



City of Townsend Community Land Use & Transportation Plan

2026

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Executive Summary

The Townsend Land Use and Transportation Plan serves as the official policy guide for the City's physical development and preservation over the next decade. As the "Peaceful Side" Townsend faces a unique challenge: balancing its identity as a premier gateway destination with the necessity of maintaining a high quality of life for its residents.

This update transitions the 2010 framework into a modern, actionable strategy. It addresses critical shifts in the community landscape—including the rise of short-term rentals, the evolution of local transportation technology, and the increasing pressure on natural resources. By aligning land-use classifications with infrastructure goals, this plan provides a framework to support sustainable growth that protects Townsend's rural character while fostering a resilient local economy.

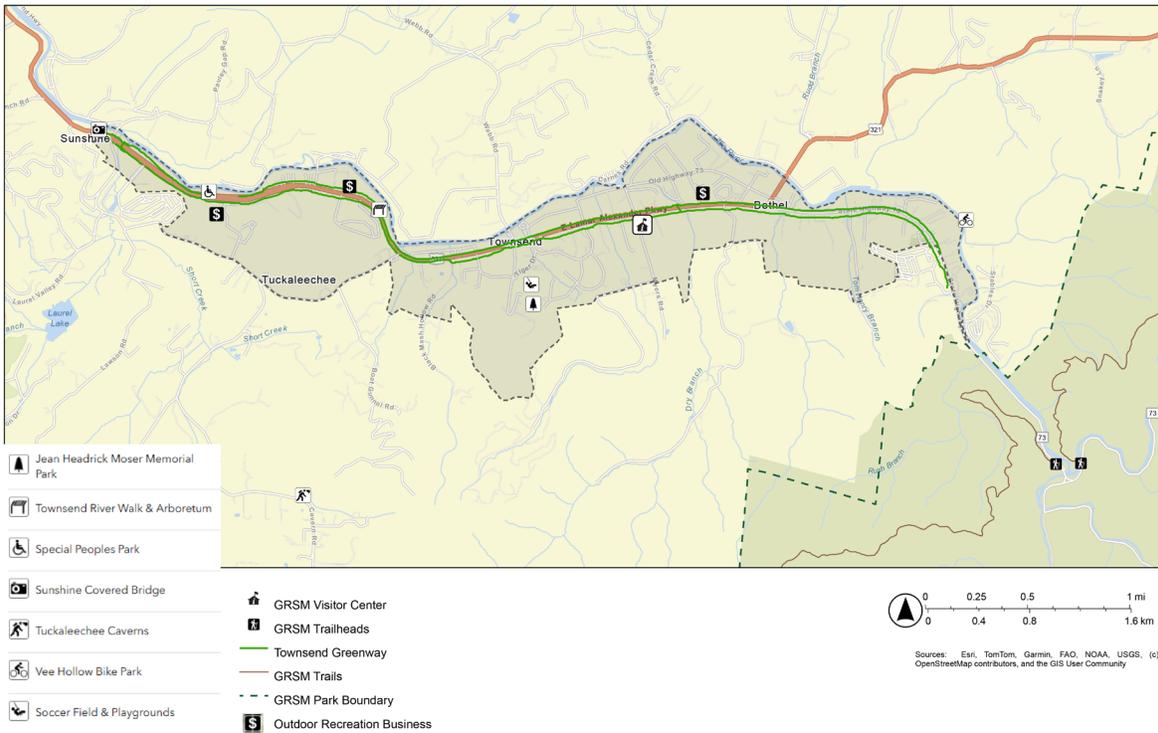
This Plan's Goal:

Planning is the process of choosing a future rather than merely reacting to it. The goal of this plan is to provide community grounded language for decision-making.

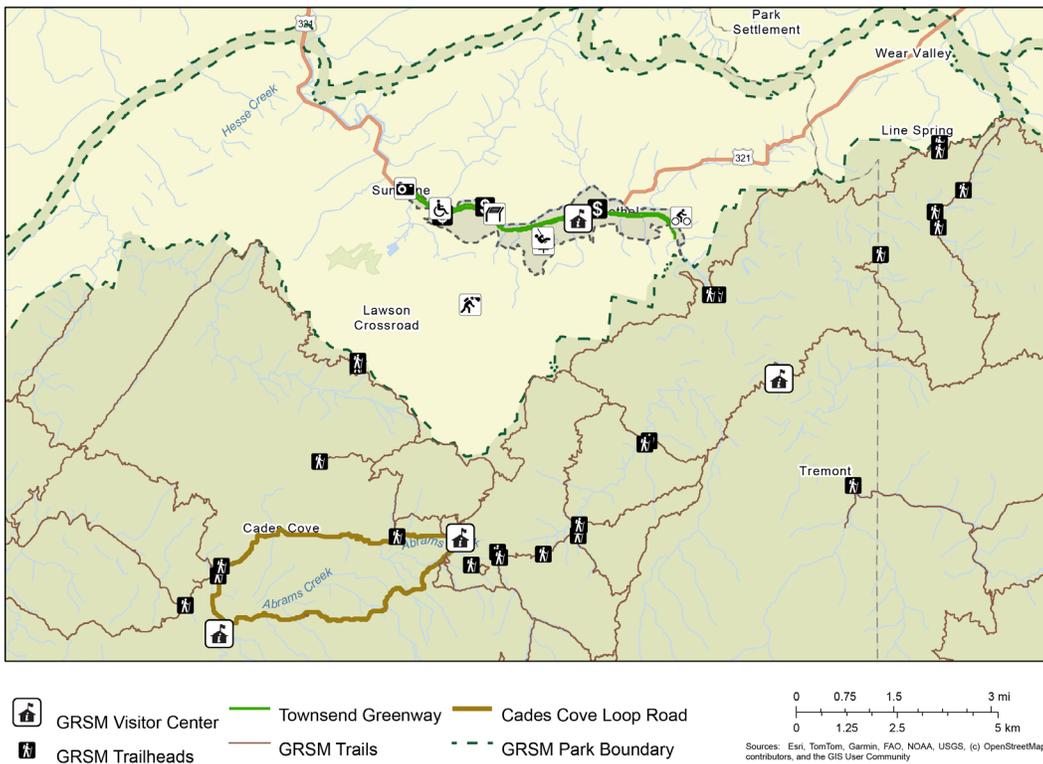
- **Manage Growth:** Ensure new development is compatible with Townsend's unique topography and quiet side vision.
- **Protect Natural Assets:** Safeguard the Little River and the surrounding forest canopy from the impacts of over-development and runoff.
- **Enhance Mobility:** Optimize the Greenway and road networks to safely accommodate residents, tourists, and the growing use of multi modal transportation.
- **Economic Resilience:** Balance a thriving tourism industry with the housing and service needs of a year-round workforce

Study Area

Townsend Local Map



Townsend Regional Map



Study Area

Townsend is situated within Tuckaleechee Cove, a geographically distinct valley at the primary gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP). Encompassing approximately 1,285 acres, the City's topography transitions from the Little River floodplains to steep mountain foothills. As a critical portal for approximately two million annual visitors, Townsend manages a complex balance between its "Peaceful Side" residential identity and its role as a high-volume regional tourism hub. The split of Highway 321 (Lamar Alexander Parkway) serves as the town's central artery, directing traffic either toward the GSMNP entrance or Wears Valley toward Pigeon Forge.

To ensure a comprehensive analysis, this study area extends beyond the corporate limits to include the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), Census Tract 114, and the 37882 zip code. This broader lens is essential for capturing regional trends—driven by the expanding Knoxville metropolitan area—and recognizes that residents throughout the "Cove" rely on Townsend for essential services, commerce, and recreation. By analyzing these overlapping jurisdictions, the Town can better coordinate growth management and protect the shared natural resources that define the Townsend experience.

Planning Team

This update to the Townsend Land Use Plan began in July 2024 and was completed in **March 2026**. The process was designed to be iterative, moving from technical data collection to community-led visioning.

The Team – Who Worked on This?

- **CPAC:** The Community Plan Advisory Committee, a dedicated group of local leaders and residents who provided steering and vetting for every policy recommendation.
- **Consultant Team:** Planning and design experts at SE Group who provided the foundational analysis, mapping, and document production.
- **East Tennessee Development District:** Provided expertise regarding Historic Preservation, ordinances, and resident data analysis
- **Community:** The residents, Business Owners, and visitors whose input shaped the plan's priorities.

Community Engagement: A Pillar of the Plan

Multiple opportunities for engagement were provided through engagement process:

- **CPAC Leadership:** The committee met regularly to reconcile technical data with community values, ensuring the plan remained grounded in local reality.
- **Community Open House:** A public forum where residents reviewed draft maps and strategies. (October 2024)
- **Stakeholder Conversations:** Targeted interviews were conducted with local business owners, environmental advocates, and regional partners like ETDD. These conversations highlighted the need for better "back-of-house" infrastructure to support tourism.
- **Community Survey:** With 791 respondents, the survey provided statistically significant data showing the top priorities of respondents.
- **Monthly Open CPAC meetings:** Open meetings were held monthly to report out on the consultants planning efforts discuss progress and provide a forum for public engagement.

Community Open House, 2024



Vision

The community vision was forged through a robust, iterative process that synthesized quantitative data from 791 survey responses with qualitative feedback from 100+ open house participants. These broad community insights were then funneled into three CPAC work sessions, where facilitated leadership exercises and word cloud analysis were used to distill key priorities into a unified direction. This tiered engagement strategy ensures that the final vision is a direct and defensible reflection of the collective values and strategic goals of the entire community.

We, the citizens, small business owners and leaders of Townsend, cherish our small-town charm and the natural beauty that surrounds us. We value clean water, clear air, mountain views, dark night skies, and the simple pleasures of life.

Our vision is to protect this heritage while embracing thoughtful development that respects our environment and enhances our quality of life.

We will:

- 
Preserve the peace and serenity that defines Townsend, safeguarding our pristine landscapes, clean water, pure air, and dark night skies.
- 
Protect the natural habitats that enrich our lives, ensuring a balanced and thriving ecosystem for generations to come.
- 
Nurture a close-knit community where residents feel a strong sense of belonging, connection, and support.
- 
Welcome visitors to share in the beauty and tranquility of Townsend, inviting them to experience the “Peaceful Side of the Smokies” responsibly and respectfully.
- 
Foster a vibrant local economy that supports homegrown businesses and provides opportunities for all to prosper.
- 
Embrace thoughtful and measured development that enhances our community without compromising its character or natural resources.
- 
Create infrastructure and amenities that benefit both residents and visitors, promoting accessibility, walkability, bike-ability, and access to outdoor recreation.
- 
Celebrate our rich cultural heritage, honoring the Ancient People of the Cove, the Cherokee, and European settlers who shaped Townsend’s history, showcasing their stories through museums, trails, and interpretive displays.

We envision a future where Townsend remains a peaceful respite for residents and visitors, a basecamp for recreational opportunities and an enduring community for generations to come.

How to Use This Plan

This plan is designed to be a living document used daily by:

- **Elected Officials:** To evaluate rezoning requests and budget priorities.
- **Town Staff:** To guide development review and grant applications.
- **Local Organizations:** To align their missions with the Town's long-term goals.
- **Community Members:** To understand the future "look and feel" of their neighborhoods.

Townsend Planning Program

Townsend was chartered as a municipal corporation in 1921. A Board of Commissioners acts as its legislative body. Newly elected commissioners begin serving on the first day of September for a term of four years. During the first meeting, the commissioners decide who will serve as mayor for a term of two years. At the completion of the two years, the mayor may be reappointed for two more years or a new one may be appointed. The mayor appoints members of the Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners appoints the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), which are legal bodies that make decisions within their statutory authority

Municipal Planning Commission

The Townsend Municipal Planning Commission was first established in 1984 by the authority granted by Section 13-4-101 through 13-4-105 of the Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA). The commission has seven members and meets monthly. The planning commission by-laws state that the chairman, vice-chairman, and the secretary shall be elected annually. The planning commission's duties include making reports, adopting a general plan for development, establishing platting regulations, and creating a zoning plan. Subdivision regulations and subsequent amendments do not require legislative action; however, the adoption of a zoning plan or subsequent amendments does require action by the Board of Commissioners. The building official, through the building permit system, enforces zoning and subdivision regulations. The majority of land use decisions within the city are made at this time. The commission has several documents available for guidance including, but not limited to, the zoning ordinance, the subdivision regulations, and the land use plan. The passage of Public Chapter 1101, The Growth Policy Act, provided an additional planning document to guide land use decisions in the State of Tennessee.

The Board of Zoning Appeals

The Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) is a quasi-judicial body required by statute. The board may offer some flexibility in the zoning regulations within the guidelines provided in the ordinance.

Townsend has a five member BZA and derives its powers from the TCA Sections 13-7-205 through Section 13-7-208, which authorize the following:

- 1) To hear and decide appeals based on decisions by a municipality's administrative officials,
- 2) hear and decide special exceptions or interpretations of official maps or special questions, and
- 3) hear and decide variances on the strict application of the zoning regulations.

The Townsend Zoning Regulations do not provide for many special exceptions in the zoning ordinance. A special exception allows the zoning ordinance to be a more flexible document by providing the BZA with the ability to decide if a use or structure meets the intent of a district or purpose stated explicitly in the regulations. As the regulations are amended in the future, the planning commission should decide if special exceptions are an appropriate method of ensuring that the document is flexible and rational.

Growth Management

Tennessee Public Chapter 1101 required cities and counties to evaluate their potential growth over the next twenty years from the year 2000 by defining their responsibility to manage growth, ensure efficient use of land, and provide appropriate public services. The law required that each county prepare a growth plan that places parameters on growth areas within the county identified as municipal urban growth boundaries, county planned growth areas, and rural areas. A county coordinating committee made up of a representative cross-section of the county was established to develop these growth parameters. The county and municipal governments within the county participated in the process by proposing these boundaries based on land needs and public service capabilities. The official map of the Blount County Growth Plan is recorded in the Blount County Register's Office; however, Illustration 2 is a representation of that map. The land use of parcels within the urban growth boundary is also included and discussed below. Townsend may not annex any territory outside of the proposed urban growth boundary unless the boundary is amended or an annexation by referendum occurs as allowed under TCA Section 6-58-111.2.

The total area of land within the urban growth boundary (UGB) is 1,911 acres and is mostly comprised of residential uses. The majority of the city's UGB extends north of the current municipal limits. Some areas to the south are also included; however, these areas are not contiguous to each other. Commercial uses are sporadically located and include a number of campgrounds. A significant portion of the land area consists of large lots.

The transportation network is connected through narrow, windy roads in the northern area. Roads outside of City Limits but within the UGB are disconnected and generally serve a small number of homes. The exception is Black Mash Hollow Road. It serves a number of small lots and is dangerously narrow. All roads in the UGB except for Wears Valley Road is maintained by Blount County.



Chapter 2: Natural Features

Climate

Townsend, Tennessee, is experiencing subtle but important shifts in climate that have implications for land use and infrastructure planning. The area now receives an average of 57.06 inches of precipitation annually, up from previous estimates, and experiences about 287 frost-free days each year—indicating a longer growing season and fewer days below freezing. Looking ahead, regional projections show that average temperatures are expected to rise, with more frequent extreme heat events that could place added stress on roads, utilities, and public health systems. Heavier and more intense rainfall is also expected, increasing the risk of localized flooding, particularly in low-lying or poorly drained areas.

These climate trends—combined with recent flooding events that have already impacted local roads and property—highlight the need for resilient infrastructure and careful land management. Resources such as TDOT’s Transportation Resilience Improvement Plan, and climate tools like the Climate Explorer, provide valuable data and strategies for adapting to these changes. Planning with these factors in mind will help ensure that Townsend remains a safe, sustainable, and thriving community in the face of future climate pressures.

Climate Projections

Consistent with the National Climate Assessment for the Southeastern United States, Townsend should prepare for the following indicators through 2050:

- **Rising Temperatures:** An expected increase in "extreme heat days" (above 95°F) and significantly higher overnight minimum temperatures. This impacts energy cooling costs and puts additional heat stress on cold-water aquatic life in the Little River.
- **Precipitation Volatility:** Projections suggest a "swing" effect—longer periods of late-summer drought interrupted by more violent, intense rain events in the spring and winter.
- **Indicators for Planning:** The City should monitor the **USDA Plant Hardiness Zone** shifts; Townsend has historically sat in Zone 7a/7b, but a shift toward Zone 8 would necessitate a change in the species of trees and vegetation recommended for municipal landscaping and reforestation efforts.

