

2023-2024



KNOXVILLE-KNOX COUNTY PLANNING

ANNUAL REPORT



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Amy Brooks, AICP • Executive Director | 865-215-4001 • amy.brooks@knoxplanning.org

No matter where you turn, growth and change are on people's minds – everywhere from media headlines to conversations between neighbors and friends. If you look through the next few pages of this report, these topics will present themselves in information about the cases heard by the Planning Commission, development highlights from the previous year, and highlights of the work our agency has led. The presence of these issues in our everyday lives, and our staff's everyday work, is the reason we have been undertaking so much long-range planning work over the past few years and are embarking on more in the year ahead.

Our staff worked alongside Knox County during the creation of the unincorporated county's first ever integrated Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan and we are pleased to report that it was successfully adopted this spring. This multi-year process helped set the stage for the county to address continued growth and development in an intentional way. We are now eager to begin work on the next phase in the process, the creation of a Unified Development Ordinance, which will be guided by the goals and vision of the Comprehensive Plan.

We are equally excited about long-range planning work we have embarked on in partnership with the City of Knoxville and the surrounding region. In partnership with Knoxville Area Transit, we have begun work to identify areas where transit service and future development can align along corridors in the city. We are also continuing work with the city that started this past year on Breathe, a project involving outreach to the Knoxville Metro Area to identify factors that will help advance our region's goals related to the environment and greenhouse gas reductions. Another regional endeavor is the process being undertaken by the TPO to update our region's long-range transportation plan, Mobility Plan 2050.

Our agency is committed to collaborating with local partners to engage in forward thinking planning processes to inform ongoing dialogue and decisions about important issues and opportunities. We recognize the importance of working with the communities we serve to create shared visions for the future to guide our work. Please read on to learn more about what we have accomplished on this front over the past year.



PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

The planning commission is an advisory board made up of 15 citizens—seven appointed by the City Mayor and eight by the County Mayor.

These volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds, representing diverse community interests and concerns. They serve staggered four-year terms and may be re-appointed. The Commission meets the second Thursday of every month.

Executive Committee: On an annual basis, the Planning Commission Chair appoints an Executive Committee consisting of the Chair, Vice-Chair, and three other members of the Commission. Terms are one year in length.

The Executive Committee reviews and recommends the annual budget and work program, consults and advises on matters brought by the Executive Director, and resolves staff issues as needed.

Executive Committee

Membership: Karyn Adams, Tim Hill (Chair), John Huber, Chris Ooten (Vice-Chair), Nathaniel Shelso



KARYN ADAMS
City | 2020-2028

NANCY BARGER
County | 2022-2026

MILES BIGGS
City | 2023-2027

TAMARA BOYER
County | 2018-2026

LOUIS BROWNING
County | 2018-2028

LOGAN HIGGINS
City | 2021-2025

TIM HILL (CHAIR)
City | 2019-2027

JOHN HUBER
County | 2022-2026

RICHARD LEVENSON
County | 2022-2026

AMY MIDIS
City | 2021-2027

CHRIS OOTEN (VICE-CHAIR)
County | 2016-2024

MARITÉ PÉREZ
City | 2021-2025

KATIE OVERTON
County | 2023-2027

NATHANIEL SHELSON
City | 2021-2024

EDDIE SMITH
County | 2020-2024

Planning thanks outgoing Commissioner Jeff Roth (2011-2023) and Patrick Phillips (2016-2023) for their service to the community.

The Planning Commission heard
524 total cases

- 166** Rezoning
- 97** Subdivisions (preliminary and final plats)
- 78** Plan amendments
- 65** Development plans
- 44** Special uses
- 29** Other business
- 25** Use on reviews
- 14** Ordinance amendments
- 4** Street name changes
- 1** Planned developments
- 1** Hillside protection

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

\$1.18
BILLION

Value of residential
construction

5,197

Residential units
permitted

1,124

Residential subdivision
lots created

\$338
MILLION

Value of non-residential
construction

127

Non-residential units
permitted

32

Non-residential
lots created



KNOX COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS

Population	500,669
Population growth over past 10 years	12.6%
Area	526 sq. miles
Housing units	219,932
Median home selling price	\$351,200
Median household income	\$69,999
Population with bachelor's degree or higher	39.2%
Labor force	256,566
Unemployment rate	2.6%
Cost of living index (100 U.S. average)	86.7
Public parks	6,414 acres
Greenways and walking trails	218 miles

OUR MISSION

Promote healthy, vibrant communities through comprehensive planning and land use management; involve residents in an open planning process; provide objective advice to public officials; and serve as an information resource for all.

