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Fwd: Please oppose the Master Sign Plan for Sherrill Hill developmen t--agenda item 6-E-11-UR.

1 message

Betty Jo Mahan <bettyjo.mahan@knoxmpc.org>

Tue, Jun 7, 2011 at 10:18 AM

To: Sarah Powell <sarah.powell@knoxmpc.org>

Forwarded conversation

Subject: Please oppose the Master Sign Plan for Sherrill Hill development--agenda item 6-E-11-UR.

From: Kline, Margaret (Margot) <utmargarita@utk.edu>

Date: Mon, Jun 6, 2011 at 11:47 AM

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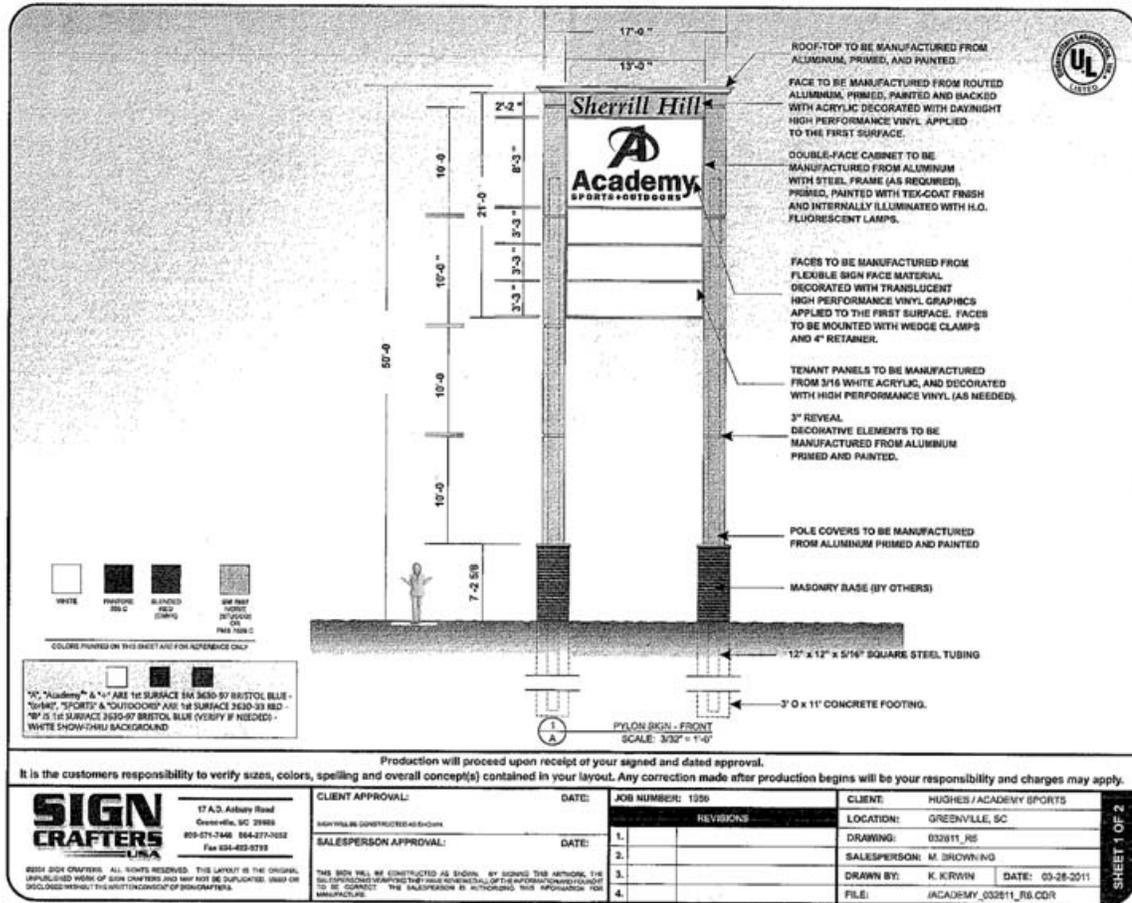
Dear Commissioners,

The agenda packet for the June 9 MPC meeting includes a signage plan for the Sherrill Hill development. The proposed "development directory" sign, which will be installed at the corner of Kingston Pike and Moss Grove Blvd., is 50 feet tall. This is at least 20 feet taller than the Krogers Marketplace sign across the street!