Recommendation: Use land use planning to address the evolving climate challenges in Townsend.

Strategy: Development should be restricted in flood-prone areas, particularly low-lying or poorly drained zones, with updated zoning guided by floodplain mapping and hydrological modeling.

Strategy: Prioritize smart growth through compact, mixed-use development and the revitalization of underutilized urban areas to limit sprawl and preserve natural landscapes.

Recommendation: Update Townsend’s infrastructure to support climate resiliency.

Strategy: Establish green buffers and riparian zones along waterways to help absorb excess runoff and protect natural systems. Integrate green infrastructure—such as rain gardens, bioswales, and permeable surfaces—into both public and private developments to further reduce stormwater impacts, while native vegetation can stabilize soils and enhance resilience.

Strategy: Upgrade infrastructure, including retrofitting stormwater systems to manage heavier rainfall and implementing detention basins and constructed wetlands.

Strategy: Roads in flood-prone areas should be elevated or reinforced, and utility systems must be protected from heat stress and flood damage.

Strategy: Emergency preparedness should be strengthened through redundant systems for critical infrastructure and improved early warning and evacuation protocols to safeguard public health and safety during extreme weather events.

Air Quality

Air quality in Townsend currently meets national standards for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and 8-hour ozone, with AirNow reporting annual index values of 50 and 46, respectively. This means the region is in *attainment* for these key pollutants, thus indicating air quality levels are within the limits set by the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). By contrast, a *non-attainment* area is defined under U.S. environmental law as one that fails to meet these standards and must implement specific air quality improvement plans or risk losing certain types of federal funding.

While Townsend is currently in good standing, ongoing monitoring remains critical as emissions from vehicles continue to be a primary contributor to air pollution nationwide. Nationally, over 25% of all vehicle trips have less than one mile—a behavior pattern that presents both a challenge and opportunity for reducing emissions through better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. Townsend’s current land use plan already acknowledges this, noting that the lack of safe non-automotive travel options can discourage walking or biking even for short trips. Improved data—potentially from TDOT’s Streetlight Insights platform or local GIS resources—could help refine local trip patterns and guide transportation planning.

If Townsend’s air quality designation has shifted from non-attainment to attainment in the past, this would reflect successful emissions reductions, with positive implications for health outcomes and access to federal resources. Continued coordination with TDEC’s Air Pollution Control Division and regional partners will be essential to preserve and build on this progress.

Recommendation: Reduce the frequency of short vehicle trips, especially those under one mile.

Strategy: Invest in well-designed pedestrian and cycling paths between and amongst destinations which could promote active pedal transportation and reduce reliance on vehicles and the parking lots to accommodate them at each destination.

Strategy: Consider transit or a centralized parking facility on either or both ends of town.

Strategy: Include this recommendation and strategies into future land use and transportation planning decisions.

Topography

Townsend’s distinctive topography—defined by rolling hills, forested ridgelines, and the Little River floodplain—shapes much of the city’s character and land use considerations. In recent years, concerns have grown around development on steep slopes, particularly as it relates to erosion, stormwater runoff, and occasional mudslide risks. While large-scale slope failures have not been common, the cumulative impacts of construction and increased impervious surfaces on hillside terrain have made appropriate site planning more important than ever. Regulations are either in place or under consideration to guide development in these sensitive areas, including provisions for stormwater control, the safe placement of structures, and stronger oversight in flood-prone zones.

The City has expressed growing interest in protecting the Little River and its adjoining floodplain by tightening restrictions on permanent structures within flood zones, while considering limited development flexibility for parcels that straddle both floodplain and non-floodplain areas.

Additionally, Townsend’s scenic viewsheds—from gateway entry points to key vantage areas along ridgelines—play a vital role in the city’s identity and tourism appeal. Preserving these viewsheds through thoughtful planning and sensitive site design will be essential as development interest increases, helping to maintain both environmental integrity and the small-town character that defines Townsend.

Recommendation: Reduce risks of erosion, stormwater runoff, and mudslides through development regulations.

Strategy: Strengthen slope development regulations, require erosion control measures, stormwater management systems, and geotechnical assessments for construction on steep terrain.

Recommendation: Topography creates the "Viewsheds" that define the Townsend experience. Preserving these views is essential to the City’s status as a premier gateway.

Strategy: The view from **Highway 321 (Lamar Alexander Parkway)** is the most critical viewshed. Maintaining the "Green Wall" of the surrounding ridges ensures that the entry into Townsend remains distinct from more densely developed tourist hubs.

Strategy: The view of the Little River from the Greenway must be protected from intrusive structures or excessive clear-cutting, preserving the natural interface between the water and the valley.

Strategy: Develop policies to strictly limit the height and lighting of structures built on the high ridges to prevent "skylining," ensuring that the silhouettes of the mountains remain the dominant visual feature of the horizon.

National Scenic Preservation Resources

- **Scenic America:** Provides benchmarks for the National Scenic Byways program and professional guidelines for visual clutter mitigation.
- **International Dark-Sky Association (IDA):** Offers technical standards for "Dark Sky Community" certification and effective outdoor lighting ordinances.
- **The Trust for Public Land (Conservation Vision):** Resources for GIS-based viewshed modeling and land conservation prioritization.

Drainage Patterns and Flooding

Townsend's drainage patterns are heavily shaped by the presence of the Little River, which is prone to periodic flooding that affects both the built and natural environments. While no catastrophic floods have occurred recently, several events have demonstrated the river's capacity to overflow and disrupt normal drainage flows, whereby these events sometimes follow patterns different than anticipated.

Flooding in Townsend has led to property damage, limited access to emergency services and utilities, and temporary transportation shutdowns, all of which affect the community's economic and physical resilience. According to First Street Foundation data, about **51.7% of properties in Townsend are currently at risk of flooding**, a figure projected to remain stable (at 51.9%) over the next 30 years.

Though heavy rainfall is always a concern, the city's greater vulnerability may come from hurricane-related systems moving inland. Townsend participates in flood risk monitoring through FEMA and may benefit from updated hazard maps that incorporate building footprints to better assess risk areas. The city is also engaged with flood mitigation programs, including initiatives from the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and a proposed regional stormwater detention pond under Blount County Emergency Management. The Blount County Hazard Mitigation Plan was recently updated and approved, highlighting areas in which regional coordination is essential.

Going forward, strengthening Townsend's participation in programs like the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and investing in updated stormwater infrastructure will be key to reducing vulnerability, especially in areas adjacent to the Little River. For additional planning and mitigation support, contacts like Josh Frazier at TDEC and ongoing studies like the Blount County Flood Study will be critical resources.

Recent Events: While the record flood of 1994 (peaking at nearly 18 feet at the Townsend gauge) remains the benchmark, the last decade has seen an increase in "nuisance flooding" and high-water events. Notable spikes in 2019 and December 2022 caused localized Greenway closures and required emergency management monitoring of low-lying commercial areas.

Drainage Overlap: Increased precipitation intensity places higher stress on existing culverts and natural drainage swales. Future land-use decisions must prioritize "Green Infrastructure" to absorb runoff, as the soil's saturation point is being reached more frequently than in previous decades.

Recommendation: Protect the Little River floodplain to minimize flood risks and maintain ecological balance.

Strategy: Create more strict zoning and building codes in the floodplain. Consider more flexible approaches, such as transfer of development rights or cluster development to offer landowners viable alternatives.

Strategy: Promote low-impact development techniques, including permeable surfaces, vegetated buffers, and minimal grading, will further support natural drainage and reduce runoff.

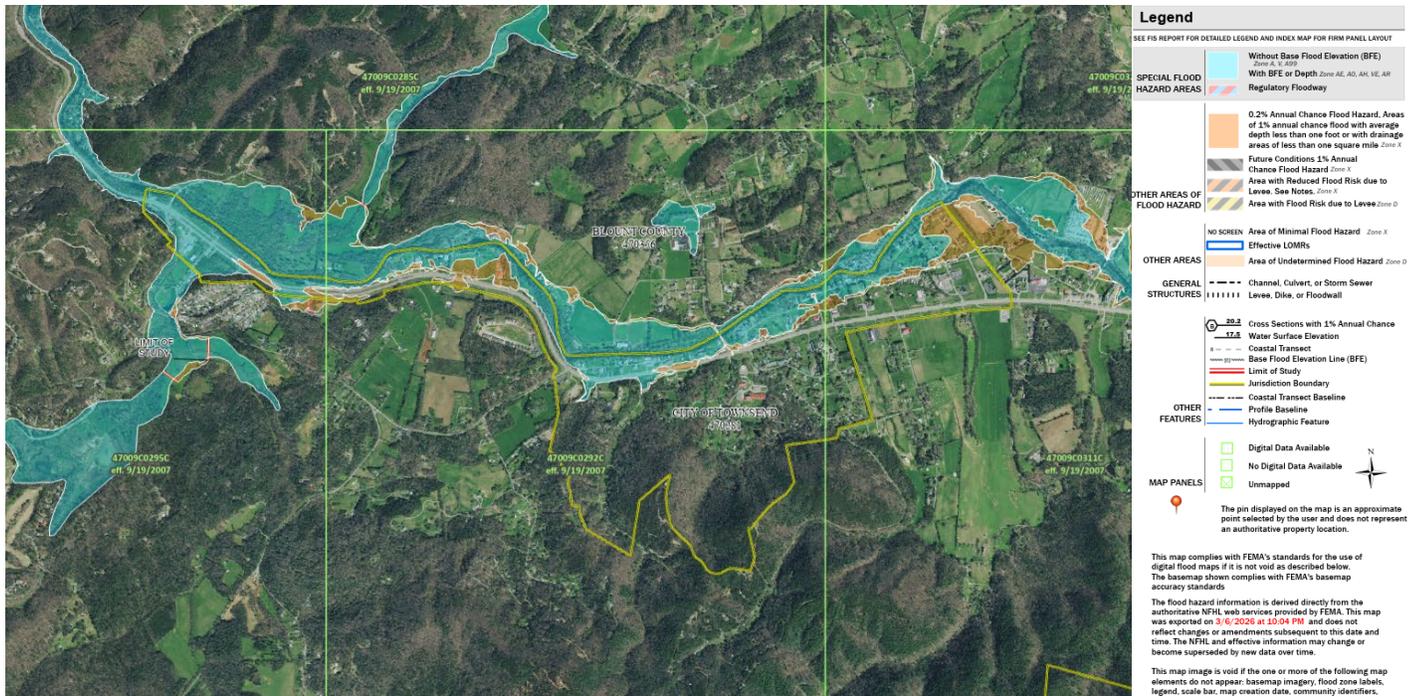
Recommendation: Improve Townsend's flood mitigation and management strategies.

Strategy: Update hazard mapping and predictive tools with refined topographic data and building footprints to guide future development and emergency planning.

Strategy: Support the development of a regional stormwater detention pond to further mitigate flood impacts.

Strategy: Renew and enhance regional coordination, playing an active role in shaping regional flood strategies. Ongoing studies like the Blount County Flood Study should inform land use and infrastructure decisions.

Strategy: Improve emergency access and resilience by identifying and reinforcing vulnerable utility corridors and transportation routes. Develop contingency plans for service continuity during flood events.



Townsend TN National Flood Hazard Layer, Retrieved 2026

Water Quality

The Little River is a defining natural feature of Townsend and remains one of the region's cleanest waterways, particularly near its headwaters in the Great Smoky Mountains. However, as the river flows downstream, it becomes more vulnerable to pollution and runoff from development, roads, and septic systems.

While the Little River is not considered heavily polluted, it is important to continue watershed protection, especially as growth increases. Water-based recreation – such as swimming, tubing, kayaking, and fishing – is a common activity in Townsend for residents and visitors alike.

Degraded water quality has the potential to impact not only the quality of drinking water for the entire county, but also the quality of life for residents and the local recreation-based economy. Stormwater runoff remains a key concern; regulations exist to guide its management, and older land use plans provide a framework for updating these guidelines.

Most of Townsend is served by a municipal water system overseen by the local utility district, which is considered adequate for current needs, though future growth may require expanded capacity. Private wells also serve some rural areas. The region's soil and terrain are generally suitable for **modern septic systems**, which—when properly maintained—offer an environmentally sound alternative for wastewater treatment. Nonetheless, runoff and system

failure risks increase with density, making it critical to monitor and regulate development in sensitive watershed areas.

Additional water quality planning resources are available through the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) and organizations like the Little River Watershed Association, which help track pollution sources and advocate for responsible water stewardship.

Recommendation: Protect and preserve the Little River as a critical natural asset.

Strategy: Implement stricter development controls in sensitive watershed areas to reduce pollution from development and roads. Update stormwater regulations using best practices to address increasing runoff as development density rises.

Strategy: Require regular septic system inspections to ensure proper function and oversight. Provide public education on septic system care and maintenance to prevent failures and protect water quality.

Recommendation: Plan for sustainable water infrastructure to support future growth.

Strategy: Strategically plan for expansion of the municipal water system to maintain continued service and protect water quality as the community grows.

Recommendation: Strengthen water quality monitoring and regional partnerships.

Strategy: Continue ongoing monitoring of the Little River to inform policy decisions.

Strategy: Coordinate with TDEC and the Little River Watershed Association to track pollution sources and promote responsible watershed stewardship.

Soils

The soils in Townsend remain a critical factor in guiding responsible land use, development, and environmental protection. Current analysis based on NRCS data indicates no major changes in the classification or distribution of soil types across the region. A variety of soil types—approximately 25 identified in the Blount County Soil Survey—affect the suitability of land for construction, agriculture, and wastewater treatment. Most notably, soil suitability for **septic systems** varies widely across Townsend, with certain areas, especially those near the floodplain, requiring careful percolation testing and engineering to ensure safe, long-term performance.

Mapping available through the **NRCS Web Soil Survey** and Blount County’s GIS office can help identify soil constraints and opportunities, including septic suitability zones. These soil patterns also intersect with **archaeologically sensitive areas**, particularly in the **Tuckaleechee Cove** and along the floodplain of the Little River and its tributaries.

Historic and pre-contact Native American settlements are known to have occupied this region, and the **Tennessee Division of Archaeology** recommends heightened caution and formal

evaluation (as required under **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act**) when federal permitting or ground disturbance is involved. Future planning efforts in Townsend should integrate updated soil data, archaeological insights, and environmental constraints to ensure land use decisions preserve both ecological and cultural resources.

NRCS Classifications and Development Suitability

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) identifies 25 distinct soil series in the Townsend area. This high degree of variation necessitates site-specific soil testing for all proposed developments. The NRCS rates soils based on their suitability for structures and septic systems:

- **Not Limited / Somewhat Limited:** These soils have favorable load-bearing strength and moderate drainage. The highest concentrations of these soils are located **south of Highway 321/73** (between Chestnut Hills and Sundown Resort).
- **Very Limited:** A "Very Limited" rating indicates significant constraints, such as high water tables, steep slopes, or proximity to bedrock. While development is possible, these sites require expensive soil reclamation, specialized engineering, and higher long-term maintenance costs.

The Septic Constraint

The majority of soils within municipal limits are rated as Very Limited for septic tank absorption fields. This has two critical implications for Townsend's growth:

1. **Increased Lot Sizes:** Soil capacity, rather than zoning minimums, often dictates the required area for a functional septic drainage field. This naturally limits residential density.
2. **Engineering Costs:** Developers must often utilize alternative or "extraordinary" septic system designs to meet health and safety standards, increasing the overall cost of housing and commercial projects.

Land Use Strategy

Future land-use mechanisms, such as overlay districts, should prioritize high-density or commercial development in areas with "Not Limited" soils to maximize infrastructure efficiency and protect the hydrological integrity of the valley.

Recommendation: Ensure development aligns with soil suitability to protect public health and environmental quality.

Strategy: Require site-specific soil evaluations and percolation testing, particularly near the Little River floodplain. Provide public education on septic system maintenance and proper land use practices. Conduct routine inspections to ensure continued system performance and environmental protection.

Strategy: Enforce engineered septic system standards in areas with marginal or variable soils to ensure long-term functionality.

