



**TO:** Knoxville-Knox County Planning Commission

**FROM:** Mike Reynolds, AICP, Principal Planner

**DATE:** Friday, August 2, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Agenda Item # 20 / File # 5-B-24-OA

Consideration of amendments to the Knoxville City Code, Appendix B, Zoning Code, Article 5.4, Table 5-2, Commercial Districts Design Standards, adding Commercial District Design Standards in the C-G-1 (General Commercial) Zoning District and clarifying the applicable design standards for residential structures.

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## RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of an amendment to the Knoxville City Code, Appendix B, Zoning Code, Article 5.4, adding Commercial District Design Standards in the C-G-1 (General Commercial) Zoning District and clarifying the applicable design standards for residential structures.

## BACKGROUND

The City Council adopted Resolution R-73-2021, requesting the Planning Commission consider and make recommendations to the City Council regarding adding architectural design standards to the C-G-1 zoning district.

### C-G General Commercial Zoning District

The purpose of the C-G General Commercial Zoning District is "to provide for a heterogeneous mix of retail, personal service, office, and residential uses within and along Knoxville's commercial nodes and corridors. The C-G District is intended to promote mixed-use development in a pedestrian-oriented environment that recalls the City's traditional business districts, and offers flexibility in the creation of integrated commercial, office and residential spaces. The C-G District is divided into three levels of intensity related to the overall form and design of the development; however, uses are the same across all levels."

As referenced in the purpose statement above, the C-G District is divided into three levels of intensity related to the overall form and design of the development. These levels are designated as the C-G-1, C-G-2, and C-G-3 Districts, with the C-G-1 District being the lowest intensity. The main factor in the level of intensity is the maximum building height. The C-G-2 and C-G-3 Districts have

dimensional standards that require portions of buildings to be located close to front and side streets (build-to zone and build-to percentage) that are not required in the C-G-1 District and are not proposed to be added with these amendments. The C-G-1 District allows structures to be located anywhere on the lot, with the exception of setbacks when abutting a residential district. Buildings in the C-G-1 District could be located close to the street in the same manner as those in the C-G-2 and C-G-3 Districts.

### **Design Standards – Article 5.4.A.1. and Table 5-2**

The Commercial Districts Design Standards listed in Table 5-2 apply to new construction and to any addition that exceeds 30 percent or more of the existing structure’s square footage. A summary of the design standards that apply to the C-G-2 and C-G-3 Districts is listed below. See Exhibit A for the full text.

#### Façade Design

These standards prohibit blank building facades that face a public road and require material/texture/wall articulation on long facades, sidewalk connection from the main entrance of the building to the road, and building materials and visual elements to continue on all facades visible from a public road.

#### Fenestration Design

The ground floor front façade is required to have 30 percent transparency between two and ten feet in height from the finished grade and 15 percent transparency of the wall area on the upper floors.

#### Commercial Site Design

The site must be designed to ensure safe pedestrian access from the public right-of-way and through the site, and a cohesive character must be established through the use of hardscape and landscape treatments throughout the development.

### **Building Material Restrictions – Article 5.4.B.**

This subsection applies to the same districts as those in Table 5-2. Restricted building materials are prohibited on any façade facing a public road or any façade that abuts a residential district. However, such materials may still be used as decorative or detail elements for up to 25 percent of the façade, or as part of the exterior construction that is not used as a surface finish material. The restricted materials include plain concrete masonry units (CMU); aluminum, steel, or other metal siding, excluding metal architectural wall panels; exposed aggregate concrete wall panels; T-111 composite plywood siding; plastic; and vinyl.



### **Residential Design Standards – Article 5.4.A.2. (new section)**

All residential uses, except for single-family dwellings, have specific design standards in Article 9.3. (Principal Use Standards). Residential development in non-residential zoning districts where the Commercial Districts Design Standards in Table 5-2 apply are required to meet the design standards in the principal use standards (Article 9.3) and Table 5-2. These design standards in these two sections have conflicts and, in some instances, are not appropriate to apply to residential structures, such as single-family and two-family structures.

### **ANALYSIS**

The C-G Zoning District's purpose and intent for the three levels of intensity are the same: to provide a heterogeneous mix of uses along Knoxville's commercial nodes and corridors, promote mixed-use development in a pedestrian-oriented environment, and offer flexibility in the creation of integrated spaces. The design standards in Article 5.4 are meant to ensure the purpose and intent of the C-G District are realized.

The staff recommendation is to use these same standards for C-G-2 and C-G-3 in all C-G Districts and reference them all together as C-G Districts in Article 5.4.

