

# Alcoa Highway Corridor Study

2022



## Alcoa Highway Corridor Study

Adopted:

Knoxville City Council: July 26, 2022

Knox County Commission: July 25, 2022

Knoxville-Knox County Planning Commission: June 9, 2022

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## ALCOA HIGHWAY CORRIDOR STUDY

# Executive Summary

Alcoa Highway corridor has a number of challenges – ongoing road construction, a decline in business occupancy and development, and steady population compared to growing population in other areas of Knox County. These factors, paired with the new road design and resulting changes to vehicular travel and access patterns, prompted a request for Knoxville-Knox County Planning (Planning) to undertake a study of the corridor to address these concerns comprehensively. The resulting legislative resolutions requested that Planning develop an approach for managing and envisioning development and redevelopment along the Alcoa Highway Corridor.

## STUDY AREA

The study area covers the length of Alcoa Highway from the Tennessee River in the north to the Little River at the Knox County line in the south. The study area is bounded by the Tennessee River on the west, aligns roughly with Maryville Pike on the east, and runs from just south of UT Hospital to just north of Governor John Sevier Highway (see map in Appendix 3).

## SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

This study was heavily informed by a previously held design charrette, conducted by the East Tennessee Community Design Center, in which community members engaged, and data was gathered on the challenges of the highway and desired development for the corridor. The charrette results indicated a desire to maintain and add businesses, as well as a desire to implement landscaping standards, connectivity, and public amenities.

Additional public input came from two community meetings, developer meetings, and a meeting with business owners in the corridor. Developers cited the number of households, or “rooftops,” within a certain radius of a commercial site as one of the primary determinants for attracting future development because those households provide a consistent customer base for the surrounding businesses. Developers reported that, presently, the surrounding population is too low to support the full range of commercial businesses the community desires within the study area.

## STUDY OBJECTIVE

The overall study objective is to develop an approach for managing and envisioning development and redevelopment along the Alcoa Highway Corridor. To accomplish this objective, the following goals have been identified:

1. Allow a broader array of land uses.
2. Protect vehicular safety improvements made by the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and improve pedestrian safety.
3. Provide a unique sense of place by creating consistency in the physical environment.

## STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

### GOAL 1. Allow a broader array of land use along Alcoa Highway.

- Add some of the commercial land uses suggested in Charrette activities to be permissible as a use on review in the County's CA (General Business) and CB (Business and Manufacturing) zones to align the uses allowed in the City's and County's zones.
- Add a variety of residential land uses to be permissible as a use on review in the County's CA and CB zones to bridge the gap between the single family and duplex uses and the various commercial uses that are currently allowed.
- Add Research and Development (R&D) as a special use in the City's C-G (General Commercial) zones to allow uses compatible with the UT Research Campus nearby and attract that type of development.
- Extend the MU-SD, SCO-3 (Mixed Use-Special District, Alcoa Highway Small Area Plan) land use classification to encompass the bulk of commercially viable properties along Alcoa Highway. This land use class allows commercial, office, and medium- to high-density residential uses.
- Amend the MU-SD, SCO-3 land use classification to include a list of allowed zones so that the desired commercial zones are the ones that are allowed.
- Work with existing and aspiring business owners in utilizing financial incentivizes to help existing business owners and to attract new businesses to the area.

**GOAL 2. Protect vehicular safety improvements made by TDOT and improve pedestrian safety.**

- Create standards for vehicular access along frontage roads, and connections within commercial centers, to create consistent, safe, and easy navigation between businesses.
- Add sidewalks along frontage roads and within developments to increase safety for pedestrians.
- Add greenways to connect residential areas with commercial areas and parks.
- Build missing link of Knox-Blount greenway.

**GOAL 3. Provide a unique sense of place for this section of the corridor.**

- Create standards for commercial development to include landscape screening, lighting, parking, building orientation, fenestration, signage, and other similar considerations to create a consistent feel along the corridor.
- Encourage amenities within the corridor such as walking trails, open green space, a dog park, and other such amenities to be refined further with community input.
- In cooperation with TDOT, install local signage along the corridor and frontage roads.

## Next Steps

Following the approval of the plan by the Knox County Commission and Knoxville City Council, the following are the next steps to move forward:

- Pursue minor zoning and land use amendments as identified.
- The City and County should engage in further discussion around the creation of overlay standards.
- Interested property owners should work with Knox County and the City to explore potential financial stimulus measures to assist new business owners in getting started.

## INTRODUCTION

# About the Corridor

Alcoa Highway (US 129/State Route 115) connects Kingston Pike (State Route 11) in Knox County to Hall Road (State Highway 35) in Blount County and is just under 12 miles long. It is classified as an expressway from Kingston Pike to the Knox County-Blount County line and as a major arterial in Blount County. The highway is also a state route, so the TDOT maintains the highway and makes decisions regarding access and curb cuts along the route. The corridor is characterized by its scenic beauty. The highway offers views of the river intermittently through Knox County, along with bluffs and cliffs. In Blount County, it provides views of the Smoky Mountains in the distance.

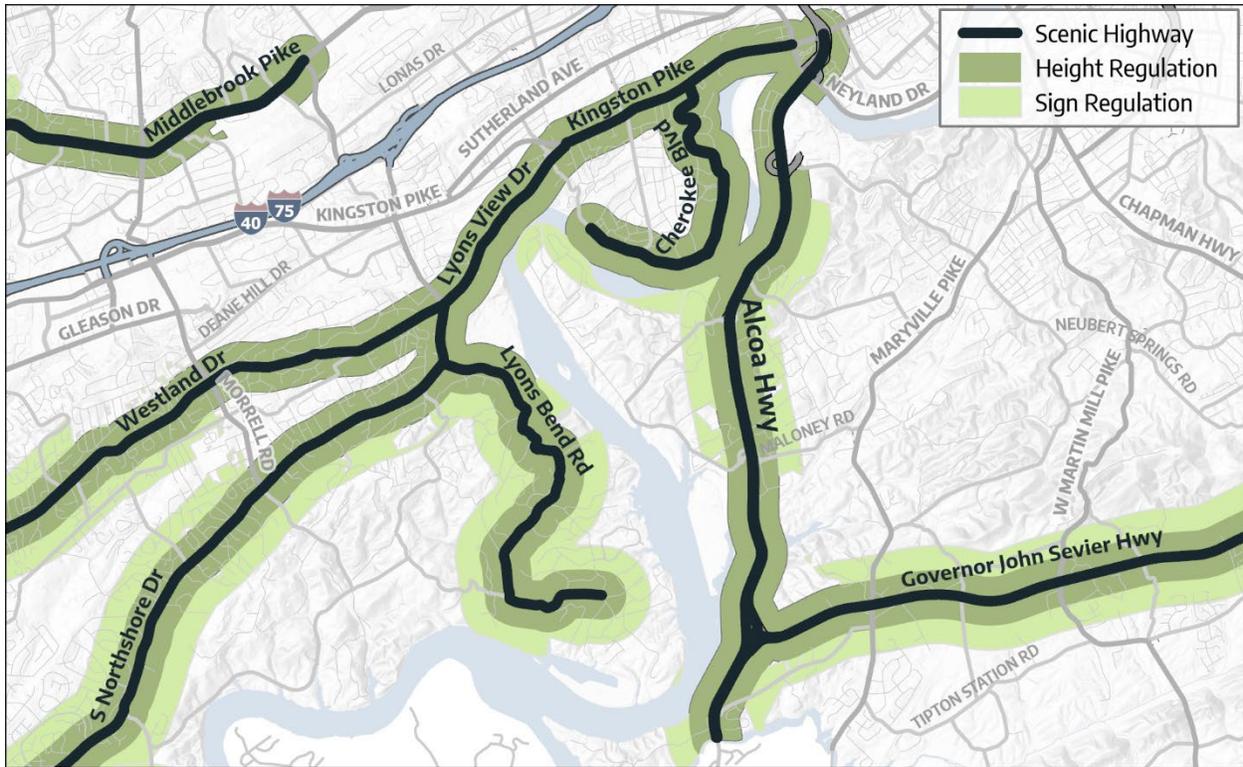


*Alcoa Highway Traveling South*

## SCENIC HIGHWAY DESIGNATION

To help protect the corridor's natural beauty, the State of Tennessee designated Alcoa Highway as a Scenic Highway in 1971 in Part 1 of the Scenic Highway System Act. This designation extends from the intersection of Alcoa Highway and Kingston Pike in Knox County to the intersection of Alcoa Highway and Singleton Station Road in Blount County. This legislation limited the size, frequency, and location of advertising structures and prohibited junkyards within 2,000 feet of scenic highways. The act also limited

building height to 35 feet above the level of the highway for structures within 1,000 feet of the highway, with the exception of UT Medical Center property at the intersection of Alcoa Highway and Cherokee Trail.



