

Knoxville • Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission
Annual Report • FY 2001-02

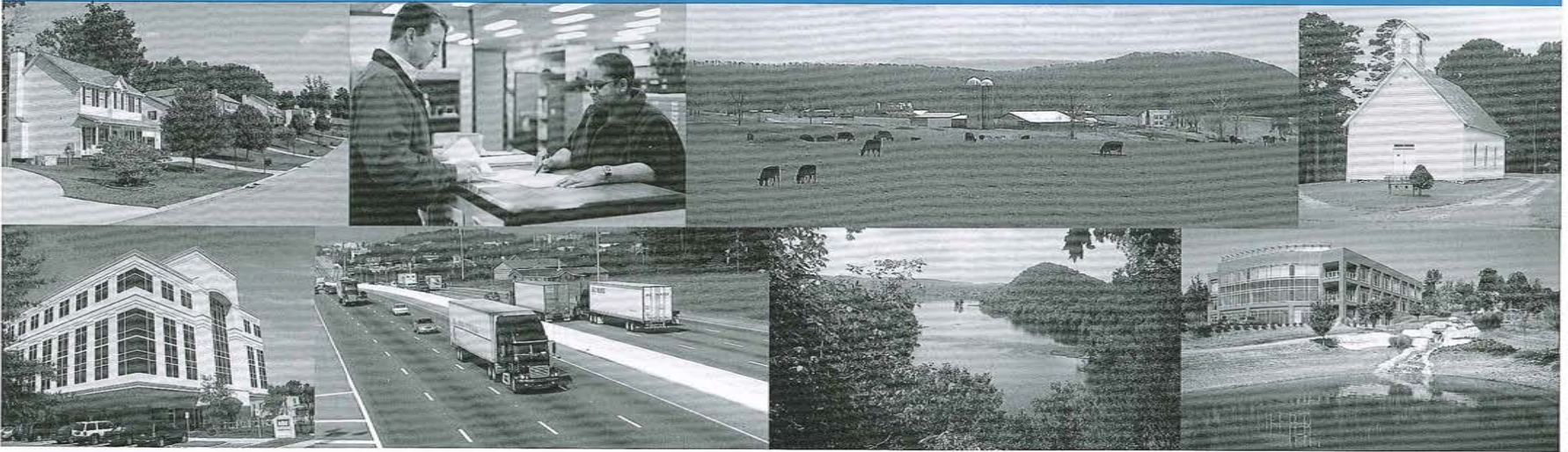


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THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING CHOICES

The Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission's duties include advising the city and county governments on growth and development issues. We also make suggestions to developers on how to develop their properties, and to neighborhood groups on how to protect the stability, safety and value of their neighborhoods.

Most often, the best way for MPC to do this is to provide a range of alternatives rather than a single, prescribed solution. I recently heard an urban design consultant who works with controversial development issues across the country state, "When you hang just one alternative on the wall, it immediately becomes a target."

On the other hand, describing a range of choices focuses the discussion on a comparison of the pros and cons of each alternative; often the selected alternative is a hybrid of the options presented. Many of the projects MPC has worked with in the past few years involved presenting alternatives. Some examples include:

- Our new urbanist zoning districts—Town Center, Traditional Neighborhood Development, and Neighborhood Conservation—that give developers and neighborhoods incentive-laden alternatives to suburban sprawl.
- *The South City Sector Plan*, which includes a proposal to redevelop the Chapman Highway corridor to provide more mixed use development, a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape and more neighborhood-serving businesses. The plan also includes alternatives to the state's plan to build a freeway through South Knoxville. The alternatives are a boulevard, an urban parkway, and a "no build" choice.
- The new *Wireless Communication Facilities Plan*, which encourages cell phone companies to choose from an extensive menu of alternatives to giant cell phone towers. Some options include locating antennas on existing towers or tall buildings (including telecom facilities as part of the design of new commercial developments), and disguising towers as commonplace landscape features such as flagpoles, trees, or church steeples.

New projects underway include *Smart Trips*, designed to give commuters alternatives to the single-occupant automobile; a *Knoxville Regional Bicycle Plan 2002*, also providing an alternative to the automobile; the Chapman Highway corridor study, which will present alternatives to the current highway commercial strip concept; and our series of community opportunities plans, which help communities identify, select and implement various urban design, transportation, and land use alternatives.

Planning is about vision, problem solving and choices. This year's *Annual Report* sums up the past fiscal year's accomplishments and sets the stage for more ambitious planning in the upcoming year. We will continue to work to expand the range of choices for all citizens of Knoxville and Knox County.