The proposed applicability section for residential design standards in Article 5.4.A.2. is to clarify which standards apply when there is a conflict between the principal use standards in Article 9.3. and Table 5-2, and to exempt single-family and two-family structures from the design standards in Table 5-2. An example of design standard conflict is the transparency standards for multi-dwelling structures, where the principal use standards (Article 9.3.I.) require 20 percent for the entire façade and Table 5-2 requires 30 percent for the ground floor and 15 percent for the upper floors.

Exhibit A: Proposed amendments to Article 5.4, adding Commercial District Design Standards in the C-G-1 (General Commercial) Zoning District and clarifying the applicable design standards for residential structures.





**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** August 1, 2024  
**TO:** Planning Staff  
**FROM:** Bryan Berry, AICP  
Deputy Director of Plans Review & Building Inspections  
**RE:** Department Letter of Support - Zoning Code Amendment Regarding C-G Design Standards

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The City's Plans Review and Inspections Department is in support of Planning's proposed amendments to the City Zoning Ordinance pertaining to Commercial General (CG) design standards. This new language in the zoning ordinance will add design standards to C-G-1 where previously they were only required in C-G-2 and C-G-3.

City staff reviewed the proposed amendments by Planning and recommends approval.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryan Berry".

Bryan Berry, AICP  
Deputy Director of Plans Review & Building Inspections

**5.4 DESIGN STANDARDS**

The following design standards applies to new construction and to any additions to a structure existing as of the effective date of this Code that exceed 30% or more of the existing structure's square footage. (Design standards for development in the DK Districts are found in Sections 5.5 below.)

**A. Commercial Districts Design Standards**

1. Table 5-2: Commercial Districts Design Standards establishes the design standards for the C-N, ~~C-G-1~~, ~~C-G-2~~, ~~C-G-3~~, C-H-2, C-R-2, and O Districts. In the table, a "•" indicates that the standard is applicable in the district indicated. The absence of a "•" indicates that the standard does not apply to the district.

2. For residential structures, the principal use standards in Section 9.3. shall apply when in conflict with the Commercial Districts Design Standards in Table 5-2. The design standards in Table 5-2 do not apply to single-family and two-family dwellings. Mixed-use structures that include residential uses must meet the standards in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2: Commercial Districts Design Standards						
	C-N	C-G-2	<del>C-G-3</del>	C-H-2	C-R-2	O
<b>Façade Design</b>						
Building façades that abut a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, must not contain blank wall areas that exceed 30 linear feet, measured per story parallel to the street.	•	•	•	•	•	
Building façades in excess of 100 linear feet that abut a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, must include a repeating pattern with no less than two of the following elements: texture change, material module change, or a wall articulation change of no less than 2 feet in depth or projection, such as a reveal, pilaster, or projecting rib. All elements must repeat at intervals of no more than 50 linear feet.	•	•	•	•	•	
All buildings must have a public entrance from the sidewalk along the primary building frontage. Public entrances must be visually distinctive from the remaining portions of the façade along which they are located.	•	•	•	•	•	
Building materials and visual elements used on the primary building frontage must continue on all building façades that are visible from a public right-of-way.	•	•	•	•	•	•
<b>Fenestration Design</b>						
The ground floor of the front façade must maintain a minimum transparency of 30%, measured between two and ten feet in height.	•	•	•	•	•	•
Upper floors of the front façade must maintain a minimum transparency of 15% of the wall area of the story	•	•	•			

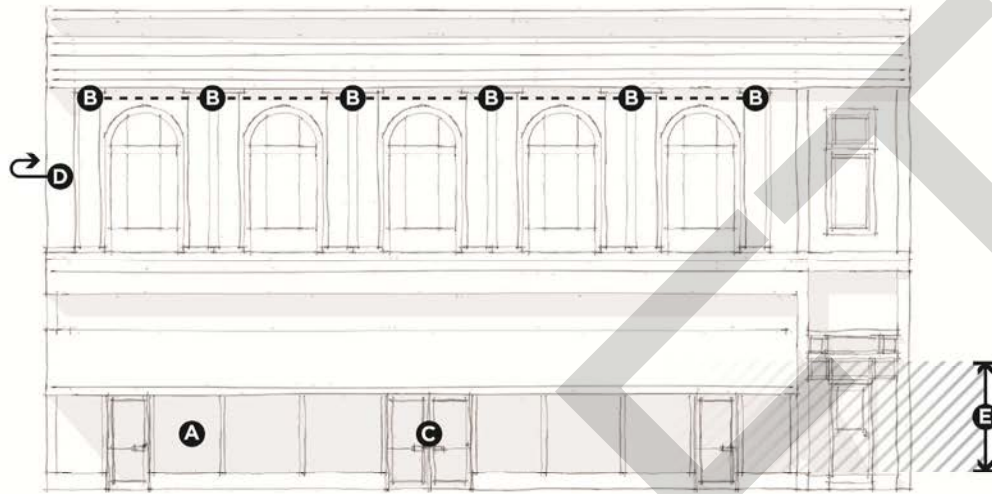
Commercial Site Design						
Sites must be designed to ensure safe pedestrian access from the public right-of-way, and safe pedestrian circulation within the development.	•	•	•	•	•	•
A cohesive character must be established through the use of coordinated hardscape (paving materials, lighting, street furniture, etc.) and landscape treatments within the development.		•	•	•	•	
Outlot buildings must meet the minimum transparency requirements of the district along façades facing the street.					•	
Any outlot buildings must include prominent entrances oriented toward both the street and the interior parking lot.					•	
Outlot buildings that are part of a multi-tenant retail center must provide definition along the street frontage of the center by placement of the front building line within 0' to 30' of the front lot line. Outlot buildings may be placed within a required setback to comply with this standard.					•	

