

Jan 6, 2022

Agenda Item #21 - Murphy Rd Subdivision 1-A-23-DP / 1-SB-23-C

Dear Commissioners,

Summary

I request that you add one conditions to the approval of the concept plan:

That the applicant must work with Knox County Engineering and Public Works to install pedestrian crosswalks on Murphy Road.

I also request that you review the Farmland Soils map for the parcel and discuss how the development could be modified to conserve some of the Prime Soil that is proposed to be graded and built on. A lot of Prime Farmland and Locally Important Soil was disturbed and displaced during Phase 1.

Finally, I request that you discuss and determine how to better connect neighborhoods.

Details

In March of last year, you reviewed and approved the concept plan and development plan for the first phase under [3-BB-21-UR](#) / 3-SA-21-SC. The public submitted a number of comments and suggestions. My [prior public comments](#) are available through the Planning website. The requests included sidewalks within the subdivision and along Murphy Rd, a pedestrian crossing on Murphy Rd, intersection improvements, landscaping screen, and conservation of prime farmland soils. The only request incorporated into Commission's approval was the [Transportation Impact Analysis](#) recommending a left turn lane.

For this proposal, I have the following observations and requests.

Road Improvements

The county has undertaken work for required turn lanes on Murphy Rd at both entrances of Shannon Valley Farms. The preliminary plans shared at a community meeting in December did not include crosswalks or sidewalks, but the attendees were vocal in their desire for them and the need for them. In particular, the applicant has set up the Meadows HOA to have use of the facilities of Shannon Valley Farms on the east side of Murphy Rd, but there is no pedestrian crossing or crosswalk provided.

I request that you add a condition that the applicant must work with Knox County Engineering and Public Works to install pedestrian crosswalks on Murphy Road.

Landscaping Screen

In March 2021, I submitted the following comment:

There should be a landscaping screen along Murphy Rd. Many of those houses will have backyards that open up into a road with about 8,000 vehicles a day. It would provide those houses privacy if there was a landscaping screen, similar to the landscaping screen on Shannon Valley Farms across the street.

No landscaping screen requirement was added when Commission approved the development plan.

Since then, this is what has actually been built. You can see a stark contrast between the developments on the east (Shannon Valley Farms) with a thick landscaping screen, and the Meadows at Shannon Valley on the west, where residents have to either build a fence, or have every passer-by look straight into the back of their house. The look of the Meadows at Shannon Valley is not in keeping with the transition to the rural area of Northeast Knox County.

This highlights how we have a lack of development and design standards for subdivisions where their internal street system backs up to a major road. KCPA strongly urges the Commission to review and add standards for this scenario.

Murphy Rd, looking north. Earlier built Shannon Valley Farms on the right with dense landscaping. Meadows at Shannon Valley, approved March 2023, without landscaping



Meadows at Shannon Valley, with either open yards or fences



Meadows at Shannon Valley, without a landscaping screen



Soil Conservation

My March 2021 comments included the below map of farmland soils for the entire development. No soil conservation practices were required in the approval of Phase 1. 1-A-23-DP proposes grading and building on more “Prime if Drained” soil.



What can Planning Commission do to help conserve soils like this? This isn't an abstract idea. Page 28 of the Knoxville-Knox County General Plan identifies "Prime agricultural land should be protected for continued farm use". What do you have in your toolbox to guide developments to implement conservation principles?

Agenda for Quality Growth**6. Respect and Nurture Our Heritage Areas.**

Heritage resources are natural or man-made features that contribute to a distinctive sense of place. Good candidates for heritage areas should have natural, historic or related attributes and some unifying element such as a river, a roadway or an architectural theme. Heritage area initiatives focus on interrelated issues, such as landscape protection, historic preservation, economic development, environmental protection and preservation of community character. Some of the heritage resources that distinguish Knoxville and Knox County from other metropolitan areas include historic sites and districts, river and creek corridors, ridges, hills, scenic highways like Pellissippi Parkway and Governor John Sevier Highway and historic corridors like the French Broad River and Emory Road.

Principles and Concepts:

