

**Hillside Task Force
Site Design Committee
August 13, 2008 Minutes**

Members present: David Vandergriff, Ben Garlington, Gary Menendez, Gary Norvell, James Allen, Joe Hultquist, Rocky Smith, Sara Hedstrom, Tim Zitzman, Tony Norman Victor Jernigan, Wayne Loveday

Staff present: Liz Albertson, Mike Reynolds, Nathan Oliver, Tom Brechko, Cindy Pionke, Tim Kuhn and David McGinley

1. Tim Zitzman called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m.
2. Tim Kuhn provided an overview of the GIS analysis in relation to the extent of development in relation to hillsides in Knox County.
 - He introduced a series of maps that were then presented in relation to a degree of slope. The maps included: (1) an overview of forested areas; (2) building footprints, and (3) a zoning analysis, showing vacant land in relation to developed land (see <http://www.knoxmpc.org/hillside> for the related maps). The highlights of that overview follow.

Forest cover in relation to slope:

- Roughly one-third (about 110,000 acres) of Knoxville/Knox County land is on hillsides in excess of 15 percent slope.
- The steeper the slope, the greater the proportion of forested area: about 120,000 acres of Knox County's 336,000 acres are forested and about 70,000 acres of that forested land is on hillsides greater than 15 percent slopes.

Buildings and paved areas in relation to slope:

- The most level land (0 to 15 percent slope) accounts for 215,000 acres of the county's 336,000 acres. About 74,000 of that acreage is in the rural-designated areas.

The greater the slope, the lesser amount of development:

- About 25 percent of Knoxville’s level (0 to 15%) area covered with buildings, about 13 percent of the moderate slopes are covered with buildings. Only small proportions (6 percent or less) of the steeper slopes have building coverage.
- Within the areas that have best access to sewer (the city, the urban growth boundary and planned commercial areas, the map shows that the observation that “the only thing left to develop is hillside land” is substantially accurate in that much of that area has been developed. (Staff noted though that some portions of that area could be redeveloped. Staff also pointed out that the level rural—designated area is largely undeveloped (only 4 percent of that area is covered buildings and pavement. In making this observation, it was noted that there may be two-fold concerns: (1) if development eventually is directed to level farmland, loss of agricultural land could be a concern; (2) if directed to slopes, loss of forested hillsides could be a concern.

Vacant and developed land in relation to zoning:

- Almost half of the county’s level land (100,000 of 215,000 acres) is composed of developed, non-agricultural parcels.
 - Developed parcels on steep slopes (25% or more) account for only 7,300 acres of the county’s 336,000 acres (just over 5 percent of the county’s landscape).
 - Zoning (agricultural and low density residential zones) allowing limited development account for vast majority of zoning on vacant hillside areas.
 - Of concern could be the zoning of 4,300 acres of steeper land (15% or greater slope) that is zoned for commercial, industrial or medium density housing purposes.
3. Joe Hultquist noted that we need to focus development on grayfield sites instead of development onto greenfields / agricultural land.
 4. Sarah Hedstrom noted the need for wildlife corridor protection on the ridges and posed the question “how do we accomplish this?”
 5. Rocky Smith noted that we need to look at purchasing the lands that are commonly-valued for protection.

6. Tim Zitzman noted the Transfer of Development Rights program in Lexington, Kentucky that might provide some insight.
7. Victor Jernigan noted a project he's working on where he is attempting to transfer density among a cluster of parcels for a development.
8. Mike Reynolds gave an overview of the City of Fayetteville, Arkansas Hillside Overlay District Best Management Practices Manual. This manual provides a series of design guidelines related to development within the Hillside Overlay District, most specifically for residential development. It calls for a variety of measures to minimize disturbance, including the following provision;
 - Reducing the front yard setbacks to bring the streets closer to the roads,
 - Right-of-way (roads & sidewalk) widths reductions
 - Siting streets parallel to slope
 - Lot depth oriented to the street
 - Siting utilities under streets or in the front yard setbacks (disallowing rear yard utility siting)
 - Allowing for steeper tie-back slopes and roads created in all cuts (instead of a cut-fill balance)
 - Discouraging "pad grading" and minimizing site grading.
 - Local streets are noted as 9.5' travel lanes (curb-to-curb = 22') or up to 27' with a 5' sidewalk, while collector streets are noted as 12.5' travel lanes (curb-to-curb = 28') or up to 33' with a 5' sidewalk
 - Tree preservation guidelines are suggested to preserve the tree canopy and encourage screening of hillside developments, requiring all new development within the hillside district to comply with the city's Tree Preservation Ordinance (which requires all new single and tow family residential structures to submit a tree preservation and site plan at the time of obtaining a building permit and that no grading shall take place until this plan has been inspected and approved.
 - During subdivision platting, a minimum of 60% of the subdivision areas must be left undisturbed (40% of the areas maybe disturbed for road construction and utility placement.)
9. There was some discussion of utility siting/access and easements in regard to steep slopes. Wayne Loveday noted that KUB doesn't mind siting utilities under roadways, but that the City and County generally do not favor this practice.

10. Liz Albertson noted that in at least one of the communities or studies in the handbook the front yard setback doubles as the utility easement. She also noted that we've provided a "notes" sheet for everyone to jot down their thoughts in regard to the various studies and codes that have been given out as part of the handbook and to please review the Land of Sky document that was given out today. She also asked the committee to please return these comment sheets before the second Task Force meeting, via email or fax is fine.
11. Cindy Pionke noted that the collector street provisions that are suggested in the Fayetteville BMPs are very generous; Knox County currently allows a smaller width on collectors.
12. David McGinley noted that in building roads retaining walls in the right-of-way poses a potential liability problem.
13. Tim Zitzman mentioned that we could perhaps go forward with the notion that there is going to be a "new zone" for which we'll need to define some site design recommendations.
14. Tim Zitzman asked MPC staff to please compile a matrix of the various regulations and standards in Knoxville and Knox County as well as some of the ones that have been utilized or proposed in other cities/regions.
15. Tim Zitzman adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.