

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Joe Hultquist, Co-Chair
Tony Norman, Co-Chair
James Allen
Doug Berry
Mark Campen
Bart Carey
Elaine Clark
Carol Evans
Scott Frith
Wayne Hastings
Sara Hedstrom
Renee Hoyos
Diane Humphreys-Barlow
Victor Jernigan
Wayne Loveday
John Luttrell
Mark Margetts
David McGinley
Gary Menendez
Gary Norvell
Cindy Pionke
Tom Simpson
Will Skelton
Rocky Smith
Lisa Starbuck
David Vandergriff
James Wade
Chris Woodhull
Tim Zitzman

ABOUT THE TASK FORCE

In March 2008 the City of Knoxville and Knox County created a 30-person task force to address issues and concerns related to ridge, slope and hillside development and protection. The effort was prompted by concerns over the erection of the South Knoxville water tower and the growing number of hillsides and ridgetops scarred by commercial and residential development. The Task Force is comprised of builders, developers, landscape architects, engineers, foresters, lawyers, conservationists, and city and county officials and is facilitated by the Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission.

THE WORK TO DATE

The Task Force met initially to identify key issues, values and themes and to divide into sub-committees around areas of expertise:

1. Land Use; 2. Public Involvement & Education, Public Relations & Recreation; and 3. Site Design, Restoration Standards & Permit Process

These committees have met at two-week intervals and as an entire Task Force every six weeks.

MPC staff and the Task Force have reviewed 30 ordinances and reports from communities around the country related to hillside and ridgetop protection and conducted visits to Gatlinburg and Asheville.

The Task Force has reached consensus on several key issues:

- There should be lower density and less clearing on steeper slopes.
- Design and location of water supply infrastructure needs to have the least visual impact possible.
- Mass grading should be avoided in hillside and ridgetop areas; thus changes in grading and revegetation practices are needed.
- Reduce road pavement widths to 20' in hillside and ridgetop areas to decrease disturbance and scarring.
- A 35-foot building height limitation on ridges is needed.

The Task Force continues to evaluate and discuss key issues that will lead to specific regulation.

NEXT STEPS

A draft of hillside and ridgetop protection measures will be presented to the community for feedback in a series of public meetings from April to May. Community recommendations will be gathered, evaluated and integrated into the final report to be presented in June and July 2009.

To track the progress of the Task Force visit <http://www.knoxmpc.org/hillside>. For questions, comments and recommendations, please contact Liz Albertson at 215-2500 or liz.albertson@knoxmpc.org.

Knoxville-Knox County Task Force on Ridge, Slope and Hillside Development & Protection

March 2009 Newsletter

OVERVIEW

Knox County lies in the heart of a system of ridges and valleys which have historically defined our community. Since the 18th century, early roads and settlement patterns have been aligned with the ridge systems traversing only natural gaps created by rivers and streams. However, with advances in technology and building construction, the natural heritage that has defined Knox County for centuries is being significantly altered. Areas of growth are pushing into hillside and ridgetop areas, thus creating concerns related to economic impact, public safety, public health and natural beauty.

Surrounding states and municipalities have begun to study these problems and pass ordinances and codes to alleviate some of these key issues. This group includes: State of North Carolina (1983), Huntsville, AL (1996), White County, GA (2005), Fayetteville, AK (2006), Asheville, NC (2007), Brentwood, TN (2007), Buncombe, Henderson, Madison and Transylvania Counties, NC (2008), Sevier County, TN (2008), Gatlinburg, TN (2008), and Blount County, TN (2008).

KEY ISSUES

ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Costs are generally greater to develop on hillside and ridgetop areas for both public and private sectors.
- A loss of scenic quality can have a negative impact on property values.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- Landslides and other hazards to life and property increase in steeply sloped areas.
- Fire safety concerns increase because of road access, water supply limitations and increased wind speeds.

PUBLIC HEALTH

- Septic system failures increase in steeply sloped areas, which can contaminate both ground and surface water.

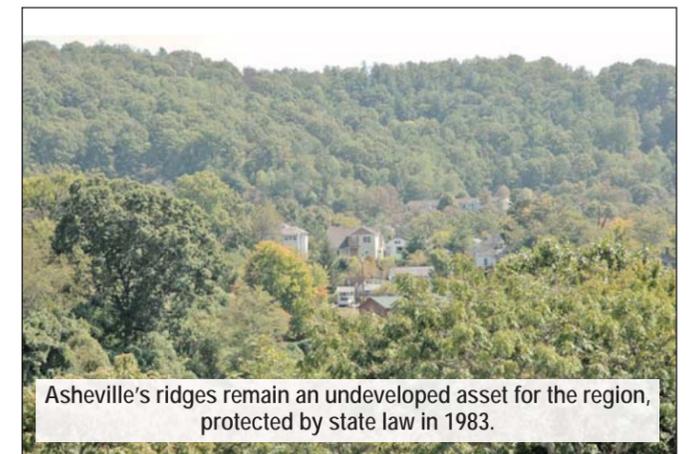
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT & NATURAL BEAUTY

- The majority of Knox County's large tract forested areas are on hillsides and ridgetops, which filter air pollution and protect wildlife habitat.
- Views within Knox County have historically been defined by the forested ridge systems.

Lack of regulations and compliance have resulted in hillside erosion and scarring along Callahan Drive.



Public safety concerns (including fire protection) prompted Sevier County to study hillside and ridgetop protection issues and development regulations.



Asheville's ridges remain an undeveloped asset for the region, protected by state law in 1983.

Thirty three percent of Knox County's total area is sloped greater than 15%

CURRENT REGULATIONS

- There are no specific regulations regarding the type or intensity of development that can occur on ridgetops.
- Developers do not have to submit site or development plans that complement hillside and ridgetop topography.
- Grading permits only place requirements on erosion and sediment control, not the amount of disturbance to hillsides and ridgetops.
- There is no limitation to the amount of clearing that can occur on hillsides and ridgetops.
- There are no reforestation requirements for development.
- There are no regulations on the disturbance of views.
- Slope guidelines only apply to rezoning. There are no slope development requirements for developments already zoned.
- There are no limitations for existing single-family residential lots on hillsides and ridgetops.
- There are no regulations for steepness of driveways in Knox County.