Norman Whitaker, AICP
MPC Executive Director

2001-2002 PLANNING COMMISSIONERS



Philip French
1998-2006, Chairman



Susan Brown
1999-2003, Vice Chair



Rusty Baksa
1995-2003



Trey Benefield
2002-2006



Michael Brown
1999-2002



Herbert Donaldson Sr.
1998-2004



Michael Edwards
1999-2002



Mamosa Foster
2000-2004



Richard Graf
2001-2005



Stephen Lewis
2000-2004



Jennifer Martella
2001-2005



Mary Parker Slack
2001-2005



R. Larry Smith
1997-2005



Patsy Vittetoe
1999-2003



David Wolf
2000-2004

NEWLY
APPOINTED
COMMISSIONERS:



C. Randy Massey
2002-2006



Jean Teague
2002-2003

The Planning Commission is an advisory board made up of 15 citizens—seven appointed by the mayor and eight appointed by the county executive. These volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds and represent a broad spectrum of community interests and concerns. They serve staggered four-year terms and can be reappointed. The Commission meets on the second Thursday of the month.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Each year MPC tracks construction and development activity in Knoxville and Knox County. Highlights are published in the **Development Activity Report**. Major new commercial projects include Cornerstone and Onyx Pointe office buildings, Saturn and West Side Honda automobile dealerships, and several shopping centers that have either been expanded (Crown Point Plaza), renovated (Knoxville Center), or recently opened (Lowe's at Isaiah's Landing). Extensive expansion/renovation work was completed at the McGhee Tyson Airport and an athletic field in Caswell Park near downtown, but by far the most significant event was the opening of the \$38 million Knoxville Convention Center.

Building Permits — The total number of approved construction permits fell 7.2 percent from the previous year. Residential development, which accounted for 90 percent of approved permits, declined 11.5 percent. Commercial permits, however, were up sharply. While overall unit counts were down, the dollar value of new construction was higher in 2001, setting a decade record of \$557.6 million invested. Combined with renovation permits, investment in building activity reached \$659 million during the year, bringing the 10-year total to \$5 billion.

Rezoning — During 2001, 161 rezonings covering 1,871 acres of land were approved. Private requests represented almost 90 percent of the total, with City of Knoxville annexations comprising the remainder.

Overall, commercial rezonings outnumbered residential requests by 2:1, but residential rezonings affected more acreage.

Subdivisions — The total number of subdivision approvals was up 8 percent in 2001. The inventory of new lots created rose 19 percent, but was below the decade average. Residential lots comprised 93 percent of the total inventory. Non-residential lots, while fewer in number, were larger in size, averaging 4.8 acres compared to the residential average of 0.8 acres per lot.

Agricultural Land Conversion — Over 900 acres of agriculturally-zoned property were converted to residential and commercial zones this year, marking a 21 percent drop from last year. Residential rezoning accounted for 534 acres of conversion, while commercial rezoning claimed 435 acres.

ORDINANCE CHANGES

County:

- Revised setbacks and height requirements for telecommunications towers
- Established requirements and minimum standards for site triangles at all intersections
- Permitted incidental retail sales of agricultural products in an agricultural zone as use on review

City:

- Clarified R-2 uses permitted as use on review in the O-1 zone

- Revised setbacks and height requirements for telecommunications towers
- Established requirements for a master signage plan, multiple tenant developments, and directory signs

Other Zoning Activity:

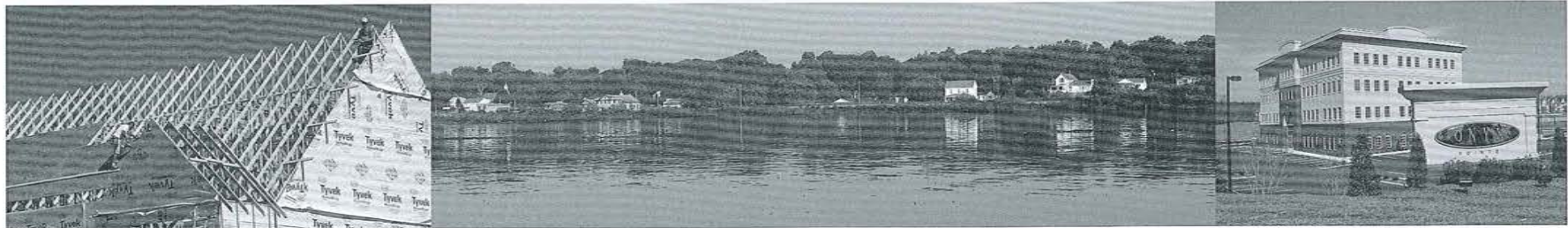
- General rezoning along Callahan Drive as a follow-up to an earlier study
- General rezoning in a portion of South Knoxville
- Fox Road corridor land use study
- Walker Springs-Mars Hill corridor land use study
- Village of Concord Historic District