Strategy: Integrate NRCS Web Soil Survey data and Blount County GIS information into development review procedures. Utilize planning tools that overlay soil suitability, floodplain boundaries, and archaeological zones to guide appropriate land use decisions.

Recommendation: Protect archaeologically sensitive areas during development.

Strategy: Require compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for projects involving federal permits or ground disturbance.

Strategy: Approach development in areas such as Tuckaleechee Cove and the Little River floodplain with heightened review and formal archaeological evaluations where required.

Wildfire Hazards

Wildfires are a natural hazard that has been affecting eastern Tennessee with increased frequency and severity over the past decade. Wildfires have become more common in the areas surrounding Townsend due to a number of environmental factors, including increased periods of drought, higher temperatures, and extreme wind. While some recent regional wildfires have been large in scale, others have been smaller but have threatened many homes in the Wildland–Urban Interface (WUI), highlighting the importance of regional coordination and proactive wildfire mitigation efforts.

Recent Regional Fires

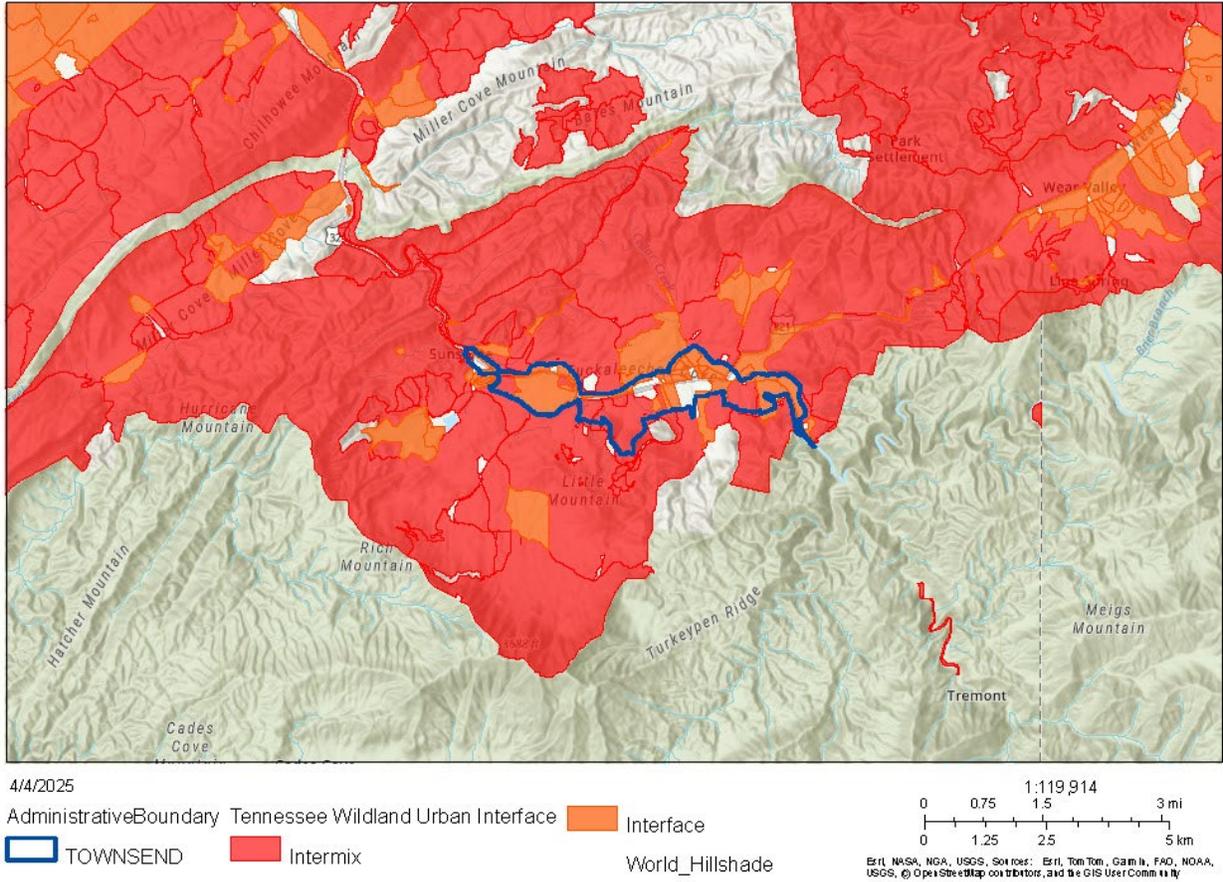
- Great Smoky Mountains Wildfire, 2016, burned 17,900 acres, caused 14 deaths and 190 injuries.
- Sevier County Wildfire, March 2025, 30-40 acres

Recommendation: Strengthen wildfire preparedness and risk mitigation efforts to protect Townsend from increasing regional wildfire threats.

Strategy: Incorporate wildfire risk assessment and mitigation planning into local emergency management and land use planning efforts.

Strategy: Coordinate with regional, state, and federal partners to monitor wildfire activity and enhance community awareness, preparedness, and response capacity based on lessons learned from recent regional fires.

Townsend WUI



Townsend WUI Map, 2025



Chapter 3: Cultural Resources

This section provides an overview of cultural resource practices as well as an accounting of previous cultural resource survey and research findings pertaining to Townsend. A historic context for Townsend follows to provide a framework for assessing the current built environment. A brief overview of historic and potentially historic resources is included in this chapter. Recommendations can be found in Chapter 7, “Implementation Methods.” A comprehensive list of resources is included at the end of this chapter to aid in future research (“Cultural Resources References”).

Introduction

Congress passed legislation referred to as the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966, creating the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO).

The NHPA formalized and professionalized cultural resource management, spurring heritage tourism, and communities nationwide came to realize there was a link between economic development and the historic preservation of cultural resources. The NHPA was the first national policy governing the historic preservation of cultural resources, and it would shape the fate of many cultural and historic sites over the next half-century. Today, the federal government regulates the identification of cultural and historic resources during any project requiring federal funding or permitting, and sanctions various historic preservation incentives for cultural resource property owners and local governments.

Definitions

The **National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)** is the official list of the Nation’s historic cultural resources worthy of historic preservation. Authorized by the NHPA, the National Park Service’s NRHP is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America’s historic cultural resources, both above and below ground. It is important to note listing in the NRHP places no federal restrictions or requirements on a private property owner.

Historical significance is derived from associations with historic events, historic persons, notable architecture, or potential to derive information from archeological evidence. To be considered historically significant, resources typically must be at least 50 years old and retain integrity, or the ability to convey their historic and cultural significance through location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and/or association.

A **local historic district** is defined by the local government with the creation of an overlay zoning district. While an NRHP historic district identifies and documents, protection of historic resources only happens at the local government level. Local historic districting does not require properties to be determined eligible for listing in the NRHP. Local designation is at the behest of the

municipality, depending on what the community determines to be historically and culturally significant, and therefore worth protection at the local level.

Federal government incentives are managed by the National Park Service (NPS) and include the Historic Preservation Fund and the Historic Tax Credit program.

The **Historic Preservation Fund** is a multi-faceted grant program that provides funding for the historic preservation of cultural resources. Grant programs vary, and can include preservation planning, research, survey, and capital projects.

The **Federal Historic Tax Credit program**, managed in partnership between the NPS and the Internal Revenue Service, encourages private investment in the substantial rehabilitation of NRHP-listed and NRHP-eligible buildings. It is considered one of the country's most successful and cost-effective community revitalization programs. Eligible projects earn a 20% income tax credit for property owners substantially rehabilitating certified historic structures considered depreciable under the Internal Revenue Code. Buildings must be put into income-producing use at the end of the rehabilitation project.

Previous Historic Preservation Efforts and Research

Previous research provides guidance for future surveys and research. Below is a chronological overview of previous research discovered during the records review.

The Tennessee General Commission passed legislation in 1921 providing the Tennessee SHPO, known as the **Tennessee Historical Commission**, authority to “properly mark and preserve battlefields, houses, and other places celebrated in the history of the state.” This created the **Tennessee State Historic Markers Program**. This program placed two historic markers within the City of Townsend in the 1950s: “Tuckaleechee Villages,” paying tribute to the Cherokee settlements located along the Little River in Tuckaleechee Cove prior to 1791 (marker replaced in 1981); and “John Mitchel,” recognizing the Irish patriot’s connections to Tuckaleechee Cove (marker replaced in 1986). A third historical marker was placed within the City of Townsend in 1998: “The Little River Lumber Company,” marking the former site of the mill complex.

In the 1970s, ETDD assisted with an NRHP nomination for the **Little River Lumber Company Office** (NRHP-listed 1974). Unfortunately, this resource was lost to fire in 1986 and subsequently removed from the NRHP.¹

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture developed a bicentennial project (1975-1976) honoring family farmers who maintained family land in agricultural production for a century or longer. This public program is known as the **Tennessee Century Farms Program**. Two century farms are located within the corporate limits of the City of Townsend: the Laverne Farmer Farm (founded 1824) and the J. L. Burns Farm (founded 1849).²

In 1989, Thomason and Associates compiled a **Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF)** titled *The Historic and Architectural Resources of Blount County, Tennessee*. This cover document provides a framework for nominating historically significant properties that share common historic contexts. The Blount County Historic Trust initiated the project with a county-wide survey in the early 1980s, obtaining a matching grant from the THC to fund the project. A second matching grant was obtained to fund the MPDF. Of the NRHP-eligible properties identified and listed in the NRHP, one is located within Townsend corporate limits: the **John F. Shea House** (NRHP-listed 1989).³

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) conducted a cultural resource assessment as required prior to any proposed undertaking by regulations set forth in 36 CFR 800 (Section 106, Appendix A) in the late 1990s. TDOT proposed road improvements at that time, specifically to construct additional lanes to the existing U.S. Highway 321/East Lamar Alexander Parkway through Townsend. The survey did not identify any previously unidentified resources as eligible for listing in the NRHP. The THC concurred with their findings. The TDOT report noted that many of the buildings constructed prior to 1940 had been destroyed, relocated, or heavily altered throughout Townsend, mostly due to previous roadway expansions to provide access to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.⁴

Between 2000 and 2001, the ETDD assisted Blount County with a grant application for the TDOT Transportation Enhancement Program. The project proposed was a bike trail referred to as “**Shadows of the Past Historic Bike Trail**” featuring 40 marked historic sites. The grant was awarded, and the City of Townsend now features the Townsend Historical Trail complete with interpretive signage and 13 historic sites along the trail showcasing various aspects of Townsend’s history. This biking trail also connects public history sites within Townsend, including the Little River Railroad & Lumber Company Museum, the Great Smoky Mountain Heritage Center, the Great Smokies Welcome Center, and the Townsend Visitor Center, as well as parks, hotels, restaurants, and other businesses. The Townsend Visitor Center offers a brochure containing a historical overview.⁵

The Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area (TN Civil War NHA) authored *The National Heritage Area Program and Blount County, Tennessee: A Feasibility Study* in 2005 based on the results of a community forum that emphasized a local desire for a federally-designated **National Heritage Area**. According to the National Park Service, which oversees the program, “National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape. Through their resources, NHAs tell nationally important stories that celebrate our nation’s diverse heritage. NHAs are lived-in landscapes. Consequently, NHA entities collaborate with communities to determine how to make heritage relevant to local interests and needs.”⁶

The goal of the feasibility study was “to provide options for Blount County that will enable the region to sustain economic development while conserving the cultural heritage, rural character, natural resources and living landscapes that make the area unique.” The Townsend Planning Commission was listed as an interested partner in the resulting document.⁷

The **Townsend Archaeological Project** (1999-2002) was one of the numerous Blount County resources highlighted within the feasibility study. This was the largest archaeological field project TDOT ever performed. Archaeological evidence discovered during the project eventually inspired the creation of the Great Smoky Mountains Heritage Center, located within the City of Townsend and established in 2005. The discoveries made during the Townsend Archaeological Project represented significant developments toward preserving and sharing the Native American story of the Appalachian region.

TDOT conducted another historic architecture assessment in 2024 due to the proposed transfer of maintenance of property along the right-of-way; no construction activities were proposed. This survey only considered TDOT owner property, which consisted of four bridges or culverts. None of these resources were determined eligible for listing in the NRHP.⁸

Townsend: Historic Context

The City of Townsend is situated within Tuckaleechee Cove at the base of the Smoky Mountains. The Little River travels through the Cove and has supported human habitation for millennia. Archaeological research has revealed that the Native Americans traveled through this region since at least 2000 BC, and evidence of permanent settlements date back to approximately 1200 AD. The Cherokee established multiple villages along the Little River in Tuckaleechee Cove supporting a large population in the 1600s and 1700s. This precontact history is explored at the Great Smoky Mountains Heritage Center, where artifacts discovered during the Townsend Archaeological Project (1999-2002) are exhibited.

European Americans arrived in the late 1700s after the Cherokee had abandoned their villages along the Little River. Blount County formed from Knox County in 1795; however, Tuckaleechee Cove would not be legitimately settled until later that decade. Despite this, settlers arrived in Tuckaleechee Cove in the 1790s, as evidenced by Myers Cemetery, located on the south side of E Lamar Alexander parkway, marked by a sign reading “Founded 1795, Oldest Burial Ground in Tuckaleechee Cove.” Graves at Myers Cemetery date back to at least 1797. Records suggest at least one dozen families inhabited Tuckaleechee Cove by 1800.

One of the first settlers, John Walker, constructed a mill on the Little River in the 1790s. Churches formed beginning in 1802 and a post office established in 1833. The location along the Little River inspired the development of grist mills, sawmills, and cotton gins. By 1869 records indicate almost 100 families inhabited Tuckaleechee Cove. The lumber industry amplified through the

second half of the 1800s, propelled by the invention of the band saw and the logging railroad. By the 1880s,

In 1900, Colonel W. B. Townsend purchased approximately 86,000 acres of land, including land within Tuckaleechee Cove. Colonel Townsend established the Little River Lumber Company in 1901. The company became one of the most successful commercial logging operations in southern Appalachia. Tuckaleechee Cove was renamed Townsend, after Colonel W. B. Townsend, in 1902. To facilitate the transportation of the lumber product, Colonel Townsend developed a railroad from Maryville to the neighboring community of Walland in 1902, and the railroad extended into Townsend by 1903. The section of railroad tracks connecting Maryville to Townsend and further east into the logging communities of Tremont and Elkmont became known as the Little River Railroad.

The Little River Lumber Company constructed housing for their workers, predominantly located between the Little River and the Little River Railroad tracks. The Company also constructed an office building, depot, company store, and a church and parsonage. The federal government purchased thousands of acres of the Little River Lumber Company's land in 1927 during their preparations to develop the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP). Due to this purchase coupled with the removal of the vast majority of trees in the previous decades, the Little River Lumber Company ceased operations in 1938. By 1941, the major Little River Lumber Company resources, the railroad and the sawmill, were removed, the National Park Service created an entrance to the GSMNP at Townsend, and the park was formally dedicated.

The closure of the Little River Lumber Company and the opening of the GSMNP just before World War II quickly shifted Townsend from a logging town to a tourism hub. Before and after the war, roadways were improved through the region to support the growing amount of automobile traffic. During this time, dozens of Little River Lumber Company buildings were demolished and some were relocated. As was common in the 1950s during the post-war boom and the popularization of automobile travel, several commercial establishments catering to tourism were developed along the new roadways, which would continue through the 1960s and 1970s. Townsend became more popular as a tourist destination and gateway to the GSMNP, earning the moniker "Peaceful Side of the Smokies," by comparison to the other Tennessee entrance to the park at Gatlinburg.

The construction of commercial buildings, short-term lodging, and other amenities catering to the tourists continues to this day as Townsend relies on tourism, the biggest industry for the area.

Townsend: Cultural Resources Assessment

The cultural resources within the City of Townsend are best summarized and catalogued under three building campaigns:

- European American Settlement Period (ca 1795-1900)

- Little River Lumber Company era (ca 1901-1938)
- National Park Tourism Era (ca 1939-1970s)

Please note that the practice of historic preservation of cultural resources adopts a 50-year-threshold for buildings to be considered potentially historic, therefore the building campaigns discussed in this chapter only account for those buildings constructed up to the 1970s.

European American Settlement Period (ca 1795-1900): There are approximately 10 resources dating to the European American Settlement Period within Townsend corporate limits, the majority of which are private residences, some of which are farmsteads with outbuildings.

