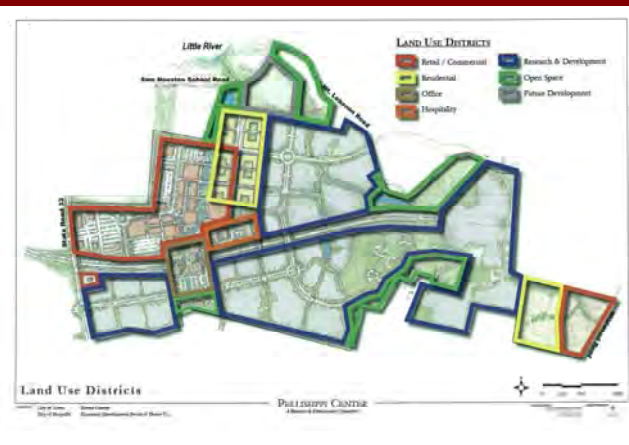


# TOWN CENTER MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT ZONE DISTRICT STANDARDS:



## KEY ISSUES AND OPTIONS

Prepared for the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization

And the City of Alcoa, Tennessee

Public Workshop Draft/August 2015

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In Association With Smart Growth America



**C L A R I O N**



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# TOWN CENTER MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT STANDARDS: KEY ISSUES AND OPTIONS

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## Introduction

The Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) on behalf of a regional consortium recently completed a three-year, multi-county planning process called Plan East Tennessee (PlanET). A key element of the regional vision that emerged from that process was to support small cities to develop dynamic town centers that would help them:

- Grow more efficiently
- Create more walking and bicycling opportunities
- Redevelop vacant and underutilized land
- Embrace a mix of new housing types



The TPO sought technical assistance and was awarded a smart growth technical assistance grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through Smart Growth America, a national non-profit organization to help it in implementing this vision, with a focus on the City of Alcoa, Tennessee. Alcoa, originally developed as a company town, has long range plans to redevelop the 350-acre former Alcoa West Plant industrial site as a mixed-use town center. The TPO and Alcoa requested that SGA conduct a thorough review of its development regulations to help it identify barriers to implementing the city's town center vision. The TPO intends to use the results of this technical assistance to assist other small cities in the region such as the Town of Farragut and the City of Oak Ridge that are also pursuing quality downtown development and redevelopment.

As the focus of that technical assistance, Smart Growth America, in association with Clarion Associates, a national planning and land use firm based in Denver, have drafted this document for the TPO and Alcoa. It discusses key issues and options related to mixed-use town center development standards. It also sets forth a preliminary audit of the Alcoa zoning ordinance to identify potential amendments to support and encourage redevelopment of the Alcoa West Plant site.

The recommendations are based on the experience of SGA and Clarion working with other communities across the United States to create or revitalize suburban town centers in places like Dallas, Hartford, and Denver. While this analysis focuses primarily on development code changes to support small city town-center development, it is important to keep in mind that other communities that have been successful

in this arena also addressed key issues such as development financing, marketing, and long-term management.

## Overview Of Key Town Center/Mixed-Use Zoning Issues

The traditional small city downtown is what often comes to mind when the concept of a town center is brought up: with a sundae-serving drugstore, sporting goods shop, a hardware store, and the best restaurants in town. City hall, the courthouse, and city park were often nearby, with picnic tables and a bandshell. Downtown was where the holidays were celebrated, where parades marched, and the post office was located. When friends came to visit, downtown was the place to go; it defined the community and was the place to be.

Many suburban communities have no established downtown--they are often accused of having no “there” there, to paraphrase Gertrude Stein. To those critics, suburban communities look increasingly bland and homogenous. Little distinguishes one place from another. Detractors denounce suburban development for being continuous and repetitive; a series of isolated land uses separated by parking lots, roads, and wide landscaped buffers.

More importantly, an increasing numbers of citizens voice these same concerns in local community planning processes. Citizen at the grass roots level in suburbs across the country are voicing concerns about “lack of a sense of place”, “community character”, and creating a “community focal point.”



As in the Knoxville region, many suburban communities have responded by trying to create new city centers, hoping to inject a liveliness and sense of place missing in their communities. Industry publications such as *Urban Land*, *Shopping Centers*, and *Planning* document the growing desire for a new kind of public life - one that is walkable, compact, with a lively mix of uses--a place for shopping, civic life, living, and leisure. There is a need for a location that provides an experience of uniqueness, a sense of place, connected not by parking lots, but by people.

