KNOXVILLE·KNOX COUNTY

MPC

METROPOLITAN
PLANNING
COMMISSION

TENNESSEE

Agenda Item # 62

MEMORANDUM

TO: Metropolitan Planning Commission

FROM: Tim Kuhn, Information Services Manager

DATE: May 3, 2017

SUBJECT: Open Data Policy

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:
Approve open data policy.

BACKGROUND:
On a daily basis, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, manages and updates data about changing conditions in the City of Knoxville and Knox County, maintains information about adopted plans, and uses data to formulate its recommendations. Increasingly, agencies across the country are taking steps to make this sort of high-quality data available to the public, in machine readable formats, permitting their use directly in computer software and websites. These practices improve transparency, accountability and can promote civic participation and innovation.

In October, 2016, the City of Knoxville was among a group of cities selected to participate in the Bloomberg Philanthropies What Works Cities initiative and was awarded technical assistance from the Sunlight Foundation and Center for Government Excellence at Johns Hopkins University. The City worked with these two entities to develop an open data policy. MPC staff participated in the development of the policy with an eye towards drafting a policy to enabling an Open Data Program modeled after the City's.

This policy creates an open data program which MPC can utilize to inventory and prioritize the release of high-quality datasets to the public domain. Its also requires the agency to establish standards to ensure protected and sensitive information is properly vetted.

Following these initial steps, staff will create a central online repository where published data can be downloaded without restriction on use and reuse. An annual progress report will be provided on the agency's website in a year's time and along with additional data prioritized for publication.

The following Open Data Policy is hereby adopted by Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission ("MPC") to sets forth policy and procedures regarding open access to data held by MPC.

Much of the data collected by MPC is stored in ways which impede the public's ability to aggregate, analyze, and synthesize them to better allocate public resources. Access to public information promotes a higher level of civic engagement and allows citizens to provide valuable feedback to government officials regarding local issues.

Every citizen has the right to expect prompt, efficient service from the government, and the thoughtful implementation of an open data program improves provision of services, increases transparency and access to public information, and enhances coordination and efficiencies among government agencies, partner organizations, and citizens.

One goal of an open data policy is to proactively provide information currently sought through public records requests, thereby saving MPC time and money. In commitment to the spirit of open government, MPC will consider non-confidential public information to be open by default and will proactively publish data and data containing information, consistent with relevant public records law.

Information technologies, including web-based and other Internet applications and services, are an essential means for open government, and good government generally. By publishing structured standardized data in machine readable formats, MPC seeks to encourage the local software community to develop software applications and tools to collect, organize, and share public record data in new and innovative ways. The protection of privacy, confidentiality, and security will be maintained as a paramount priority while also advancing the government's transparency and accountability through open data.

I. Definitions

A. <u>Data</u>: statistical, factual, quantitative, or qualitative information that is maintained or created by or on behalf of MPC.
B. <u>Open data</u>: data that are available online, in an open format, with no legal encumbrances on use or reuse, and are available for all to access and download in full without fees. "Legal encumbrance" includes federal copyright protections and other non-statutory legal limitations on how or under what conditions a dataset may be used.
C. <u>Open format</u>: any widely accepted, nonproprietary, platform-independent, machine-readable data format, which permits automated processing of such data and facilitates analysis and search capabilities.
D. <u>Dataset</u>: a named collection of related records, with the collection containing data organized or formatted in a specific or prescribed way, often in tabular form.

E. Protected information: any dataset or portion thereof to which an agency may or must deny access pursuant to state or federal law related to privacy or confidentiality, or any other law or rule or regulation.

F. Sensitive information: any data which, if published by MPC online, could raise privacy, confidentiality, or security concerns or have the potential to jeopardize public health, safety, or welfare to an extent that is greater than the potential public benefit of publishing that data.

G. Publishable data: data which are not protected or sensitive and which have been prepared for release to the public.

II. Open Data Program

A. MPC commits to develop and implement practices that will allow it to:

1. Proactively release all publishable MPC data, making them freely available in open formats, with no restrictions on use or reuse, and fully accessible to the broadest range of users to use for varying purposes;
2. Publish high quality, updated data with documentation (metadata) and permanence to encourage maximum use;
3. When feasible, provide or support access to free, historical archives of all released MPC data;
4. Measure the effectiveness of datasets made available through the open data program by connecting open data efforts to MPC's programmatic priorities;
5. Minimize limitations on the disclosure of public information while appropriately safeguarding protected and sensitive information; and
6. Encourage and support innovative uses of MPC's publishable data by agencies, the public, and other partners.

B. The MPC Executive Director and his/her designee(s) will oversee the development and implementation of MPC's open data program. MPC records custodians, as designated in Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(1), will ensure compliance with relevant statutes relating to confidentiality outlined in Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-504.

C. MPC's work program shall include an open data program element to achieve the goals of this program.

III. Implementation

A. Implementation of MPC's open data program will focus on work with the agency's divisions to:

1. Oversee the creation of a comprehensive inventory of datasets held by the agency which is published to the central open data location and is regularly updated;
2. Develop and implement a process for determining the relative level of risk and public benefit associated with potentially sensitive, non-protected information so as to make a determination about whether and how to publish it;
3. Develop and implement a process for prioritizing the release of datasets which takes into account new and existing signals of interest from the public (such as the frequency of public records requests), MPC's programmatic priorities, existing opportunities for data use in the public interest, and cost;

4. Proactively consult with members of the public, agency staff, journalists, researchers, and other stakeholders to identify the datasets which will have the greatest benefit to Knox County residents if published in a high-quality manner;
5. Establish processes for publishing datasets to the central open data location, including processes for ensuring that datasets are high quality, are up-to-date, are in use-appropriate formats, and exclude protected and sensitive information;
6. Ensure that appropriate metadata are provided for each dataset in order to facilitate its use;
7. Develop and oversee a routinely updated, public timeline for new dataset publication; and
8. Ensure that published datasets are available for bulk download without legal encumbrance.

IV. Central Online Location for Published Data

A. MPC will create and maintain a publicly available location on MPC's website or in another suitable online location where MPC's published data will be available for download.
B. Published datasets shall be placed into the public domain. Dedicating datasets to the public domain means that there are no restrictions or requirements placed on use of these datasets.
C. Each published dataset should be associated with contact information for the appropriate manager of that dataset as well as with a file layout or data dictionary that provides information about field labels and values.

V. Open Data Report and Review

A. Within one year of the effective date of this policy, and annually thereafter, MPC shall publish an annual open data report. The report shall include an assessment of progress towards achievement of the goals of MPC's open data program, an assessment of how MPC's open data work has furthered or will further MPC's programmatic priorities, and a description and publication timeline for datasets envisioned to be published by MPC in the following year.