Little River Lumber Company Era (ca 1901-1938): There are approximately 25 resources dating to the Little River Lumber Company Era within Townsend corporate limits, less than half of which are believed to have been constructed by the Little River Lumber Company. While resources constructed during this building campaign are not necessarily related to or constructed by the Little River Lumber Company, the operation of the Little River Lumber Company during this time was inevitably a primary factor propelling growth.

National Park Tourism Era (ca 1939-1970s): There are over 100 resources dating to the National Park Tourism Era within Townsend corporate limits, over half of which are residential. Many of these resources are commercial, most notably several overnight lodging accommodations developed to support the growing tourism industry.

A chart inventorying select cultural resources follows.

Table X: Select Cultural Resources

Description	Built (approx.)	Building Campaign	Ownership	Address	Status
Myers Cemetery	1795	European American Settlement Period	Nonprofit (Myers Cemetery Preservation Association)	Myers Road Townsend, TN 37882	Further study recommended
Walland Depot	1901	Little River Lumber Co. Era	Nonprofit (Little River Railroad & Lumber Company)	7747 East Lamar Alexander Parkway Townsend, TN 37882	Currently Ineligible (moved in 1983)
John F. Shea House	1904	Little River Lumber Co. Era	Private (residential)	7713 River Road Towsend, TN 37882	NRHP-Listed

Swinging Bridge	1905	Little River Lumber Co. Era	Private (residential)	7802 West Old Hwy 73 Townsend, TN 37882	Further study recommended
Former Townsend High School	1920	Little River Lumber Co. Era	Public (Blount County Board of Education)	133 Tiger Drive Townsend, TN 37882	Further study recommended
Dam (Previous Mill Site)	1934	Little River Lumber Co. Era	None (located at/near the Riverstone Campground)	East Lamar Alexander Parkway (near 8277) Townsend, TN 37882	Further study recommended
Tally Ho Inn and Restaurant / Carriage House Restaurant	1950-1993	National Park Tourism Era	Private (commercial)	8310 - 8314 TN-73 Townsend, TN 37882	Further study recommended
Former Townsend Dance Hall	1963	National Park Tourism Era	Private (commercial)	7277 East Lamar Alexander Parkway Townsend, TN 37882	Further study recommended
Tremont Lodge and Resort	1972	National Park Tourism Era	Private (commercial)	7728 East Lamar Alexander Parkway Townsend, TN 37882	Further study recommended

Recommendations

Zoning and Subdivision Regulations

Recommendation: Define desired Townsend aesthetic. State community goals to protect cultural resources, control development, and define a desired aesthetic.

Historic resource survey identified numerous properties exhibiting the National Park Service Rustic style, known colloquially as “Parkitecture.” These resources feature details meant to mimic the buildings located within neighboring Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Buildings exhibiting this style were often designed to blend into the natural landscapes and be less obtrusive. Specific features include stone cladding (both real and faux), wood accents, and board-and-batten siding.

A design review board can exercise control over development in a defined zone by adopting design guidelines and reviewing all conceptual plans for new construction, alteration, repair, rehabilitation, and relocation or demolition of any building within the defined zone for compliance with those design guidelines.

Strategy: Establish a design review board by local ordinance (Legal basis: State of Tennessee enabling legislation, TN Code § 5-1-129); identify the target zone for design review; draft and adopt design guidelines; involve current property owners and make a plan to inform future property owners.

Code Enforcement

Recommendation: Incentivize the preservation and adaptive reuse of the existing built environment over new construction.

Growth Management and Annexation

Recommendation: Incentivize maintaining agricultural parcels, such as the Century Farms. Laverne Farmer Farm (ca 1824) is only partially located within City limits but maintains its agricultural character. JL Burns Farm has already been subdivided and developed, with further development occurring at present. While still in its infancy, Tennessee recently passed the Farmland Preservation Act, designed to assist farmers who wish to protect their land through permanent conservation easements.

Strategy: Consider adopting easements and/or deed restrictions to maintain agricultural parcels.

Cultural Resources

Recommendation: Generate a historic preservation plan to create an agenda for future preservation activities and establish goals.

Townsend retains numerous mid-century resources constructed to capture the “peaceful side of the smokies” motif, exhibited by stone and wood accents on many of these commercial resources. Over time, the adoption of historic overlay zoning in the form of a local historic district may become more relevant in Townsend as resources dating to the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s approach the 50-year threshold typically considered in historic preservation practice. The design review board target zone (Recommendation 1) may inform future historic zoning overlay.

Strategy: Establish a focus area for a future historic zoning overlay (Legal basis: State of Tennessee enabling legislation, TN Code § 13-7-404).

Recommendation: Hire a consultant firm to generate a formal Historic Preservation Plan (HPP) to address and plan for historic preservation goals. An HPP can be customized to suit the needs of the municipality, but often includes a historic resources survey and would expand upon the historic preservation goals, strategies, opportunities, and incentives outlined in this chapter.

Strategy: Identify historic preservation goals and a geographical focus area; apply for the Historic Preservation Fund matching grant program through the Tennessee Historical Commission/National Park Service to fund the HPP

Recommendation: Pursue National Heritage Area (NHA) status in collaboration with Blount County and the National Park Service, and potentially other stakeholders such as the Great Smoky Mountains Convention and Visitors Bureau, Blount County Chamber of Commerce, Keep Blount Beautiful, Foothills Land Conservancy, Little River Watershed Association, Blount County Historical Society, Sam Houston Schoolhouse Museum, City of Maryville, City of Alcoa, Town of Friendsville, Blount County Government, among others.

Strategy. Thoroughly review and comment upon recommendations made in TN Civil War National Heritage Area's *The National Heritage Area Program and Blount County, Tennessee: A Feasibility Study*; identify other potential project partners that may have been established in the last 20 years since the creation of the abovementioned document; in collaboration with Blount County and other interested parties, request a cost proposal to update the abovementioned document from the TN Civil War NHA.

Recommendation: Encourage and/or pursue additional NRHP listings for resources located within the Townsend corporate limits. Listing in the NRHP opens resources up for historic preservation incentives for capital projects, such as the Historic Preservation Fund and the Federal Historic Tax Credit program.

The MPDF (1989) discussed in Chapter 2 provided a framework for nominating historically significant properties that share common historic contexts. The MPDF provided contextual categories and a basis for evaluating the historical significance of properties that share a common theme and/or physical characteristics. These categories were:

1. Antebellum Residential Architecture
 1. Settlement Period, ca. 1785-1830
 2. Post-Settlement Period, 1830-1860
2. Residential Architecture, 1860-1940
3. Industrial and Commercial Buildings, ca. 1815-ca. 1939
 1. Industrial Buildings
 2. Commercial Buildings
4. Religious, Educational, and Public Buildings
 1. Religious Buildings
 2. Educational Buildings
 3. Public Buildings
5. Cantilevered Log Barns

In addition to the above list, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture 1975-1976 Century Farms program also supports NRHP nominations of eligible Century Farms, such as the Laverne Farmer Farm.

Strategy: Educate property owners; encourage property owners to secure a determination of eligibility from the SHPO; utilize the Historic Preservation Fund matching grant program through the Tennessee Historical Commission/National Park Service to fund hiring a consultant to compile the NRHP nomination(s)



Chapter 4: Socio-economic Trends

Introduction

This chapter showcases datasets which provide a portrait of Townsend’s socioeconomic characteristics, especially as it concerns its demographics, housing, jobs and some of its facilities/amenities – e.g., the elementary school as well as parks and recreation.

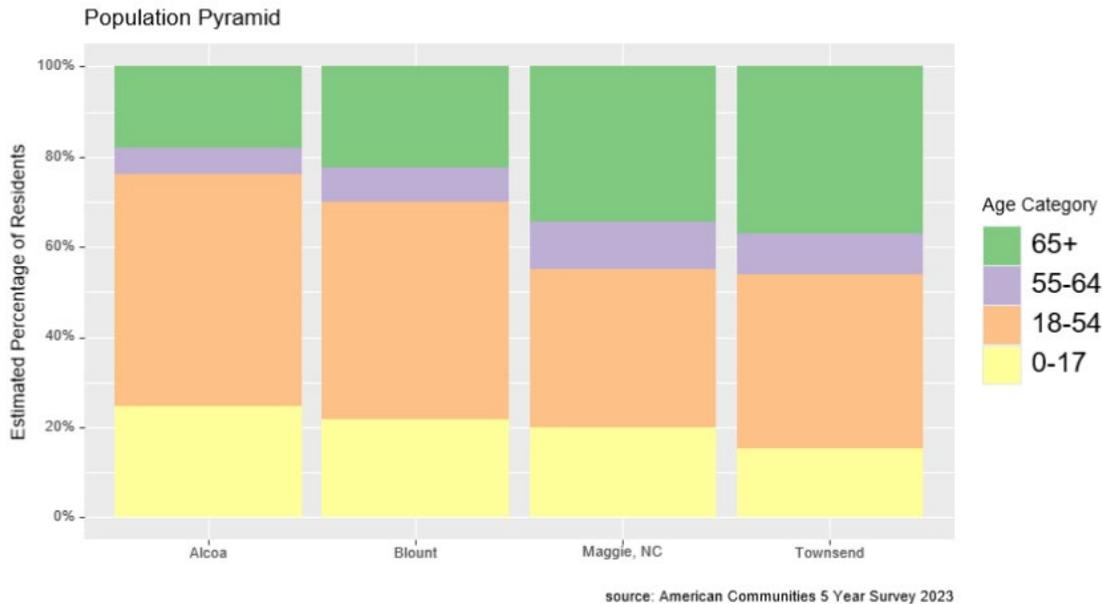
A community’s demographic makeup shapes how its natural and built environments function, influences the demand for amenities and activities, and informs the types of services residents expect. Its datasets have adjacent considerations, decisions and goals.

Knowledge about population and housing growth trends, age distribution and household characteristics will facilitate a community’s decision-making about its policies, services, and facilities. Socioeconomic data covering income levels, educational cohorts, and employment potentialities inform workforce development strategizing, educational programming, and socioeconomic development planning. Built environment variables such as housing stock and occupancy and public facilities and amenities (parks, schools, etcetera) inform budgeting, grants procurement, and funds management.

Community development, land use planning, public governance as well as civil and civic life should be predicated on, be planned for, and can influence and be influenced by the quantity and quality of Townsend’s assets, their potential and promise. This chapter is a data portrait of what comprises some key aspects of Townsend’s present form and its future function.

Disclaimer:

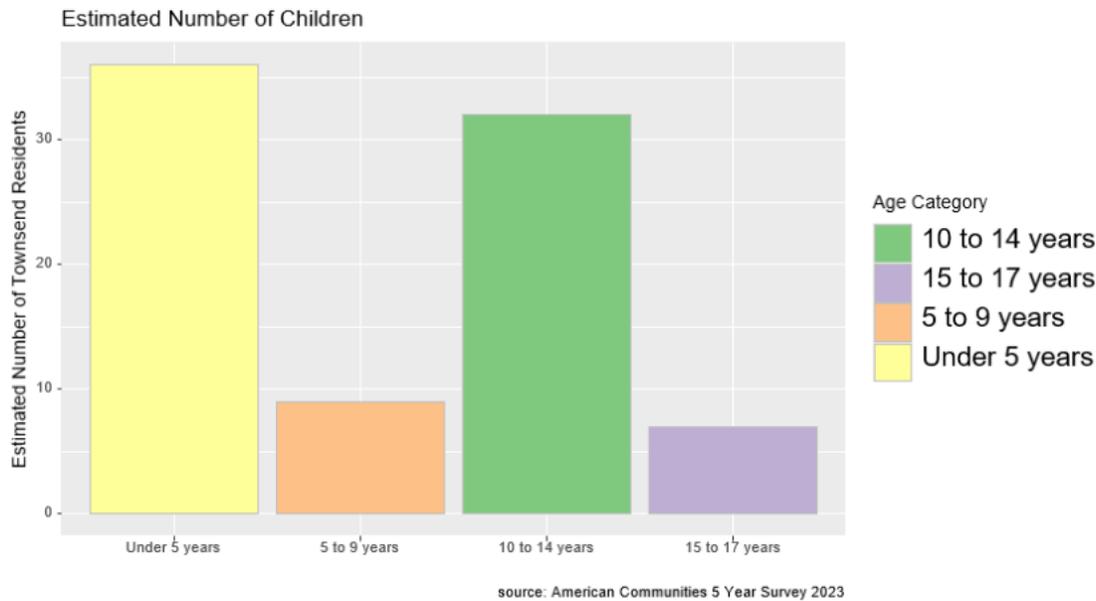
- The data from Realtor.com® Economic Research is at the zip code level and therefore might include properties outside of Townsend.
- This analysis is largely descriptive.
- All data, along with their derived strategies and recommendations, should be deliberated over, decided on and implemented thereof during contemporary eras. This document serves as a long-term plan and may need to be updated to reflect and tackle future national trends, dynamics, and local impacts. COVID-19 being one stark example and the evolving nature of short-term hospitality, relatively, being a subtle one.
- Adoption of the contents to this chapter is at the discretion of the civic bodies and their members as well as the community at large.
- Data sources are fuller disclosed in the report’s appendix, and as already disclosed in the data workshop presentation.



Townsend has a significant portion of its population made up of mature-aged individuals (refer to Infographic 1), resulting in a lower proportion of people in the prime working age group (25-54 years).

This demographic trend can influence the local workforce and economic productivity. ‘Organic’ growth in Townsend will be stagnant, if not in decline. Population growth will therefore be dependent on in-migration. People will have to choose to reside in Townsend for population growth to expand or demographic stability to be fluid and vibrant.

STRATEGY: The demographic shift resulting from this migration represents a socioeconomic dynamic that Townsend should either proactively guide or be prepared to effectively manage.



What do these estimates (refer to Infographic 2) imply for enrollment numbers or facilities planning and management, such as schools, parks, and recreation?

Considering the small sample size and potential statistical power paucity, these thoughts are germane (and because of which an official citywide special census will be well advised):

- **Enrollment Numbers:** With fewer births and a very small sample size, school enrollment may continually decline. However, Blount County as a whole is experiencing growth in its school-ages population, and the Blount County School System has no foreseeable plans to close Townsend Elementary. The school is part of the countywide system, and most of its students reside outside of the City limits.
- **Parks & Recreation:** The aging population may shift Townsend’s facilities towards activities suited for older adults, such as walking trails and community gardens. There may be a need to invest in accessible facilities and programs that cater to the interests and physical capabilities of elderly residents. For instance:
 - **STRATEGY:** The Special People’s Park is a prime example that should remain a priority for civic bodies and residents. Its rehabilitation and further development are essential for the community.
 - ♣ **RECOMMENDATION:** A plan plus the procurement of grant or philanthropic funds should be sought for its design, financing, and construction.

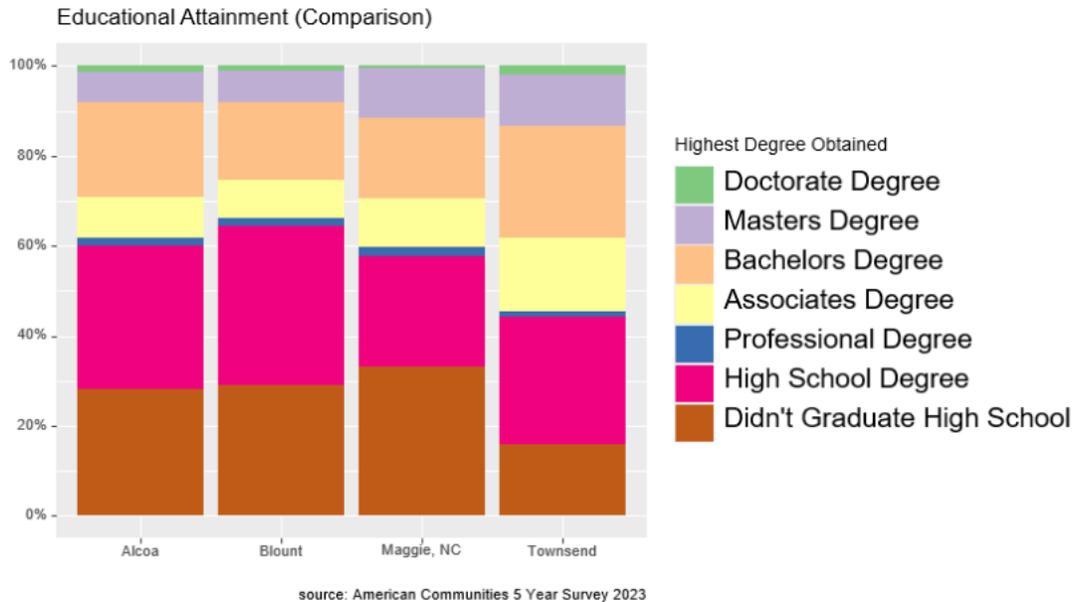
- o **STRATEGY:** Combining the current enrollment status and the future occupancy integrity of the elementary school with the adjacent Jean Moser Memorial Park, a recreation and civic activity center could be explored, with this amenity catering to residents more than tourists and local businesses' patrons, especially if the school facility remains as an educational institution.
 - ♣ **RECOMMENDATION:** A sector design and development plan for the area's vitality should be a priority. This plan should address both the community's demographics and the school facility, given the dynamics Townsend's data reveals.