The drawing included with the agenda item shows the dimensions of the sign but DOES NOT include a perspective drawing of a person standing beside it. The standard practice is to include a silhouette of an average-height person for comparison purposes. Below is the drawing with and without a person drawn in for perspective (*I added the person in the second drawing*).

, 2011

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Clearly, this is one HUGE sign. At 50 feet tall, I think it might be visible from the interstate—I wonder if that is the motivation for this absurd height. But note that this is NOT an "Advertising" sign, it is a "Development Directory" sign.

According to the City Sign Ordinance,

"For the purpose of providing flexibility and incentives for coordinated, well designed sign systems for shopping centers, commercial subdivisions, office parks and other large scale commercial and mixed use developments, a master signage plan is required for certain signs identified within article V, section 10, and sign systems within the TC-1 (Town Center) district. A master signage plan will promote the use of signs which are aesthetically pleasing, of appropriate scale, and integrated with surrounding buildings and landscape, in order to meet the community's expressed desire for quality development consistent with the property's land use designation. Master signage plans required pursuant to other provisions of this ordinance, shall be submitted for review and consideration by the metropolitan planning commission as a use on review..."

The Sherrill property is annexed to the city, but the Sevenoaks, Wedgewood Hills, and Statesview neighborhoods that surround it are in the county. There has been little apparent legislative coordination regarding how the Sherrill Hill (city) development will affect the property values of adjacent (county) neighborhoods or change the nature of this entire area. I am the president of the Council of West Knox County Homeowners (www.cwkch.com) and I plan to bring this issue up at our June meeting, which is this Tuesday night. I will represent the council at Thursday's MPC meeting if the majority of council members support this. Even if they don't, I will come to the MPC meeting as a private citizen opposed to this signage.

I live in the Ebenezer/Bluegrass area myself and I am VERY concerned about the damage being done to the history and character of this community. I have also been a member of the PlanET Consortium since the grant-writing phase. I have studied federal guidelines for smart growth and livable communities. I am a member of the Congress for the New Urbanism and a graphic designer by trade. A 50-foot lighted plastic sign adjacent to established neighborhoods does NOT conform to anyone's concept of sustainable or quality growth.

People who live next to this development are very unhappy, but beyond that, please understand that the history of this area deserves some special consideration. This part of Knox County was settled at the same time as downtown Knoxville. It was a thriving community by the mid 1790s. Sherrill Hill was once known as Mount Ebenezer. On this site there was once a highly esteemed school called Mount Ebenezer Academy, which was

founded by The Rev. Samuel Ramsey, one of the first leaders of the Presbyterian Church in Tennessee and brother of Francis Ramsey (Ramsey House). Rev. Ramsey was the first pastor of Ebenezer Presbyterian Church (now known as Cedar Springs Presbyterian), and Knoxville's founding families sent their sons to Ebenezer Academy and sent their daughters to a school for girls run by Reverend Ramsey's wife (*Goodspeed's History of Tennessee, 1887*).

Ebenezer is named for Ebenezer Byram, who was a descendent of John Alden, who came over on the Mayflower; Ebenezer had a train station and a post office between the middle 1800s until sometime in the middle of the 20th century; Statesview House, the home of Charles McClung (Knoxville's first city planner and the surveyor of Kingston Pike as well as James White's son-in-law), is still standing at the corner of S. Peters Rd. and George Williams Rd.; Ebenezer Mill, one of the oldest grist mills still in existence in Knox County, is located on Old Ebenezer Rd. The Cedar Springs Church graveyard, founded in 1796, is located next to Maple Grove Inn on the grounds of the first Cedar Springs Church, and it contains the graves of Samuel Ramsey as well as many other of Knox County's earliest settlers along with many who fought in the Revolution and the War of 1812. Baker-Peters House is 2 blocks east of the Sherrill Hill development, although regrettably almost obscured by a gas station in its front yard.

