



Knox County Planning Commission
City-County Building
Knoxville, TN 37902
July 12, 2024

Dear Planning Commissioners,

The City of Knoxville Tree Board, appointed by the Mayor to advise on urban forestry matters in the City, wishes to express concerns regarding the recent request for greater-than-allowed disturbance of the property at 5233 McIntyre Road as it relates to the Hillside Protection Ordinance. This ordinance was established through extensive public engagement and thoughtful compromise, embodying the collective values and input of our community. We believe upholding this ordinance is of the utmost importance.

As the amount of available land for development within our city limits continues to decrease, we anticipate a noticeable rise in requests for hillside disturbances as the city continues to experience significant development pressure. While we certainly do not view development as negative per se, we believe it must be carried out responsibly and within the regulations that exist. The Hillside Protection Ordinance is an essential tool for safeguarding against the negative impacts of overdevelopment, such as canopy loss and stormwater management issues.

One of the key aspects of maintaining this ordinance is the concept of precedent. While we know that each case is evaluated individually, approving a request such as this would set a tone that undermines the ordinance's effectiveness and encourages future requests, thus weakening its integrity. It is imperative that we remain vigilant in upholding the ordinance to ensure that development does not harm the environment and place undue burdens on other property owners and residents.

Mature trees, often overlooked in development plans, are a vital part of our city's infrastructure. They offer numerous benefits, including improved air quality, enhanced aesthetic value, and essential stormwater management. These trees should be treated with the same importance as other infrastructural elements in our city planning processes; they are needed now more than ever to mitigate the more severe heat and flooding we are seeing in our area.

Given these considerations, we respectfully urge you to uphold the Knoxville-Knox County Planning staff recommendation in this case to deny the property owner's request; our understanding is that the property owner does not have a legitimate hardship that would justify deviating from this recommendation. Your vote to deny the request will protect our environment and reaffirm commitment to the Hillside Protection Ordinance, which was created at the behest of the community.

Thank you so much for your service and consideration.

Sincerely,
Members of the City of Knoxville Tree Board