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Townsend, Tennessee

Proposed Land Use Objectives and Policies

Assumptions

1. Townsend will continue to see a rise in the population of persons age 65 and older. The demands of this cohort will be different than previous residents with a desire for more multi-family housing and closer proximity to goods and services.
2. Single-family housing will continue to hold the greatest share of residential land uses.
3. Per capita income will continue to increase at a faster rate than the nation, state, and county.
4. Townsend, as a Gateway Community to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, will work closely with the National Park Service and the Tennessee Department of Transportation to accommodate the traffic flowing through the city.
5. The tourism industry; especially, tourist accommodations/restaurants, recreation/entertainment, retail, and real estate/rental establishments, will dominate the economic base in the city.
6. Retail trade will continue to increase through the addition of small businesses that sell hand-crafted goods, local art, and convenience items.
7. The City of Townsend will not be served by a public sewer system limiting the intensity of development; however, alternative sewage treatment systems will allow for denser housing developments.
8. Townsend's proximity to the Little River and focus on water quality issues within Blount County will support stricter regulations for the preservation of the county's drinking water supply.
9. The community supports measures that would enhance the character of Townsend as the "Peaceful Side of the Smokies."
10. Development within Townsend will reinforce the theme of Townsend as the "Peaceful Side of the Smokies."
11. Townsend will develop in a logically, planned manner so that citizens can continue to live in an aesthetically pleasing environment.
12. The City of Townsend will work cooperatively with Blount County to develop and implement a Green Infrastructure Plan.

General Development Goals

Objective: Protect the function and inherent integrity of the natural environment by implementing measures to minimize the adverse impacts of development to soils, slopes, vegetation, wetlands, and other natural features.

Policies

1. All applicable development permits should be obtained before site or subdivision approval is given.
2. A drainage plan should be submitted for all developments to ensure that pre-development run-off discharge rates are equal or less than post-development rates, flood risks within the drainage basin are minimized, water quality is not compromised, and drainage patterns are not altered.
3. Increased canopy cover can decrease the amount of water run-off on a site; therefore, a policy to encourage preservation, replacement, and establishment of trees during the development process is encouraged.
4. All topsoil should be set aside during any development of a site and later used on the same site.
5. Natural features should be preserved and if possible enhanced on any development site. Mature trees and vegetation should be retained and marked as such during the construction process.
6. The city shall develop appropriate criteria or measures to ensure the protection of its natural resources, environmentally-sensitive areas, and other valuable areas.

Objective: Townsend should continue to develop its unique sense of place by preserving its character as a rural mountain town.

Policies

1. Development regulations should be amended to include minimum landscaping requirements with deciduous trees and native plants.
2. Maintain a limited building height in the city to preserve vistas of the surrounding areas.
3. Promote open space where possible.

DRAFT

4. The city should consider the institution of a design review commission to ensure that site and architectural design reflect an appropriate rural mountain theme.

Objective: Each development proposal should be scrutinized for its potential impact on the natural environment, existing infrastructure, scenic views, and quality of life on current and future residents of Townsend.

Policies

1. The planning commission should require a developer to provide the appropriate corrective actions if a proposed development appears to increase traffic congestion or increase daily trips beyond capacity of road classification, to produce hazardous curb cuts, or to create a hazard to pedestrian circulation systems.
2. Where it appears that unsuitable conditions exist, the potential developer shall have the responsibility for undertaking the necessary studies to prove the feasibility of the land to support the proposed development.
3. Areas of excessive slope should be conserved as open space if development would cause soil and/or water degradation.
4. Areas with slopes in excess of twenty-five percent should only be developed where engineering documentation is available to prove that no adverse affects will occur to housing construction, road stability, drainage, and erosion.
5. All development should aspire to be visually unobtrusive in the landscape.

Objective: Additional parking areas or reconstructed parking areas should strive to reduce the visual impact of the areas on the landscape.

Policies

1. Parking areas should be screened from view using a variety of practices such as berms, trees, topography, and similar practices.
2. Parking for a development should be designed so as to minimize the amount of parking between the structures and the street and/or sidewalk.
3. Internal landscaping in a parking lot should be used to reduce visual impact and retain run-off from the parking lot.
4. Landscaping and screening for parking lot shall be immediately adjacent to the lot and preferably within the required five foot green space area.

DRAFT

5. Large parking lots should have pedestrian links between the structure and the sidewalk clearly marked and free from any obstructions. The width of the sidewalk connection should be adequate to serve those accessing the structure.

Residential Land Use

Objective: Provide for a variety of housing types and densities for a wide range of family incomes, sizes, and lifestyles.

Policies

1. Townsend should encourage an expansion of the affordable housing stock to mitigate potential negative impacts of a growing gap between household income and housing costs.
2. Artist live/work spaces should be encouraged in developments that highlight or retail their work.
3. The city encourages the development of multi-family and condominium units where appropriate topographical and geological conditions exist.