Development regulations such as zoning codes and subdivision standards have proven to be a key factor in whether a community will be successful in creating a lively, mixed-use town center. Development codes can be positive forces when they offer incentives for well-designed



mixed-use projects, remove unnecessary regulatory barriers, are attuned to local and regional market demand, and ensure new development is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. More specifically, some of the key issues explored in this working paper include:

- **Appropriate Uses and Use Mix:** Promote appropriate uses that:
  - Encourage a dynamic live/work/play environment;
  - Create active and secure pedestrian-friendly settings;
  - Provide a range of housing types;
  - Support civic and institutional uses; and
  - Offer a variety of retail and employment opportunities.
- **Development densities and intensities:** Accommodate and encourage higher development intensities that:
  - Support retail shops and services;
  - Provide an enhanced tax base; and
  - Reflect acceptable development investment risks.
- **Transportation Circulation And Access:** Provide for circulation patterns that:
  - Form a safe, convenient, and accessible network for all modes of transportation;
  - Interconnect streets, walkways, and bikeways throughout the district and its surrounding development;
  - Maximize connectivity between adjacent developments; and
  - Provide transit options.
- **Parking:** Apply parking management strategies that:
  - Reflect the reduced vehicle parking demand inherent in mixed-use developments;
  - Provide for increased bicycle parking; and



Enhanced environment of public and private places

- Make parking a “utility” provided at a district level rather than a requirement of individual development on a parcel-by-parcel basis.
- **Development and Design Standards:** Create an enhanced environment that:
  - Is attractive, safe, and orderly as well as compatible with surrounding existing neighborhoods;
  - Organizes public and private spaces to invite pedestrian activity and social interaction in comfort and security; and
  - Encourages building facades and orientation that reinforce the human scale of a pedestrian environment and enhance pedestrian routes.
  - Implements low-impact development concepts such as bioswales and pervious pavement where feasible.

Of course in addition to these development code, communities must also address a host of other non-regulatory issues to be successful in their town-center creation efforts such as market demand, infrastructure financing, public engagement, and long-term management. The final section of this working paper touches briefly on these complementary topics.

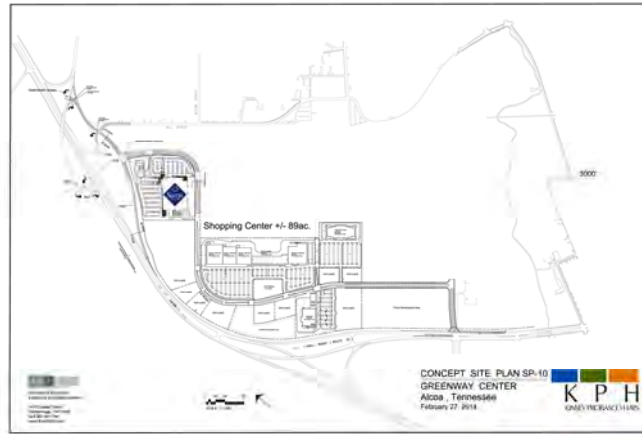
## The City of Alcoa

Alcoa was incorporated in 1919, a company town organized and overseen by the Aluminum Company of America which built major production facilities there. After World War II, the City of Alcoa become less and less dependent upon its parent company and evolved into a more economically diverse community. Today it has a population of about 8,600 people, which almost doubles during the day as workers commute into the community for jobs. It lies in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains and covers an area of about 16 square miles. Demographically, it is about 80% white and 16% African American. The median family income is about \$45,000. The city is known for its extensive 16-mile greenway trails system that connects to its neighboring city. It has a city manager/council form of government.