If you drive down Kingston Pike and look at Cedar Spring Church and the road beyond it, just imagine that the huge billboards and the tangle of power lines are erased... it would still look a lot like a picturesque village. Shouldn't we be striving to restore what beauty remains in this area? It isn't too late...

I was really expecting that the Sherrill Hill signage might look more like the best of Kingston Pike development—Franklin Square—rather than the worst. That huge, ugly, plastic sign shown in the MPC agenda is an abomination. Knox County planners will be the laughing stock of the state if they allow this sign to be installed.

FIGURE 1: THE WORST—Kingston Pike 3 blocks east of Sherrill Hill



FIGURE 2: THE BEST—Kingston Pike 3 blocks west of Sherrill Hill. This looks like what you might see in Germantown, Franklin, or some other area with per-capita income that is similar to the Cedar Springs/Ebenezer/Bluegrass demographic.



FIGURE 3: APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE. This is a good example of shopping center/commercial signage that is bordered by residential... it is "esthetically pleasing, of appropriate scale, and integrated with surrounding buildings and landscape, in order to meet the community's expressed desire for quality development"



FIGURE 4: HOW COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL CAN CO-EXIST AS GOOD NEIGHBORS. With signage like that shown in figures 2 and 3 above, the property value of homes in adjacent residential neighborhoods is not damaged. In fact, the desirability of a neighborhood can be enhanced by a well-planned commercial development. This shows Tippet Lane, which leads to residences behind the east side of the Franklin Square shopping center:



I am absolutely not opposed to development or change, but I am convinced that Knox County can do a lot better job of guiding high-quality development! Other areas of Tennessee are growing and thriving even during these economic hard times mostly because they create and enforce strict building codes and signage restrictions. Franklin, Cool Springs, The Avenue development in Murfreesboro, and the Town of Farragut are light-years ahead of Knox County where signage is concerned. These areas have developed with a focus on enhancing the quality of life of the existing residents and increasing the overall value and appeal of their communities.

The continuing proliferation of interstate-size signs next to Cedar Bluff, Ebenezer, Bluegrass, and Northshore at Pellissippi neighborhoods is a tragedy and an embarrassment. I believe that our county leaders should be focused on limiting the size of signs as well as following Farragut's example and require developers to plant attractive trees along main thoroughfares, add landscaped median strips, bury utilities, and otherwise make this county a better place, where people will continue to want to live and where new businesses will want to locate. This proposed 50-foot-tall sign is an atrocity.

According to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, Cedar Bluff, Cedar Springs, Bluegrass, Ebenezer, and the nearby Northshore/Pellissippi census districts have the highest density, the highest income growth, the highest median household income, the highest average education level, and the highest median home price of any areas in Knox County outside of Farragut. What better place to start enforcing guidelines?

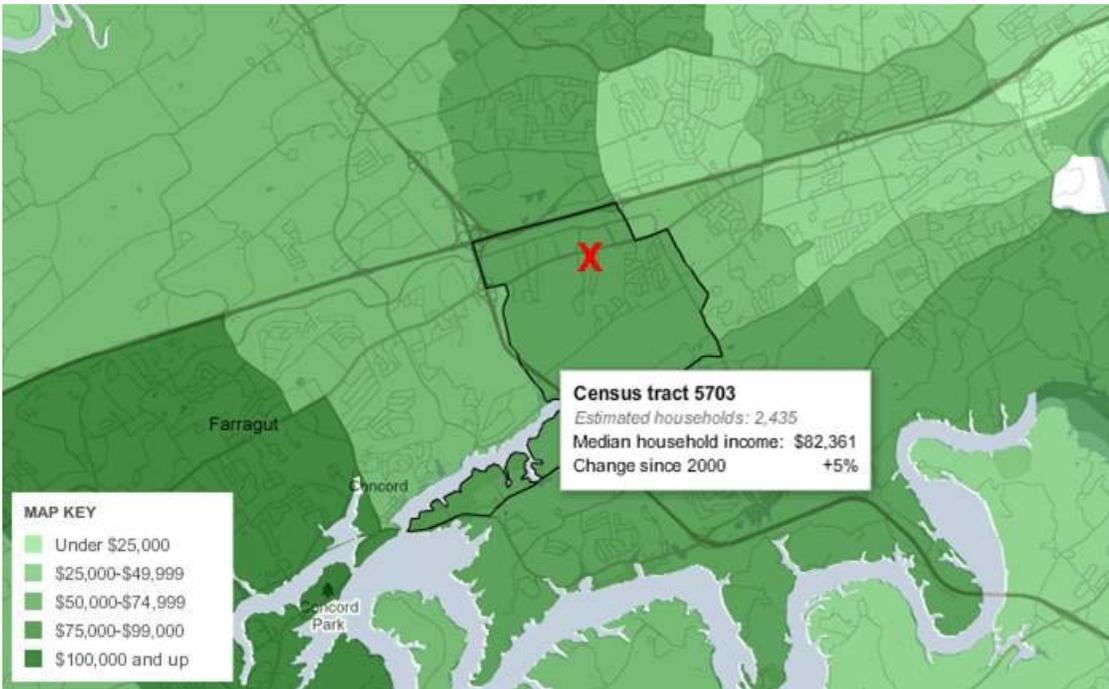
The MPC has links to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey on its website. These figures are not very easy to interpret, however. *The New York Times* has a really great interactive link to the American Community Survey that allows you to see very quickly where the population growth has been during the past 10 years, what the average household income is, what percent of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher, what the median house price is, etc.