These trends highlight the importance of proactive and flexible planning to ensure that Townsend's educational and recreational facilities can effectively serve its demographic dynamics. How these planned changes will impact the community's overall quality of life should be a strategic priority.

Then also, the spectrum between Townsend being a bedroom community which is intolerant of "growth" but ought to be astute to 'development' as against a 'bloated' township at risk of losing its character is what should spur the attentiveness to demographic growth within it (i.e., what age cohorts predominate) and what levels of population numbers transit through it (i.e., vastly increased tourism levels at the risk of congestion and clutter).

What workforce opportunities or recruitment efforts should be targeted towards non-graduates, high school graduates, and associate degree holders for the tourism sector of Townsend? The data indicates that this composite cohort comprises more than 60% of Townsend's demographic profile.

INFOGRAPHIC 3



RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR POPULATION & HOUSING PER DATASETS:

Towards this determination, opportunities in roles such as lodging staff, restaurant workers, and customer service positions in Townsend will have to be well defined for the tourism sector. Hospitality is the sector which Townsend appears geared towards. The demands of managing this sector are presented with the following suggested hierarchical priorities: [1] workforce housing, [2] revenue capture, [3] low-impact tourism, and [4] enhancement of off-season tourism programming? For this data section, workforce housing emerges as a crucial consideration.

- Workforce housing is simultaneously a population, social, and economic issue. Ensuring the existence, recruitment, and retention of a workforce in Townsend's socio-economy requires foresight, potentially through the following strategies and considerations:
 - o **STRATEGY:** Allowing onsite employee housing could be an optimal solution for addressing workforce housing in Townsend. This type of housing—private property placed and managed as well as self-contained—would not require public expenditure for construction and maintenance, though it would need public land use permitting and building inspection oversight. This strategy could directly match housing quantities with workforce levels per an employer’s need, thereby providing a practical approach and supply to workforce housing.

- o **STRATEGY:** Cottage courts are a middle housing option, not just for workforce housing, but for aspiring homeowners and/or property owners who would want to pursue this housing option. Middle-income occupants of cottage court housing may span the spectrum from retirees to starter-home heads of households. Cottage Courts consist of clusters of smaller, single-family homes arranged around a courtyard, thereby optimizing green space. They could incorporate universal design features, economical layouts, and smaller footprints, thus promoting cost-effective housing solutions.
- o **STRATEGY:** Allowance of Accessory Dwelling Units/ADUs (Infographic 4) are defined by the American Planning Association (APA) as follows: “An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is a smaller, independent residential dwelling unit located on the same lot as a stand-alone (i.e., detached) single-family home.” Furthermore, APA comments as follows: “Internal, attached, and detached ADUs all have the potential to increase housing affordability (both for homeowners and tenants), create a wider range of housing options within the community...[and]...facilitate better use of the existing housing fabric in established neighborhoods.”
- **RECOMMENDATION:** Broadening housing choices is essential to accommodate workforce retention needs and to attract in-migration, which will help Townsend repopulate its demographics and prevent it from becoming a community of seasonally vacant homes, which upon a turnover of ownership could lay Townsend’s housing stock victim to probate courts, speculating investors, and empty homes instead of the vibrancy of in-place residents and their accompanying neighborliness.
 - o Accessory Dwelling Units/ADUs could retrofit and repurpose some of Townsend’s existing housing stock whilst also being of economic benefit to homeowners, at once, supplying housing for established residents, for the local economy’s workforce, and for the community’s visiting patrons.
 - o Cottage Courts could cater to newly arriving middle-income residents, e.g., workforce homeowners or renters, retirees, and homeowners, who whilst away on extended stints, would want to occasionally avail their compact residences to Townsend’s visiting patrons.
 - o Workplace-situated workforce housing per strict permitting could provide private sector driven housing options for larger—though not grand scale—tourism enterprises.
 - o Live-Work use buildings for home-based business operators, in mixed-use and/or per the adaptive reuse of existing residential and/or commercial structures may also be an option to consider and allow.

- Ultimately, Townsend’s housing options should be thoughtfully based on current and future socioeconomic dynamics that promote residential vibrancy whilst also facilitating revenue capture, which shores up Townsend’s purse strings.

RECOMMENDATION: Housing options should be prioritized in the following order: (1) Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), (2) Cottage Courts, and (3) Onsite Workforce Housing. This hierarchy should guide development review processes and be aligned with updated land use regulations to ensure consistency and strategic implementation.

For additional context—particularly historical—it is important to acknowledge that onsite workforce housing has already been considered and approved by the City of Townsend in January 2024, following a petition submitted by Yonder/Offland. Although the decision was contentious, hinging on the interpretation of what constitutes a hotel, it was ultimately approved along with a site plan that explicitly included onsite workforce housing. This action established a precedent for permitting such housing within the city.

To address this issue effectively, Townsend may consider allowing such housing only when developments meet a minimum size threshold—particularly in terms of acreage—as the City's height restrictions and the limited capacity of a single permitted facility may not sufficiently support onsite workforce housing.

RECOMMENDATION: Workforce housing may be allowed as a special exception, as a use on review, procedurally.

INFOGRAPHIC 4



(Source: American Planning Association/APA – [Accessory Dwelling Units](#))

Accessory Dwelling Units/ADUs as the choicest option, especially whereby preexisting homes/structures are retrofitted for adjunct and separate household use/users—and Infographic 4 indicates them in red—may be an expeditious way to boost the supply of alternative housing units. Exterior structures and interior spaces, which when deemed fit, upon inspection, for human habitation, e.g., garages, basements, attics, carved out or separate level unused/disused spaces, onsite guest houses, in-law suites, barns, etc., could be retrofitted as apartments, studios, and backyard cottages, etc.

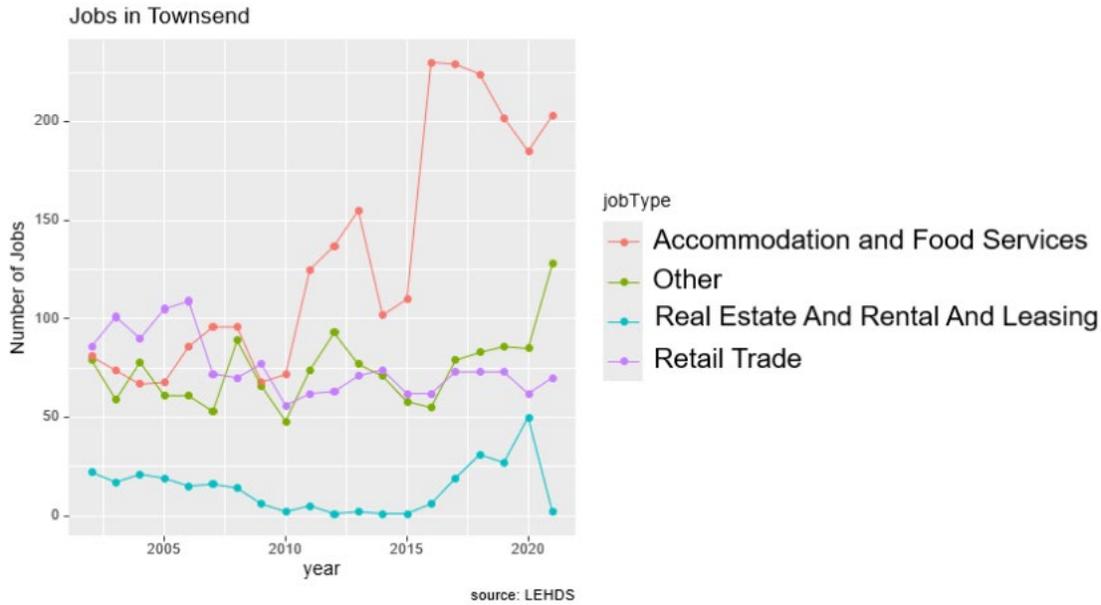
Lot size and setback restrictions could still apply, and special exceptions and variances may be considered where and when warranted. Restrictions could also be developed to arrest the possible-probable congestion of neighborhood streets and/or standards that require solely onsite/driveway parking. Owner-occupancy rules may also apply to these units, whether that be the primary or accessory unit[s]. Design/aesthetic compatibility, separate metering as well as building and codes permitting, site plan reviews—even green cover restrictions—plus health and safety conditionalities and inspections (fire, septic, etc.) could form part-and-parcel of Townsend’s standards, regulations, and allowances.

Property owners may reap supplemental income and emerging and middle-income earners and seniors on fixed income who reside in these units could mutually benefit from these ADUs’ existence. Homeowners could offset mortgage costs, affordable housing options could be made available to Townsend’s workforce (Infographic 5), and multigenerational living arrangements

could be possible for families or caregivers’ spaces for senior aged or ailing residential occupants.

Townsend may also choose to permit only the conversion of pre-existing structures for such housing purposes.

INFOGRAPHIC 5



Townsend is a higher-income community compared to other areas in Blount County (Infographic 8). The median home price in Townsend ranges between \$299,000-\$490,000, with some homes selling for about \$500,000, with prices creeping upwards to \$600,000. Currently as of the first half of 2025, there are about 35 houses available, with roughly half already sold. Maggie Valley, NC shows similar housing dynamics to Townsend in terms of listings, with dips during the height of COVID-19 between them.

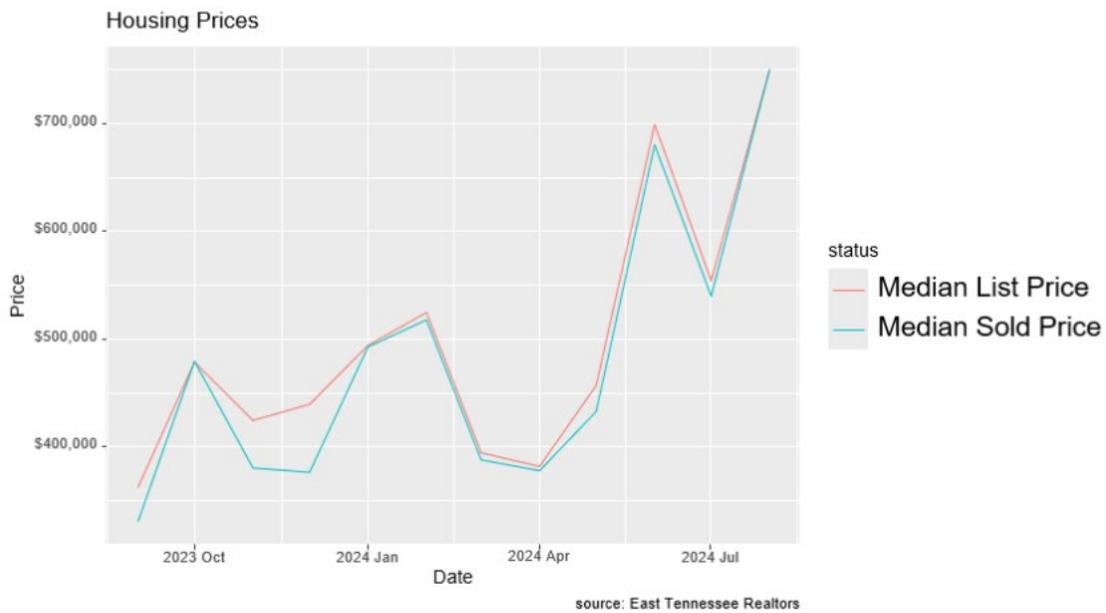
Median housing price data spans a spectrum—from concrete sales figures to census estimates and speculative market analytics. While market data can be volatile and speculative (Infographic 7), it carries real-world implications. Recent figures reveal a 27.3% increase in the median home price, with the average price per square foot now at \$304. A breakdown of median prices by bedroom count is illustrated in Infographic 6 below.

INFOGRAPHIC 6

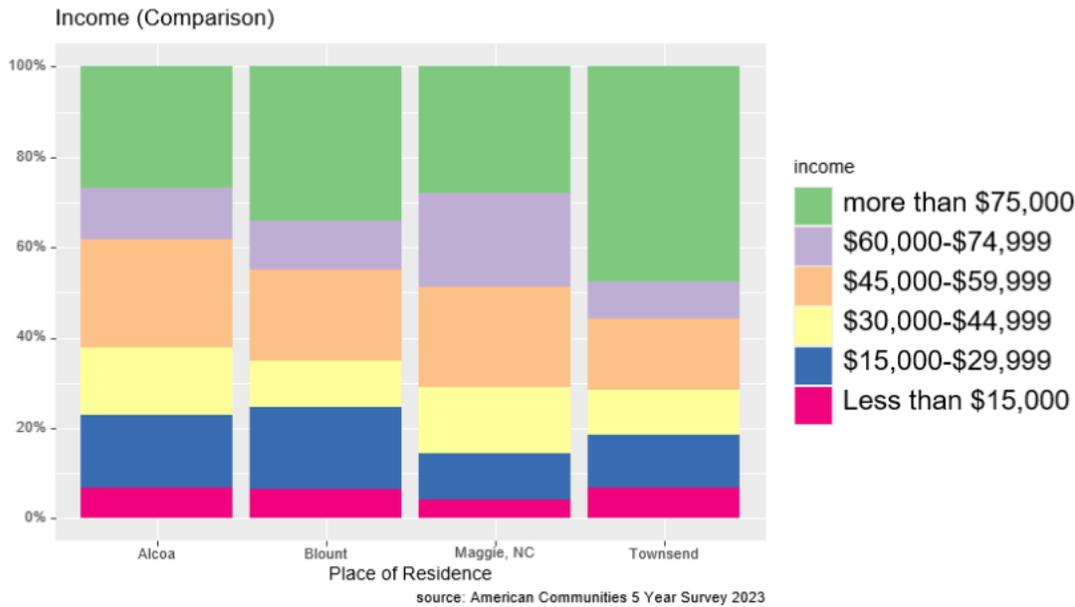
BEDROOMS	MARCH 2024	MARCH 2025	% CHANGE
1 BR	\$306k	\$385k	+25.8%
2 BR	\$398.2k	\$384.5k	-3.4%
3 BR	\$357.5k	\$657.5K	+83.9%
4 BR	\$730k	\$660K	-9.6%
5BR	\$1.1m	\$500K	-57.4%

(Source: rocket.com)

INFOGRAPHIC 7



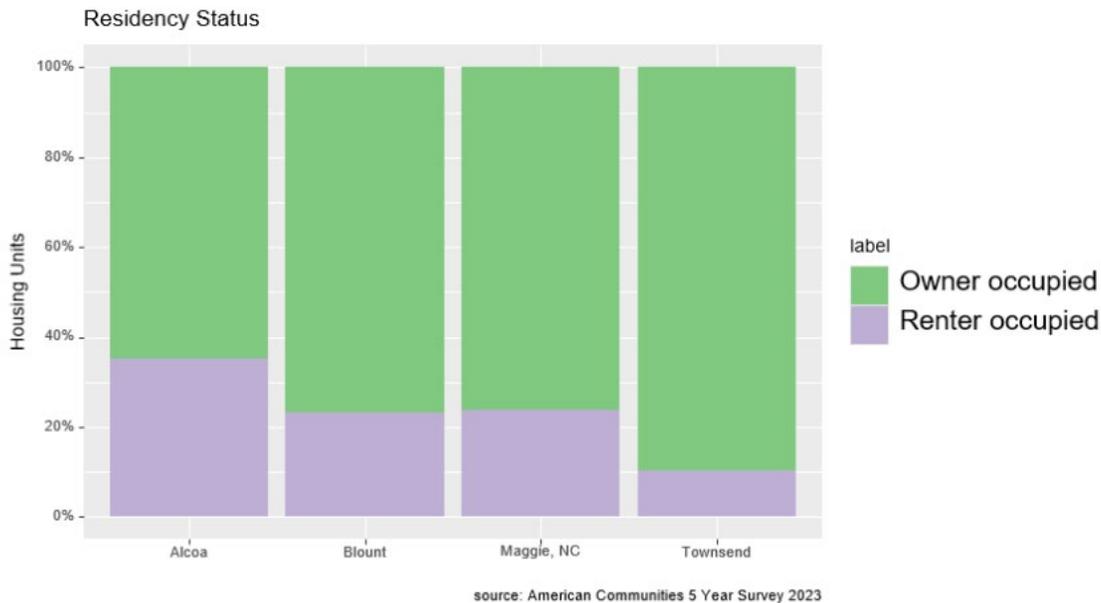
INFOGRAPHIC 8



Townsend has a healthy absorption rate of 5-6, indicating a balance between available homes and demand. The median number of days houses stay on the market is under 30 days, reflecting a relatively quick turnover. Housing prices in Townsend have increased significantly during the pandemic era. While the price points between Maggie Valley, NC and Townsend appear similar, they are, in fact, approximately \$100,000 apart.