Objective: Residential developments should not increase any strain on existing public services and transportation systems or adversely impact the public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, prosperity, and general welfare of existing or future residents.

Policies

1. Multi-family or high-density residential developments should be located near existing goods and services. These developments can also be used as buffers between low-density residential and commercial areas.
2. All residential developments should have internal circulation systems and pedestrian connections to existing sidewalks.
3. Residential lots shall be no smaller than 20,000 square feet if served by a sub-surface disposal system. Lots served by an approved advanced treatment system must follow the requirements set forth in the Townsend Zoning Regulations.
4. Townsend should adopt regulations limiting the visual impact of developments on higher elevations seen by those in the "Valley."

DRAFT

Objective: Residential development should be prohibited or appropriately erected on land subject to topographical conditions, flood hazards, or other natural restrictions.

Policies

1. The building permit should require the appropriate stamp(s) by a certified engineer and/or surveyor when hazardous conditions exist on the home site.
2. A letter shall be submitted to the building inspector certifying that all improvements were made as intended by the appropriate certified engineer or surveyor.
3. All structures built within the flood hazard area shall abide by the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance.

Commercial Land Use

Objective: Any development or redevelopment should be aesthetically-pleasing and harmonize with the rural character of Townsend.

Policies

1. Strip commercial malls and similar land-consuming developments should be discouraged in the city.
2. Cluster developments such as Planned Unit Developments should be encouraged in a way that limits ingress and egress points.
3. The use of open space and appropriate building height should be included to maximize the surrounding viewshed.
4. All commercial developments shall be designed in compliance with appropriate site development standards.
5. The Mayor and Board of Commissioners should appoint a Design Review Commission as enabled by TCA § 6-54-133 to ensure that new developments conform with the rural mountain theme of the city.
6. Commercial developments should enhance not detract from the aesthetical qualities of the community. Screening and buffering with natural colors and/or native landscaping is desired.
7. Landscaping shall be located along public boundaries of the site, within parking areas, around buildings, and at building entries to create a sense of natural surroundings to the structure.

DRAFT

8. Nuisance screening for loading areas, dumpsters, utility boxes, detention ponds, and any other unsightly objects should be utilized.

Objective: Mixed Use District(s) should be allowed within the City of Townsend.

Policies

1. The Zoning Regulations should specify the various uses allowed in each mixed use district.
2. A detailed set of stipulations for the application of the zone should be developed for each district.
3. These districts should allow a mix of commercial and residential units in the same development.
4. Live/work units for the local arts and crafts community are encouraged.
5. The district should enhance the use of alternative transportation modes by requiring the appropriate mix of internal pedestrian, bicycle, and low to medium speed motorized vehicles within the district and connecting to the existing transportation system.

Objective: Commercial development should not negatively impact existing development or put undue strain on services provided by the city.

Policies

1. All proposed developments should be located and be accessed on roadways designed to carry the expected daily car loads of both existing and proposed developments.
2. All proposed developments should minimize negative impacts to the existing transportation system.
3. All proposed developments should be served by adequate infrastructure connections capable of supporting the development.
4. Parking lots should be designed according to those policies established by the City of Townsend.

Recreational, Cultural, Educational, and Public Land Use

Objective: For the enjoyment of its citizens and visitors and preservation of scenic vistas, Townsend should create a plan for recreation and open space acquisition and/or preservation.

Policies

1. Priority for any public resource expenditures shall be given to areas that provide access to cultural and natural resources.
2. An inventory of all publicly-owned land should be first analyzed to see if any additional recreational uses would be compatible on the existing public property.
3. This plan should include both passive and active recreational opportunities.
4. Attention should be paid to kid-friendly facilities accessible by nearby neighborhoods and/or semi-public and public buildings.
5. Townsend should consider preserving public land and/or acquiring land within officially designated floodways for a recreation or open space program.

Objective: A comprehensive plan should be developed for the preservation and restoration of historical sites and structures within the planning area.

Policies

1. Construction, rehabilitation, and restoration shall be controlled through encouragement of individuals and historical groups.
2. Historical buildings and sites should, where possible, be adapted for present day uses. Open space areas of historical importance should also be maintained and integrated into Townsend's recreational and open space program.

Objective: Provide for public access along the Little River.

Policies

1. Public access to the river should be systematically connected when possible to provide for an uninterrupted pathway along the river.
2. When possible, the city should develop or encourage the development of a park by the river with appropriate public facilities where residents and visitors can enjoy water-related activities.

Vacant Land and Open Space Land Use

Objective: To maintain the rural character of Townsend and maximize the surrounding viewsheds, open space is encouraged in the city.

