

## MEMORANDUM

Agenda Item # 11

Date: July 2, 2009  
To: Planning Commission  
From: Mark Donaldson, Executive Director  
Subject: Magnolia Avenue Corridor Plan and Amendments to the Central City and East City Sector Plans – 6-A-09-SAP

---

### **RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE**

I recommend that you adopt the [Magnolia Avenue Corridor Plan](#) and amendments to the Central City and East City Sector Plans and forward the plan to City Council with a recommendation for adoption. A resolution is included for that purpose.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, in partnership with the East Tennessee Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), Knoxville's Community Development Corporation and the City's Community Development staff, has prepared this Magnolia Avenue Corridor Plan. This corridor is a gateway to downtown and serves as a series of commercial, residential and institutional districts for central and east Knoxville. Following plans to improve the South Waterfront, Cumberland Avenue, Fort Sanders and Downtown North, this corridor, which runs from the Old City to Burlington, is seen as the last major wedge of land and transportation systems that could be further revitalized within the neighborhoods known as the "Heart of Knoxville."

The purpose of this plan is to create opportunities to enhance development along the Magnolia corridor, including the north end of downtown, the Hall of Fame/Caswell Park area, Burlington and the areas in between. This plan is focused on the physical environment:

- opportunities for more intense, mixed-use development, including a vertical mix of retail, housing and office uses
- conservation, restoration and reuse of historic resources
- improvements to the sidewalk, bicycle and street systems, including standards for on- and off-street parking, fostering greater intensity in development
- improvements to parks and open spaces, including new squares, day-to-day access to Chilhowee Park and completion of the First Creek Greenway.

The plan is intended to serve as a guide for development of the Magnolia Avenue portion of the Central and East City Sectors; as such, the Sector Land Use Plans, which contain proposals for mixed use districts along the corridor, are to be amended with the adoption of this plan. The concept for a form based code is included in the document. The

development of that code will require changes to Knoxville's Zoning Ordinance and will be developed via additional steps with the City and stakeholders in the future.

City of Knoxville requested that the Metropolitan Planning Commission assist in creating this plan, recognizing the needs of the area as part of Knoxville's Empowerment Zone. Empowerment Zone funding was used preparing the plan. The local AIA chapter had independently foreseen the possibilities of a design and improvement program for this gateway, and asked to be involved in creating the plan. AIA received a grant from their national association, which was used, in part, to develop several of the illustrations in the plan.

Various members of the City of Knoxville Engineering Department made comments on the draft plan (see attached). MPC staff has made several changes to the draft in recognition of these comments, which are outlined in response to the Engineering Department (also attached).

Representatives of AIA and the MPC staff worked together to engage residents and business interests in identifying issues and opportunities for improvements through a workshop and a charette. Additionally, three public meetings were held to review the plan concepts and draft plan. Eighty to 120 people attended each of those meetings. Additionally, MPC presented the plan concepts to Town Hall East and the newly formed Magnolia Avenue Business Association.

# INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Bob Whetsel, Policy & Communications  
Mike Carberry, MPC

**FROM:** Brently Johnson

**DATE:** June 25, 2009

**SUBJECT:** Magnolia Avenue Corridor Plan

1. Form Codes have been proposed for this corridor. With the number of vacant buildings in this corridor, creating more stringent standards does not seem appropriate. The functionality of Form Based Districts in this area is unproven.

2.\*\*\* a. Chapter 4, Page 17: The complete street cross section for Magnolia Avenue - Hall of Fame to Myrtle Street shows only one 12 ft. travel lane in each direction. Is this sufficient to convey the reported 16,000 ADT for this section of roadway?

b. Additionally, the ADT's are based on current traffic levels which are associated with a high building vacancy level through the corridor. If business flourishes as proposed in the plan then the ADT's would significantly increase and the two lane cross-section would definitively be insufficient.

c. The medians would be expensive to build and maintain, businesses would object to the reduction in access and TDOT would object to the narrowness of the medians. The enhanced sidewalks would be similarly expensive.

3. a. Chapter 4, Page 18: The planted trees in the median and buffer zone would be collision hazards and sight distance obstructions for driveways and intersections.

b. The magnitude of right-of-way vegetation and trees would require significant additional maintenance.

4. a. Chapter 5, Page 23: The recommendation for striped diagonal parking on Willow Avenue would need to be studied. Any diagonal parking allowed from street curb to curb would need to be reverse angle parking. This is problematic from safety and enforcement standpoints (angle parking creates more crashes; a lot of enforcement is required to keep the public from parking in it going the wrong direction, etc.).
5. a. Chapter 5, Page 32: The recommendation for a roundabout at Magnolia/Rutledge/Asheville may not work at the intersection of 3 state highways and would need to be studied. Given the volume of traffic, a multilane roundabout would possibly be required. The 2 lane, median divided section west of Cherry would be at or near capacity the day it opened.
6. a. On street parking has slowly been removed from Magnolia over that last 20 years. The replacing of parking would create sight distance issues with driveways.
  - b. Additionally, restricting parking locations to the sides and the rear of the developments may discourage redevelopment in these areas.
  - c. The shared parking concept may be difficult to implement.
7. Chapter 5, Page 33: Discusses a road diet for the Burlington area streets. I am not sure which streets in this area would be considered for a road diet.
8. The "New Sullivan Street" does not seem to be beneficial to vehicular traffic. The use of "cobble-like" roadway surface and proximity of the bollards may be difficult to maintain and may create an unsafe condition (fixed objects close to the travel ways). This concept for this street may be more appropriate as a pedestrian pathway.
9. Crime issues throughout this corridor could be improved with aggressive codes enforcement. A KPD review may be helpful.

