

City of Townsend, Tennessee: Scoping for an updated Community Plan

Background

Townsend's current Land Use and Transportation Plan was envisioned to guide City administration and citizens from 2010-2020. Responsible planning policy supports updating the Plan with new information and taking into consideration fresh perspectives of the community. This scoping document is intended to launch the process and outline an initial framework to develop and implement new a Community Plan.

The purpose of the Community Plan is to set down clearly and practically, the best and most appropriate future development of the area under the jurisdiction of the Planning Commission, to aid the Commission in designing ordinances that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture of Townsend, and to guide the Commission in the performance of its other duties in a manner that achieves the principles of smart, balanced growth, sound planning, and wise resource allocation.

The Community Plan will be a set of statements and land use and development principles for the City of Townsend with accompanying maps, diagrams, charts, and descriptions to give legal standing to the implementation ordinances and other measures of the Planning Commission. Each section of the Community Plan should be consistent with the others in its implementation of the vision section.

Process

The new Community Plan will be developed for eventual adoption by the Planning Commission with further adoption and endorsement by the City Commission. The Planning Commission and the City Commission will actively engage throughout the planning process.

The Planning Commission will establish a Steering Committee to allow focus on the Community Plan efforts while the Planning Commission continues its regular work. The new Community Plan will become a standing item on the Planning Commission agenda in addition to regular business. Regular updates should also be provided at City Commission meetings.

The Steering Committee will establish a Community Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) to help collect and analyze data and information, facilitate community engagement, and draft key sections of the new Community Plan.

A consultant may be engaged to provide expertise and facilitate the work.

Timeline

The timeline for developing, adopting and implementing the Community Plan should consider the resources available, the expediency of having a newly updated plan for decision making, and the desire for community engagement.

Budget

Resources available for the planning process can include:

- Planning Commission/City Commission
- ETDD Planner
- City Staff
- Community Plan Advisory Committee
- Consultant
- City budget
- External sources (Community Block Grant, ETDD interns, TCGA, UTK)

A more detailed budget can be developed as the outline progresses, but at a certain stage it will be useful to establish targets. Costs between \$75,000 and \$150,000 seem typical, but could be more depending on consultant fees, level of public engagement, and other factors. Estimates of expected volunteer hours may be useful. Research into additional sources of funding should be conducted early in the process.

Key Steps in the Planning Process

- Visioning and goal-setting
 - Could include: interviews with stakeholders and “topic experts”, public meetings, focus groups, surveys, Internet tools
 - Output: vision statement which serves to guide the remainder of the planning process
- Data collection
 - Review and synthesis of past plans, studies, reports; census data; regional planning authority data; relevant information from State and County agencies, local sources; legal provisions
 - Output: repository of data and information to support the planning process
- Data and information analysis
 - Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) Analysis
 - Identification of trends and further estimates and predictions of key variables
 - Output: analysis to inform the new Community Plan
- Drafting the new Community Plan
 - Review existing Plan for gaps
 - Identify key sections
 - Vision section
 - Future land use map

- Review and adoption of the new Community Plan
 - Pubic engagement
 - Community Plan Advisory Committee
 - Planning Commission/City Commission
- Implementation and monitoring of the Community Plan
 - Identification of ordinances that may need to be updated

Milestones

- Develop and adopt the scoping document to launch the planning process and provide an initial framework
- Establish a Steering Committee
- Assemble and charge the Community Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC)
- Conduct community engagement to inform about the planning process, identify additional sources of data and information, and solicit input on the vision statement
- Adopt a provisional vision statement which will inform the remainder of the planning process
- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Drafting the new Community Plan
- Review and adoption of the new Community Plan
- Implementation of the new Community Plan