The State of Tennessee's Scenic Roadway designations in the vicinity of Alcoa Highway. To view the map, please visit the following [link](#).

## CORRIDOR BACKGROUND

### Development Pattern

Commercial development began along Alcoa Highway around the 1950s/1960s. The dominant style of strip commercial development began with the construction of the Southgate Shopping Center. Other new commercial and civic institutional structures continued to be constructed until the mid-1980s/early 1990s. However, little new development or redevelopment has come to this corridor in recent years while vacancy rates of commercial structures have risen. This trend has accelerated with the ongoing construction of Alcoa Highway, and several more businesses have closed since construction began in 2016.



*Southgate Shopping Center sits mostly vacant, Google Street View image, May 2021*

### ALCOA HIGHWAY SMALL AREA PLAN

Since the late 1970s, various proposals have been made for improvements to the corridor. The latest was the Alcoa Highway Small Area Plan, which was incorporated into the South County Sector Plan, adopted in 2012. The Alcoa Highway Small Area Plan created a mixed-use, special district for a portion of Alcoa Highway south of Mount Vernon Drive: the MU-SD, SCO-3 (Alcoa Highway Small Area) land use classification.

At the time of the sector plan adoption, a decision had not been made on whether frontage roads would be part of the highway improvement project, and two alternatives were proposed for land use options. The alternatives did not list specific zones for inclusion but instead focused on land use. Both alternatives allowed a mix of uses based on the prevalent underutilization of parcels and the redevelopment opportunities available for large commercial tracts. Construction has largely been completed in this area,

and Alternative 1, with frontage roads on either side of the highway, is the closest to what has been constructed. Alternative 1 of the SCo-3 classification calls for commercial, office, and medium- and high-density residential uses.

The plan's suggested proposals and policies were premised on the anticipated shortening in the depth of lots due to the new frontage roads, a continued trend in less spontaneous shopping behavior since access will no longer be directly off the highway, and the need to create more destination-oriented land uses. Rather than relying solely on commercial uses, a mix of uses was proposed for the larger parcels along the highway in an attempt to make multifamily uses and infill development more viable.

### ALCOA HIGHWAY SMALL AREA PLAN OBJECTIVES (from Sector Plan):

The following objectives were specified in the Alcoa Highway Small Area Plan. They are included in this study because the objectives remain relevant today.

1. Create a sense of place and identity for Alcoa Highway by promoting local businesses to protect and strengthen commercial and office areas.
2. Enhance and further promote the redevelopment of existing commercial areas, particularly for a grocery store or small market retailer.
3. Enhance connectivity and walkability of the area through sidewalks, greenways, and parks.
4. Protect the character of neighborhoods adjacent to Alcoa Highway.

### TRANSPORTATION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The concepts listed below were included in the Alcoa Highway Small Area Plan. These principles remain important to this area and coincide with the stated wants and needs of Design Charrette activity participants, which are provided in Appendix 2.

1. Create more intense buffers for the adjacent established neighborhoods.
2. Diversify development to include commercial, office, and various types of residential.
3. Reduce parking requirements to increase outparcel development potential for smaller office and commercial buildings.

4. Landscape parking and frontage areas to increase aesthetic appeal and reduce stormwater runoff.
5. Provide safe pedestrian and cyclist circulation throughout the area with walking and biking connections for the established neighborhoods and the Knox-Blount greenway.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

The following sections describe the existing conditions of the corridor and the challenges present in attracting and retaining development in this area.

## TDOT ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

Alcoa Highway serves as a major connection between the City of Knoxville and the Cities of Alcoa and Maryville, as well as a gateway into the City of Knoxville and Knox County. Commuter through-traffic is heavy along this road, but it also serves businesses and the airport, creating conflicting priorities.

Since 1985, average daily traffic has increased from 39,482 to 49,603 vehicles, an increase of 25.6%. Additionally, Alcoa Highway has experienced an above-average number of traffic crashes resulting in a fatal or serious injury compared with other highways and roads classified as major arterials in the Knoxville Region. Based on an analysis conducted by the TPO,<sup>1</sup> Alcoa Highway ranks number 8 out of the 34 major arterials in the region based on the number of fatal and serious-injury crashes between January 2016 and June 2019.

**KNOXVILLE REGION MAJOR ARTERIALS**

**Roadways that account for the most fatal and serious crashes.**

1. W. Broadway in Maryville	6. Western Avenue	11. Charles G. Seivers Blvd.
2. Chapman Highway	7. Magnolia Avenue	12. Maynardville Pike
3. Henley Street	8. <b>Alcoa Highway</b>	13. Kingston Pike
4. Broadway in Knoxville	9. Clinch Avenue in Clinton	• Order is most to least crashes per mile
5. Clinton Highway	10. Maryville Highway	

Prior to TDOT construction, Alcoa Highway was a four-lane highway with multiple curb cuts providing direct access to the adjacent commercial areas and neighborhood roads. Many of the curb cuts were located close together, and there were no deceleration lanes to aid drivers accessing the adjoining properties.

<sup>1</sup> Life Altering Crash Facts. <https://knoxtpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Life-Altering-2021.pdf>. 2021. Accessed December 2021.

Based on these safety factors, and in response to stakeholder and public interest, TDOT reassessed the corridor and reviewed the highway design. This review ultimately recommended a program of capital improvements and a redesign that is currently underway in the corridor. The design improvements extend from Cherokee Trail in the north to State Route 35 (Hall Road) in Blount County in the south.<sup>2</sup> Separated into seven separate projects, completion of all planned improvements is anticipated by 2030. The improvements are designed to increase roadway capacity and level of service, correct roadway deficiencies, reduce crashes, and improve safety in the corridor. Improvements in Knox County are broken into three independent projects.



***Alcoa Highway construction, July 2021***

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<sup>2</sup> Tennessee Department of Transportation. <https://www.tn.gov/tdot/projects/projects-region-1/sr115-us-129-alcoa-highway.html>. No date provided. Accessed December 2021.

## 1. North of Little River to south of Maloney Road:

Construction began in 2019 and is expected to be complete in 2024. Improvements to this section include widening the roadway to six lanes along the existing alignment with a concrete median barrier wall. No left turn movements will be allowed along this section of Alcoa Highway. Interchanges and frontage roads will provide safe access to other local roads, local businesses, and neighborhoods.

The intersections at Topside Road and John Sevier Highway have been redesigned to provide access to Alcoa Highway via on- and off-ramps. Two new bridges will be constructed (at Topside Road and John Sevier Highway), and two existing bridges will be widened (Knob Creek and CSX Railroad).

A greenway will be constructed to run the length of the project and will eventually provide a connection between the Knoxville and Blount County Greenways.

## 2. South of Maloney Road to Woodson Drive:

Construction began in 2016 and is nearing completion. Improvements follow the existing alignment and consist of widening the existing roadway to six lanes with a concrete median barrier. A new frontage road network serves this section, with interchanges providing access to Woodson Drive, Montlake Drive, Mount Vernon Drive, and Maloney Drive. A new interchange serves Maloney Road, and three new bridges provide connectivity to the frontage roads serving Woodson Drive, Montlake Drive, Mount Vernon Drive, and Maloney Drive. Roundabouts have been installed at East Maloney Road, West Maloney Road, and Montlake Drive.

A greenway is included along the southbound section, from Montlake Drive to south of Alcoa Way Shopping Center, providing a link in the planned connection between the Knoxville and Blount County Greenways.



*Alcoa Highway Construction, September 2020*

### 3. Woodson Drive to Cherokee Trail

Scheduled to begin construction in 2022, this project also widens Alcoa Highway to six lanes with a concrete median barrier. A new interchange will be constructed at Cherokee Trail to improve access to UT Medical Center, UT Agriculture, UT Athletics, the Cherokee Farms Business Development, Marine Park, Navy/Marines Training Center, and residential areas along Cherokee Trail. An interchange has been constructed at Woodson Drive and includes a roundabout.

