



# SPECIAL USE REPORT

**FILE #:** 9-G-24-SU **AGENDA ITEM #:** 9  
 POSTPONEMENT(S): 9/12/2024, 10/3/2024, 11/14/2024 **AGENDA DATE:** 12/12/2024  
**APPLICANT:** CALVARY CHAPEL OF KNOXVILLE (OWNER)  
 OWNER(S): Calvary Chapel of Knoxville

**TAX ID NUMBER:** 147 030 [View map on KGIS](#)  
**JURISDICTION:** City Council District 1  
**STREET ADDRESS:** 3330 W GOVERNOR JOHN SEVIER HWY  
**LOCATION:** South side of W Governor John Sevier Hwy, east side of Alcoa Hwy, north of Topside Rd  
**APPX. SIZE OF TRACT:** 42 acres  
**SECTOR PLAN:** South County  
**GROWTH POLICY PLAN:** N/A (Within City Limits)  
**ACCESSIBILITY:** Access is via W. Governor John Sevier Highway, a major arterial street with a 47 to 54-ft pavement width within an 84 to 136-ft right-of-way. Access is also via Topside Road, a minor collector street with an 18-ft pavement width within a 60-ft right-of-way.  
**UTILITIES:** Water Source: Knox-Chapman Utility District  
 Sewer Source: Knoxville Utilities Board  
**FIRE DISTRICT:** Knoxville Fire Department  
**WATERSHED:** Tennessee River

**ZONING:** RN-1 (C) (Single-Family Residential Neighborhood) (Previously Approved Planned District), HP (Hillside Protection Overlay)  
**EXISTING LAND USE:** Public/Quasi Public Land  
**PROPOSED USE:** Sanctuary and podium parking for a place of worship expansion

**HISTORY OF ZONING:** A rezoning from E (Estates) and A (Agricultural) to PR (Planned Residential) up to 8 du/ac for most of the property was approved in 1982 (8-M-82-RZ). In 2002, the City of Knoxville rezoned the property to RP-1 (Planned Residential) (11-Y-02-RZ).

**SURROUNDING LAND USE AND ZONING:**  
 North: Agriculture/forestry/vacant land, rural residential - RN-1 (Single-Family Residential Neighborhood), O (Office), HP (Hillside Protection Overlay) in the City  
 South: Agriculture/forestry/vacant land, rural residential, single family residential - E (Estate), RAE (Exclusive Residential), PR (Planned Residential) up to 8 du/ac, A (Agricultural), RB (General Residential) in the County  
 East: Single family residential - A (Agricultural) in the County  
 West: Agriculture/forestry/vacant land - E (Estate) in the County

NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT: This property is located at the southeast corner of the Alcoa Highway and W Governor John Sevier Highway interchange, in an area that is primarily comprised of forested hillside and single-family residences.

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

► **Approve the request for a building addition and parking structure for a place of worship, subject to 5 conditions.**

- 1) Implementing all 12 recommendations of the updated Traffic Impact Letter in coordination with the TN Department of Transportation (TDOT), City of Knoxville Engineering and Knox County Engineering and Public Works.
- 2) Abiding by any conditions applied in the Level II Hillside Protection case (9-A-24-HPA).
- 3) Reevaluating sight distance from the access on Topside Road with a certified traffic engineer to determine if vegetation on adjacent private property needs to be removed for safe egress. If this is the case, an easement agreement with the property owner for vegetation removal will need to be obtained prior to permitting.
- 4) Meeting all applicable requirements of the City of Knoxville Zoning Ordinance.
- 5) Meeting all applicable requirements of the City of Knoxville Engineering Department.

With conditions noted above, this request meets the requirements of the former RP-1 zoning district (current RN-1(C) / HP zoning district) and the criteria for approval of a special use for modifications to previously approved planned districts per Article 1.4.G.

**COMMENTS:**

In 2023, a Special Use request for driveway access to Topside Road and a minor expansion of the right turn lane on the church driveway to W Governor John Sevier Hwy was approved. This review was accompanied by a traffic study regarding the anticipated 1,828-seat expansion to the parish at that time.

This Special Use request is for a 130,033 sq ft parish building addition that will add 2,231 seats to the existing 658 seats in the original building. The proposal also includes a podium parking structure that will create a total of 817 parking spaces with an additional access point from the driveway on the church campus. The original parish building will be used for children's programming, so those seats were not included in the updated Traffic Impact Letter dated 10/28/2024, which accounts for a 403-seat increase since the last traffic study.