OUR CORE DUTIES

Prepare and Adopt

a general plan

Review

subdivision regulations and site plans

Prepare and Recommend

zoning ordinances and maps

Review

proposed zoning amendments

Prepare and Advise

on a capital improvements plan

Perform

special purpose studies



PLANNING SERVICES

Planning Services staff guide residents, developers, and others through local review processes. Planners evaluate requests for rezonings, subdivisions, and development plans, and they prepare a recommendation for each case that will be considered by the Planning Commission.

The group updates long-range land use plans and conducts special studies, like park inventories, small area plans, and guidelines for neighborhood overlays. Staff also maintain the county's property addressing system. Planning Services works closely with several city and county departments, as well as our own Transportation Planning division, promoting the interconnectivity of land use and transportation infrastructure.

ADDRESSING AND PLATS

Addressing

Planning's Addressing Department makes sure that each residence and place of business in Knox County is systematically assigned a valid, unique address, complete with a structure number and road name, essential for the community's safety and for proper service delivery.

Subdivision Plat Review

Planning is responsible for regulating the subdivision of all land in Knox County other than the Town of Farragut. Final plats are reviewed and certified by staff. Plats requiring a variance from the subdivision regulations, or those that create 26 or more lots, require approval by the Planning Commission prior to certification.



MICHELLE PORTIER, AICP
Planning Services Manager

KELSEY BOUSQUET
Planner

DORI CARON
Senior Administrative Assistant

LINDSAY CROCKETT, AICP
Principal Planner

DALLAS DEARMOND
Administrative Assistant II

SHELLEY GRAY
Planning Services Technician

NAOMI HANSEN
Planner

SAMIUL HAQUE
Planner

JESSIE HILLMAN, AICP
Principal Planner

DAVID HOBBS
Planning & Addressing Specialist

OSCAR INIGUEZ
Planning Services Technician

ANDREA KUPFER, AICP
Planning Services Supervisor

MADISON LOUIS
Planning & Addressing Specialist

TINA PIATT, APHR
Business Officer

FRANKIE RAMOS
Planning & Subdivision Specialist

MIKE REYNOLDS, AICP
Principal Planner

SPENCER SCHMUDDE
Planning & Subdivision Specialist

WHITNEY WARNER, AICP
Planner

Missing Middle

Planning and city staff collaborated to craft Middle Housing standards that were adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council earlier this year. Middle Housing types are now permitted in certain residential zoning districts within the Traditional Neighborhood Residential area, and Planning staff is reviewing these applications. These changes were informed by the Middle Housing Scan that was released in the fall of 2022.

Advance Knox

Work on the Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan, an outcome of the Advance Knox process, concluded this year. In early 2024, the Comprehensive Plan and the Future Land Use Map were both adopted and are now in effect. Additionally, an amendment was made to the Growth Policy Plan. The Advance Knox planning process will continue as Knox County and Planning partner on the creation of a new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), which is expected to begin later this year.



TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

The Transportation Planning group supports the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization, or TPO. This federally-required entity coordinates road improvements, bicycle and pedestrian plans, freight movement, and transit.

Staff members collaborate with the Planning Services division on corridor studies, long-range plans, and other land use planning activities, in addition to working closely with the engineering departments and transportation service providers of Knoxville, Knox County, and several surrounding communities.

SMART TRIPS

To ease traffic congestion and improve our region's air quality and quality of life, Smart Trips promotes alternatives to driving alone.

515

registered participants

45,581

fewer automobile trips as participants made alternative choices

40,986
gallons

of gas saved by participants

1,481,601
calories

burned by biking, walking, or other active transportation



DOUG BURTON
TPO Coordinator

JONAH BIRD
Planner

MIKE CONGER, PE
Senior Transportation Engineer

CRAIG LUEBKE, AICP
Senior Planner

EMILY JACKSON
AmeriCorps Member

Regional Roadway Safety Action Plan

We reported on this project last year and are happy to announce that the TPO Executive Board adopted this plan last July. By completing and adopting it, the TPO and local member jurisdictions are now eligible to apply for federal funding.