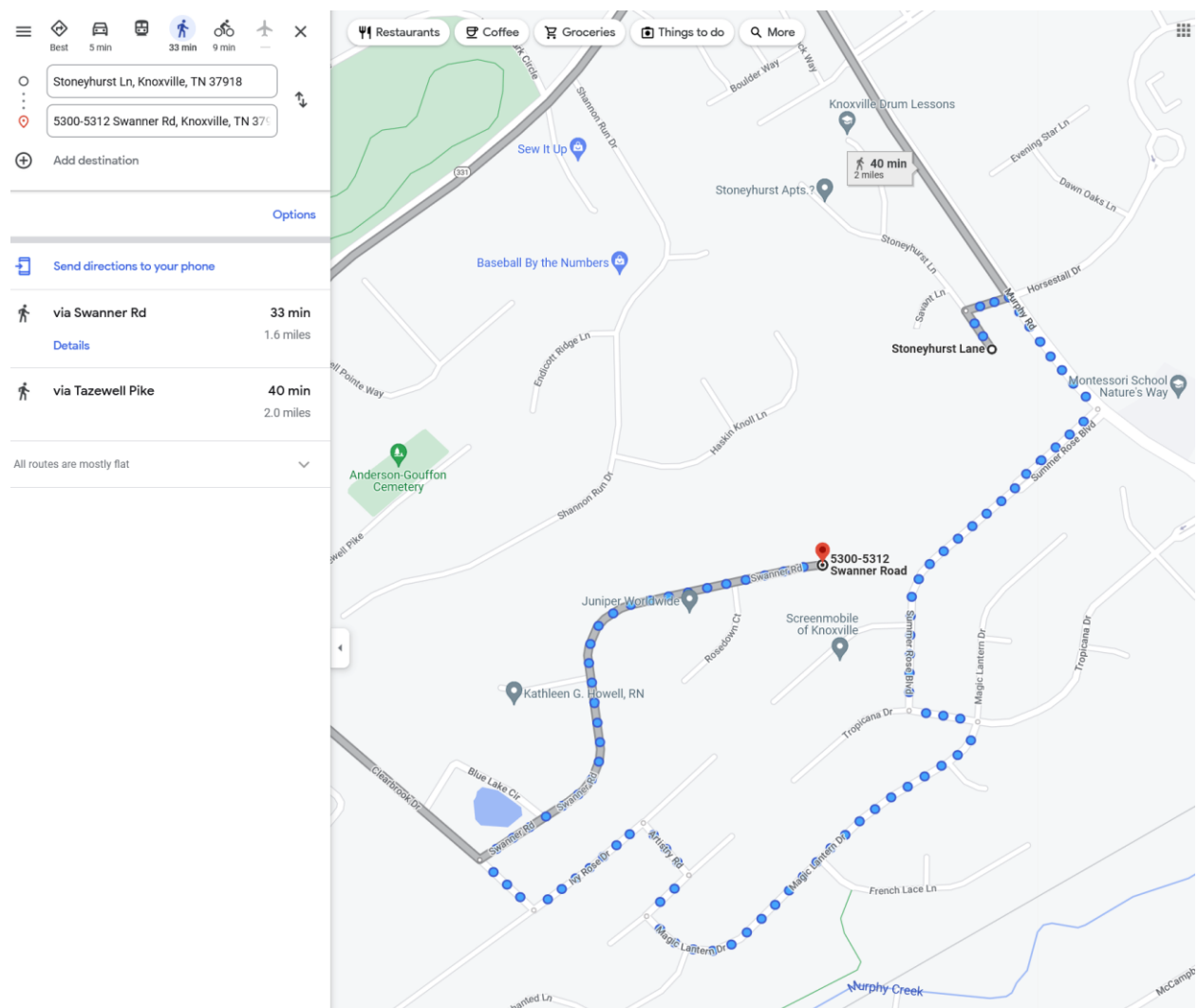
- Prime agricultural land should be protected for continued farm use.
- The landscape of the rural areas designated in the Growth Policy Plan should be conserved, including open space, historic sites and farm buildings.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape associated with historic and scenic corridors, including highways, rural roads and the rivers.
- Ridges, woodlands and waterways should be protected for wildlife and plant habitat.
- Historic neighborhoods and buildings should be preserved.

Subdivision Connectivity

KCPA has spoken about subdivision connectivity multiple times. This development proposal shows how we limit our options in the future when we don't require connectivity.

Brookvale Estates subdivision to the west was rezoned and approved back in 1988/1989. The Summer Rose subdivision was approved in 1996, by the same applicant. Each of these subdivisions extensively utilizes cul-de-sacs, and the approved plans did not provide for future connectivity to the east/north. (the property that is now the current Meadows at Shannon Valley.)

As a result, a child living in a house built in this proposed Phase 2, who has a common rear yard lot line with a house on the end of Swanner Road, would have to **walk 33 minutes / 1.6 miles** to visit their backyard neighbor. None is there pedestrian connectivity proposed between this development and adjacent neighborhoods.



Connectivity is not a new wish-list item. It is codified in the Subdivision Regulations, which govern the Concept Plan process.

2. **General Standards:**

- a. **Connecting to existing streets.** The proposed street system of a subdivision shall provide for the continuance of existing or dedicated right-of-way or streets in adjoining or nearby tracts when it is determined by the Planning Commission to be a feasible.
- b. **Providing for future street connections to adjoining undivided property.** The proposed street system of a subdivision may be required to include street stub-outs for the logical extension of the street system into the surrounding area. If required by the City of Knoxville Department of Engineering or the Knox County Department of Engineering and Public Works, a turnaround may be required for the street stub-out. The restoration and extension of the street shall be the responsibility of any future developer of the abutting land.
- c. **Impact of future street connections.** When street connections are made between subdivisions, the future traffic patterns should be evaluated to identify any impact from the connections. Cut-through traffic and speeding on local residential streets should be discouraged through proper design measures.
- d. **Notification of future street connection.** When streets are designed to connect to an adjacent property to allow for future connectivity between developments, the end of the new street shall be posted with a sign designating the street end as a future street connection. The sign shall be clearly visible from the end of the new street and shall be of a size and design meeting the requirements of the City of Knoxville Department of Engineering or the Knox County Department of Engineering and Public Works. The Concept Plan and Final Plat for the subdivision shall also clearly identify that the street end is designed for future connection.

Sincerely,

--Kevin

Kevin Murphy
4508 Murphy Rd
Knoxville, TN 37918
contact@kcpa.us