**B. Building Material Restrictions**

In the C-N, ~~C-G-2~~, ~~C-G-3~~, C-H-2, C-R-2, and O Districts, the following building materials are prohibited on any façade facing a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, or any façade that abuts a residential district. Such materials may still be used as decorative or detail elements for up to 25% of the façade, or as part of the exterior construction that is not used as a surface finish material.

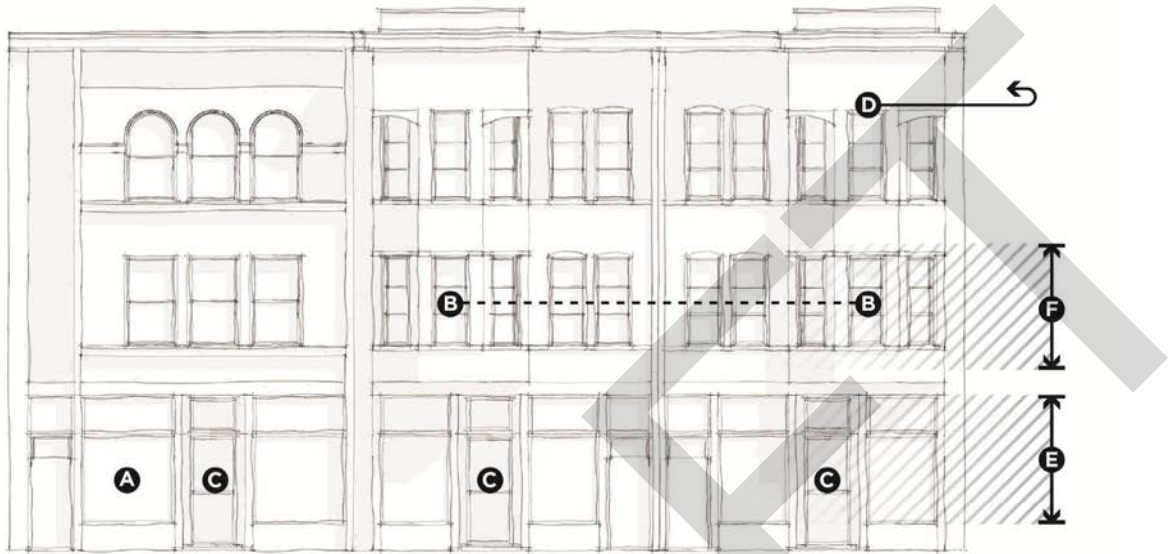
1. Concrete Plain concrete masonry units (CMU);
2. Aluminum, steel or other metal sidings; this restriction does not include metal architectural wall panels;
3. Exposed aggregate concrete wall panels;
4. T-111 composite plywood siding;
5. Plastic;
6. Vinyl.

## C-N DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS



- A** Building façades that abut a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, must not contain blank wall areas that exceed 30 linear feet, measured parallel to the street.
- B** Building façades in excess of 100 linear feet that abut a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, must include a repeating pattern with no less than two of the following elements: texture change, material module change, or a wall articulation change of no less than 2 feet in depth or projection, such as a reveal, pilaster, or projecting rib. All elements must repeat at intervals of no more than 50 linear feet.
- C** All buildings must have a public entrance from the sidewalk along the primary building frontage. Public entrances must be visually distinctive from the remaining portions of the façade along which they are located.
- D** Building materials and visual elements used on the primary building frontage must continue on all building façades that are visible from a public right-of-way.
- E** The ground floor of the front façade must maintain a minimum transparency of 30%, measured between two and ten feet in height from grade.

