



**Smart Growth America Technical Assistance
“Implementing Transit Oriented Development 101”
Progress Report #3
September 19, 2016**

In partnership with Smart Growth America (SGA), the City of Knoxville held a “Transit Oriented Development 101” workshop on July 16, 2015. Attendees included City staff and elected officials, representatives from Knoxville Area Transit (KAT), regional planners, community members, and other state and local officials. Workshop presentations provided a foundational knowledge of the benefits of transit oriented development (TOD) and implementation strategies. During the workshop, breakout/discussion sessions asked all participants to actively consider the attributes of existing core KAT routes to begin thinking about suitability for TOD.

Feedback from both the workshop and Next Steps Memo was highly positive and reflected stakeholder interest in potential opportunities to incorporate TOD principles into zoning, redevelopment, and economic development plans and activities. This progress report summarizes several ways in which the City has moved forward with principles and recommendations from Smart Growth America (SGA) through the workshop and Next Steps Memo.

Progress

Since the workshop, the City’s 1-month and 6-month progress reports have showcased local efforts to build on the lessons and recommendations offered by SGA. This 12-month report provides the final set of updates reflecting on progress from the last six months (since the previous report) and looking ahead to the City’s future efforts to connect transit with development and redevelopment efforts.

1. **Transit System Improvements to Attract Choice Riders.** The Smart Growth Workshop and memo highlighted the need to help residents understand the important role of transit in our community and encourage “first time rides” to expose more people to KAT services.
 - a. This summer, the City and KAT hosted “Try Transit Week,” a week of activities showcasing new system improvements and encouraging residents to try the bus through events such as “celebrity rides,” neighborhood group rides, and “Free Rides Friday” using KAT’s new Google Transit Planner. The theme of the week was to show residents how transit is a key component to a successful city. Comparing August 2015 with August 2016 following these events, KAT saw a 3.2% increase in ridership.
 - b. Leveraging the challenge of UT’s football season mid-week home opener, KAT and the City developed a series of Vols Game Route Maps describing in detail how football fans could use normally scheduled KAT buses to commute to the game along key City corridors. The campaign succeeded in getting new riders to try the regular bus system—combined ridership on the six routes serving campus increased 32.8% over a normal Thursday. The City now hopes to publicize these regular services throughout the football season, with a goal of exposing more new riders to the bus system.



- c. KAT has installed and is currently testing Wi-Fi services on some buses. Pending results of testing, this service is expected to expand to the entire fleet by the beginning of next year.
 2. **Integration of Transit into City Land Use Decisions:** Among the most important take-aways from the Smart Growth workshop was the need to fully integrate transit considerations with land use decisions across the City. With the Metropolitan Planning Commission, the City has advanced several specific initiatives designed, among other goals, to promote strong connections between transit and land use along key corridors.
 - a. **Parking Ordinance Updates:** MPC recently drafted an updated parking ordinance, the draft of which was released for public comment on August 24th. In developing the revisions, the City and MPC intentionally sought to integrate transit into its parking strategy. The revised ordinance includes, for example, reduced-parking incentives for multi-family residential developments located within one-quarter of a mile of a transit route, and requirements for larger parking lots to provide clearly defined and accessible pedestrian routes connecting building entrances with adjacent public sidewalks. City Council is expected to vote on the parking ordinance in October 2016.
 - b. **Bearden Mixed-Use Rezoning Proposal:** The Bearden Corridor, currently served by KAT Routes 10, 11, and 17, was identified in the SGA workshop and memo as an area of high opportunity for promotion of TOD principles. In July of 2016, at the request of City Council, MPC released proposed zoning changes to create a Mixed-Use District in Bearden. Among the goals of this rezoning are to facilitate quality mixed use and pedestrian-friendly development, to provide a greater variety of densities, and to group and link uses, thereby reducing vehicle trips and relieving traffic congestion. The Bearden Mixed Use Standard would be the first application of such a standard in Knoxville, and MPC has designed it to be a model applicable to other higher-density corridors in the City. City Council is expected to vote on the rezoning in late 2016.
 - c. **City-wide updates to the Zoning Code:** In May, Mayor Madeline Rogero and City Council requested that MPC conduct a complete review and update of the City's zoning ordinance. The City and MPC are currently evaluating proposals from consultants to support this process, which is expected to take 15 months. Among the goals of the rezoning effort are to modernize the ordinance to encourage dynamic growth, particularly along key corridors leading to downtown, and to increase connectivity among neighborhoods and destinations. Principles related to sustainability, transit, walkability, and accessibility will be built into the entire process.
 3. **Improving Services along Core Lines:** The SGA memo made clear the importance of continued investment to improve transit services along core lines, while also deploying strategies that fit the unique opportunities and constraints of each corridor, rather than employing a “one size fits all” approach. Several recent projects open doors for strategic TOD considerations within key redevelopment and transit corridors.
 - a. **Broadway Corridor:** For the last year, the City, businesses, and residents have worked together to re-imagine the Broadway Corridor, which is KAT's most



heavily traveled route. Responding to community interest in addressing congestion and improving bus stops, the City applied this summer for a \$6.3 million Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality grant to install a mixed flow traffic signal priority system along the corridor, which will help expedite bus travel. If approved, the grant would also include funding for bus shelter improvements along the route.

- b. **Magnolia Corridor:** In July, the City cut the ribbon on new Kirkwood Street Superstop improvements designed to serve KAT routes on and near the Magnolia corridor. Improvements include new pavement, sidewalks and shelters, with landscaping to be added this fall, when temperatures cool. In addition, the City plans to begin streetscape improvements by Spring 2017 to make Magnolia a more “Complete Street,” with transit amenities fully integrated into the design, including transit stop/shelter improvements and bus pull offs to allow more efficient loading and unloading along this high-ridership route.