Mobility Plan 2050

TPO staff began updating the long-range transportation plan known as Mobility Plan 2050. This plan will examine the current state of transportation in and around the Knoxville region and make recommendations for future investments. The first round of public engagement concluded in February of this year, and the next round is scheduled for the fall.

Federal Certification Review

The TPO successfully completed the federal certification review of the metropolitan transportation planning and programming process. Staff received commendations for their organizational structure, performance-based planning and programming, and transportation improvement program development and management.



INFORMATION SERVICES

This division comprises several support functions, including research, GIS, web development, graphic design, and communications. Staff assist agency-wide planning activities by conducting background research for plans and presentations, maintaining the print and digital library, and leading community outreach efforts.

Planning's geographic information systems (GIS) group maintains land and infrastructure data systems and produces maps. Web and design staff are responsible for content management and presentation of the many websites housed at Planning, and they prepare artwork and layouts for the agency's plans, reports, and brochures.



TERRY GILHULA, PHD
Information Services Manager

ALLY KETRON
Strategic Planning and
Communications Manager

JOSH ANDERSON
Senior Web Developer

KELLI BYARD
Graphic Designer

PRESLEY DASSOW
Communications Specialist

NICK SCHOENBORN, GISP
GIS Analyst/IT Coordinator

ELIZABETH SEMANDE
GIS Specialist

AUBREY WEILAND
Research Associate

ALEX ZENDEL
GIS Analyst II

Website Support

Staff from our Information Services division continue to lend expertise to local partners by providing content, design, and programming support for their websites. The team plays an important role in website support for the Knoxville Chamber, Industrial Development Board, Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization, and projects like Advance Knox and Breathe.

Breathe Project

The City of Knoxville and Planning are partnering on a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant for the Knoxville metro area. Information Services staff worked collaboratively to develop a brand, website, and an outreach program for this project. Our agency is now working with an outreach consultant to engage with communities within the metro area to complete a Comprehensive Climate Action Plan.

Knoxville's Housing Strategy

Planning staff collaborated with the City of Knoxville to provide research and data management in support of the creation of the city's new housing strategy. The strategy identifies challenges unique to Knoxville, accompanied by plans to utilize tools to support the development of new housing in the coming years. Information Services staff also assisted this project through the creation of a custom-built interactive dashboard and story map.



PLANNING ACTIVITY TIMELINE

- Planning Services
- Transportation Planning
- Information Services

2023

JULY

- Planning and Addressing Specialist David Hobbs joins staff
- TPO adopts Regional Roadway Safety Action Plan

AUGUST

- 2023 Facts and Figures Report is available
- City of Knoxville partners with TPO on Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program (Breathe)
- AmeriCorps member Emily Jackson joins TPO

SEPTEMBER

- Planning and TPO participate in Parking Day
- GIS Specialist Elizabeth Semande joins staff

OCTOBER

- Knox County Draft Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan is available
- TPO begins Mobility Plan 2050 update
- Jeff Welch receives AMPO's Ronald F. Kirby Lifetime Achievement Award

NOVEMBER

- Growth Policy Coordinating Committee convenes

DECEMBER

- Breathe Advisory Committee convenes

2024

JANUARY

- Planning hosts One Year Plan community meetings

FEBRUARY

- TPO hosts Mobility Plan 2050 community workshops
- Middle Housing ordinance amendment is adopted
- Staff assists City of Knoxville with housing strategy and interactive dashboard

MARCH

- Breathe Priority Climate Action Plan is submitted to EPA
- Communications Specialist Presley Dassow joins staff

APRIL

- Growth Policy Plan amendment is adopted
- Knox County Comprehensive Land Use and Transportation Plan is adopted
- One Year Plan is adopted
- TPO receives federal certification
- Planner Kelsey Bousquet joins staff

MAY

- 2024 Bike Month Guide is released
- TPO participates in Open Streets

JUNE

- 2023 Development Activity Report is available
- Planning begins work on Priority Investment Areas Map
- Planner Jonah Bird joins staff

AGENCY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Our agency tracks outreach efforts to measure visibility, participation, public interest, and feedback.

