



MEMORANDUM

TO: Metropolitan Planning Commission

FROM: Mark Donaldson, Executive Director

DATE: November 10, 2010

SUBJECT: Amendments to the City of Knoxville Zoning Ordinance regarding the prohibition of public schools in the C-2 (Central Business) district.
11-B-10-OA

REQUEST

MPC has been requested by Knox County Schools, with support of the City Administration, to consider making a recommendation on amendments to the City of Knoxville zoning ordinance regarding the current prohibition of public schools in the C-2 (Central Business) district.

BACKGROUND

Knox County Schools announced on Friday, October 29, 2010 an interest in utilizing the historic L&N Station, near World's Fair Park downtown for a new high school. The City administration proposed use of the building after school officials approached them about possible locations. The facility proposed will offer access to a high quality education in the STEM field. STEM is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. The proposed facility would also use the vacant *Butcher Shop* building located on the same parcel. The site is currently owned by Alex Harkness and Station 82 Partners, and the City holds a lien on the property.

The site is currently zoned C-2 (Central Business District). The current C-2 regulations prohibit the use of land for elementary and high schools, both public and private. The list of permitted uses (at Article IV, 2.2.5 (B)), includes public buildings and lands *other than elementary and high schools*. The regulations allow business and vocational schools. The list of prohibited uses (at Article IV, 2.2.5 (D)), includes *elementary and high schools, public or private*.

ANALYSIS

The C-2 district is an urban mixed-use zone district. Public or private schools should be a part of the mix of uses that contribute to an active, vibrant downtown area. The adaptive reuse of buildings is one of the best ways to preserve many of the city's historic structures.

Privately operated, but publicly funded, charter schools are a growing trend in education nationally. Many of these types of schools have located in very urban or downtown areas throughout the country.

The impact of public or private elementary and high schools would be comparable to business and vocational schools and many of the other permitted uses in the C-2 district.

The proposed amendments:

- eliminate the exclusion of elementary and high schools from the permitted use of public buildings and lands;
- eliminate the listing of elementary and high schools, public and private, as a prohibited use; and,
- add private schools as a use permitted on review.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the planning commission recommend approval of the proposed amendments to the City of Knoxville Zoning Ordinance at Article IV, Section 2.2.5, as shown in Exhibit A.

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit A – Proposed amendments
- Exhibit B – Letter from Knox County Schools

Proposed Amendment to C-2 Zone District
Allowing Public High Schools as a Permitted Use

~~Strike Through~~ shows text to be deleted

Bold shows text to be added

2.2.5 C-2 Central Business District

B. *Uses permitted.* The following uses shall be permitted in the C-2 central business district:

12. Business schools, studios, vocational schools not involving processes of light or heavy industrial nature.

16. Public buildings and lands ~~other than elementary or high schools.~~

C. *Uses permitted on review.*

4. Private schools.

D. *Prohibited uses and structures.* The following uses are prohibited in the C-2 central business district:

~~6. Elementary or high schools, public or private.~~

(Renumber items 7 & 8 as 6 & 7)

EXHIBIT B

KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS
ANDREW JOHNSON BUILDING

Dr. James P. McIntyre Jr., Superintendent



October 20, 2010

Mr. Larry Martin, Deputy Mayor
City of Knoxville
Room 681, City County Building
P.O. Box 1631
Knoxville, TN 37901

Dear Mr. Martin:

Please consider this correspondence as a formal request to change the zoning for the L&N Station building at World's Fair Park to allow for a public school to be housed and operate at that facility.

As I understand it, doing so would require an amendment to the City Zoning Regulations, Article IV, Section 2.2.5(B)(16) so as to remove the exclusion of elementary and high schools in the C-2 central business district.

I appreciate your willingness to consider this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James P. McIntyre, Jr.", followed by a horizontal line.

Dr. James P. McIntyre, Jr.
Superintendent