Policies

1. Both residential and commercial developments should include dedicated open space.
2. When possible, open space should be contiguous to other areas of open space either on the same parcel or adjacent parcels.
3. All publicly-owned land shall be examined for its potential open space or recreational use before being sold or disposed of by the town.
4. Current vacant lands with significant scenic vistas, wildlife corridors and habitats, and water bodies should be conserved or compatible uses encouraged on the site.
5. Townsend should promote the practice of donating land with significant historical significance or scenic vistas to a land conservancy or similar organization.

Objective: Ensure that appropriate standards and guidelines are followed for development of vacant land and for the provision of open space.

Policies

1. Areas of excessive slope should be conserved as open space, when possible, if development would cause significant soil and /or water degradation or where the terrain possesses special scenic or recreational value.
2. If no appropriate alternatives are available, filling and excavation in flood hazard areas shall only occur when compliant with the National Flood Insurance Program Regulations.
3. Townsend should ensure that adequate amounts of open space areas are available for future population.

DRAFT

Objective: Provide a plan for green infrastructure within the City of Townsend.

Policies

1. Townsend should work cooperatively with Blount County for the development of the Green Infrastructure Plan.
2. Areas providing corridors for wildlife and scenic views, of historical and cultural significance, containing prime farmland soils, affecting water quality, and with valuable recreation opportunities should be identified.
3. The city should work cooperatively with Blount County to obtain funds for the preservation, and when possible, acquisition of significant areas identified within the plan.

Utilities Land Use

Objective: Provide adequate and efficient public utility facilities.

Policies

1. All new development, whether public or private, should have adequate utilities which shall be properly installed at the expense of the developer.
2. The city should monitor the water system to ensure that the system is adequate to meet current and future needs.
3. Future development should encourage the use of underground utilities.
4. A long-range plan for the implementation of a public sewage treatment system should be developed.
5. The town should apply for a grant that would cover the cost of moving utility poles along Highway 321/73 underground.

Objective: Provide appropriate standards and guidelines for extension and maintenance of utilities.

Policies

1. The use of underground electrical utilities should be required wherever feasible.
2. Use of subsurface sewage disposal systems and alternative sewage treatment systems in Townsend should not compromise the quality of the Little River and other water bodies flowing into the river.

DRAFT

3. The water distribution system should be periodically evaluated to ensure that water lines are of adequate size to provide adequate pressure for fire fighting.
4. Fire hydrants should be present in all developed areas.
5. Proposed developments shall be required to appropriately locate, install, and size all utilities.
6. The location of utility structures for storage of equipment, pumps, or similar materials should be adequately buffered and landscaped so as not to detract from the surrounding area.

Transportation

Objective: Provide a transportation system that will adequately meet the future needs of Townsend.

Policies

1. All new development whether public or private, should have an adequate transportation system which shall be properly installed at the expense of the developer.
2. All new major streets should be located in a manner that will minimize disruption to neighborhoods, open space, recreational areas, or commercial areas.
3. All new streets should be designed to incorporate storm water drainage systems, either built or natural, which are adequate in size to handle runoff from anticipated development.
4. All segments of the transportation system should be designed and located to meet future as well as present demands.
5. Older streets in the city should be upgraded or improved through a road improvement program.

DRAFT

Objective: Provide appropriate design guidelines for the construction of new streets and other transportation facilities.

Policies

1. Beautification efforts by the town and/or concerned citizen groups are encouraged. Projects should conform to any applicable regulations.
2. Gateway entrances to the city should be clearly distinguished by either built or landscaped markers along the major highway entrances.
3. Additions to the transportation system should be designed to incorporate appropriate landscaping to heighten the aesthetic qualities of Townsend.

Objective: Provide more transportation opportunities for alternatives to automobile use.

Policies

1. All new developments shall be required to install sidewalks. If possible, they should connect to existing sidewalks to increase their use for daily trips.
2. The city should promote pedestrian safety for school kids, recreational walkers, and general use.
3. The use of low speed/medium speed vehicles should be promoted throughout the city through designated lanes or public awareness.
4. Bike lanes should be designated on Highway 321/73 through Townsend.
5. When possible, sidewalks and bike lanes should be developed on all arterial and collector streets.

Objective: Ensure that the goals and policies set forth in this plan are recognized in all transportation projects within the city and cooperation among governmental entities is promoted.

Policies

1. The Townsend Planning Commission shall be informed and provide input to any major road projects as enabled by T.C.A. §13-4-104.
2. Townsend should work out agreements concerning the use of right-of-ways with the Tennessee Department of Transportation.
3. The city should maintain contact with the National Park Service to promote cooperation between the two agencies.

DRAFT

4. The city should promote the location of a trolley system serving Cades Cove in Townsend for revenue and convenience.
5. The city should promote efforts that encourage visitors to use Townsend as a gateway to the national park and as a destination to park and ride or hike into the national park.