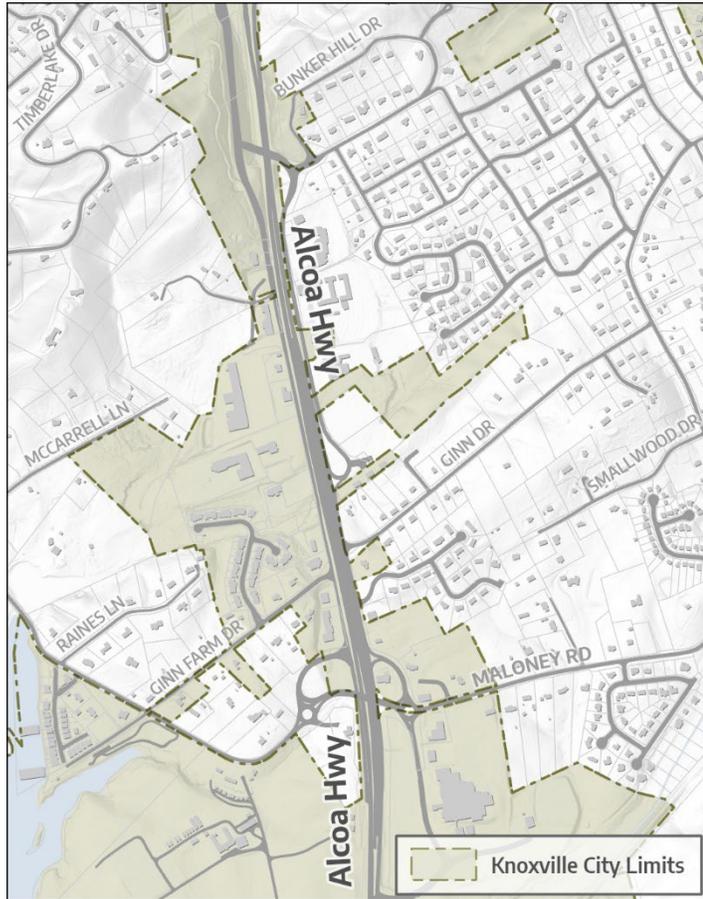
A greenway is under construction along the southbound section which will connect the existing greenway system behind the Cherokee Farms Business Development and Marine Park to the proposed greenway system being built as part of the project segments to the south.

## **LAND USE AND ZONING**

The city-county boundary is irregular in this area, resulting in both commercial and residential zones in both the City and the County along this highway. Since the different municipalities have different zoning ordinances with distinct standards, the result is a wide variation of setbacks, lot coverage, and landscaping

requirements. Currently, there is little consistency in the standards between the ordinances, and future development is likely to be discordant along the highway.

Most of the challenges for creating consistent development stem from the differences between the zoning requirements of the jurisdictions. For example, the maximum front setback is 20 feet in the City's commercial zones, but that is the minimum setback in the County's commercial zones, and most buildings in the County are set back further with parking in front. The two jurisdictions also have different landscaping requirements, with the City's ordinance requiring internal landscaping for parking lots over a certain size, interior parking lot planting for parking lots over a certain size, and requiring more plantings than the County around perimeter yards between commercial and residential uses.



**Map showing irregular boundary between the City of Knoxville and Knox County**



**An example of buildings set far back from property lines with large parking lots in front, Google Street View, May 2021**



***An example of buildings set closer to Alcoa Highway with parking in front of the building, July 2021***



***Commercial businesses along Alcoa Highway with side parking and a drive aisle in front of the building, July 2021***

There are some land uses that would be allowed in the City's zones but not the County's. Since the City-County line weaves in and out between parcels, this equates to a discordant allowance of uses within the main commercial area of the corridor. And some of the uses (e.g., types of commercial businesses) suggested in Charrette activities are not allowed widely through the study area.

## **CAPACITY FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

The amount of traffic and the lack of safety prior to construction on Alcoa Highway prevented many drivers from stopping. This resulted in less spontaneous shopping behavior than one would find on other highways, like Kingston Pike, for example. This through-pattern of driving is expected to continue and places more importance on the need for the consumer base for businesses in the corridor to be comprised of the surrounding residents.

As stated in the Executive Summary, one of the main factors cited in our meetings with developers is the number of households within 1 to 3 miles of a site, and the Alcoa Highway corridor does not have enough rooftops in the area to attract the type of commercial developments or businesses identified during the Charrette. Therefore, commercial development along the corridor will continue to be limited and commercial properties underutilized unless the number of residences in the study area increases.

## **SENSE OF PLACE**

Current development consists of large parking lots, limited pedestrian infrastructure, and a number of vacant buildings. Additionally, many of the properties lack vegetation or trees, creating a visual landscape consisting predominantly of asphalt. The area along the corridor does not currently provide a unique experience and is not currently an inviting environment. This contributes to the lack of spontaneous

shopping behavior, as there is no enticement for drivers to pull off of the highway when they can likely take care of their needs closer to home with less disruption to their schedule.



***Vacant commercial strip center, July 2021***



***Typical parking lot along Alcoa Highway devoid of trees or landscaping, July 2021***

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Stakeholders and other community members who participated in the public input process for this study noted the decline in available services as their primary concern for the corridor. Other issues raised included confusion resulting from the recent TDOT road improvements, incompatibilities in uses, lack of attractive development, the need for financial incentives, and the need for connectivity and protected pedestrian travel routes along this heavily trafficked thoroughfare with high vehicular speeds. The goals below are intended to address these issues and achieve the overall objective of the study, which is to develop an approach for managing and envisioning development and redevelopment along the Alcoa Highway Corridor.

## GOAL 1. Allow a broader array of land use along Alcoa Highway.

- Add some of the commercial land uses suggested in Charrette activities to be permissible as a use on review in the County's CA (General Business) and CB (Business and Manufacturing) zones to align the uses allowed in the City's and County's zones.
  - Examples include drive-through facilities and arts and fitness studios, which are allowed in practice under broader descriptions, but are not codified as they are in other zones.
- Add a variety of residential land uses to be permissible as a use on review in the County's CA and CB zones to bridge the gap between single family and duplex uses and various commercial uses that are currently allowed.
  - Examples include townhouses, multifamily developments (including a three-plex or four-plex), and above-ground dwellings (as found in mixed use developments).
- Add Research and Development (R&D) as a special use in the City's C-G (General Commercial) zones to allow uses compatible with the UT Research Campus nearby and attract that type of development.
- Extend the MU-SD, SCO-3 (Mixed Use-Special District, Alcoa Highway Small Area Plan) land use classification to encompass the bulk of commercially viable properties along Alcoa Highway. This land use class allows commercial, office, and medium- to high-density residential uses.

- Extend the classification on both sides of Alcoa Highway to the south to terminate just past Maloney Road. This keeps the designation on both sides of Maloney Road so that a similar experience would be created on both sides of the street as property develops.
- Amend the MU-SD, SCO-3 land use classification to include a list of allowed zones so that the desired commercial zones are the ones that are allowed.
  - County Zones recommended for inclusion: CA, CB, and CN (Neighborhood Commercial).
  - City zones recommended: C-G-1 and C-G-2 (Both General Commercial, though C-G-2 has design standards).
  - Note that some parcels are currently zoned SC (Shopping Center), which is not one of the zones recommended. This is because the intent of the SC zone does not align with the overall objective for the corridor. The Shopping Center zone is not the only zone that allows shopping centers; shopping centers, in general, would be allowed in the recommended City and County zones.
- Work with existing and aspiring business owners in utilizing financial incentivizes to help existing business owners and to attract new businesses to the area.
  - This could perhaps include façade improvement grants, Business Improvement Districts, Tax Increment Financing (TIFs), or other types of available assistance.

## GOAL 2. Protect vehicular safety improvements made by TDOT and improve pedestrian safety.

- Create standards for vehicular access along frontage roads and require connections within commercial centers to create consistent, safe, and easy navigation between businesses.
  - Limit new curb cuts to protect traffic flow on the frontage roads.
  - Require vehicular and pedestrian connections between adjacent commercial and/or office developments to create easier paths of navigation between businesses.
- Add sidewalks and/or multi-modal facilities along frontage roads (as right-of-way width allows) and within developments to increase safety for pedestrians.
- Add greenways to connect residential areas with commercial areas and parks.
- Build missing link of Knox-Blount greenway.