C-G-2 DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS



**A** Building façades that abut a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, must not contain blank wall areas that exceed 30 linear feet, measured parallel to the street.

**B** Building façades in excess of 100 linear feet that abut a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, must include a repeating pattern with no less than two of the following elements: texture change, material module change, or a wall articulation change of no less than 2 feet in depth or projection, such as a reveal, pilaster, or projecting rib. All elements must repeat at intervals of no more than 50 linear feet.

**C** All buildings must have a public entrance from the sidewalk along the primary building frontage. Public entrances must be visually distinctive from the remaining portions of the façade along which they are located.

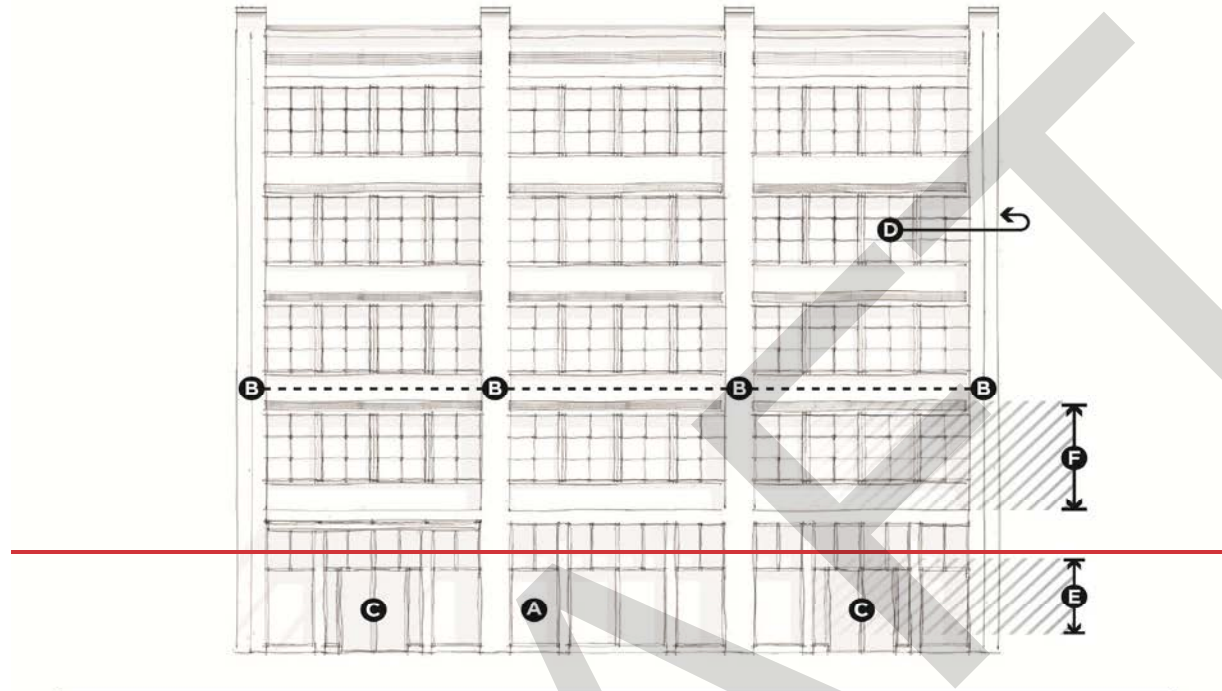
**D** Building materials and visual elements used on the primary building frontage must continue on all building façades that are visible from a public right-of-way.

**E** The ground floor of the front façade must maintain a minimum transparency of 30%, measured between two and ten feet in height from grade.