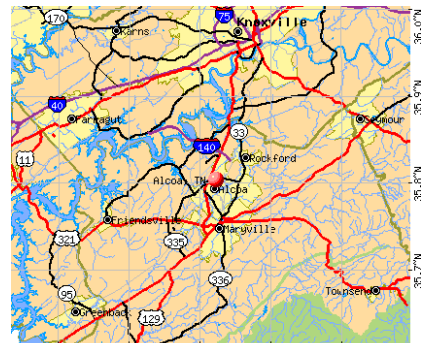


## TOWN CENTER MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS

The proposed town center in Alcoa is located on the 350-acre former site of the Alcoa West Plant. The site continues to be owned by Alcoa, Inc. Future development and ownership of the site is under the direction of a partnership with Alcoa that includes a development firm from Chattanooga, Kinsey Probasco Hays (KPH), and International Risk Group (IRG) based in the Denver area. The City of Alcoa and State of Tennessee will contribute



substantial funds for transportation and other infrastructure improvements and thus will also have a significant role in shaping development of the site. The city anticipates signing a memorandum of agreement in the future with the partnership to further define performance measures and financial contributions. The site has excellent access, being adjacent to two significant north/south transportation corridors, Alcoa Highway and North Hall Road. Alcoa Highway serves commuters to and from Blount County and travelers seeking an alternative interstate route to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It also provides easy access to nearby McGhee Tyson Airport. The town center site, featuring a creek on the western portion with a significant floodplain, borders two established, distinct 1900s neighborhoods. The City of Alcoa is also working with others to develop a major research and technology mixed-use office park called Pellissippi Place, which has a mixed-use component planned for a portion of the park. Located in the City of Alcoa, this park is a collaborative effort that includes the cities of Alcoa and Maryville and Blount and Knox Counties.



In 2010, the city passed a mixed-use zoning ordinance to encourage a greater variety of housing, retail, and commercial uses. The Mixed Use District "E-3" (Section 14-2.1301-1310 of the zoning code) contains many progressive provisions aimed at fostering lively mixed-use developments such as that envisioned for the Alcoa West Plant site. For example, it allows mixed-use commercial and residential buildings as of right without any special permits. Front and side setback requirements are greatly reduced, and buildings must have pedestrian-friendly facades and windows to encourage compact, walkable development. Also, parking must be at the rear or side of buildings to reduce the impact of parking lots on key streets. However,



according to staff, for a variety of reasons (including the lack of local developer experience with mixed-use projects), the E-3 District has not been utilized.

In contrast, the rest of the city's zoning ordinance is typically suburban in its regulations and standards. Off-street parking requirements are excessive in some instances. For example, multi-family residential units must provide two spaces in contrast to other communities where downtown apartments and condominiums must provide only one. Similarly, the landscaping standards require buffering with trees and shrubs and extensive interior parking lot landscaping, all of which makes compact, walkable development more difficult to achieve. The ordinance does not offer more urban options such as ornamental fencing around parking lots instead of wide landscape buffers. The following section of this working paper provides a more detailed analysis of the city's zoning.

## **Discussion of Key Issues and Options for Town Center Mixed Use Development District Standards**

### **TOWN CENTER SUBDISTRICTS**

We typically recommend suburban communities consider the division of a town center zone district into subdistricts to recognize that while the core of the town center might have a vertical mix of uses, taller buildings, and design standards to encourage walking and discourage use of autos, the periphery may allow horizontal mixing of uses and more auto-oriented uses such as large retail establishments and drive-through restaurants. The success of a town center district generally depends on concentrating most of the district's activities and destination points within a distinct, compact area that is pedestrian-oriented and has a rich mix of commercial, residential, and civic uses. We call this the core subdistrict. The area outside the core that can accommodate more suburban, auto-oriented uses that can support the core is called the ring subdistrict.

Using subdistricts is an efficient way of both applying general development standards (e.g., setbacks, landscaping, parking) throughout the town center district while tailoring use, intensity, and design standards that go a step further in promoting and accommodating pedestrian activity in the core area.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In some circumstances, additional subdistricts might be warranted. For example, topographic or other special conditions such as presence of a creek or highway may divide the district into multiple areas. This is true in Alcoa where the site includes an extensive floodplain.

There are several alternatives to using subdistricts. One would be to have two separate zone districts. Another, suitable for a less intensely developed town center district, where the difference between what would be appropriate in a core district and a ring district might be less significant, would be to apply a single set of use, density, and design standards throughout a single district.

Alcoa Zoning Ordinance Audit:

As noted above, the city's E-3 mixed-use zone district has a number of progressive features often found in successful town center zoning regulations. Auto-oriented uses are restricted (allowed only by conditional use permit) and street design standards are well-suited to promote compact, pedestrian-oriented town center development. However, as discussed in detail below, other provisions need to be reexamined (for example, there is no limit on the size of retail stores in the core area). Thus while the E-3 district provides a good foundation, the city should build on it and consider a new tailored town center zone district.