**Limiting curb cuts to create blocks (to cut down on multiple, individual, direct access points) limits conflict points, image of Northshore Town Center from KGIS**



**Image of Northshore Town Center showing boulevard entry and sidewalks, Google Street View, November, 2021**

**GOAL 3. Provide a unique sense of place for this section of the corridor.**

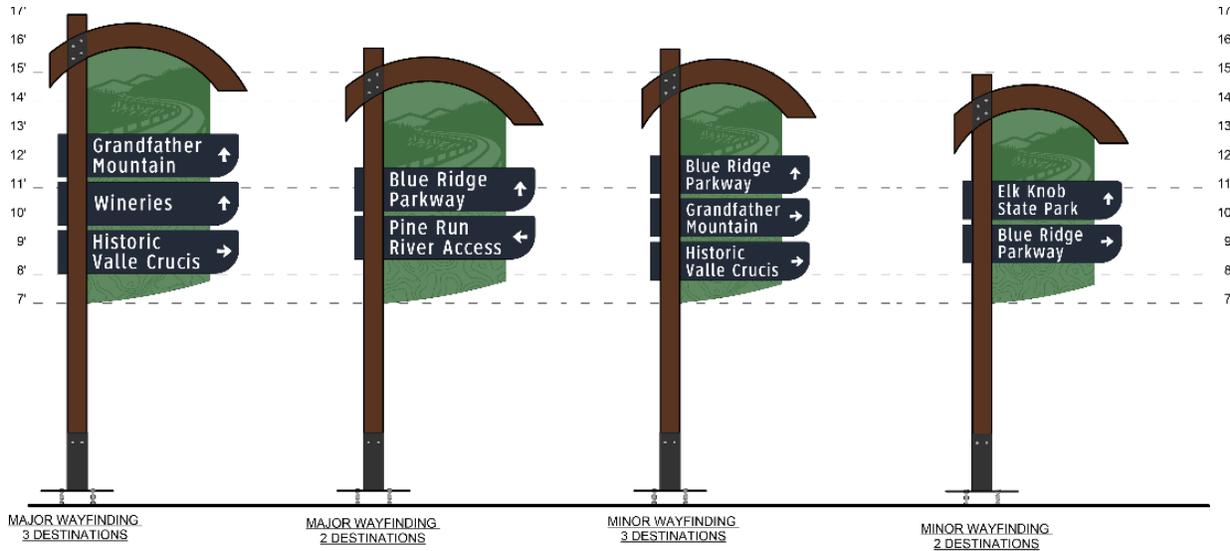
- Create standards for commercial development to include landscape screening, lighting, parking, building orientation, fenestration, signage, and other similar considerations to create a consistent feel along the corridor.
- Encourage amenities within the corridor.
- In cooperation with TDOT, install local signage along the corridor and frontage roads.



***Boulevard entries, infill development of smaller commercial uses, and tree plantings could help to provide a sense of place for the corridor, Photo of Northshore Town Center***



***Landscaping along the new frontage roads would enhance the area and provide an inviting environment – photo of a development on a side street off of Hardin Valley Road***



1 SIGNAGE SYSTEM OVERVIEW  
Scale: 3/8" = 1'-0"



Examples of outdoor wayfinding and/or multi-tenant signage showing how signage design can be conducive to an attractive environment while still promoting the businesses within.

Photo credits, top: <https://dbdplanning.com/project/watauga-county-wayfinding/>

Top left: <https://sunsetsignsoc.com/business-signs/shopping-center-signs/>

Top right: <https://www.davessigns.com/the-importance-of-signage-in-shopping-malls/>

Bottom left: <https://citycoop.us/wheatonil-signage/2015/01/29/street-pole-banners-wheaton-il/>

Bottom right: <https://magnifysigns.com/wayfinding-directional-signage-signs/>

## Next Steps

Following the approval of the plan by the Knox County Commission and Knoxville City Council, the following are the next steps to move forward:

- Pursue minor zoning and land use amendments as identified.
- The City and County should engage in further discussion around the creation of overlay standards.
- Interested property owners should work with Knox County and the City to explore potential financial stimulus measures to assist new business owners in getting started.

## APPENDIX

# Appendix 1. Public Engagement Summary

In addition to the Charrette efforts, a project webpage provided information on the project and links to related work including the South County Sector Plan, the Knoxville-Knox County Hillside and Ridgetop Protection Plan, and more. A project email was set up to receive questions and comments as well. Throughout the project, information was shared on the project webpage, Planning's social media accounts, through neighborhood groups, and more.

### ROUND ONE ENGAGEMENT

In the first round of engagement, two meetings were held on September 30, 2021 to review the study efforts to date. Since the pandemic created a lapse since the Charrette, there was a need to remind interested parties of what had occurred and inform the public of where this was in the process.

There was a Zoom meeting held at 12:00 p.m. with 26 attendees. An in-person meeting was held at 5:30 p.m. at the north campus of Sevier Heights Baptists Church and had 24 attendees. Both meetings covered demographic and economic data for the study area, TDOT improvements to the corridor, and an overview of previous planning work completed through a design charrette held in 2019 by the East Tennessee Design Center. Comments and questions were accepted.

To promote the meetings, Planning posted an article on the agency's website, created Facebook events, and sent letters directly to 60 business locations along the corridor.

### ROUND TWO ENGAGEMENT

Planning staff attended an initial meeting of commercial property owners along the corridor who wish to form a business association for the area. The meeting was held on December 2, 2021. The group discussed their role in spurring redevelopment along the corridor.

Planning also held another public meeting on February 28, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. at the north campus of Sevier Heights Baptists Church and had 49 attendees. At the meeting, staff presented draft recommendations and asked for additional input to help reaffirm things they had heard earlier in the process about community preferences. Comments and questions were accepted. Staff once again posted an article on both the Planning and TPO website, created a Facebook event, and coordinated with neighborhood representatives to share the information with neighbors and business owners.

## Appendix 2. East Tennessee Design Center Charrette

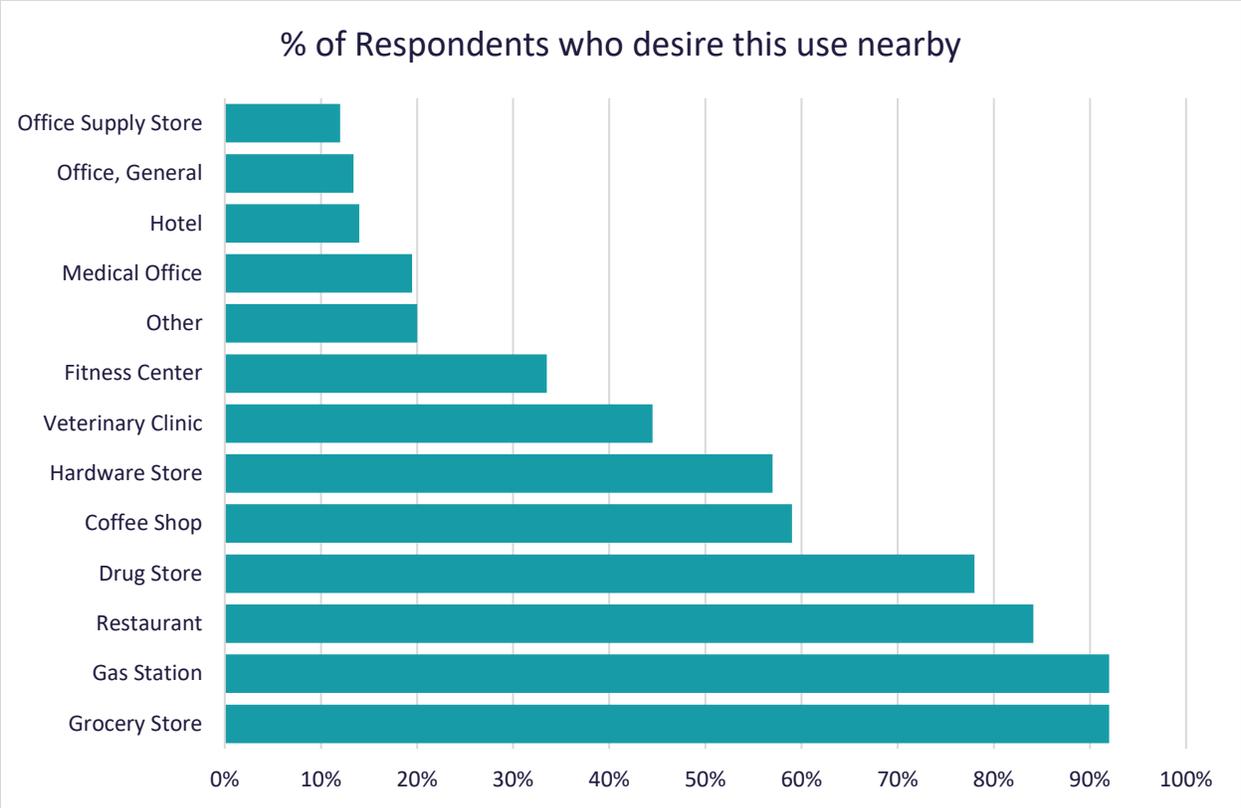
The Alcoa Highway Beautification Council partnered with the East Tennessee Design Center and organized a design charrette for a portion of the corridor. The Alcoa Highway Beautification Council is comprised of residents from both sides of Alcoa Highway. They have worked with TDOT in recent years to ensure the new construction will benefit the community in addition to increasing safety and will continue to be a stakeholder through this process.

Beautification Council members canvassed residents in the area prior to the Charrette event and asked residents to identify the types of businesses they wanted, and results were tabulated graphically. This information was presented at the beginning of the Charrette event, so each participant knew the types of businesses and other land uses identified as desirable within the corridor. Also presented were a summary of TDOT’s plan for phased implementation, demographics of residents in the area, a list of the businesses that had closed since construction had begun, and businesses that were still open at the time of the charrette.