**STANDARDS FOR EVALUATING A SPECIAL USE (ARTICLE 16.2.F.2)**

**THE USE IS CONSISTENT WITH ADOPTED PLANS AND POLICIES, INCLUDING THE GENERAL PLAN AND THE ONE-YEAR PLAN.**

1. Calvary Chapel's updated Traffic Impact Letter (TIL), conducted in September 2024, notes that there is a Knoxville Police Department (KPD) officer at the church's entrance on W Governor John Sevier Highway during Sunday morning service. According to the TIL, "the officer's direction of traffic significantly reduced the vehicle delays and the length of the exiting Church traffic vehicle queues compared to the original observation in December 2023, when no police officer was present at the intersection." The Chapel's efforts to coordinate with KPD on traffic safety in light of its growing congregation is consistent with the General Plan's Development Policy 10.3 to involve school, police and fire officials in land use planning at the sector, neighborhood, and site plan levels.
2. The church's location has access to W Governor John Sevier Highway, a major arterial street, and Topside Road, a minor collector street. This placement of a place of worship is consistent with the One Year Plan's location criteria, which states that churches should be located on arterial and collector streets.
3. The South County Sector Plan's land use classification for this property is MDR/O (Medium Density Residential/Office), which recommends zoning districts that all permit consideration of the use of a place of worship.
4. The extent of clearing and grading in the proposed development has led to conflicts with the zoning enforcement of the adopted Hillside and Ridgetop Protection Plan. This issue is addressed in the Level II HP case that is paired with this Special Use review.

**THE USE IS IN HARMONY WITH THE GENERAL PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THIS ZONING CODE.**

1. Per the Transition Rules in Article 1.4.G of the zoning ordinance, the previously approved RP-1 (Planned Residential) zoning on this property is the operative zoning district. RP-1 zoning is intended to provide optional methods of land development which encourage more imaginative solutions to environmental design problems. Limited nonresidential uses that are compatible with the character of the district may be permitted.
2. The proposed building addition and parking structure are situated along the northwestern property boundary

that borders Alcoa Highway. This location is set far back from existing single-family residences along Topside Road, and the remaining forest along the property's southeastern border provides screening between these different land uses. This location for the expansion is consistent with the intent of the RP-1 district.

THE USE IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE IT IS PROPOSED, AND WITH THE SIZE AND LOCATION OF BUILDINGS IN THE VICINITY.

1. Calvary Chapel was originally built in 2013, making this place of worship an established use in the area. The proposed 130,033 sq ft building addition and parking structure, paired with the existing 22,100 sq ft sanctuary is a substantial development that will be highly visible from Alcoa Highway. Both Alcoa Highway and W Governor John Sevier Highway are state-designated Scenic Roadways, which cap the height of buildings at 35 ft within 1,000 ft of the highway. The architectural elevations provided in this package reflect compliance with that building height limitation. Aside from that consideration, the placement of the church on the approximately 42-acre property is such that neighborhood character is a less relevant concern.

THE USE WILL NOT SIGNIFICANTLY INJURE THE VALUE OF ADJACENT PROPERTY OR BY NOISE, LIGHTS, FUMES, ODORS, VIBRATION, TRAFFIC, CONGESTION, OR OTHER IMPACTS DETRACT FROM THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT.

1. The traffic study projects multiple failing level of service (LOS) conditions during Sunday peak hours on W Governor John Sevier Highway, even with a secondary entrance to Topside Road, which is due to be constructed soon. The noted condition for approval regarding implementation of all traffic engineering recommendations, including a continuation of law enforcement personnel deployment to direct traffic, should alleviate anticipated congestion. It is also favorable that Sunday church service hours are at a time that does not coincide with typical traffic congestion on these classified streets.

THE USE IS NOT OF A NATURE OR SO LOCATED AS TO DRAW SUBSTANTIAL ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC THROUGH RESIDENTIAL STREETS.

1. Residents along Topside Road have expressed concern about the increase in traffic that will occur with Calvary Chapel's new access to that street. However, it is a minor collector, not a local residential street in terms of its classification. This access has been deemed necessary as a secondary ingress/egress for emergency personnel and evacuation, and it is needed to provide relief for anticipated traffic congestion at W Governor John Sevier Highway near its intersection with Alcoa Highway.