The City of Alcoa and Alcoa, Inc., have been working on plans for the site for 15 years according to city staff. The current concept is to develop the commercial portion of the site first along the main road spine in the form of a shopping center followed by a more urban core area with a mix of uses including residential. Alcoa city staff reports that the development partnership has a good handle on site environmental constraints related to past industrial activity, which will have an impact of some of the development form and patterns within certain areas (for example, some contaminated areas should not be disturbed and will be covered by parking lots).



**USE STANDARDS**

Zoning ordinances use a variety of ways to identify those uses allowed by right in particular zoning districts, uses that are allowed only with a special or conditional use permit, and uses that are prohibited. Use sections of zoning ordinances also set forth the standards or conditions under which certain uses are allowed.

Generally, preferred uses in a town center zone district include higher density housing, pedestrian-oriented retail uses, and intense office uses. Uses that are less intense and take a good deal of space so that development is spread out rather than compact--such as big-box retail stores, sprawling shopping centers, and large open space parks and recreational areas--are usually prohibited or discouraged in the

core. Similarly, auto-oriented uses like parking lots, car dealers, and drive-through facilities that may inhibit pedestrian activity are often prohibited or tightly controlled.

Experience demonstrates that to encourage mixed-use, compact development, most uses permitted in a town center district should be allowed by right rather than require the type of time-consuming planned unit development, rezoning, or conditional use permit review used in many ordinances. Alcoa staff reports that site planning reviews are currently done expeditiously by the planning commission with engineering and building plan review conducted simultaneously at the administrative level.

Nevertheless, some current site planning requirements for all major developments in Alcoa with its multiple review layers might be reduced or eliminated if development standards are clear enough. Tennessee law (TCA 6-54-133) allows the city to delegate exterior design review of all non-residential and multi-family residential properties to the planning commission rather than establishing a stand-alone design review board which can add to review times.

Set forth below is a sample town center use table that identifies potential allowable uses, special uses, and prohibited uses.

## **PRINCIPAL USES**

### **Sample Table of Allowed Principal Uses**

This use table list uses by use classification (rows shaded light blue), use category, and specific use type to facilitate interpretations of what use type (if any) a particular proposed land use activity falls under, as well as the application of subsequent use-specific and development standards. Recognizing that zoning ordinances vary considerably in how they identify allowable and prohibited uses, the use types listed in the table are relatively general—just specific enough to indicate the range of uses within the various use categories and to address uses that are particularly important in a town center zone district or call for specific standards to make them appropriate in a town center zone district. For other purposes, a community using or incorporating such a use table may wish to include a different breakdown of use categories or additional use types, or to break up certain uses by size or capacity thresholds.

**TOWN CENTER MIXED-USE  
DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS**

<b>Table 1: Allowed Principal Uses</b> P = Allowed by Right    S = Allowed only with Special Use Permit    X = Prohibited				
Use Category	Use Type	Town Center Core	Town Center Ring	Use-Specific Standards
<b>Mixed-Use Development</b>				
Mixed-use development	Live-work unit	P	P	
	Other residential over nonresidential	P	P	
	Other mixed-use development	P	P	
<b>Residential Uses</b>				
Household Living Uses	Single-family dwelling	X	S	
	Two-family dwelling	X	P	
	Three- or four-family dwelling <sup>2</sup>	X	P	
	Multifamily development	P	P	
	Townhouse development	P	P	
Group Living Uses	Group living	P	P	
<b>Public and Institutional Uses</b>				
Community Service Uses	Adult day care facility	P	P	
	Child day care facility	P	P	
	Community center	P	P	
	Library	P	P	
	Museum	P	P	
Educational Uses	Business/trade/vocational school	P	P	

<sup>2</sup> Such dwellings (also called triplexes and quadplexes) are commonly treated as multifamily dwellings. However, a community should consider treating these housing types separately—whether to allow them as appropriate infill development in a lower-intensity ring subdistrict (to promote greater variety in housing types and costs), or to prohibit them in a higher-intensity core subdistrict (to better ensure pedestrian activity along street frontages).