Renter options in Townsend are limited (Infographic 9), which can be challenging for the lower-income workforce and residents seeking more affordable housing. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and cottage courts could be well-advised for ripe aged working adults and downsizing retirees. Ripe aged workforce participants ranging in age from 25-54 years whether that be for rental or ownership options are seeking affordability and stability. Middle housing (i.e. duplexes, cottage courts and ADUs) allowances could address affordability and labor shortages, and by extension it could serve as a strategic priority to support local economies whose socioeconomic profile includes ripe/prime and mature aged persons who face a high-priced housing market and who may staff Townsend's tourism/hospitality service and inhabit its residential sectors. Townsend's housing stock should be [re]populated by local habituating residents and organic in-migrants, not—when come homeowner turnover time—by market forces speculators who may riddle the housing market and outprice Bonafide locals out of their community.

INFOGRAPHIC 9



Then also, once again, how does Townsend capture revenue from accommodation and tourism services, especially Airbnb, VRBO, and other short-term lodging/accommodation rental properties and activity?

Deliberations about the supply and character of residential housing, short-term accommodation, and the community's decisions thereof may consider the following strategies towards optimal socioeconomic ends:

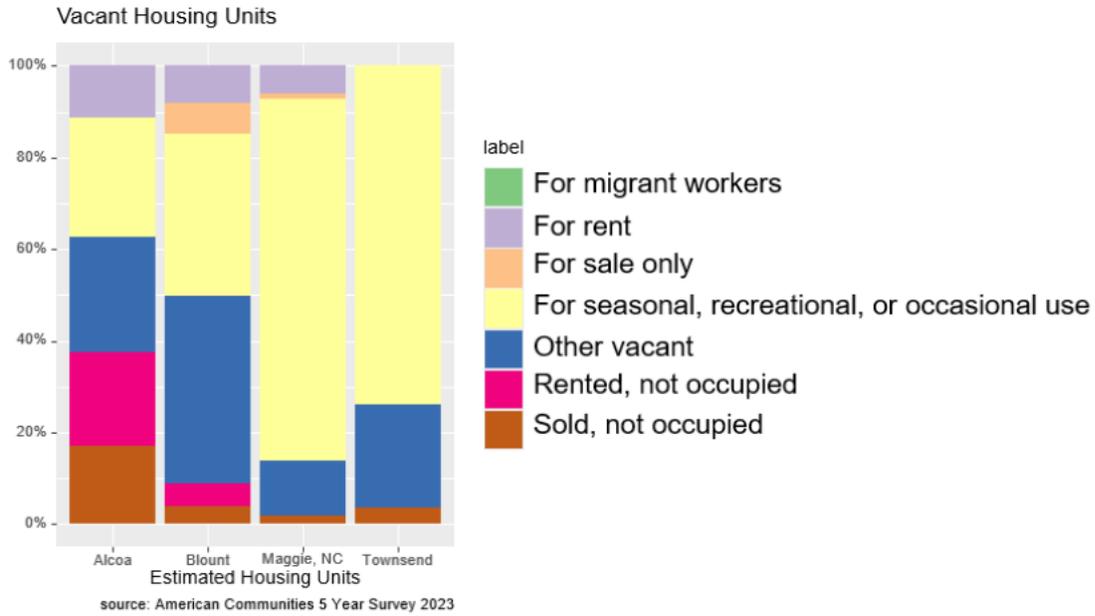
1. **STRATEGY - Limited Renter Options:** Address the scarcity of rental properties to support the local workforce.
2. **STRATEGY - High Housing Prices:** Manage and mitigate the impact of rising housing costs on affordability.
3. **STRATEGY - Occupancies in Vacant Residential Units:** Utilize and encourage the use of vacant units to meet housing demands.
4. **STRATEGY - Diversification of Housing Options:** Encourage a variety of housing types to accommodate different needs and demographics.

These factors are crucial for making informed decisions that promote a balanced and vibrant community in Townsend with the following as problem solving strategies and/or solutions:

1. **RECOMMENDATION:** ADUs can be developed within the structure of single-family residences or as separate outbuildings, subject to local zoning regulations.
2. **RECOMMENDATION:** Cottage courts, required to be subsumed under Planned Unit Development regulations, could be incorporated into land development regulations.
3. **RECOMMENDATION:** Townsend can capture revenue from accommodation and tourism services, including platforms like Airbnb and VRBO, through Implementing a licensing system for short-term rentals which ensures that all properties are registered and compliant with local regulations, as the levying of occupancy taxes on short-term rentals could generate significant revenue for Townsend. Specific strategies to consider may include the following:
 - A. **STRATEGY:** Require permitting and registration for all short-term rental properties.
 - B. **STRATEGY:** Require some form of primary residency verification, e.g., driver's license having a property address disclosure.
 - i. If that is unavailable or unattainable, with discretion, Townsend may require the designation of a local host/agent who would stand in stead for the owner-operator.
 - C. **STRATEGY:** Institute a regimen of auditing and inspection to ensure compliance and to exact revenue from these commercial inclined properties, including a regime of penalties, e.g., suspensions of rental permits, fines, etc.
 - i. Auditing may include the review of receipts and platform profiles or even extend to Voluntary Collection Agreements (VCAs) platforms like Airbnb and VRBO, whereby platforms collect and remit taxes on behalf of hosts/short-term property operators.
 - ii. Building code compliance addressing structure, fire safety, and sanitation could comprise inspection protocols.
 - D. **STRATEGY:** Based on a property's lot and square footage size, institute prescribed occupancy allowances which may limit the number of guests and/or days per year a unit may be rented out, plus parking restrictions.
 - E. **STRATEGY:** Establish an online portal for short-term rental registration, tax filing, and public oversight and/or utilize Rentalscape or other such means.
4. **RECOMMENDATION:** Establish a local tourism development authority to manage and promote appropriate scale tourism activities which strive to ensure sustainable development and revenue generation by engaging residents, businesses, and other stakeholders in ensuring that development benefits the entire community.
5. **RECOMMENDATION:** Maintain mutually satisfying coordination of events and festivals with stakeholders and partners who increase spending in the local economy, as well as manage optimal levels of tourism activity which do not compromise the "Peaceful Side of the Smokies" ethos.

- 6. **RECOMMENDATION:** Conduct a community-wide housing stock survey (Infographic 10) to determine all occupancy and use types and intensities, present and potential.

INFORGRAPHIC 10



TOOLKIT: COMMUNITY DATA ADJACENT GOALS

No.	GOAL	INPUTS	ACTIVITY	OUTPUT	OUTCOME	IMPACT[S]
1.	IEQ Study of Elem. Sch.	Engage architectural or facilities firm/specialist and liaise with Blount County Schools/BCS	Audit indoor environment al quality. Conduct structural sustainability analysis. These pending BCS feedback	Long-range facilities plan	Policy & strategy for community amenity given population demographics	City budget. Community & Family life. Seniors' community social activity programs. Improved community amenity.
2.	Sector plan for Jean Moser Park & elem. sch. grounds	Engage urban design consultant (or is this addressed in SE Group Report?)	Design charette and studio with community stakeholders .	Community Pocket Park & Social Amenity Action Plan	Strategy for underutilized park. Facilities refurbishment plan for school and area – barn, waterbody, etc.	Recreation and/or education program game plan for residents ¹ .
3.	Plan: Special Peoples' Park	SE Group Project Mgmt. – to be included in their report.	Community Engagement. Research & Analysis. Evaluation. Design. Grants & Fundraising.	Strategic Action Plan	Planning Commission and City Council's approval for effectuation of plan.	Actionable plan being a living document towards realization of park as a viable amenity which reflects demographics.
4.	Consider housing options – ADUs, Cottage Courts, Workforce Housing ²	Planning Commission deliberations and decision making	Workshops and meetings - decisions and actions addressing occupancy standards, bldg. permitting, codes enforcement	Zoning ordinance amendments + ordinances approved. Bldg. code standards.	Decided-upon Housing options adopted in land use regulatory documents	Housing options ³ addressing middle bracket housing formulated and formalized.
5.	Residential Lots Survey	Formation of community volunteer team	Windshield survey. Mapping. Committee meetings.	Map and inventory spreadsheet of housing stock	Improved governance action on short-term accommodation oversight and enforcement	May complement Townsend's Single Family Dwelling Use Form, and thereby also

						contribute to codes enforcement, bldg. Inspection and tax income and revenue capture
6.	Citywide Special Census	Community task force or Census Bureau, plus review & certification by ETDD, and oversight by UTK Boyd Center/State Data Center	7-step census administration process, with 3 deadlines	Completion of a special census roster and required materials submission to ETDD. Notarized letter from mayor. ETDD certification letter. Territory coverage map.	Approved notice from Boyd Center	Corporate limits specific population census ⁴ + other data specific variables (if permissible as part of the count).

Community Data Adjacent Goals Analysis

Goals adjacency refers to the strategic alignment and proximity of various objectives with urban planning and community development to maximize synergies and minimize errant divergence. A portrait of community data without their expressed adjacency to what they may imply and be of consequence to is the essence of this chapter.

Townsend’s data highlights the need for stronger integration between the community’s amenities and facilities, particularly in the areas of community life, social activity, as well as parks and recreation. This includes a closer examination of the types of recreational amenities and facilities that may best serve the town’s demographic profile in the medium- to long-term.

Determining the most suitable sports and recreation facilities, for example, in Townsend requires thoughtful consideration of both the physical infrastructure and the character of programming offered within them. The integration of planning efforts for the elementary school, Jean Moser Park, the surrounding neighborhood, and the Tuckaleechee Utility District’s access to the community water tank must be approached holistically. These elements—along with the area's exposure to tourists and the potential misuse by nighttime visitors—should not be addressed in isolation or in ways that conflict with one another.

Given their spatial proximity, these assets should be aligned temporally to ensure coordinated attention, to facilitate efficient resource allocation, and to approximate equitable access. This

synchronization for the immediate adjoining area[s] will help maximize their collective value to the community.

Key stakeholders who should be engaged in this collaborative planning process include City Staff, the utility district's personnel, local homeowners, the Planning Commission, and Blount County Schools. Their joint participation is essential to achieving goals adjacency—ensuring that any initiative supports and enhances the other within this vital pocket of Townsend.

For the Jean Moser sector and the Special Peoples Park gentle gradients, non-slip surfaces, comfortable enough seating, plentiful shaded areas, ADA compliance, outdoor games amenities (like chess/checkers tables and benches), gazebos (with ramps or at ground level) and emergency phone stations may be optimal.

Goals adjacency for Jean Moser sector should focus on assessing indoor environmental quality and structural sustainability, with implications for long-range facilities planning and continual community use. A sector plan should aim to revitalize an underutilized civic space through planning & design collaborations, community engagement and programming for recreation and/or education. These two initiatives are highly adjacent in goals; they share space, serve overlapping stakeholders, and require coordinated planning. Treating them as a single, integrated planning zone rather than separate projects will yield greater community benefit, more efficient use of resources, and a stronger case for funding and policy support.

For further specificity's sake, intra-coordination of an interparty collaboration concerning the IEQ due diligence exercise for the elementary school will involve some all-important interdependent adjacency project capture steps. A selected architectural or facilities firm, in collaboration with the City and Blount County Schools (BCS), will evaluate the scope and cost of the facility's lifeline. This effort may be supported by the current donor, additional future donors, or other philanthropic avenues. Throughout the planning process, stakeholders will consider the long-term future of the facility—including whether it will still function as a school in 20 years—and the potential for it, along with other facilities, to be designated as historic properties; for example, the adjacent **Townsend Area Volunteer Fire Department Station 1** and the **Tuckaleechee Barn/Townsend Dance Hall**⁵. Then also, might the elementary school facility one day optimally transmogrify into a Y (YMCA/YWCA) facility or a senior and/or family health center (operated by Blount Memorial?), thus reflecting the demographic trend/portrait to be, or what Townsend intends it to be?

The school building facility could then undergo a comprehensive audit of the indoor environmental quality, while structural engineers will perform a sustainability analysis of the building. IEQ would then also mean an interior, engineering and quantities audit for the long-term life and probable repurposing of the facility. These assessments are contingent upon timely feedback from BCS, which is a critical path item influencing the overall project timeline. The

findings from these evaluations will inform the development of a long-range facilities plan, shaped by demographic projections and community input. Concurrently, city council members, urban planners, and community leaders will work to craft policies and strategies that enhance community amenities in alignment with population trends. These initiatives must be integrated with the city’s budget and broader community priorities, as determined by its finances and governance entities. Supporting programs that enrich community and family life, as well as expand social activity opportunities for seniors, will further position the school facility as a central hub for community engagement. Ultimately, these coordinated efforts aim to improve the overall quality of community amenities, benefiting all stakeholders involved.

To Imagine and, possibly, be executed, proactively:

- ✓ Townsend Elementary School → Indicative Demographic Trends → Apparent Need for Retrofit & Repurpose → Form Partnerships → IEQs Initiative → Facility Reuse.

Goals adjacency for the housing options policy should involve Townsend’s community planning apparatus deliberating on housing types and regulatory frameworks. Workshops, zoning amendments, code enforcement updates should be the processes to attend to, all towards the preservation of neighborhood integrity, housing infrastructure balance and fastidious and community planning stewardship. This initiative is a prime example of goals adjacency in action. It connects housing policy with economic, spatial, and social planning goals. By aligning zoning reform with demographic needs and community values, Townsend can create a more inclusive, resilient, and vibrant housing landscape.

Goals adjacency for the residential lot survey would involve the constituting of volunteer teams to conduct a survey—as also the citywide special census could be administered simultaneously—to conduct a comprehensive inventory of housing stock. This exercise should improve the oversight of short-term accommodations, support code enforcement and enhance tax revenue capture. Townsend’s Single Family Dwelling Use Form could also be jointly administered under this initiative. The Residential Lots Survey is a highly adjacent initiative—its outcomes ripple across multiple planning domains. It exemplifies how a single, well-designed data collection effort can bridge gaps between policy, practice, and community needs, making it a cornerstone of integrated, goals adjacent urban planning.

Goals adjacency for the citywide special census would involve local implementation with oversight from regional and State agencies. A 7-step administrative procedure should involve ETDD and the UTK Boyd Center. A certified population count and, potentially, other demographic datasets would be the output which could serve as the methods and means for city planning, budgetary funding and municipal governance and intergovernmental partnerships. The Citywide Special Census is a keystone initiative in the goals adjacent framework. It doesn’t just support

other goals—it enables them. Its success ensures that Townsend’s planning, budgeting, and development efforts are grounded in reality and strategically aligned.

