

Parking will be key to Cumberland Ave. design code

By Hayes Hickman

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A draft design code unveiled for the Cumberland Avenue Strip could transform the campus-area corridor into a walkable, mixed-used destination within a generation of college students, if only the parking issues can be overcome, planners said.

Knoxville city officials offered a draft version of a form-based code for the redevelopment area to about 25 attendees at a public presentation at the UT Federal Credit Union on Thursday.

The form-follows-function zoning approach, similar to what's been adopted for the South Waterfront, is intended to spur a denser, wider variety of uses — i.e., more retail and residential — along the roughly six-block stretch.

“There’s a lot of flexibility of use in the code,” said Lee Einsweiler with Code Studio, the Austin, Texas-based design firm behind the plans. “In a mixed-use environment, we don’t want to focus too much on whether you’re the tinker, tailor or candlestick maker.”

The code also is being developed in conjunction with a \$14.6 million city streetscape project to narrow the roadway, widen the sidewalks and bury the utilities underground. That work could begin as soon as year’s end, said Anne Wallace, the city’s project manager.

The code could be presented for adoption to the Metropolitan Planning Commission by June, and later approval by Knoxville City Council. The regulations would govern new construction within the area between Third Creek to the west and 17th Street to the east, as well as White and Lake avenues.

How to effectively accommodate parking, though, is one element of the form-based code that still needs work, Einsweiler admitted.

“You have a very sophisticated parking problem here,” he said. “A walkable environment wants the least visible parking possible. A (football) gameday environment wants the most visible.

“We have to find the balance between what it’s going to become in 15 to 20 years and the place it is today.”



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