That link is <http://projects.nytimes.com/census/2010/explorer>, and if you input Essex Drive, 37922 it will center the map on the Sherrill Hill property and show an interactive map and demographics of the area around it.

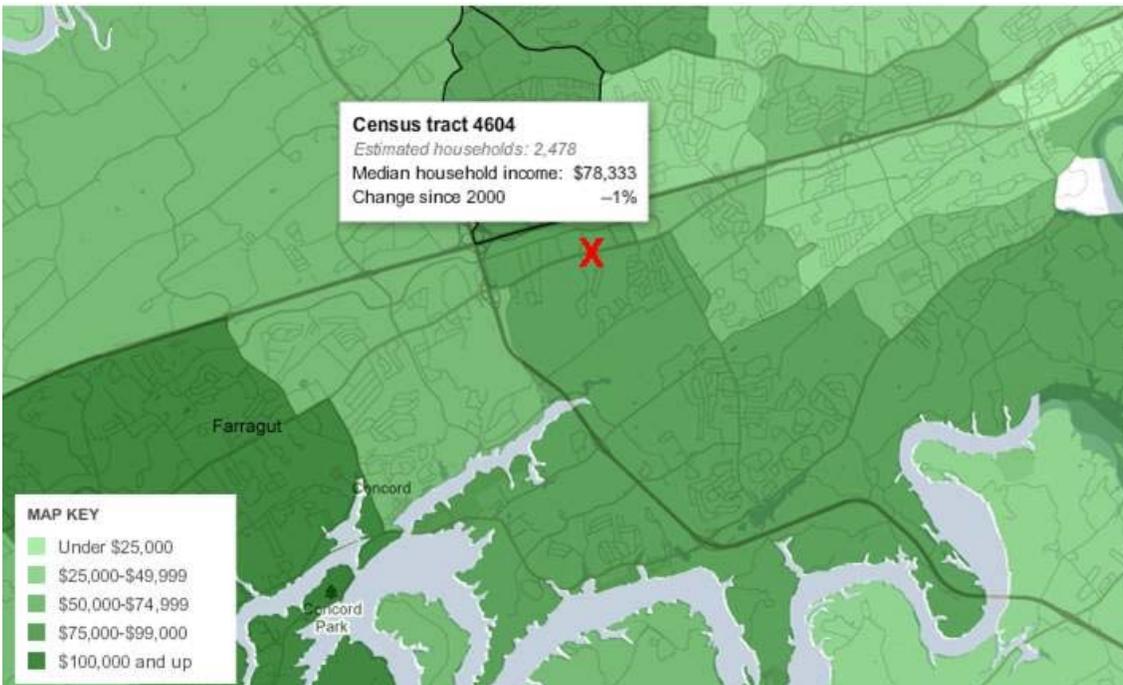
I have done screen captures to show these statistics... but if you have access to the internet at your agenda review meeting it would be really eye-opening for everyone to look at the maps and the data online, because you can mouse over areas and see the demographic information interactively... I have lived in Knoxville for 51 years, and I was very surprised to learn that the average household income in Cedar Springs, Cedar Bluff, Ebenezer, and Bluegrass is higher than in Sequoyah Hills, Lyons View, Bearden, Deane Hill, West Hills, Westland, and Rocky Hill.

