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Recode Knoxville demands attention

Big potential changes to Knoxville's zoning code are on the horizon. Knoxville is exploring overhauling its existing zoning code in a process dubbed "Recode Knoxville." Recode Knoxville's current project timeline roughly extends through October 2018, with a first draft of a new code expected to be available by year's end. The Knoxville City Council could vote on whether to adopt Recode Knoxville's finished product as early as a year from now. Should the City Council vote to adopt, it will be the most significant change to Knoxville's zoning code in over 50 years. In short, if you are involved in Knoxville's real estate industry, Recode Knoxville is worth your attention.

Recode Knoxville has the potential to considerably expand the scope of permissible uses within Knoxville's commercial corridors. Part of this will entail allowing residential uses in certain commercial zones. Other expected changes will likely include building setback and orientation regulations designed to promote walkability. Such changes, in fact, are already imminent. The Metropolitan Planning Commission recently recommended amending Knoxville's zoning code to allow residential uses, subject to some conditions, in C-3 and C-6 commercial zones to enable more walkable, mixed-use development before Recode Knoxville's completion.

Recode Knoxville presents an unparalleled opportunity for industry participants and citizens alike to shape Knoxville's zoning regulations to reflect current and anticipated market demands for Knoxville real estate. When zoning regulations do not permit a use on a particular parcel for which a demand exists, the available solutions are: (1) seek to have the parcel rezoned from its current zoning classification to another zoning classification that allows the desired use; or (2) seek to amend the zoning classification affecting such parcel to allow the use within that classifi-

cation. Those solutions, though, are parcel-by-parcel and classification-by-classification processes, respectively. In contrast, Recode Knoxville could update zoning regulations on both a city-wide and classification-wide level. This opportunity does not arise every day.

If a landowner has been contemplating making a future rezoning request but has so far declined to do so, such landowner should seriously consider actively engaging in the Recode Knoxville process. This not only gives the landowner a voice in the Recode Knoxville process, but it could also preempt potential objections to future rezoning requests on the basis that the landowner should have raised such requests during the Recode Knoxville process.

Recode Knoxville has already started, but there is still ample time to observe and comment on the process. A simple but productive effort for landowners would be reviewing how each updated code draft regulates their specific parcels and noting whether such regulations comport with known market demands for those specific parcels. That could help a landowner evaluate whether, and to what extent, to offer comments on Recode Knoxville. Developers would also be well-served by similar efforts. I suggest bookmarking <http://recodeknoxville.com/> for easy access to observe and comment on the process.

If adopted, Recode Knoxville's final product will affect local land use decisions for the foreseeable future. Do not sleep on it.

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