15

Public engagement events

68

Monthly meetings

23

Articles shared on
Planning and TPO websites

123

News articles published
by local media

18,702

Newsletters (opened)

1,100

Planning Facebook followers

534

TPO Facebook followers



Our agency also seeks out unique engagement opportunities to share our work with the communities we serve. Each year we participate in events like Park(ing) Day and Open Streets where we interact with the public in creative ways to help translate our work into relatable activities and games. We also look for opportunities to work with younger audiences to inform them about what planning is and how it impacts their communities.

Our staff participated in a summer program led by the Appalachian Regional Commission and Oak Ridge Associated Universities. These organizations facilitated two cohorts of middle school students from Appalachia in week-long summer camps where students learned about AI, 3D printing and city planning. Our staff presented information to them and led them through an interactive exercise to design a site based on what they had learned.

We partnered with a group of engineering students from West High School in which we presented them with a project prompt focused on transportation planning, engineering, and Complete Streets design. Our staff worked with engineering staff from the City of Knoxville to share a presentation, talk about their prompt, and lead them on walking tours of downtown.

We worked with students from the University of Tennessee School of Architecture who tested the City of Knoxville's Middle Housing proposal. Students gave presentations of their work, including models and drawings, and later shared their ideas with the public at a First Friday exhibit in Emory Place.



BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Design Review Board

The Design Review Board examines proposals for private and public development in Knoxville's center city. The group also reviews applications for infill housing in Edgewood, Lonsdale, and Oakwood/Lincoln Park neighborhoods for conformance with the Heart of Knoxville Infill Housing Guidelines. The goal of the review board is to foster attractive and harmonious development and rehabilitation of the downtown area and to ensure infill development is architecturally compatible with established neighborhoods, fosters community stability, creates pedestrian-oriented streets, and meets a wide range of housing needs.

Historic Zoning Commissions

The Historic Zoning Commissions for Knoxville and Knox County evaluate projects proposed in local Historic Overlay districts. Work of the commissions is intended to stabilize or improve property values by encouraging rehabilitation and new construction that is harmonious with the area. The commissions review applications to repair, alter, rehabilitate, relocate, or demolish properties; review proposed new construction; and identify properties for local or National Register of Historic Places designation.



Tennessee Technology Corridor Development Authority (TTCCA)

The Tennessee Technology Corridor Development Authority and its design guidelines ensure aesthetic quality and environmental conservation for developments within the Technology Overlay zones of the city and county.

TPO Executive Board and Technical Committee

The TPO Executive Board and Technical Committee work with TPO staff to make decisions on regional transportation plans and projects. The Executive Board, which sets policy and adopts plans, is made up of elected officials from the TPO planning area, representatives from the East Tennessee Development District, and the Governor of Tennessee. The Technical Committee consists of local planners and engineers who work closely with staff and make recommendations to the Executive Board.



PLANNING STAFF ACCOLADES

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Amy Brooks serves as treasurer for the TN section of the American Planning Association and serves on the boards for Nourish Knoxville and the East Tennessee Community Design Center.

Mike Conger serves as Chair of the Knox County Air Pollution Control Board.

Andrea Kupfer volunteers at the Clarence Brown Theatre.

Michelle Portier volunteers with East Tennessee Children's Hospital.

Aubrey Weiland serves on the United Way Housing Systems Advisory Council.

STAFF PROMOTIONS

Doug Burton – TPO Coordinator

Lindsay Crockett – Principal Planner/Design Review Program Manager

Jessie Hillman – Principal Planner

Ally Ketron – Strategic Planning and Communications Manager

Andrea Kupfer – Planning Services Supervisor

Tina Piatt – Business Officer

Michelle Portier – Planning Services Manager

RETIREMENTS

Jeff Welch served as TPO Director for 38 years and retired last August. Dori Caron, who served our agency as a Senior Administrative Assistant, retired this May after 12 years. Help us thank them for their hard work and commitment to our community!

YEARS OF SERVICE

10+ Years

Alex Zendel	19
Amy Brooks	17
Mike Reynolds	16
Dori Caron	12
Nick Schoenborn	10

20+ Years

Mike Conger	26
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30+ Years

Terry Gilhula	35
Doug Burton	34





Knoxville-Knox County Planning

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