

For the Planning Commission Regarding Rezoning Request for 205 N. Wooddale Rd. (Parcel ID: 62 047)

Introduction

Hello Commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity to leave a comment regarding the proposed rezoning of 205 North Wooddale Rd. I recognize the time and effort you dedicate to ensuring responsible development in our community, and I appreciate your commitment to balancing growth with environmental stewardship. I live on Vista View Lane in Neal's Landing, a neighborhood that is directly impacted by this rezoning request, and I'm here to propose a solution that supports sustainable development while protecting critical environmental resources.

Context & Concerns

Knoxville's beauty and quality of life are major drivers of growth, and it's no surprise that housing demand continues to rise. However, this growth brings challenges, particularly when it comes to preserving our natural landscapes and mitigating flood risks in valley areas.

Flooding Risk & Environmental Impact

The valley areas near Asheville Highway, including Neal's Landing, are prone to flooding. This is exacerbated by increasing impervious surfaces, which limit the land's natural ability to absorb stormwater.

- Currently, there are six active development sites near Asheville Highway alone.
- Major storms, such as Hurricane Helene, have highlighted the growing risk of flood damage in our region.

Trees and native plants are essential in mitigating this risk. For example:

- A single mature tree with a 30-inch diameter absorbs up to 300 gallons of water per day.
- Native plants, like goldenrod, have root systems that extend up to 11 feet, stabilizing soil and reducing runoff.

The proposed density of five to six dwelling units per acre on 205 North Wooddale Rd. will significantly limit space for mature trees and native vegetation, further reducing the area's capacity to manage floodwaters. There simply isn't enough space to plant trees at this density and, even if there were, it would take years for these trees to reach maturity.

Ecological & Community Value of the Property

The property on 205 North Wooddale Rd. represents the last open green space in our neighborhood. It is more than just a piece of land—it is a thriving native meadow bordered by mature oak, hickory, and cedar trees. This unique habitat supports diverse wildlife, including:

- Monarch and swallowtail butterflies, lunar moths, and a variety of songbirds.
- Larger species such as coyotes, deer, opossums, hawks, and owls
- Even fireflies, which are pretty spectacular during the summer months.

Maintaining this natural habitat aligns with the goals outlined in the **Knox County Hillside and Ridgetop Protection Plan**, which emphasizes:

- The preservation of open spaces to enhance community character and property values.
- The importance of maintaining wildlife corridors and interconnected green spaces.

Proposed Compromise: A Conservation Corridor

I fully understand the need for development and the demand for affordable housing. However, I believe we can achieve a balance between development and conservation by creating a **conservation corridor** on the hillside portion of the property, closest to Neal's Landing.

This approach would:

1. **Preserve the Native Meadow** and surrounding mature trees, ensuring continued flood mitigation and wildlife support.
2. **Provide a Natural Buffer** between the new development and existing neighborhoods, enhancing property values for current and future residents.
3. **Align with County Plans**, such as the **Conservation Subdivision Ordinance**, which encourages resource conservation and interconnected open spaces.

I have included some materials for your review that demonstrate our proximity to floodplains, pictures of the meadow on 205 N. Wooddale and an aerial map that illustrates a suggested conservation corridor. This corridor preserves the hillside meadow and surrounding trees, while allowing development on the relatively flat portion of the property closer to North Wooddale Rd., which is more suitable for development.

Conclusion

In closing, I ask the Planning Commission to consider this compromise as a means to balance responsible development with environmental stewardship. By preserving the most ecologically valuable portion of the property, we can protect our community from flood risks, maintain vital wildlife habitats, and enhance the character and value of our neighborhood.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this proposal. I appreciate your commitment to making Knoxville a resilient and sustainable community.

May you have a wonderful holiday season.