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DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS**

<b>Table 1: Allowed Principal Uses</b> P = Allowed by Right    S = Allowed only with Special Use Permit    X = Prohibited				
Use Category	Use Type	Town Center Core	Town Center Ring	Use-Specific Standards
	College/university	P	P	
	Elementary/ middle/high school	P	P	
Government Uses	Courthouse	P	P	
	Fire/EMS station	P	P	
	Police station	P	P	
	Government maintenance facility	X	X	
	Government administration offices	P	P	
	Post office	P	P	
Medical uses	Hospital	S	P	
	Other medical facility	P	P	
Open Space Uses	Cemetery	X	X	
	Community garden	P <sup>3</sup>	P	
	Park or greenway	P	P	
	Public square or plaza	P	P	
Transportation uses	Transit station	P	P	
	Park-and-ride facility (if transit available)	S	X	
Utility uses	Major utility facility	X	X	
	Minor utility facility	P	P	

<sup>3</sup> Community gardens generally are too land-intensive to be appropriate in a town center core, but would be appropriate if located on a building's rooftop or as a temporary use of a vacant lot pending its development. Provisions limiting community gardens in core to such circumstances should be incorporated in any use-specific standards for community gardens.



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DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS**

<b>Table 1: Allowed Principal Uses</b> P = Allowed by Right    S = Allowed only with Special Use Permit    X = Prohibited					
Use Category	Use Type	Town Center Core	Town Center Ring	Use-Specific Standards	
	Telecommunication tower	X	S		
Other Public and Institutional Uses	Club/lodge	P	P		
	Place of worship	P	P		
<b>Commercial Uses</b>					
Animal Care Services	Kennel	X	P		
	Veterinary clinic	S	P		
Eating/Drinking Establishments	Bar/lounge	P	P		
	Restaurant	P	P		
	Specialty eating/drinking establishment	P	P		
Entertainment/ Recreation Uses	Cinema	P	P		
	Arena/stadium	S	S		
	Auditorium/stage theater	P	P		
	Commercial recreation facility	Indoor	P	P	
		Outdoor	X	S	
Country club/golf course	X	X			
Office Uses	Non-service-oriented offices	P	P		
	Service-oriented offices	P	P		
Retail Sales and Service Uses	Bank or financial institution	P	P		
	Funeral home	X	P		
	Lawn care, pool, or pest control service	X	X		
	Personal services establishment	P	P		

<b>Table 1: Allowed Principal Uses</b> P = Allowed by Right   S = Allowed only with Special Use Permit   X = Prohibited				
Use Category	Use Type	Town Center Core	Town Center Ring	Use-Specific Standards
	Plant nursery	X	S	
	Shopping center <sup>4</sup>	GFA ≤ 150,000 sf	P	P
		GFA > 150,000 ≤ 400,000 sf	P	P
		GFA > 400,000 ≤ 800,000 sf	P <sup>5</sup>	X
		GFA > 800,000 sf	X	X
	Other retail sales and service use <sup>6</sup>	GFA ≤ 50,000 sf	P	P
		GFA > 50,000 ≤ 100,000 sf	X	S
		GFA > 100,000 sf	X	S
Sexually Oriented Businesses <sup>7</sup>		X	X	

<sup>4</sup> As a multi-tenant retail sales and service development, shopping centers allow customers to shop at a number of stores without having to drive out onto the streets. Although shopping centers traditionally consist of spread-out, single-story buildings with a large parking lot, they are increasingly multistory with structured parking. Shopping centers commonly are identified as neighborhood, community, regional, or superregional shopping centers, usually distinguished by floor area thresholds such as those shown in the table. Shopping centers might alternatively be distinguished by building footprint thresholds, or by both floor area and footprint thresholds. Doing so recognizes that large multistory shopping centers might be beneficial to establishing the high-intensity activity desired for the core area without diminishing its pedestrian-oriented character. Distinguishing of shopping centers may be done in the use table, in the definitions of the various shopping center types, or in the use-specific standards for a shopping center use.

<sup>5</sup> As noted above, a traditional large shopping center would be inappropriate in a Core Subdistrict, but might be appropriate if the floor area were stacked in a multistory building.

<sup>6</sup> This distinguishes general retail sales and service uses in terms of gross floor area based on the observation that large, single-tenant retail sales and service stores (“big box” retailers) tend to be very auto-oriented, with large surface parking lots—and thus inappropriate in pedestrian-oriented core subdistricts. As with shopping centers, these might alternatively be distinguished by building footprint thresholds, though big box retail stores (whether a department, wholesale, grocery, or home supply store) are unlikely to be multistory.