VILLAGE OF CONCORD HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Village of Concord is the first large area in Knox County to apply for and be protected by a historic zoning overlay. The town was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987, and residents have documented houses and buildings ranging from 1830-1946. After the nearby development of two modern subdivisions, villagers banded together to request help from MPC in designing guidelines so that future development respects the historical architecture and setting of the village.

MARKET REPORTS

In addition to an annual Development Activity Report, MPC researched and published market reports on industrial/warehouse space and office space. The **2001 Industrial Space Inventory** and the **2001 Office Market Analysis** are useful references that compare national and local trends, and include building-by-building property listings.



LONG-RANGE PLANNING

MPC staff held dozens of public meetings and community workshops during the past year in order to update plans for three sectors: East City, South City, and South County. Common to all three plans are recommendations for improving roads, a call for more sidewalks, open space and greenways, and suggestions for locating commercial and industrial development. Each of the 12 sector plans in the city and county are updated on a five-year rotating basis, and serve as a guide for future zoning decisions.

An updated draft of the **General Plan**, a 30-year policy framework for physical development in Knoxville and Knox County, was presented to the public last spring. Work continues on fine-tuning the

implementation section. The plan is summarized in the form of a 10-point agenda for quality growth:

1. Develop a strong economy.
2. Provide transportation choices for all citizens.
3. Build on Knoxville's role as a regional capitol.
4. Understand the building blocks: neighborhoods, districts, corridors, & communities in the region.
5. Make strategic community investments.
6. Respect and nurture our heritage areas.
7. Reclaim our rights to clean air and water.
8. Encourage growth in the existing urban area.
9. Build sustainable new neighborhoods.
10. Development decisions should be predictable, fair, and cost effective.

After numerous meetings with neighborhood activists

and representatives of the cell tower industry, MPC produced a **Wireless Communication Facilities Plan** which was unanimously adopted by the Planning Commission. The plan lists and defines three situations when considering the placement of new cell towers:

- Opportunity Areas where placement of wireless communications facilities is encouraged (along expressways, industrial parks, office/commercial corridors, forests and pastureland, and some government-owned land)
- Sensitive Areas where care in site selection, facility design, and screening is needed (multifamily dwellings, within 500 feet of a residence, and non-residential properties in a residential area)

EAST CITY SECTOR PLAN

- Protect environmentally sensitive areas near the French Broad, Holston, and Tennessee rivers, and conserve historic sites and vistas.
- Create guidelines for infill development in established neighborhoods.
- Improve roads near the Knoxville Center Mall and add sidewalks to make the area more walkable.
- Consider mixed use development, perhaps using new zoning alternatives such as traditional neighborhoods or town center zoning, for the Knoxville Center district and the Magnolia Avenue corridor/Burlington business district.
- Protect slopes, conserve land, and dedicate public open space with pedestrian connections to surrounding areas in tandem with any future development along Marble Hill.

SOUTH CITY SECTOR PLAN

- Create a waterfront plaza near Blount Avenue and a park near Old Sevier, along with waterfront townhouses and condominiums. Include a waterfront greenway and a boardwalk outside the retaining wall of Baptist Hospital.
- Improve Chapman Highway with more sidewalks, landscaping, and additional turn lanes.
- Designate Maryville Pike corridor as an industrial district. Relocate housing in this area and consolidate the smaller lots into larger properties for development.
- Improve Fort Dickerson Park by creating new entrances, adding picnic and restroom facilities, and new trails.
- Develop a community center at Chapman Highway and Moody Avenue.

SOUTH COUNTY SECTOR PLAN

- Encourage redevelopment and/or renovation of vacant commercial property along Chapman Highway.
- Establish rural heritage areas to protect natural and historic resources at New Hopewell and Seven Islands-Kimberlin Heights communities.
- Extend the scenic corridor designation of Gov. John Sevier Highway to its entire length.
- Designate the French Broad River as a scenic blueway from the Sevier County line to Island Home Pike.
- Consider adding public walking trails and a community education program in gardening at the University of Tennessee Experimental Farm.