Community Data Gain-of-[Dys]function Analysis

INITIATIVE	GAINS/FUNCTIONS (if implemented successfully)	DYSFUNCTIONS (if not implemented or fails)
IEQ Study of Elementary School	[1] Improved indoor environmental quality; [2] Enhanced learning or community use environment; [3] Informed long-range facilities planning.	[1] Continued exposure to poor environmental conditions; [2] deferred maintenance costs (to community and/or Blount County Schools); [3] Missed opportunity for community-centered facility’s use.
Special Peoples Park Plan	[1] Inclusive, accessible park reflecting community demographics; [2] increased civic pride and social cohesion; [3] attraction of grants and external funding	[1] Underutilized or deteriorating public space; [2] Missed opportunity for intergenerational or demographically appropriate engagement; [3] Less than optimal quality of life for seniors and/or family life.
Sector Plan for Jean Moser Park and School Grounds	[1] Coordinated use of adjacent public spaces; [2] revitalized park and educational facilities; [3] Renewed programming for recreation and/or learning.	[1] Fragmented planning and inefficient land use; [2] continued underutilization of valuable community assets; [3] Loss of potential for integrated community programming.
Housing Options (ADUs, Cottage Courts, Workforce Housing, etc.)	[1] Increased housing diversity and affordability; [2] Supportive housing environment for workforce, aging residents and in-migrating newcomers; [3] Alignment with zoning and land use goals.	[1] Housing shortages for middle income and essential workers; [2] Rising displacement, disenfranchisement and affordability crises; [3] Regulatory stagnation and community pushback.
Residential Lots Survey	[1] Accurate inventory of housing stock; [2] Improved strategies for short-term accommodation regulations; [3] Enhanced tax revenue and code compliance.	[1] Lack of data for informed demographics planning and policy; [2] Unregulated short-term rentals adversely impacting neighborhoods; [3] Missed revenue and enforcement opportunities.
Citywide Special Census	[1] Updated population data for funding and planning; [2] Better representation in regional and State governance decisions; [3] Data-driven community development.	[1] Outdated or inaccurate demographic data; [2] Missed funding opportunities; [3] Poor alignment of services with actual population/demographic needs.

The data portrait of Townsend and its variables exist in a gravitational orbit which may either facilitate buoyancy and resiliency or deflation and fragility. Proactive and preemptive planning and policy which strives for pliability and is free of inflexibility should be the discourse and reason which guides Townsend’s decision-making and courses of action.

Each of the above suggested initiatives, given the undergirding of data amongst them, are interdependent. Their gains could be communitywide when tackled in unison instead of accruing into compounded costs against one another. This data adjacent analysis supports prioritizing integrated planning and stakeholder collaboration to maximize gains and minimize dysfunctions.

Astutely conceptualized community social amenities, enterprising housing options, stable neighborhood ethos, and resiliency against speculative market forces—if adjacently addressed, and all made salient by its datasets— could realize achievements for Townsend’s policy goals.



Chapter 5: Land Use and Transportation Inventory & Analysis

This analysis expands on earlier findings from the Land Use and Transportation Inventory and Analysis completed in 2009. The 2009 Inventory and Analysis is included in the Appendix of this document. Additional context, clarifications and forward-looking considerations have been incorporated below. Development over the past fifteen years has been limited, with the Townsend Event Center – owned by the Smoky Mountain Tourism Development Authority – standing out as the most notable addition. While the site brings seasonal activity, it has not significantly influenced the overall distribution of land uses within the city.

Land Use Overview

Townsend’s land composition continues to reflect a balance of residential parcels, transportation rights-of-way, commercial uses along Highway 321/73, and sizeable vacant acreage. Residential areas remain dominated by single-family homes. No meaningful expansion of duplexes, multifamily housing, or mobile home districts has occurred, and the community’s development pattern continues to be shaped by reliance on subsurface sewage disposal systems. These systems require larger lots and limit opportunities for denser residential or mixed-use development.

Commercial land use remains centered on small businesses, locally owned shops, overnight accommodations, and artisan-oriented destinations. While the commercial corridor retains its character, recent years have seen the rise of maintenance-oriented improvements and reinvestment rather than major new construction. The establishment of the Festival Event Grounds has added a flexible venue supporting a variety of festivals and community gatherings, enhancing the tourism ecosystem without requiring significant land-use reclassification.

Public and semi-public uses—including the Elementary school, the Little River Railroad/Lumber Company and the Great Smoky Mountains Heritage Center museums, community facilities, and cultural amenities—remain strong anchors for both residents and visitors. These uses contribute to Townsend’s identity as the ‘Peaceful Side of the Smokies’ and play an essential role in maintaining the community’s small-town character.

Vacant Land

Vacant land continues to account for a significant share of Townsend’s total acreage. However, as in 2009, many vacant parcels face environmental constraints such as steep slopes, flood-prone areas, and parcels preserved through conservation or easements. These limitations continue to influence land availability for both residential and commercial development. Unconstrained commercial land remains limited, reinforcing the importance of strategic planning, redevelopment of underutilized parcels, and carefully evaluating potential growth areas.

Transportation System

Note: The full update to the Transportation Inventory and Analysis section of this chapter has been postponed to accommodate an upcoming TDOT study of the Townsend area and its transportation infrastructure. This chapter will be updated upon the completion of this study.

Highway 321/73 remains Townsend’s primary travel corridor, providing essential connectivity for residents, tourists, and regional travel. While daily traffic conditions remain manageable, the corridor experiences periodic congestion during peak visitor seasons. The intersection of Wears Valley Road and Highway 321 now experiences noticeable traffic increases during high-attendance events in both Townsend and neighboring Pigeon Forge. These conditions highlight the regional nature of transportation impacts.

Local streets maintain similar conditions to 2009, with narrow pavement widths and limited shoulders in several areas. These characteristics restrict the safe flow of higher traffic volumes and warrant cautious review of any development proposals that may introduce additional demand on substandard roadways.

Non-Motorized Transportation

Townsend’s multi-use path remains a significant asset. It supports safe recreational travel and alternative transportation along the main highway corridor. However, connections between neighborhoods and the path remain limited. As the community’s population ages and interest in walkability grows, the inclusion of pedestrian connections in future development will be increasingly important.

Future Considerations

Although development since 2009 has been limited, future pressures are beginning to emerge. New large scale projects represent a potential change in the development landscape, depending on their final design and land-use components. Their size and location may affect land availability, infrastructure needs, and transportation patterns. As Townsend evaluates this and other future proposals, considerations should include utility capacity, roadway safety, environmental constraints, access management, and consistency with the community's vision.

Conclusion

Townsend’s land-use patterns have remained stable for more than a decade, reinforcing the relevance of the 2009 inventory as a baseline for analysis. With minimal new development—apart from the Festival Event Grounds—and new projects on the horizon, Townsend remains well-positioned to shape future growth in a manner that protects its character while adapting to emerging needs. Strategic planning, thoughtful evaluation of development proposals, and

coordinated transportation management will remain essential as the city navigates the coming years.



Chapter 6: Development Plan

Introduction

Townsend’s communitywide effort to assess and document public opinion, to shape the ordinance’s structure and function and to better align regulations with the community’s vision is what this chapter will address.

Civic deliberations, public decision-making, and broad community input will be essential throughout this perennial process. These efforts ensure the ordinance’s continuous evolution and that its relevance aligns with the diverse priorities and perspectives of residents, businesses, and stakeholders. This chapter serves as a weigh station to look backwards, to gain insights presently (as of the Summer of 2025) and to envision the way forward regarding Townsend’s land use regulations, development controls and growth management.

To underscore the importance of this document—and this chapter in particular—it must be emphasized that the evolution of zoning decisions made by the City Commission, as well as the deliberations, workshops, and rulings of the Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals, should be directly informed and guided by the principles and content presented here. This chapter is intended to serve as a critical reference point, shaping both the process and substance of land use and community development decision-making in Townsend.

Townsend's elected and appointed civic leaders are responsible for guiding thoughtful development rather than battling unchecked growth. As they refine the City's Zoning Ordinance towards this end, community input has been essential.

A set of prior exercises comprising [1] ETDD’s/East Tennessee Development District’s ‘scrubbing’ of the City’s zoning ordinance, [2] a public presentation/workshop, [3] an online public comments procedure and [4] a reporting-out workshop have informed this zoning ordinance review and proposed revising initiative.

This zoning ordinance review and proposed updates initiative reflects Townsend’s commitment to:

1. Foster sustainable growth
2. Enhance neighborhood character
3. Support economic development
4. Ensure clarity and consistency in land use regulations
5. Effectuate the intent of its community development set of ideals.

Guided by the goals outlined in the Community Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) process to inform and advise the Planning Commission, Board Zoning Appeals and City Commission, the updating of Townsend’s zoning ordinance will incorporate contemporary-to-evolving planning principles which will address current challenges and will sharpen the development review process and tools of Townsend into the future.

Context

The contents of the preexisting zoning ordinance under specific study in this chapter include its [1] titles, purposes and definitions, [2] general provisions, [3] application of regulations, [4] the establishments of districts, [5] provisions governing use districts, [6] exceptions and modifications, [7] amendments, and [8] notes and changes. It is these specific areas to which review was deemed most relevant for contemporizing and for which feedback was most prevalent.

Thereupon, the recommended enforcement measures outlined in this chapter are intended to supplement and continually make contemporary Townsend’s regulatory framework. These suggestions and recommendations should guide Townsend’s aim to reinforce the intent and significance of its Zoning Ordinance as it stands, as of September 30, 2025, and beyond. They align with the broader strategies and guideposts presented throughout this document.

It is important to note that the procedures, powers, and actions of the Board of Zoning Appeals—given its role as an appellate and quasi-judicial body—are not expected to undergo changes. Its established modus operandi remains appropriate and effective within the context of these suggested and recommended updates.

Titles, Purposes, Terms, & Definitions

For terms not explicitly defined within this document, their meanings should be interpreted based on the context in which they appear, using the following recommended hierarchy:

- **RECOMMENDATION: FIRST**, refer to definitions provided in any adopted building codes, zoning ordinances, or other relevant municipal regulations, which, in-and-of-themselves, would need recurring monitoring and evaluation for their [a] effectiveness as nomenclature, as being [b] sufficiently contemporary as an assessing lens for deliberation and insight, and as a [c] definitive yardstick for decision making and enforcement.
- **RECOMMENDATION: SECOND**, if no applicable regulatory definition exists, the term shall be interpreted according to its commonly accepted meaning as found in a standard dictionary or better yet per the definitions suggested in a contemporary edition of the following American Planning Association publication: ***A Planners Dictionary***.
- **RECOMMENDATION: THIRD**, in cases where variable interpretation is necessary, flexible and reasoned judgment should be applied to ensure that definitions are not overly rigid, wantonly arbitrary, or errantly capricious wherefore allowance and tolerance are facilitated for thoughtful consideration of proposed uses, suitable structures, or development petitions.
- **RECOMMENDATION: FOURTH**, [a] communitywide agreement on, [b] common cause for, [c] disparate understanding of and [d] disputes settlements over controversial or divisive

definitions and matters should be legitimated via the use of fastidiously administered all-inclusive public polling (see this chapter’s ANNEX), which, as an exercise, may be seen as having ultimately been abating or devoid of partisan myopia and fractious wrangling.

These four recommended approaches may best ensure clarity and measurement while allowing for practical application and adaptability in deliberation and decision-making.

RECOMMENDATION: Then also, to ensure consistency and clarity in zoning language, it is recommended that the term “**principal use**” be used uniformly in place of “main use,” and that both “**accessory use**” and “**principal use**” be clearly defined within the ordinance.

Updating Townsend’s Definitions

The realm of complexity, towards the need for clarity, and ultimately the effort to achieve the intent, of purity, as they concern definitions, terms, purposes and titles may be studied; for example, in the context of defining and regulating short-term lodging in a changing landscape:

1. The Challenge of Definitions in a Rapidly Evolving Market

Rigid definitions risk becoming outdated in today’s dynamic lodging environment. Terms like “*hotel*”, “*taxi*”, or “*hospitality*” have evolved significantly—consider the shift from taxis to rideshare platforms like Uber, or from traditional hotels to platforms like Airbnb and VRBO. To remain relevant and enforceable, definitions in Townsend’s zoning and land use regulations must strike a balance between clarity and adaptability.

2. Recommended Approach to Lodging Definitions

Rather than relying solely on static terms, we recommend a tiered classification system for short-term accommodations, with flexibility built in for future evolution. Categories might include the following recommended nomenclative definitions:

- **RECOMMENDATION:** TRADITIONAL LODGING = Hotels, Motels, Inns
- **RECOMMENDATION:** RESIDENTIAL-BASED LODGING = Bed & Breakfasts, Airbnb/VRBO units, Hostels
- **RECOMMENDATION:** RECREATIONAL LODGING = Cabins, Chalets, Yurts, Campgrounds, Glamping
- **RECOMMENDATION:** MOBILE LODGING = Campers, Motorhomes
- **RECOMMENDATION:** EMERGING OR HYBRID MODELS = Cottage Courts, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

STRATEGY: Each category can be defined with reference to:

- Use and occupancy duration
- Ownership and management structure

- Physical characteristics
- Platform or method of rental (if relevant)

3. Legal Framework: Tennessee’s Short-Term Rental Unit Act

The **Short-Term Rental Unit Act** (Public Chapter 972, 2018) limits how municipalities can regulate short-term rentals. Made effective on May 17, 2018, its purpose is to establish how municipalities in Tennessee may regulate short-term rental units (STRs), such as those listed on Airbnb or VRBO. Its key provisions may be summarized as follows:

- A. Definitions (T.C.A. § 13-7-602)
 - Defines what constitutes a *short-term rental unit* (STR): a residential dwelling rented for less than 30 days.
 - Clarifies what it means for a property to be “used as a short-term rental unit,” including requirements for permits or tax remittance depending on local laws.
- B. Legacy (Grandfather) Clause (T.C.A. § 13-7-603)
 - STRs in operation **before** a new local ordinance was enacted are **grandfathered in**.
 - These properties can continue operating under the rules in place at the time, unless:
 - i. The property is sold or transferred,
 - ii. It ceases STR use for 30 consecutive months, or
 - iii. It violates local laws three or more times.
- C. Local Regulation Limits
 - Municipalities **can regulate** STRs but **cannot retroactively prohibit** those that qualify under the legacy clause.
 - Local governments may still enforce **generally applicable laws** (e.g., noise, safety, health codes).

4. Legal Review of Grandfathered Short-Term Rental Properties

Properties currently operating as short-term rentals under grandfathered status—protected unless they cease operation for 30 consecutive months or incur three or more local code violations—should be evaluated to determine whether they may still be subject to regulation and taxation as commercial entities.

RECOMMENDATION: Townsend’s legal counsel should be consulted to clarify the following:

- A. The extent to which these properties may be regulated under existing or future ordinances.
- B. Whether their continued use qualifies them for commercial tax treatment.
- C. The City’s authority to assess and collect taxes on revenue generated from such uses.

This legal review will help ensure that grandfathered properties are treated equitably and in alignment with both state law and local policy objectives. Of course, this alignment is germane to

the conducting of a suggested special census alongside that of Townsend’s desire to administer a **Single-Family Dwelling Use Form**.

5. On the Nature and Relevance of Definitions

What, then, constitutes a *definition*—and when does it become outdated? This question is especially relevant in the evolving landscape of lodging/accommodation and land use. The distinctions between a hotel, motel, campground, Airbnb/VRBO, or hostel, etcetera, are increasingly [1] fluid, shaped by shifting market trends, [2] comprised of constantly emerging technologies, and [3] subject to user expectations. Then also, at once, they are liable to residents’ tolerances and intolerances, whereupon their body politic must consider its accommodation of these uses legitimately.

Yet, regardless of form or label, these uses share a common functional thread: they provide temporary accommodation. As such, they should be evaluated not solely by their definitions, but by their **impacts**—including measurable nuisances that may arise and the potential for generating revenue for the city.

RECOMMENDATION – Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that such uses, development proposals, etc.:

- Do not disrupt the desired character of the community,
- Are subject to fair and enforceable standards,
- And contribute equitably to the local economy.

CAUTION – Definitions, then, should serve as tools for clarity—not constraints on thoughtful, adaptive governance and its decision-making.

Policy Recommendations for Zoning

Short-Term Accommodation

- **STRATEGY – Cap on Short-Term Rentals:** Consider a cap or a permit system (e.g., modeled after NYC’s taxi medallion system) to preserve residential character and prevent investor-driven housing shortages.
- **RECOMMENDATION – Primary Residence Requirement:** Require proof of primary residence (e.g., homestead exemption, utility bills, driver’s license address) to limit speculative ownership.
 - **CAUTION:** For example, homeowner turnover, Townsend’s housing stock, should not become victim to the vagaries and vicissitudes of the marketplace.