Basically, here is the pertinent information:

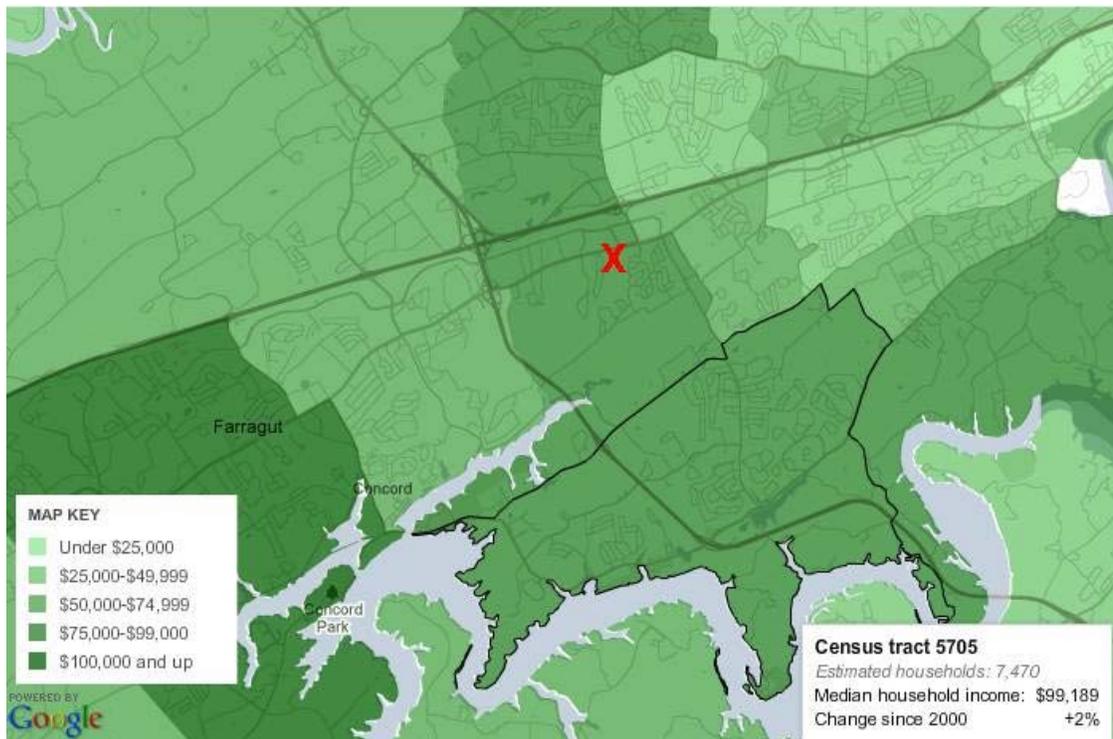
The Cedar Springs median household income is **\$82,361** (a 5% increase in the past 10 years):



The Cedar Bluff median household income is **\$78,333** (a 1% decrease)



The Bluegrass/Ebenezer/Northshore median household income is **\$99,189** (a 2% increase).



This information becomes even more interesting when you compare it with other areas of West Knoxville/Knox County:

The Lyon's View/Sequoyah Hills median income is \$71,901, a 2% increase since 2000.

The Toolles Bend/Riverbend area south of Northshore median income is \$89,346 but this is a 13% decrease since 2000.

The West Hills median income is \$54,196, a 0% increase.

The Dean Hill median income is \$32,987, a 30% DECREASE

Clearly, the Bluegrass, Cedar Springs, and Ebenezer area is a gold mine for developers. They need to be held to the highest standards rather than the lowest.

Thank you,

Margot Kline

President, Council of West Knox County Homeowners

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