- Avoidance Areas where new towers should not be built, but where co-location of antennas on existing towers is encouraged

The plan also offers various incentives and recommendations for companies using these siting preferences, and establishes a committee to review new wireless technology that may lead to changes in policies and regulations.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

During the last fiscal year, the Knoxville Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization changed its name to the **Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization** or **TPO**. The organization continues in its role as a transportation planning board for Knox and parts of Blount counties.

TPO completed a reaffirmation of the **2002-2025 Long Range Transportation Plan** which serves as a 20-year priority list for roads, bikeways, sidewalks, and transit in the urban area. The plan lists 155 projects estimated to cost \$2.6 billion.

TPO planners helped the National Park Service and consultants conduct a series of public meetings on ideas to lessen congestion in the **Cades Cove** area of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. A draft proposal will be presented to the public in mid-winter.

A **goods movement study** for the urban area was completed. Staff focused on truck, air, rail, water, and pipeline—all of which must work well together to make the delivery of items efficient.

GOODS MOVEMENT

- In 1998, truck trips accounted for approximately 20-30% of average annual daily traffic on I-40 and I-75.
- In 2000, 1.7 million passengers and 97 million pounds of freight and mail flew through McGhee Tyson Airport.
- Three rail lines service Knox and Blount counties, with 80% of all commodities carried by Norfolk Southern.
- In 2001, commodity traffic on the upper Tennessee River (including Chickamauga, Ft. Loudon, and Watts Bar dams) was close to 4.1 million tons.
- Two petroleum pipelines serve Knox and Blount counties: Colonial and Plantation. This is where fueling stations get gasoline to sell to the public.

A technical report on **travel time** used field data collected during peak and off-peak hours along major roadways in Knox and Blount counties. The project will serve as background research for a larger study on congestion management. In a separate study, traffic count data for these two counties was compiled into a single database available at www.knoxtrans.org. The heaviest traffic in the region last year was on I-40/75 with 154,160 vehicles per day traveling between Papermill Road and I-640.

A **regional bicycle plan** was adopted in October after a series of public meetings. TPO is now developing a five-year implementation plan in coordination with other agencies such as engineering and public works departments and the police and sheriff's departments. TPO also helped organize the second annual Neighborhood Bike Ride, which drew more than 160 people.

Two TPO staff members participated in a design session on ideas for pedestrian improvements in the Bearden area. The session focused on the Sutherland Avenue corridor and featured a facilitator from the nonprofit organization Walkable Communities, Inc. Improving walkability was one of the goals identified last year in the Bearden Village Opportunities Plan.

MPC LIBRARY

Business people, journalists, students, and other citizens walk through the doors of the MPC Library on a daily basis to access planning information. The library houses thousands of reports, journals and books, including publications researched and produced by MPC staff. Some recent inhouse topics include:

- **Development Activity Report**
- **Office Market Analysis**
- **Industrial Space Inventory**
- **One Year Plan for the City of Knoxville**
- **Knoxville Area Facts and Figures**



- **Directory of Neighborhood Organizations**
- **Travel Time Study**
- **Goods Movement: An Overview for the Knoxville Regional TPO**
- **Long Range Transportation Plan Reaffirmation**
- **Tennessee Technology Corridor Development Authority Annual Report**
- **Numerous census reports**

ADDRESSING

In FY 2001-02, addressing staff handled 16,800 addresses for new construction and newly assigned housing units as well as 37,972 modified addresses. There were 519 road segments created, and 1,589 road segments modified. Staff also closed the boundaries on 2,311 subdivisions — part of the mapping process for creating interior lot lines.

GIS

Geographic Information Services continues to provide mapping and analysis in support of numerous MPC activities and planning efforts. In addition to contributing to many of the projects already mentioned in this document, GIS staff assisted the Election Commission on redistricting for state and local political districts and worked with KGIS (a local GIS consortium) to incorporate redistricting and census data into their website. Staff also created a three-dimensional model of downtown for the grassroots movement Nine Counties One Vision, and improved the efficiency of MPC's Development

Services Division by developing an automated method of notifying local property owners about agenda items.

