

Knoxville Knox County Planning Commission
June 28, 2021

RE: 7-H-21-RZ

Dear Planning Commissioners:

My family has lived in the Lakemoor Hills neighborhood for almost 50 years, while Alcoa Hwy. traffic has steadily increased and neighborhood services and businesses on Alcoa Hwy. have diminished. I have high expectations for the opportunities afforded in the redevelopment of the Alcoa Highway corridor.

The property on Maloney Rd. east of the interchange with Alcoa Hwy. recently became available for development, the first commercial property to be sold since the current highway construction began. We were apprehensive that a chain gas station or convenience store would soon dominate that strategic site. Such businesses would be welcome elsewhere on the corridor. However, much of the community efforts to make the corridor more attractive to new businesses and services could be undermined by inappropriate development on critical sites. The idea of an attractive community-oriented business center might then become nothing more than a pipe dream.

The collective efforts of 75 dedicated individuals - residents, business and property owners, architects, planners and developers - organized by the Community Design Center in an intensive brainstorming work session two years ago at a local church, resulted in many thoughtful recommendations. This workshop was organized with the encouragement of former Planning Director Gerald Green to facilitate a planning update of the area. A neighborhood survey was conducted, a demographic profile prepared with help from the Knox County Library, and business and property owners were interviewed to establish a systematic basis for planning. It became obvious through this process that additional housing in the corridor could provide critical support for existing businesses and incentive for new businesses.

When a design concept for that site on Maloney Rd. was put forward recently, many of us became hopeful. A three-story, well landscaped complex of apartments would serve the needs of the UT Medical Center and Research Park, as well as newcomers who valued proximity to the airport and Knox-Blount Greenway and older residents of nearby neighborhoods who want to remain in the area without the burden of home maintenance. Such a complex could set the standard for the high quality corridor development envisioned in the community brainstorming session two years ago. It would be ideally suited for that particular site, where traffic generated would feed directly onto Alcoa Hwy. north or south without congesting neighborhood streets. Those of us who witnessed the decline of the commercial area, once providing a diverse array of services to this area, to its present status as a mostly vacant commercial strip, without even a grocery store or gas station in several years, envision a neighborhood center that provides the diverse array of services previously available in this area.

I encourage the Planning Commission to recommend approval of the RN-5 zone for this site.

Respectfully submitted,
Gene Burr, AIA, AICP
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