



MEDIA RELEASE

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URBAN LEAGUE, SEED TO PROMOTE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Planners want to make sure everyone's voice is heard as the City's zoning code undergoes its first major update in nearly 60 years.

To help gather input from traditionally underrepresented sectors of the city, the Knoxville Area Urban League and SEED, in partnership with Centro Hispano de East Tennessee, will be providing outreach services.

MPC is contracting with the Urban League and SEED (Socially Equal Energy Efficient Development), two nonprofit organizations with proven track records for effective community engagement. The Urban League and SEED submitted proposals for the competitively bid \$35,000 services contract.

The City is otherwise funding the complete review and update of the City's zoning ordinance by the Metropolitan Planning Commission.

Extensive public engagement is critically important.

To gather input, a series of community meetings were held last year, and more are being held this spring. More than 1,600 people have responded to survey requests. The www.recodeknoxville.com website was created to provide updates to the community, and comments also can be submitted here throughout the process.

Camiros, a full-service planning, zoning and urban design consultancy, has created a draft of its recommendations, which is available online. MPC and City staff will continue to weigh public feedback and prepare a final draft of the updated zoning ordinance, which is scheduled to go to City Council by the end of 2018.

Gerald Green, MPC Executive Director, said the Urban League will be assisting with upcoming public meetings, networking with community representatives, and developing "Zoning 101" explanatory materials. SEED also will help enhance the public process, and its members will be going door-to-door in neighborhoods and conducting more surveys.

"The Urban League and SEED will help in explaining how zoning impacts our daily lives," Green said. "For example, how a neighborhood is zoned can affect whether the corner store remains viable – and whether you create the environment in which children can walk to that corner store."

“Appropriate zoning can allow desirable mixed-use development on the edges of neighborhoods, and it provides more opportunity for housing.”

Phyllis Nichols, President and CEO of the local Urban League, said “it’s important for all community voices to be understood and be heard.”

“Informing the community about issues that affect residents and businesses is consistent with our mission,” she said. “We’ll be sure to work with people to raise awareness, because the new residential and commercial zoning code will affect our neighborhoods and livelihoods.”

For details about the project, including an overview, survey results and Camiros’ technical report and initial draft, visit www.recodeknoxville.com.

Knoxville’s zoning code hasn’t undergone a thorough review in more than a half century. Recode Knoxville will allow the city to adopt modern standards to help shape the city for the next 20 to 40 years. It will also help protect and enhance Knoxville’s sense of place over the next few decades.

Knox County is projected to add 170,000 residents by 2040, and this update of the City’s zoning ordinance will help prepare the community for that growth by striking a balance between protecting historic characteristics of neighborhoods and creating standards that encourage dynamic growth. It will encourage investment, protect valued community assets, and support connectivity among people and places.

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