CENSUS DATA

In its role as a state data center affiliate of the U.S. Census Bureau, MPC analyzed data from the 2000 Census and published demographic reports for use by both internal staff and the public. MPC also co-sponsored a workshop on interpreting the new census data along with the Greater Knoxville Research Network, and produced a CD-ROM that offers data in spreadsheet format and allows the user to make custom queries. Some recent publications include:

- **Knox County Demographic Trends**
- **Comparing the Demographic Profiles of Local Census Tracts**
- **Knox County Population Projections**
- **Knoxville, Farragut, and Knox County: Social & Economic Comparisons**

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Staff continue to provide technical support and/or serve on committees for the Empowerment Zone, Hope VI, and the new northwest city park. MPC also assists many boards and commissions, including:

- **Knoxville Board of Zoning Appeals**
- **Knox County Parks & Recreation Commission**
- **Knoxville Water Quality Forum**
- **Knoxville and Knox County Historic Zoning Commissions**

- **Knoxville Tree Board**
- **Knoxville Greenways Commission**
- **Beaver Creek Task Force**
- **Nine Counties One Vision task forces on downtown, transportation, and rural heritage**
- **Market Square Redevelopment Review Board**

MPC's website (www.knoxmpc.org) continues to grow. New additions include:

- **Maps and local trends from the 2000 Census**
- **MPC Quarterly Newsletter**
- **MPC Customer Satisfaction Survey**
- **2002 Excellence Award winners**
- **Sector plan updates for East City, South City, and South County**
- **Wireless Communication Facilities Plan**
- **MPC Addressing Department site**

MPC CUSTOMER SURVEY

Last winter MPC mailed 850 surveys to a variety of local citizens and professional business people, including a random assortment of rezoning applicants. Overall, MPC earned high marks from the 20 percent who responded, with about 75 percent of those rating the office's performance as good or excellent. A clear majority (about 70 percent) felt that MPC professional staff make recommendations that are fair and in accordance with applicable regulations, and nearly the same percentage regarded the Planning Commission's recommendations as fair and balanced.



United States
**Census
2000**



EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Some 150 people attended MPC's 21st annual Excellence Awards, a program recognizing developers, designers, and neighborhood activists who have made our community a better place in which to live. The winners in seven categories were:

RESIDENTIAL:



Mechanicsville Commons, a mix of housing styles and sizes with traditional design features being built by Knoxville's Community Development Corporation at University and Western avenues;



and **Timberlake Subdivision** in Halls, being developed by Southland Development Group, Inc. led by Tom and Rocky Smith and Jim Hill.

OFFICE:



Dowell Spring Business Park, a 120-acre parcel along Middlebrook Pike which includes the Cornerstone Office Building owned by White Realty



and the Lewis Sansom Scout Center, the new headquarters of the Smoky Mountain Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

COMMERCIAL:



Mercedes Place, a shopping center in Bearden developed by Furrow-Holrob.

SPECIAL USE:



All Saints Catholic Church and Knoxville Catholic High School on North Cedar Bluff Road developed by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Knoxville.

RENOVATION:



Meridian Trust Building on Northshore Drive



and **Jupiter Entertainment Building** on Erin Drive. The Meridian is owned by T.J. Development and Jupiter Entertainment is owned by Callisto Investments.

RESTORATION:



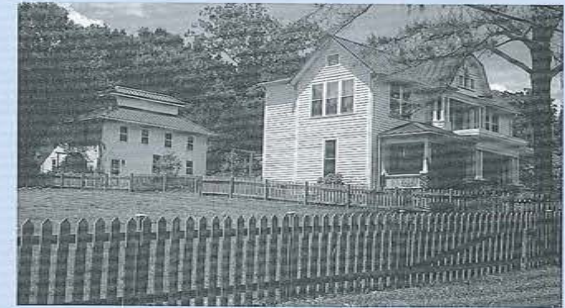
Knollwood, a historic house off Kingston Pike on Major Reynolds Place. Knollwood is owned by Schaad Properties and is used as office space.

NEIGHBORHOOD/CIVIC ACHIEVEMENT:

Seven Islands Wildlife Refuge, a 208-acre preserve along the French Broad River donated to Knox County for public use;



Village of Concord Historic District, where residents achieved a historic zoning designation;



and **Community Place Subdivision**, affordable housing on a small tract off Boyd's Bridge Pike.

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF

The Planning Commission is supported by a dedicated staff who work in one of four divisions: Administrative Services, Comprehensive Planning, Development Services, and Information Services. While each group has unique abilities and responsibilities, staff quite often work across division lines as a team to accomplish tasks.

The **Executive Director** manages the agency and is responsible for developing and administering a work program and budget. A five-person management team reports to the executive director.

Administrative Services manages the day-to-day operations of the agency, including personnel matters and paychecks. This division also helps run some 200 meetings a year of the Planning Commission, its executive committee, the Board of Zoning Appeals, and special committees and task forces.