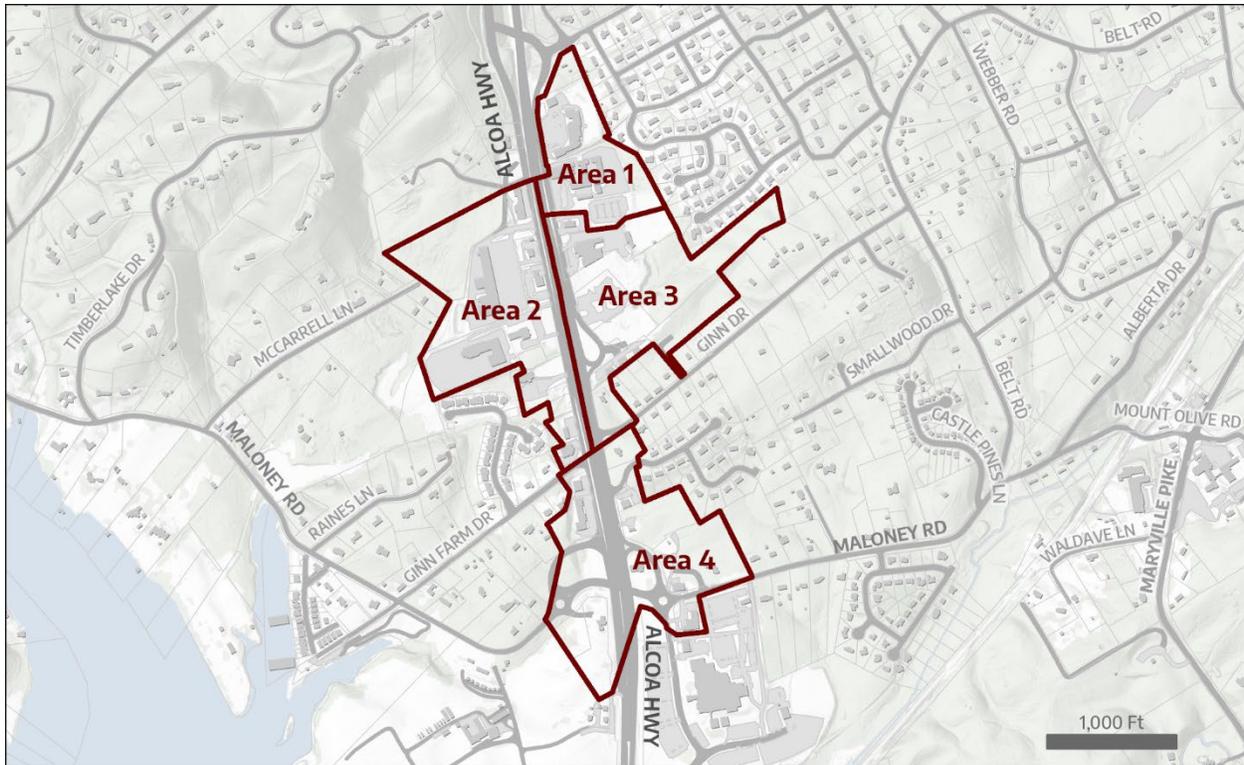
Type of Business	% of Respondents who desire this use nearby
Grocery Store	92%
Gas Station	92%
Restaurant	84.10%
Drug Store	78%
Coffee Shop	59%
Hardware Store	57%
Veterinary Clinic	44.50%
Fitness Center	33.50%
Other	20%
Medical Office	19.50%
Hotel	14%
Office, General	13.40%
Office Supply Store	12%



**Group 3 Charette Study participants hard at work**



The Charrette study area was identified and subdivided into 4 parts. The focus area correlated to TDOT’s Phase 1 along Alcoa Hwy, which spanned from Mount Vernon Drive to the Maloney Road fly-over just below Ginn Drive. Charrette participants were divided into four groups, and each developed a plan for the team’s designated area.



**Map showing division of land into groups used in Charette study**

The goal of the charette exercise was to use the shared information to formulate a plan for each designated area, including proposal of land use and amenities. A summary of the resulting suggestions is provided below.

## **SUMMARY OF CHARETTE RESULTS**

The charrette results included suggestions for adding and maintaining certain businesses, utilizing infill development to increase the productivity of strip center development, increasing the walkability of the area through trails, sidewalks, and interconnectivity, and adding public amenities to the area. The latter suggestions would foster a sense of place for the area, which in turn would aid in attracting development. Greenspace, landscaping, and pedestrian amenities were common threads between all four groups that indicated a collective interest in these items.

Residents, business owners, elected and appointed officials, and other stakeholders have all expressed a desire for the area to have a greater sense of place, particularly because Alcoa Highway serves as a gateway into Knox County and the City of Knoxville.

## Desired Land Uses

The following land uses/business types were those proposed by the community. Some of these would need to be added to the area, while others would be maintained.

1. Small hotel (Team 1)
2. Small multifamily development (12 du on the 1.2-acre property – team 1)
3. Small commercial development behind The Health Factory store as infill development (Team 1)
4. Also proposed internal connection to the hotel to provide options for food and shopping
5. Anchor grocery store added to CVS shopping center (Team 2)
6. Added secondary entrances onto side streets to alleviate the traffic situation
7. Ginn Cemetery remains (Team 2)
8. Maintained vet clinic site, but added another office to the development (Team 2)
9. Retain fast food restaurant, identify new tenant to take over vacant former Hardee's (Team 3)
10. Maintained National Fitness Center/Court South facility (Team 3) – *this has since closed*
11. Maintain existing automotive repair business (Team 3)
12. Medium density residential housing in the form of an independent living facility, 2 or 3 stories; connected to UT Campus with bus transit (Team 3)
13. Single family housing to buffer existing single family residential housing from proposed independent living facility (Team 3)
14. Small-scale retail and offices, possibly food services or health service providers near the independent living facility to be supported by that facility (Team 3)
15. Addition of an internal roundabout to feature parking and stormwater detention (Team 3)

16. Maintain existing retail businesses in strip center along south-bound traffic lanes at top of the team's focus area (Team 4) – has Subway, liquor store, and a real estate school Parcel zoned office to be rezoned to allow a neighborhood-scale grocery store
17. RN-1 (Single-Family Residential) zoned parcel adjacent to above parcel to be rezoned to the O (Office) zone to allow duplexes as a transition down to existing SF homes (Team 4)
18. Parcel with historic home to be rezoned to allow infill parcels with retail and office uses and a small library (Team 4)
19. KAT bus stop in the parking lot of visitor center/retail area (Team 4)
20. Maintain existing clinics along northbound traffic lanes (Team 4)
21. Infill development added to clinic property; restaurant proposed (Team 4)
22. Add a gas station along Ginn Drive at the roundabout (Team 4)

## Proposed Changes to Existing Uses

The following list includes changes that were proposed to existing businesses or areas.

1. Mini-storage facility was scaled back to cover just the back portion of the property it currently sits on to provide a buffer to a neighborhood (Team 1)
2. Redeveloped strip center to have a restaurant with a patio open to the greenway at the rear of the property (Team 2)
3. Infill development in the CVS shopping center (Team 2)
4. Removed existing Vulcan office building and replaced it with smaller commercial uses (Café, bar, bicycle shop - Team 2)
5. Replaced some of the parking with a paved plaza area
6. Removal of storage buildings behind Vulcan building and replaced with live/work studios and affordable housing units with a central community garden, park space, and gathering areas (75 dwellings proposed – Team 2)

7. Converted nightclub into a boutique hotel, 3 stories (Team 3)
8. Historic home to the south of the western Maloney Rd roundabout to be preserved, but converted into a visitor's center for the neighborhood as an information stop along the greenway (Team 4)

## Amenities

The following amenities were added by each team, indicating a broad desire to include landscaping, greenery, and walking paths throughout the area.

