

10 Compatibility with neighboring land uses

Complementing the architectural style, construction materials and building heights of nearby structures helps maintain the character of an area, especially in neighborhoods. Appropriately designed signs and lighting also are important, as are placement of parking lots and landscaping. Elements to consider:

- Preservation of neighborhoods
- Design reflecting regional style, climate, heritage and local materials
- Scale and mass of structures in concert with surroundings
- Enhancement of existing street systems
- Transition buffer zones between areas with incompatible uses and densities

11 Public involvement

MPC encourages developers to meet with nearby residents, property owners and neighborhood associations before details of a project are finalized. In many cases, concerns can be addressed, suggestions can be incorporated, and compromises can be worked out by using buffer zones, landscaping, or slight changes in rezoning requests and/or design features. MPC also encourages community groups to meet on a regular basis to work toward common goals of improving an area, protecting natural and cultural resources, and participating in land use and transportation planning meetings.

12 Transit orientation

Transit-oriented development (TOD) goes beyond transit accessibility by creating places that are specifically designed to be served by transit. TOD helps make transit convenient through walkability, compactness, a mix of uses and design elements that create attractive, comfortable places to access transit services.



The Mechanicsville Commons won several Excellence Awards by providing nearly 80 new housing units along with new churches, sidewalks and a new park to foster neighborhood revitalization.

More information on the MPC Excellence Awards can be found at www.knoxmpc.org/aboutmpc/ex2001.htm including a gallery of previous winners and a nomination form for this year's competition.

The criteria listed above are principles of smart growth. For more information about smart growth or for more details about these principles go to:

- http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/scorecards/Scorecard_expfleissigjacobsen.pdf
- www.smartgrowth.org
- www.smartcommunities.ncat.org
- www.cnu.org (Congress for New Urbanism)
- www.walkability.org
- <http://landuse.org> (the Smarter Land Use Project)
- www.knoxtrans.org



What Makes a Project

Excellent?

How to take a development from acceptable to outstanding

The Metropolitan Planning Commission sponsors an annual Excellence Awards program that recognizes developers, designers and neighborhood activists who have made our community a better place in which to live by implementing sound principles regarding urban design, growth management, neighborhood conservation, multi-modal transportation and economic well-being. Projects in both the public and private realm are judged according to the following criteria:

1 Adherence to adopted plans

MPC has numerous small area plans, corridor plans, sector plans and a general plan that address long-range goals for transportation and land use. These plans have specific recommendations and policies for positive change. They also note which places should be protected from further development. Working within the guidelines and spirit of these plans is looked upon favorably.

2 Catalyst for positive change

Sometimes a developer, an individual, or a community group spurs further development or improvement by taking the first step—locating a business in a marginal area, rehabbing the first downtown warehouse for residences, setting up the first conservation easement, addressing social needs, or reinvesting in an older neighborhood. MPC recognizes innovation and applauds the vision involved in these projects.

3 Infill development

Existing neighborhoods may already provide some of the critical support for new residential and commercial development such as roads, schools, bus service, water, electrical and sewer services. The key objective of infill development is to build projects without diminishing the essential quality and character of the surrounding area (unless redeveloping the area has become a planning goal). Projects that strengthen and revitalize existing neighborhoods improve the entire community.

4 Rural development

Development located away from the urban center usually requires additional services, new civic amenities and longer car trips to access necessities. Dispersing new housing in rural areas sets a pattern of development that will in the long run create more sprawl. We believe that clustering new rural development, and maintaining larger tracts of open areas, is the better long-term choice.

5 Mix and balance of uses

Developing more than one use in a project, regardless of the location, can create a connection between users of that project: The ability to walk to a restaurant at lunchtime rather than driving to



A 2007 Excellence Award winner, Cherokee Health Systems compliments the adjacent neighborhood and represents a preeminent investment in the area.

a commercial strip; being able to walk to a health club before or after work; taking care of several errands once you've parked your car; and in some instances, living near work and minimizing commuting time. For the community, mixing uses can help reduce traffic impacts. For developers, the added construction and marketing costs can be offset by the ability to lease the space more quickly.

6 Traffic flow and minimizing motor vehicle trips

Multiple entrances to large subdivisions are required, but smaller residential developments also benefit from designing more than one way in and out. Additional entrances provide safety measures and allow for a better network of roads.

Conversely, MPC suggests consolidating automobile access points from businesses onto busy streets and highways. Linking roads, parking lots, and walkways with adjacent developments is a good idea, and helps reduce congestion and reliance on the automobile. Ideally, developments should be located along existing transit routes, or coordination with the transit agency should occur prior to construction.

7 Pedestrian and bicycle access

Sidewalks are good; separated sidewalks with curb ramps are even better and are often required by the American with Disabilities Act. Greenways and/or sidewalks around the perimeter or through a development are popular with residents and employees. Good pedestrian access between the street and the front door is key to making a development truly pedestrian and shopper friendly.

Developers can create walkable communities by:

- building sidewalks on both sides of a street
- providing pedestrian amenities, like seating, landscaping or lighting

- locating parking so that it does not compete with pedestrian access
- connecting pedestrian paths to existing or planned open space near site

With more people choosing to bike instead of drive, bicycle racks are an inexpensive but important element of any development. For more information on selection and placement of appropriate bicycle racks contact the Bicycle Program Coordinator at 215-3815 or go to www.knoxtrans.org under "Bicycle Program."

8 Visual appeal

Most projects can be made more visually appealing by paying attention to small details: concealing utilities, trash cans and Dumpsters; planting trees and shrubs throughout parking lots; preserving natural features; encouraging consistency in design; and using complementary materials. A well-designed project can help resolve fears that some may have regarding density, multi-family developments, and the proximity of homes to commercial development.

9 Respect for environmental and historic resources

MPC staff is happy to suggest ways to conserve woodlands, protect slopes and streams, and preserve historic structures. New ways to grade land, protect trees, install drainage systems and retain water may even be more practical than traditional methods.

Every project also has the opportunity to incorporate open space for recreation and enjoyment either on the perimeter or in the center of the development. Open space preservation not only reduces the impacts on other natural areas, but if properly done, can increase the value of the development.