Every workday dozens of citizens walk up to MPC's **Development Services** counter to obtain application forms or file permits, or to receive guidance on specific projects. This division processes and reviews requests for rezoning, subdivisions, and development plans, and prepares a recommendation on each case for consideration by the Planning Commission.

Information Services includes the addressing staff, the geographic information services staff, a graphic design team, a public relations specialist, and a senior researcher. This division manages MPC's library, website, computer network, and various community outreach activities, including publications and market studies.

Comprehensive Planning focuses on transportation issues and long-range planning. Updating city and county sector plans and the general plan fall under this division's responsibilities, as well as special projects such as park inventories, downtown plans, corridor studies, and guidelines for neighborhood overlays.

Allen Alderman
Planning Technician

Gretchen Beal
Director of Information Services

Ann Bennett
Senior Planner

Tom Brechko, AICP
Senior Planner

Michael Brusseau
Planner II

Doug Burton, AICP
Principal Planner

Mike Carberry, AICP
Principal Planner

Sherry Clowers
Receptionist

Michael Conger
Senior Transportation Engineer

Bonnie Curtiss
Planner I

Raymond Dailey
Planning Technician

Renee Davis
Planner II

Jill Draper
Communications Specialist

Terry Gilhula, Ph.D.
Senior Research Associate

Jack Hawkins
Planning Technician

Donna Hill
GIS Operator

Ewing (Buz) Johnson, AICP
Director of Development Services

Johnetta Johnson
GIS Operator

Dan Kelly
Principal Planner

Danny Kirby
GIS Specialist

Tim Kuhn
GIS Administrator

Betty Jo Lamb
Administrative Assistant

Shirley Mase
GIS Specialist

Debbie Mitchell
Office Assistant I

Madeline Newport
Office Assistant I

Karen Perdue
GIS Specialist

Patricia Ann Phillips
GIS Operator

Sarah Powell
Graphic Designer

Ken Pruitt, AICP
Principal Planner

Dee Anne Reynolds
Finance Manager

John Roberts
GIS Operator

Kelley Segars
Transportation Planner II

Susan Taylor
Administrative Assistant

Jo Ella Washburn
Graphic Designer

Jeff Welch, AICP
Deputy Director/Director of Comprehensive Planning

Charlotte West
Administrative Assistant

Violet (Vi) Whitmire
Administrative Services Manager

Norman Whitaker, AICP
Executive Director

Tennessee Technology Corridor
Development Authority Staff
Micah Wood
Amber Stults

MPC strives to be a learning institution, and employees take on the role of both students and teachers—including several staff members who presented guest lectures at the University of Tennessee. Staff also attended various professional conferences:

- American Planning Association national and regional conferences
- Tennessee Geographic Information Council
- Southern Transportation Air Quality Summit
- Neighborhoods USA Annual Conference
- Pro-bike/Pro-walk Conference
- Tennessee Urban Forestry Conference
- Lincoln Institute of Land Policy: Land Use Mediation Seminar
- Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations Annual Meeting
- Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting
- National Title VI Conference

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2002 - Unaudited

	Budgeted	Actual
Fees and Charges	\$360,000	\$351,003
Federal Government	983,613	844,231
State of Tennessee	7,110	10,514
RTAS Project Grant	305,348	113,550
City of Knoxville	729,100	730,100
Knox County	709,660	709,660
In-Kind Contributions ¹	185,000	105,243
Withdrawal from Fund Balance	107,070	21,770
Total Funding Sources	\$3,386,901	\$2,886,071
Salaries and Employee Benefits	\$1,980,593	\$1,927,162
Contracted Services ²	1,091,710	739,114
Supplies and Materials	78,288	67,673
Other Charges	201,110	120,508
Capital Outlay	35,200	31,614
Total Expenditures	\$3,386,901	\$2,886,071

NOTES:

1 The variance in budget and actual in "In-Kind Contributions" is attributable to a reduction in office space cost.

2 Some consultant work contracted for this fiscal year was shifted to the next fiscal year, accounting for most of the variance between budget and actual.

The Knoxville • Knox County
Metropolitan Planning Commission
promotes quality growth through
comprehensive planning and land-use controls.

We will also provide competent, objective
advice to elected and appointed officials,
involve the public in the planning process,
and serve as an information source
for citizens and the business community.

KNOXVILLE • KNOX COUNTY

M P C

METROPOLITAN
P L A N N I N G
C O M M I S S I O N

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