\*\*\*Near Asheville / Rutledge /

T057 - Asheville Hwy 13041 ADT

T358 - Rutledge Pk 9666 ADT

T149 - Magnolia Av - no count

Magnolia Ave

C300 - Magnolia E of Cherry EB - 9415, WB - 12039 (21454 ADT)

C269 - Magnolia W of Harriett Tubman EB - 4752, WB - 5192 (9944 ADT)

**From:** Mike Carberry  
**To:** Brent Johnson  
**Date:** 7/1/2009 5:06:37 PM  
**Subject:** Magnolia Avenue Corridor Plan Comments

Thank you for your staff's recent comments. Before outlining the changes that we made, we felt that you should be aware of several concepts and objectives regarding the plan.

The Magnolia Avenue corridor plan is a 15-year plan, setting a vision for a major corridor that has declined over the years. One of the city's adopted goals in the Heart of Knoxville Empowerment Area is revitalization of its corridors and neighborhoods.

Although more detailed, the vision in this plan is not unlike that in other sector and small area plans, which have sown seeds for change that are now beginning to be realized, including:

- South City Sector Plans (1990s), providing concepts for South Waterfront Development
- The Fort Sanders Neighborhood Plan (2000), suggesting a road diet and vertical mixed use for an improved pedestrian-oriented street and campus
- The Broadway-Central-Emory Place Small Area Plan (2007), presenting the concepts for a North Central "Complete Street" and architectural/form code improvements
- I-275 Corridor Study (2005), provided a vision for the new road system and extension of business park-like redevelopment.

The form code concept that is proposed along parts of Magnolia Avenue offers more opportunities for renovation and redevelopment than what can currently be achieved under existing zoning. As conceived, it would likely be less stringent in terms of off-street parking requirements, setbacks and lot coverage. Coupled with mixed land use (both horizontal and vertical possibilities), it becomes one of the potential tools to solve the blighted and vacant property problems. Over 90 percent of the stakeholders and citizens agreed with the land use/form code concepts.

Certainly, there would be costs in realizing the complete street system; however, that cost is influential in reinvestment in places like the "Heart of Knoxville": the environs surrounding downtown Chattanooga, Nashville (the Gulch), and Greenville, SC are prominent regional examples. The South Waterfront promises to be another. Collectively, the question that we should be raising and answering is what can we do as planners and engineers to realize the improvements and reinvestments of such New Urban programs. The arterials of Central Knoxville evolved in the 1950s as automobile conduits to get people through or out of town. Its time to place more emphasis on creating a better physical and natural environment that retains and attracts people to the Heart of Knoxville.

We will welcome your assistance as the form based concepts and Complete Streets ideas are refined to become codes and improvement programs.

As to the specific changes, we added several clarifications that more work will be needed in examining the road diet concept (e.g., traffic generation, etc.), the need for prudence in

developing the street landscape plan, and complete street implementation. The text has been changed as follows:

P. 21 Add: The road profiles that are illustrated in this chapter will undoubtedly be refined with implementation plans. Such traffic engineering issues as the number of travel lanes will have to be addressed in terms of new traffic patterns (following Smart Fix) and a projection of trip generation in relation to the land uses of a form code.

P. 24 Add: A landscape and tree planting plan is recommended with the street improvement programs to select appropriately sized landscape materials. This plan should address pruning techniques and mature tree dimensions to maintain sight distances and avoid collision hazards, while realizing beautification and reinvestment goals.

P. 40 Replace "road diet" with street improvement plan (Burlington area)

P. 43-44 Replace the first part of the paragraph with: Further traffic engineering work will be necessary to implement the complete streets program. The avenue's wide right-of-way is an asset capable of realizing several design alternatives (for example, two travel lanes or four travel lanes east of Hall of Fame Drive; both with landscaped medians. One potential funding source for complete streets is the Transportation Enhancement Grant Program.

CC: Bob Whetsel; Buz Johnson; Mark Donaldson

**KNOXVILLE-KNOX COUNTY  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING COMMISSION  
A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE MAGNOLIA AVENUE CORRIDOR PLAN AND  
AMENDING THE CENTRAL CITY AND EAST CITY SECTOR PLANS**

*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 Knox County; and*

*WHEREAS, City of Knoxville requested that the Metropolitan Planning Commission assist in creating a Magnolia Avenue Corridor Plan, recognizing the needs of the area as part of Knoxville's Empowerment Zone; and*

*WHEREAS, conditions have significantly changed in the corridor, including: highway improvements (Smart Fix 40 and Hall of Fame Boulevard), a rise in vacant lots and buildings, and opportunities for improvements through various Community Development programs; and*

*WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Planning Commission staff prepared an inventory report on land use, vacant properties, historic resources, traffic and street capacities, and existing design features associated with the corridor; and*

*WHEREAS, representatives of the East Tennessee Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the staffs of the City of Knoxville, Knoxville's Community Development Corporation and Metropolitan Planning Commission have worked together to engage residents and business interests in identifying issues and opportunities for improvements; and*

*WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Planning Commission staff prepared the Magnolia Avenue Corridor Plan, which takes into account the comments of citizens and city departments that serve the area, and presented the plan concepts and final draft through a series of public meetings and placed the draft plan on MPC's website and in local libraries; and*

*WHEREAS, the land use section of the plan contains several proposals for mixed use districts in the corridor, necessitating changes to the Central City and East City Sector.*

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

*SECTION 1: The Commission hereby adopts the Magnolia Avenue Corridor Plan, dated May 2009, and corresponding 15-Year land use plan amendments to the Central City and East City Sector Plans.*

*SECTION 2: The Planning Commission further recommends that the Knoxville City Council adopt the plan and corresponding sector plan amendments through passage by ordinance.*

*SECTION 3: This Resolution shall take effect upon its approval.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary \_\_\_\_\_