1. Sidewalk with plantings along frontage roads (Team 1)
2. Green boulevard as part of the infill development (Team 2)
3. Landscaping along Alcoa Hwy and next to new frontage road (Team 2)
4. Paved plaza area at the small commercial center (Team 2)
5. Central community garden, park space, and gathering areas where storage buildings are now, behind Vulcan building (Team 2)
6. Added greenspace and landscaping with a greenway connector and/or soft trails to Ginn Cemetery (Team 2)
7. Landscaped buffer zones at neighborhood edges (Team 3)
8. Water feature at the team-proposed roundabout; doubles as detention and drainage for the site (Team 3)
9. Dog park that would also serve as a buffer from the existing car repair business and nearby housing (Team 3)
10. Walking trails along hills behind the clinics (Team 4)
11. Additional park space and a new section of greenway to allow new residents to connect to these commercial areas and buffer neighborhoods from commercial development (Team 4)

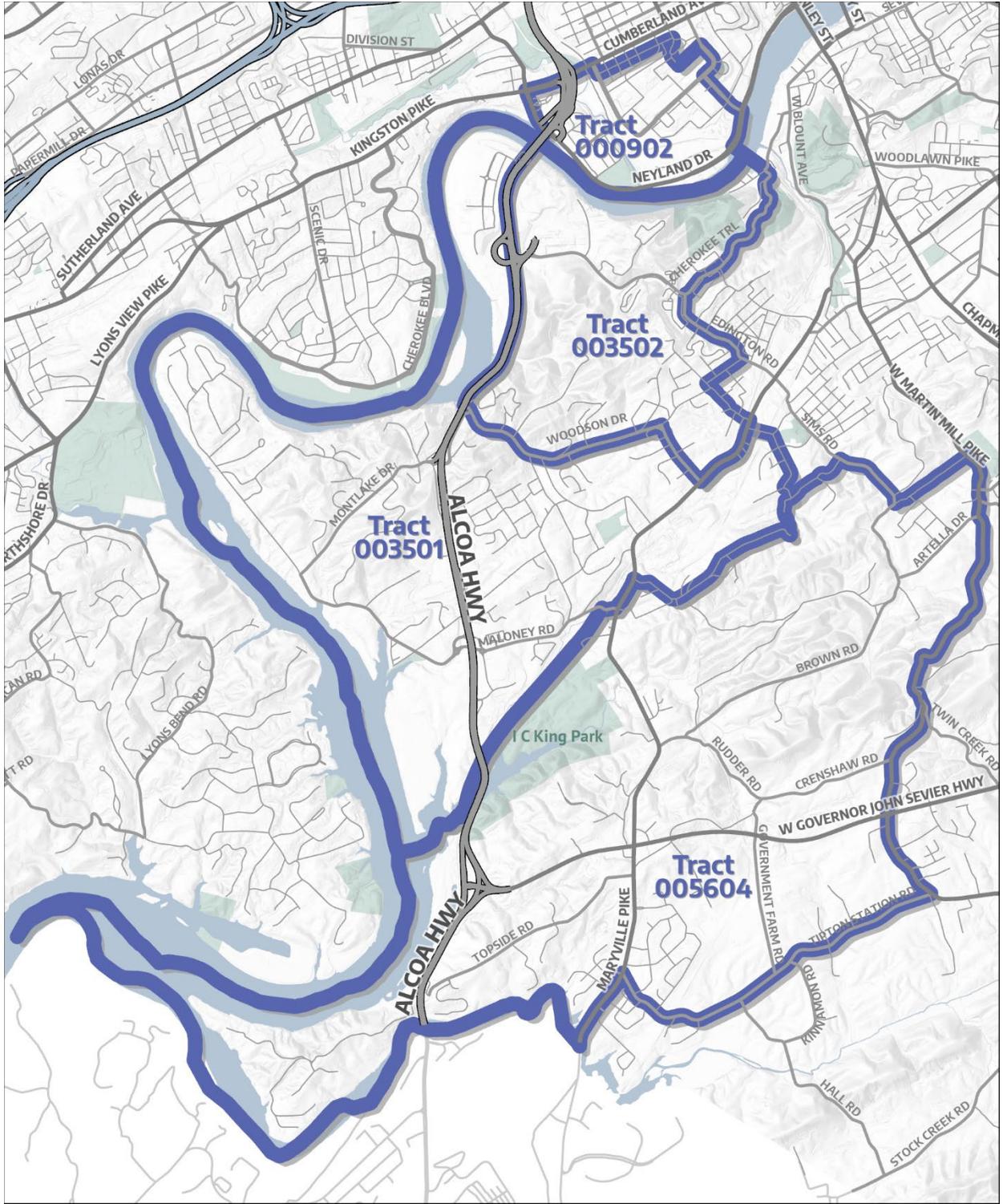
## Appendix 3. Demographics for the Study Area

The following demographic information was compiled using the American Community Survey 2015-2019 5-year Estimates, which is produced by the Census Bureau and which was the most recent data available at the time of compilation. The most detailed information was provided at the “census tract” level. The Census Bureau defines census tracts as, “small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county or equivalent entity that are updated by local participants prior to each decennial census...”<sup>3</sup>

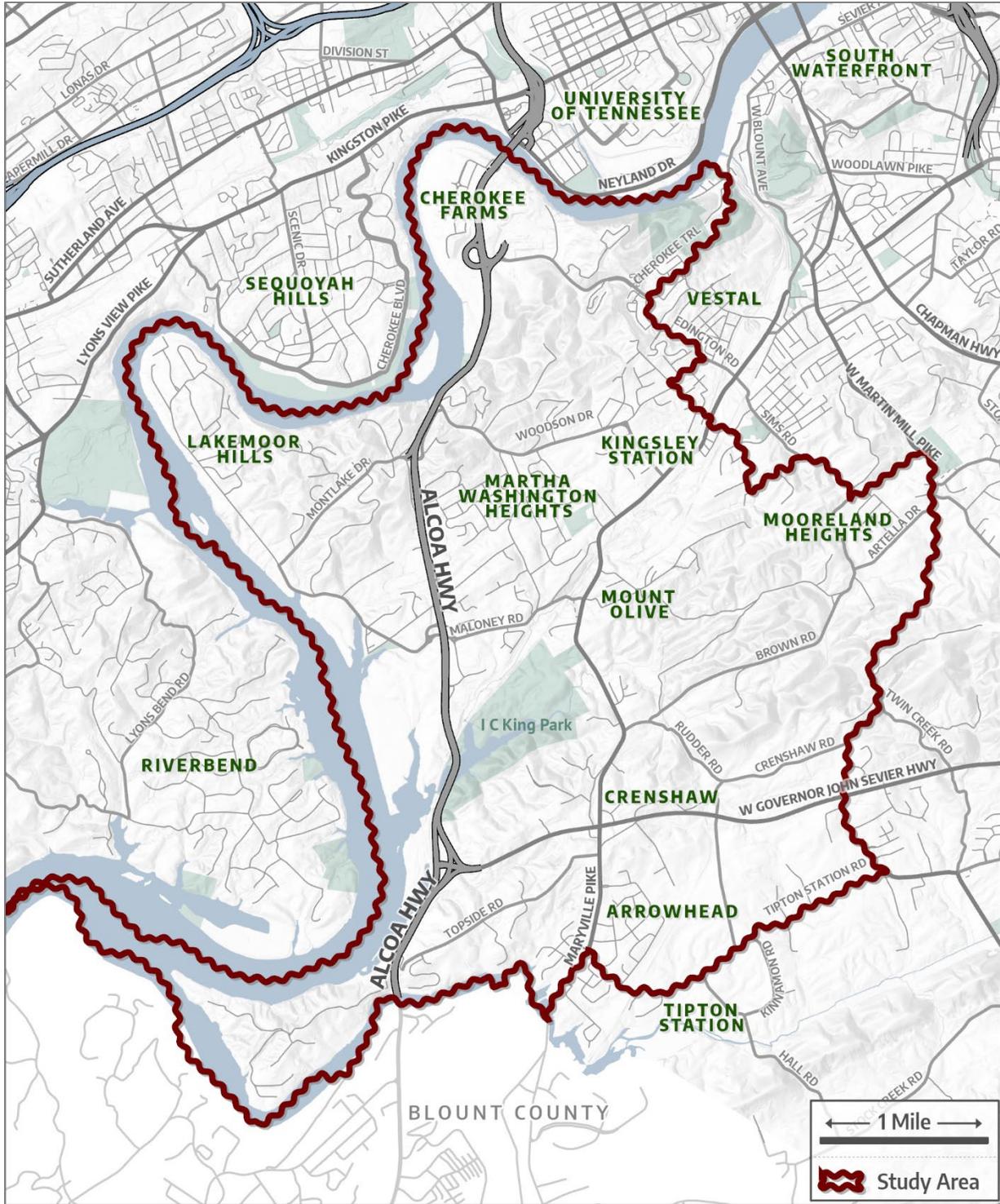
The study area includes census tracts 35, 56.04, and 103.01. Tracts 35 and 56.04 border the corridor, while tract 103.01 straddles it. Tract 103.01 is the largest tract in the study area. Census tracts 35 and 56.04 are located in Knox County, while 103.01 is in Blount County. The Blount County data was collected since its population is so close to the highway and is influenced by what occurs there. However, the recommendations put forth by this document are only for Knox County.

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<sup>3</sup> United States Census Bureau Glossary. October 8, 2021. [https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/about/glossary.html#par\\_textimage\\_13](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/about/glossary.html#par_textimage_13) (accessed December 2021)



Map showing census tracts in the study area.