**F** Upper floors of the front façade must maintain a minimum transparency of 15% of the wall area of the story

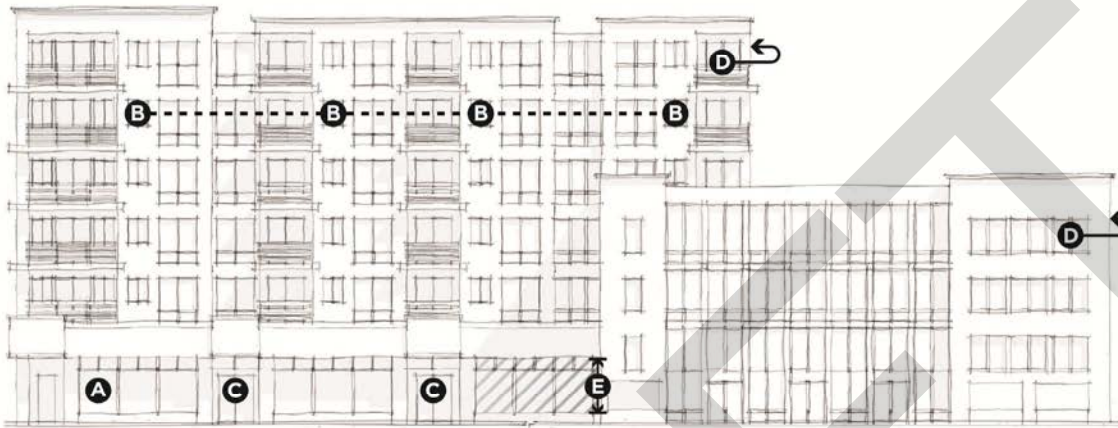


**C-G-3 DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS**



- A** Building façades that abut a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, must not contain blank wall areas that exceed 30 linear feet, measured parallel to the street.
- B** Building façades in excess of 100 linear feet that abut a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, must include a repeating pattern with no less than two of the following elements: texture change, material module change, or a wall articulation change of no less than 2 feet in depth or projection, such as a reveal, pilaster, or projecting rib. All elements must repeat at intervals of no more than 50 linear feet.
- C** All buildings must have a public entrance from the sidewalk along the primary building frontage. Public entrances must be visually distinctive from the remaining portions of the façade along which they are located.
- D** Building materials and visual elements used on the primary building frontage must continue on all building façades that are visible from a public right-of-way.
- E** The ground floor of the front façade must maintain a minimum transparency of 30%, measured between two and ten feet in height from grade.
- F** Upper floors of the front façade must maintain a minimum transparency of 15% of the wall area of the story.

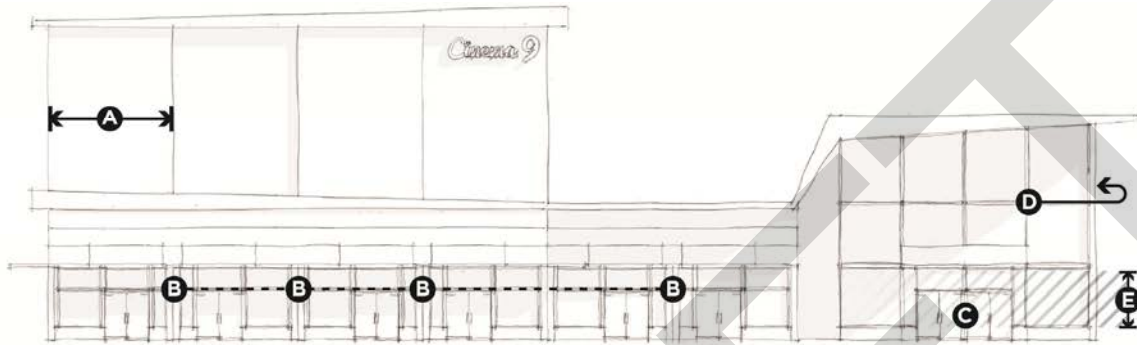
C-H-2 DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS



- A** Building façades that abut a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, must not contain blank wall areas that exceed 30 linear feet, measured parallel to the street.
- B** Building façades in excess of 100 linear feet that abut a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, must include a repeating pattern with no less than two of the following elements: texture change, material module change, or a wall articulation change of no less than 2 feet in depth or projection, such as a reveal, pilaster, or projecting rib. All elements must repeat at intervals of no more than 50 linear feet.

- C** All buildings must have a public entrance from the sidewalk along the primary building frontage. Public entrances must be visually distinctive from the remaining portions of the façade along which they are located.
- D** Building materials and visual elements used on the primary building frontage must continue on all building façades that are visible from a public right-of-way.
- E** The ground floor of the front façade must maintain a minimum transparency of 30%, measured between two and ten feet in height from grade.

## C-R-2 DISTRICT DESIGN STANDARDS



- A** Building façades that abut a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, must not contain blank wall areas that exceed 30 linear feet, measured parallel to the street.
- B** Building façades in excess of 100 linear feet that abut a public right-of-way, excluding alleys, must include a repeating pattern with no less than two of the following elements: texture change, material module change, or a wall articulation change of no less than 2 feet in depth or projection, such as a reveal, pilaster, or projecting rib. All elements must repeat at intervals of no more than 50 linear feet.
- C** All buildings must have a public entrance from the sidewalk along the primary building frontage. Public entrances must be visually distinctive from the remaining portions of the façade along which they are located.
- D** Building materials and visual elements used on the primary building frontage must continue on all building façades that are visible from a public right-of-way.
- E** The ground floor of the front façade must maintain a minimum transparency of 30%, measured between two and ten feet in height from grade.