- **RECOMMENDATION – Appeals and Interpretation:** Include a provision allowing the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) to interpret definitions and resolve disputes, ensuring flexibility and fairness.
- **STRATEGY – Reference Tools & Measurement Instruments:** Adopt resources like the *APA’s A Planner’s Dictionary* and conduct/consult structured public polling results to support consistent, informed, legitimate, and supportable interpretations.

Expanding Housing Options and their Definitions

1. **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):** Strongly supported by East Tennessee Realtors, ADUs can increase housing supply without altering neighborhood character. Consider allowing them in R-1 and R-1E zones.
 - **RECOMENDATION:** Townsend should enact an amendment allowing **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)** in its zoning ordinance.
2. **Cottage Courts:** These small-scale, clustered housing developments offer affordable, community-oriented living and should be explored as a zoning option.
 - **STRATEGY:** To expand the housing stock while promoting affordability—particularly to meet the needs of the local workforce and future young families—Cottage Courts should be considered as a permitted housing type within R-2, B-1, and B-2 zones. This approach, guided by—it is suggested—forthcoming design standards and review guidelines, supports demographic renewal and broadens housing options.
 - **RECOMMENEDATION:** Constitute a **Design Review Commission** and devise design and aesthetic standards to conduct oversight, perform advisory functions and effectuate standards for Cottage Courts and other high density and historic structures.



ADU units may be detached structures, attached additions, or converted existing spaces such as attics, basements or garages. Their basic spatial and living function is to be a self-contained accessory/secondary residential unit with independent interior amenities (entrance, kitchen and bath, etc.) from that of the principal residential structure/property. Their construction or retrofitting should require building permitting and code inspection.

INFOGRAPHIC 1

Areas in red in the above **INFOGRAPHIC 1** (Source: APA/American Planning Association) indicate six types of ADUs which may be detached, attached or internal relative to a principal structure/unit, in green.

RECOMMENDATION: Townsend should, initially, only allow ADUs in preexisting structures.

STRATEGY: ADUs could address short-term residential affordability and availability, whilst cottage courts could cater to medium-term housing supply paucity and long-term growth.

CAUTION: [1] The sale of ADUs should be disallowed. They should only be allowed as a **rental use** which may be treated, dually, as a **commercial use** via Townsend's employ of conditional use permits, thereby subjecting property owners to fire, safety, insurance, ADA, parking/driveway, deed, and/or tax restrictions or requirements. [2] Examples of cities' fuller allowance, regulation or standards for ADUs include Austin, Texas, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Portman Oregon and Pittman Center, Tennessee. Pittman Center's ordinances 292 (of 2020), 322 (of 2023) and 164 (of 2024/2025) may serve as a starting point to classify and regulate ADUs and residences which may

or ought to be treated as being, at once, a rental and a commercial use. Townsend’s forthcoming administration of its **Single-Family Dwelling Use Form** will help with this determination as the City should also bear in mind the dictums inherent in the **Short-Term Rental Unit Act, Public Chapter 972** when devising their rental standards and regulations for single-family residential properties. [3] The inclusion of tiny homes or mobile camper trailers as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) or short-term accommodations should be approached with caution, as their suitability may not align with the intended residential character or regulatory framework. [4] **Suites intended for extended family members—such as in-laws or (grand)parents—are distinct in purpose and should not be subject to the same classification or regulatory treatment as ADUs designed for rental or commercial use.**

Cottage courts’ key features typically include [1] a modest sized footprint of a building with a relatively plain interior floorplan; [2] a centrally placed courtyard, functioning as a shared open space, with [3] all units’ entrances facing that shared courtyard, whereby their [4] backyards are modestly sized, and whereas they may be [5] constructed as a cluster of bungalow-style semi-detached units. Additionally, cottage courts are comprised of [6] shared parking spaces and [7] a network of sidewalks whereby access to units is usually by foot, though [8] individualized garages may be made available at each or some unit’s rear. Ultimately, ADUs are [9] pocket-sized neighborhoods, with [10] shared infrastructure and amenities, comprising moderately priced and constructed homes, though not entirely and necessarily required to be of modesty. *Refer to infographics 2-6 for context.*

INFOGRAPHIC 2 (Source: www.youobserver.com)



INFOGRAPHIC 3 (Source: www.stevencanplan.com)



INFOGRAPHIC 4 (Source: www.CNU.org)



INFOGRAPHIC 5 (Source: Southern Urbanism www.southernurbanism.org)



INFOGRAPHIC 6 (Source: www.houzz.com)



INFORGRAPHIC 7 (Source: www.davidrobinsonblog.com)



Over the next 15–25 years, the residential, short-term accommodation, and housing landscape is expected to undergo significant transformation, shaped by demographic shifts, economic pressures, and evolving policy frameworks.

Affordability challenges are expected to persist as the need for flexible, if not smaller, units may become preferential for home dwellers of all sorts – i.e., the aging, renters, single persons, young couples with or without children—these aforementioned two being starter homebuyers—plus digital work nomads and families comprising intergenerational households.

Floorplans which are flexible for retrofitting, footprints which are smaller, and structures which are sustainable and resilient will all be important variables to consider, address or enact as they concern Townsend’s growth and development, especially as regards its demographics as also its lands’ development and infrastructural adaptations.

The protection of Townsend’s long-term housing stock and the familial stability of its residences and neighborhoods should be striven for, especially in tourism-heavy local socio-economies which seek to balance a community environment alongside such an economy. ADUs may address housing stock adaptation, short-term accommodation supply, long-term housing affordability, detour high density housing, and most important of all, restore and retain neighborliness.

RECOMMENDATION: Residential-Commercial adoption and adaptation may be a prudent strategy for Townsend’s housing, demographic, economic, and finance matters arising.

CAUTION: Lastly, a cautious approach, within the law, to tiny homes and vehicular mobile units, though not mobile homes, for the law outrightly allows them, should be adopted. For one, to allow them as newly constructed ADUs could end up being a two-edged sword. Considerations and hedges to ameliorate their risks may include septic capacity, driveway ingress and egress as well as green cover versus impervious surface ratios.

ADDITIONAL TERMS, DEFINITIONS, AND THEIR INTENDED PURPOSES—as outlined in Chapter 2 of the Zoning Ordinance—which may be adapted to better align with Townsend’s unique contexts plus is planning goals and development priorities.

Unified Definition and Regulatory Scope for Alcohol Manufacturing Facilities

Alcohol manufacturing and retail operations could be unified under a single definitional category. This classification includes the production, storage, and on-site sale of alcoholic beverages—such as beer (brewery), wine (winery), or spirits (distillery)—with the allowance of on-site tastings only. On-site consumption beyond tastings should not be permitted unless the establishment also functions as an eatery, which would separately qualify for on-premises consumption under food service regulations.

So, the details to home in on are whether a prospective alcohol manufacturing and/or retail establishment proposes on-premises sales and of what sort (packaged or by-the-drink, etc.),

including a determination as to whether food sales/dining or not are to be a consideration for the Planning Commission and other decision-makers.

STRATEGY: To preserve Townsend’s small-town character and mitigate potential land-use conflicts, facilities shall be limited to **non-industrial scale operations**, defined in part by their production volume, physical footprint, and onsite activity as to be determined by the Planning Commission and the City Commission in due course. Which specific structure and its particular or peculiar use[s] that is[are] proposed to the city could then be suitably placed under the purview of the Building Inspector.

OPERATIONAL IMPACT CRITERIA

Regulatory attention must be given to controlling externalities that may affect adjacent properties or the broader community. The following factors should be evaluated and addressed through zoning and permitting conditions:

- **Traffic and Parking:** Volume, ingress/egress points, and overflow controls
- **Noise:** Particularly from outdoor seating, amplified music, and event programming
- **Lighting:** Light pollution mitigation, and security measures
- **Event Management:** Frequency, capacity limits, and public disturbance controls
- **Environmental Nuisances:** Distance restrictions relative to schools, churches, etc., plus hours of operation conditionalities and signage standards.

The determinations of what constitutes and what comprises the manufacture of alcohol such that they need to be separated by the following nomenclature (as defined in the zoning ordinance): [1] brewery, [2] brewpub, [3] distillery, [4] micro-distillery, [5] micro-winery, and [6] winery—when all manufacture a similar class of product—is quite an errant exercise, especially when equal or comparable regulatory quantities in gallons/liters would suffice.

Amusement and Entertainment Uses

DEFINITION AND POLICY DIRECTION

Amusement facilities—including arcades, amusement parks, and similar developments—have the potential to disrupt the community’s established character. These uses may be subject to strict zoning restrictions, including limitations on size, location, and operational scope. To even have these entertainment facilities allowed in ‘peaceful’ Townsend optically and auditorily sounds oxymoronic.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AND IMPACTS

- **RECOMMENDATION:** The potentially cumulative presence of amusement uses may conflict with Townsend’s land use vision, particularly its emphasis on low-impact

development and its preservation of its natural and scenic character. These uses should be stricken out of the zoning ordinance.

- Outdoor arcades and amusement parks should only be allowed as a temporary entertainment event-based amenity.
- **STRATEGY:** If it is to remain allowable in the zoning ordinance, legal, aesthetic, and land-use mechanisms should be considered to discourage or regulate such uses where appropriate, especially in proximity to residential districts, conservation areas, or gateway corridors.
- **CAUTION:** Outdoor seating areas and event staging associated with these facilities should be evaluated for potential nuisance, including traffic and parking overflow, ambient noise as well as intrusive lighting.



Chapter 7: Implementation Methods

In this chapter, several tools and methods for implementing the recommended objectives and implementation strategies in this plan are reviewed. Many of these methods for implementation are already being utilized by the City of Townsend; however, the planning commission and board of commissioners should examine the effectiveness of current regulations to meet the objectives and policies previously stated. If the following methods are not currently used, then the commissions should consider implementing them in the future. The planning program is administered and enforced by the planning commission, board of zoning appeals, and the building inspector.

The City of Townsend currently employs several tools including but not limited to zoning, subdivision regulations, growth management plan, code enforcement, mandatory referral, and an active planning commission; however, the regulations or policies contained within these tools require amendments from time to time to reflect best practices and current conditions. This chapter will provide an overview of the importance of these implements and how they may be amended to better accomplish the objectives in the previous chapter.

Planning Commission Project Review/Mandatory Referral

Under Tennessee Code Section 13-4-104, Mandatory Referral Act, after the adoption of a land use plan, no public improvement project can be authorized or constructed in the municipality until and unless the location and extent of the project have been submitted to the planning commission for review. This review authority enables the planning commission to ensure that all public improvement projects are in compliance with the plan. The commission may provide comments on the project referring to the policies stated in this plan.

Zoning

A zoning ordinance established zoning districts, identifies uses allowed in each district, and establishes standards for new developments. Specifically, each zone or district regulates the location, height, bulk, and size of buildings and other structures, the percentage of the lot that may be occupied, the sizes of yards, courts and other open spaces, the density of the population, and the uses allowed within the zone. The intent of the ordinance is to promote the public health, safety, morals, convenience, order, prosperity and general welfare within the city. The zoning ordinance often serves as a guide for property owners and developers who wish to improve land. Zoning is most effective when aligned with the land use policies.

Site plan requirements within the zoning ordinance should provide guidance for new land development that corresponds with the policies within this plan. Site plan requirements ensure that the regulations within the zoning ordinance are applied to new or expanding developments.

Subdivision Regulations

The subdivision of land is the initial process in the development of a city. When land is subdivided and roads and utilities are constructed, a development pattern is established that is unlikely to be changed. Subdivision regulations, used in a coordinated manner with zoning, are a legal mechanism to carry out the recommended implementation strategies in this plan and should reflect the previously stated policies. Subdivision of land permanently alters the land use pattern and the quality of life for residents and those who live in a subdivision development. The quality of subdivisions and the standards that are required determine the form and character of an area. Subdivision of land and subsequent development may affect the hydrology within a watershed, water quality, wildlife habitat, tree canopy, and availability of prime agricultural farmland. The regulations may be amended to include the policies regarding these natural features.

Controls over the subdivision of property ensure the installation of adequate utilities that may be economically serviced and maintained. Premature development may lead to increased costs regarding the transportation system, utilities, public services, and schools. Additionally, the fiscal health of a city may be damaged if development does not correspond with land use policies. These controls are also used in providing a coordinated street system and ensuring sufficient and strategic open space for recreation, wildlife habitat, and public services.

Code Enforcement

Townsend currently employs a part-time codes enforcement agent and a part-time building inspector. These two positions are given the ability to enforce several codes including those in the zoning ordinance, the flood hazard ordinance, and in the building code. The system of codes functions by active inspection system. Code enforcement ensures the adequacy of new residential, commercial, and industrial structures while also detecting and preventing deterioration of existing facilities through periodic inspection. By reducing blight, property values become more stable and the health and welfare of the community is protected.

Capital Improvements Plan

A Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) provides the means through which the local government can effectively undertake a properly planned and programmed approach toward utilizing its financial resources in the most efficient way possible to meet the service and facility needs of the community. A CIP identifies recommended capital improvements, estimates their costs, and identifies possible financing alternatives. The plan develops and schedules a way to finance the recommendations for implementing the land use policies and other public projects.

Growth Management

In compliance with the Growth Management Act 1101 enacted in Tennessee in 1998, Townsend, along with Blount County and the other municipalities that lie therein, adopted a county-wide growth plan. Each jurisdiction identified those areas outside of the municipal limits where they were most able to provide urban services. Three districts are identified in each growth plan. Cities propose “urban growth boundaries,” and counties propose “planned growth areas” and “rural areas.” In Townsend, annexation is limited to its urban growth boundary. If the city wishes to annex beyond the boundary, a revision to the map must be completed along with all supporting documentation.

Townsend proposed urban growth areas that lie just beyond the municipal limits but did not include all parts of the Tuckaleechee Cove area. The “Cove” area is geographically isolated from other parts of Blount County. Annexation of additional areas in Townsend should only occur if the area positively affects the health, welfare, and prosperity of residents within the city and in the annexation area. Annexation should be regarded as a tool to implement land use policies, provide unified zoning and planning, and to provide or to reduce the cost of public services.

Planning Staff

Planning staff from East Tennessee Development District serves the planning commission and the community by providing recommendations to the commission that conforms to the land use policies. Staff members are responsible for informing the commission on matters related to the land use plan in every day decisions. Staff is guided by the land use policies and recommended implementation strategies as the annual work program is created.

Citizen Participation

Citizen participation is an important factor in determining the success of a land use plan. An informed citizenry that is willing to work to achieve the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation strategies set forth in the plan is an invaluable asset. Citizens can offer support for programs designed to achieve community goals. Successful citizen participation can be achieved through a public education program designed to inform the community of the various purpose and reasons for the actions of both the planning commission and the legislative body. Educating the public may be achieved through newspaper articles, public hearings, and workshops on areas of concern.

Committees

To support city staff and elected officials, Townsend residents may also serve the city by participating in committees that advise the planning commission and the legislative body. There is currently an active Parks and Recreation Committee, and there may become a need for additional

committees to be formed to help implement the recommendations and strategies set forth in this plan. Committees can serve a critical role by gathering input from stakeholders and community members, building on research and information provided by local planning assistance office staff, and presenting their recommendations to the planning commission and elected officials.

Local Leadership

The Townsend Board of Commissioners has the authority to amend regulations that must be changed in order to conform to the recommended implementation strategies and land use policies. Therefore, the legislative body should maintain a close working relationship with the planning commission so that the planning process is coordinated and effective. The commissioners have the authority to adopt the appropriate implementation strategies that will fulfill the goals, objectives, and policies developed in this plan.

Appendix Materials

We will send all of these materials, you can decide which you would like to include in the final appendix.

2009 Land Use and Transportation Inventory & Analysis

Townsend Recreation Plan

[Site Visit Notes and Takeaways.docx](#)

[Townsend Itinerary.docx](#)

[Survey Results Processing Guidance.docx](#)

[Survey Word Clouds 8.12](#)

[Decision-Making Framework.docx](#)

[STR Data.docx](#)

[Case Studies.docx](#)

Cultural Resources References

Community-Wide Opinion Poll

Zoning Amendments History

Cultural Resources References

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