Map showing study area in relation to Alcoa Highway

## **ALCOA HIGHWAY POPULATION BREAKDOWN**

The total population within the study area has remained steady since 2010, with relatively flat growth. More information is provided below on the population statistics of those living within the study area, giving a more detailed view of who lives in this area.

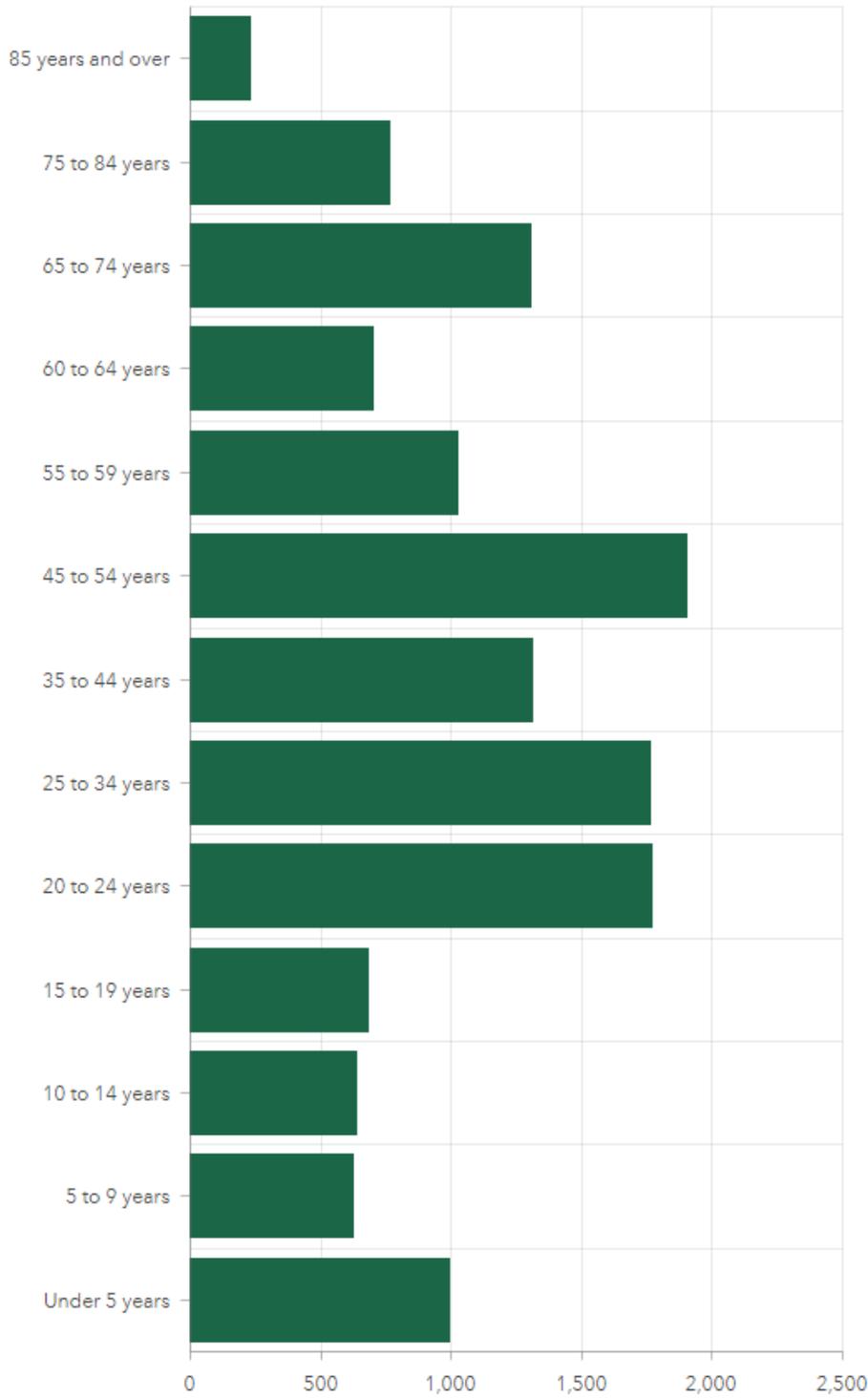
### **Race**

Residents living in the study area are predominantly white, comprising 86.8% of the population. The remaining population is comprised of black or African Americans at 7.7%, two or more races at 3.2%, Asians at 1.1%, and other races at 1.2%.

### **Age**

A large section of the study area population is working age, as the largest segments of the population are between the ages of 20-34 years in age, and aged 45 to 54 years. Population counts for older residents show a smaller portion of the population over age 55 than under age 19. 63.35% of the population between the ages of 19 and 64. 19.87% of the population was aged 18 and under, and 16.78% of the population was 65 and older.

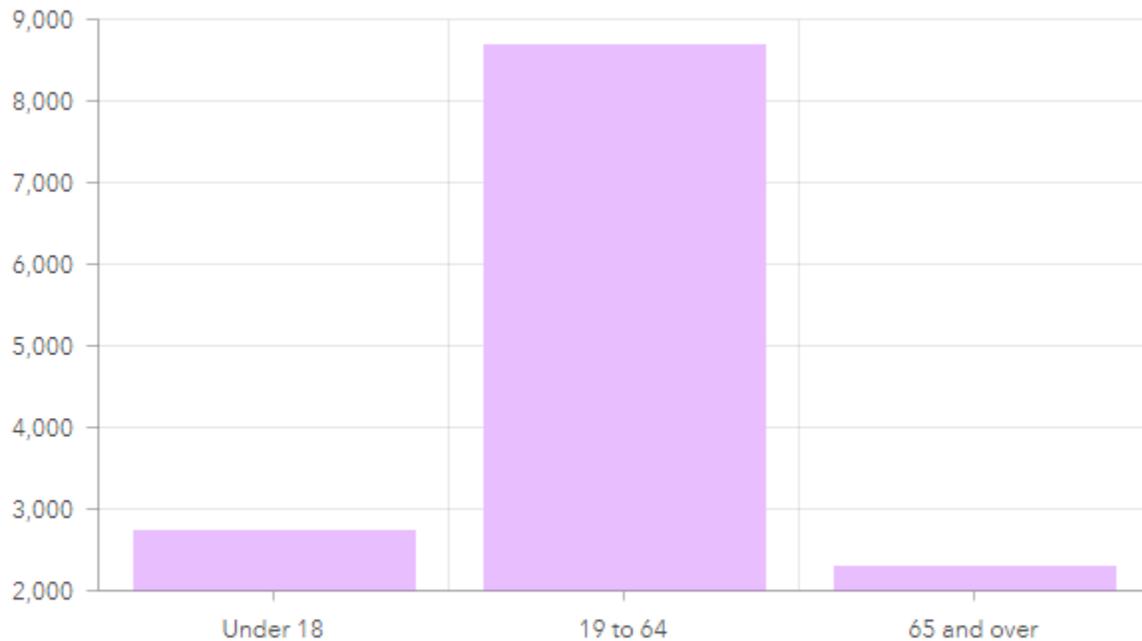
# Population by Age, 2019



Median Age in Knox County: 37.4 years

Median Age in Blount County: 43.7 years

## Working Age Population, 2019



Age 19 to 64 in Knox County: 292,438

Age 19 to 64 in Blount County: 77,423

### Poverty

19.1% of the study area population lives below the poverty level. This is higher than both Knox and Blount Counties, both of which have census tracts in the study area. Knox County has 14.5% of its residents living below poverty; Blount County has 11.1% below poverty. However, the study area performs moderately better than both Counties with regard to cost-burdened homeownership. HUD defines cost-burdened families as those “who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.”<sup>4</sup> 15.6% of the population are cost-burdened homeowners, compared with 16.5% in Knox County and 16.5% in Blount County. 45.7% of the study area population are cost-burdened renters, compared with 47.5% in Knox County, and 45.5% in Blount County.

