the residents and business people of our community want.

As well, Mr. Joe Hultquist was in attendance at this meeting and he brought up the point that there is a taskforce that was formed to look at other viable areas for this housing and even on Mr. Lawler's website it was stated that there would be a moratorium that would remain in effect until the guidelines are finalized, however, Mr. Lawler stated, and I quote the Knoxville News-Sentinel, "we still think we can go down both of those paths simultaneously," as they have yet to find a facilitator or have their first meeting. I would respectfully request that the vote for this rezoning be placed on hold or denied until the taskforce has had the opportunity to do their job. As well, we residents are very concerned about having the chronically homeless housing in our neighborhoods because by Mr. Lawler's own words the only agreement they will have with these individuals is that they agree to get into housing and pay their own portion of the rent, as they will be considered Section 8 housing. All the studies that I have found say that most if not all of the chronically homeless are people who have dual diagnosis, drug/alcohol addiction as well as mental illnesses, Mr. Lawler stated that they have not set any guidelines as to who will be allowed in, but that there will not be any felons, however, criminal convictions and arrests will be allowed. As I have researched the 10-Year plan in other states it shows, as I believe Mr. Lawler will tell you as well, that these individuals will still be allowed to conduct their business, i.e. drink, do drugs, will not have someone overseeing if they actually take their medication for mental illness, but will only be responsible to pay rent. Mr. Lawler also stated that these people are on disability, I suspect many are on SSI, so they will not be working in the community, perhaps just hanging around. My parents live on Volena Place and I have a four year old son who stays with them frequently. I cannot imagine having my son over to their house and have a person living in this housing unit who perhaps has had their "dealer" come over and he too is hanging around the neighborhood, or someone who hasn't taken their medication and is drunk. We have many empty buildings in Knoxville that are already zoned for office space and should

not place this in our residential neighborhood. This neighborhood is already a depressed area and the property values of these homes will not sustain this. It upsets me to no end that my parents are sixty plus years old and have worked to have what they have and now they are going to be forced to live with chronically homeless people one street over. I am asking you, MPC members, to vote no on this or to at least give the taskforce time to meet and come up with recommendations. Though as I said, Mr. Lawler stated that the only thing they were waiting on was to hear if they got the funding. The money that they are asking for from the Tennessee Housing Development Agency states that the funds that are given the housing must stay low income for thirty years, so this will add another low income housing in the area where it is already saturated with them. You must also understand that many of these residents are elderly and have lived in their homes for thirty years or longer, it is not an option to sale their house and pick up and move.

I am asking you on behalf of the residents of South Knoxville and business leaders to vote no on this measure.

I also included e-mail addresses for City/County Commissioners because I wanted you to see what is going on in our neighborhood and I suspect it's going on in yours as well and if MPC decides to go ahead with this vote I am asking you to vote no when it comes before you. There are many, many places that are not residential that they could put housing in that is still near the bus line for these individuals, but do not let them put this type of housing in our neighborhoods.

Mr. Lawler stated that he has had some problems with the housing situation on Baker Avenue, which I must say I am unfamiliar with at this time, however, he stated that the problem was that the people who decided they wanted to put it there said, "To hell with it, we are going to put it there and that's that," well this is the same take that I and other residents get from Mr. Lawler about Flenniken School. There have been many meetings and the residents have been outspoken in opposition to this and all he's waiting on is the funding. Please help us send a message to Mr. Lawler that it is important to listen to the residents and not just make a decision and go full speed ahead with it. I am asking each one of you to stand up for each one of us and tell him that there are other places and other ideas than just his. Please tell him to wait until the taskforce meets and see what comes up, as well, tell him that you will not vote just because of what he wants, and the mayors as he told us in the meeting, you will stand up for the residents.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at welchk2@bellsouth.net or by phone at 865-579-9549.

Sincerely,
Karen Welch