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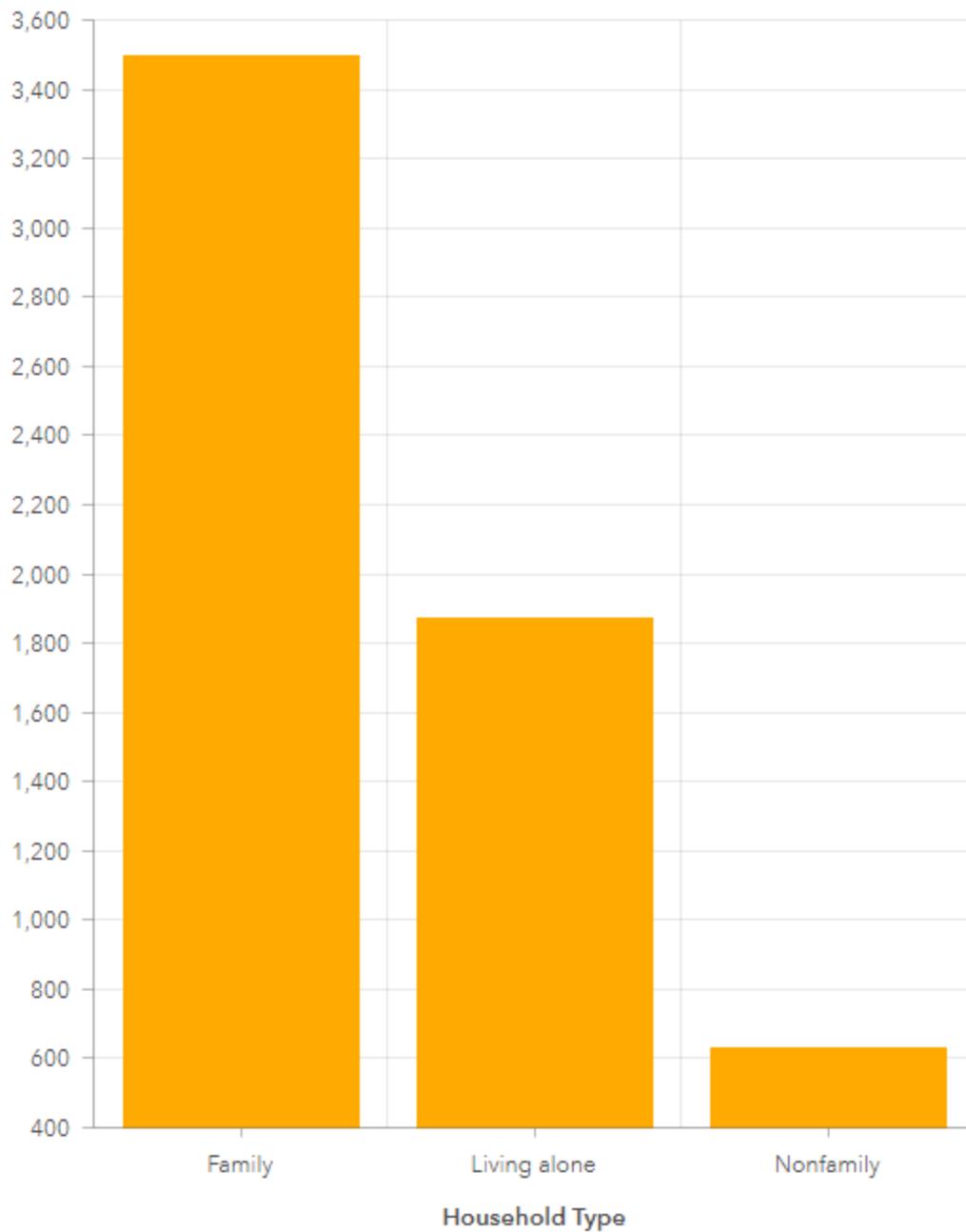
<sup>4</sup>Rental Burdens: Rethinking Affordability Measures. PDR Edge, an Online Publication of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development of Research, year not provided.  
[https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr\\_edge\\_featd\\_article\\_092214.html](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr_edge_featd_article_092214.html)

Poverty also affects homeownership rates, as people living below poverty are unlikely to own a home and are more likely to have difficulty purchasing one, as evidenced by the high percentage of cost-burdened renters. In the study area, 46.1% of housing is occupied by homeowners, 40.5% is occupied by renters, and 13.4% of the housing stock is vacant. The vacancy rate is higher than that of Knox County (8.9%) and Blount County (12.4%).

## Household Configuration

The majority of households in the study area are families, which comprise 58.3% of the study area population. 31.2% of the study area households consist of people living alone, and 10.5% of the population are nonfamily members living together. In Knox County, 61.9% of the households are families, 30.3% of people live alone, and 7.8% are nonfamily members living together. In Blount County, 68.8% of the population live together in a family, 26.1% of people live alone, and 5% of the population are nonfamily members living together.

# Households by Type, 2019

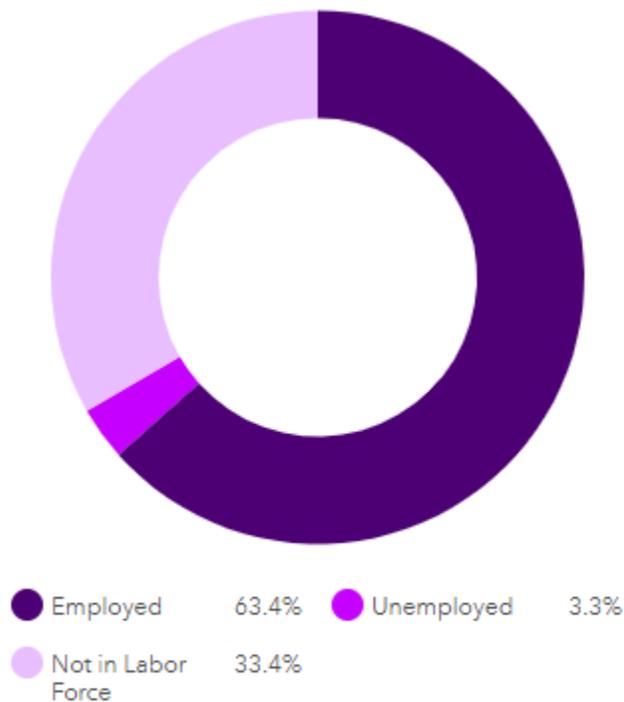


Knox County: Family- 61.9%, Nonfamily- 7.8%, Living alone- 30.3%  
Blount County: Family- 68.8%, Nonfamily- 5.0%, Living alone- 26.1%

## ALCOA HIGHWAY STUDY AREA ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN

63.4% of the people living in the study area are employed, compared to 33.4% of the population who are not in the labor force. The study area had a 3.3% unemployment rate in 2019. This is higher than Knox County, where 2% of people were unemployed, and Blount County, where 2.2% of the population was unemployed.

### Labor Force Participation, 2019

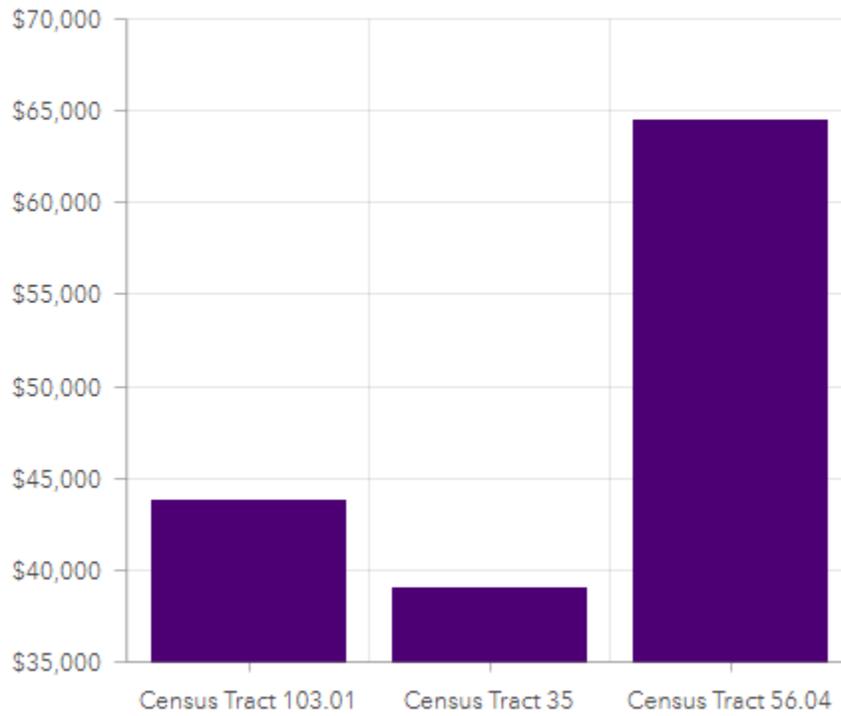


Employed Population in Knox County: 232,086

Employed Population in Blount County: 60,847

Income is distributed rather unevenly through the study area. Census tract 56.04, located on the southern end of the study area on both sides of Alcoa Highway and extending to the eastern and western study area boundaries, earns the highest median income at just under \$65,000. The other two census tracts are smaller, comprising the northern end of the study area. Census tract 35, located east of Alcoa Highway, has a median income of approximately \$39,000. Census tract 103.01, west of Alcoa Highway, has a median income of approximately \$44,000.

## Median Household Income by Tract, 2019



Knox County: \$57,470 | Blount County: \$56,667