<sup>7</sup> Identification and treatment of sexually oriented businesses (or adult uses) varies among communities. Some communities may find it necessary or acceptable to allow these uses in the town center district, but should consider subjecting them to

**TOWN CENTER MIXED-USE  
DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS**

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Use Category	Use Type	Town Center Core	Town Center Ring	Use-Specific Standards
Vehicle/ Equipment Sales and Service Uses	Automotive painting or body shop	X	S	
	Automotive repair and service	X	S	
	Automotive sales or rental	X	X	
	Car wash	X	S	
	Gas station	X	S	
	Parking lot (as a principal use)	S	P	
	Parking structure (as a principal use)	P	P	See discussion in design standards section
	Self-service storage facility	X	S	
	Taxi or limousine service facility	X	S	
	Tire sales and mounting	X	X	
	Truck/recreational vehicle sales, rental, or service	X	X	
Visitor Accommodation Uses	Bed and breakfast inn	X	P	
	Hotel or motel	P	P	

spacing or other use-specific standards targeted toward addressing safety concerns and preventing the core from becoming a 'red-light district.'

Table 1: Allowed Principal Uses				
P = Allowed by Right   S = Allowed only with Special Use Permit   X = Prohibited				
Use Category	Use Type	Town Center Core	Town Center Ring	Use-Specific Standards
<b>Industrial Uses<sup>8</sup></b>				
Industrial Service Uses		X	X	
Manufacturing and Production Uses		X	X	
Warehousing and Freight Movement Uses		X	X	
Waste-Related Uses		X	X	
Wholesale trade uses		X	X	

*Alcoa Ordinance Audit:*

Alcoa’s mixed use zone district contains a thoughtful list of uses that will promote compact, walkable developments (Section 14-2.1303). To illustrate, live-work units are allowed by right, and auto-oriented uses are restricted. While it is a good starting point for further discussions, there are a number of areas that need addressing. For example, there are no size limits on retail development thus opening the possibility of large, big box stores that would be inappropriate in the town center core. Furthermore, there are no guidelines or requirements regarding mixing of uses which can result in single-use projects dominating the town center nor are there restrictions on non-retail ground-floor uses on key retail streets. On the other hand, the E-3 district does not allow ground floor residential units that might be appropriate and even desirable in a town center ring district.

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<sup>8</sup> Most industrial uses have a scale and impacts that make them inappropriate in a pedestrian-oriented town center district. Thus this table does not identify the many use types that might fall under each of the use categories. Some communities, however, may find it desirable to allow certain small-scale industrial uses in the town center district—e.g., craft or artisan industry uses, particularly where they have a retail sales component. Alcoa’s mixed use ordinance does allow artisan/hand-tools only industrial uses by conditional use permit.

### **Mixing of Uses**

Most town center zone districts include standards intended to ensure that the district includes at least some mix of nonresidential and residential uses as it is built out. Some are quite specific in dictating a minimum use mix (e.g., a minimum of 10% of each of three different use types such as commercial, residential, and civic are required in each development) or not allowing any nonresidential development unless residential development is proposed in conjunction with it. Others are more flexible, focusing on the mix of uses allowed over time (e.g., “by the time 50 percent of the land area within the Town Center District is developed or approved for development, residential uses shall make up at least 30 percent of the total gross floor area existing or approved within the district and nonresidential uses shall make up at least 20 percent of such floor area. No new nonresidential use shall be approved in the district until the 30 percent threshold for residential uses has been met, and no new nonresidential use shall be approved until the 20 percent threshold has been met.”).

Another use mix issue that should be considered is that of vertical use mixing. Many zoning ordinances and local building codes erect hurdles to vertical use mixing which is highly desirable in promoting compact, higher density mixed-use development around transit stations. While vertical mixing is preferred, in most smaller cities and suburban areas, mixed-use projects will just as likely be horizontal based on market demand. This should be allowed, provided the developments are well-integrated in terms of complementary uses, access and circulation, and compatible design.

#### *Alcoa Ordinance Audit:*

Alcoa’s mixed use zone district does not require any specific mixing of uses. While city staff and development partnership believe there is significant market demand for commercial and residential uses on the site, the city needs to proceed cautiously in this arena. Mixed-use developments, particularly preferred vertical mixed-use projects, are not common developments in the most suburban communities such as Alcoa in the Knoxville region. A mandatory mix of uses or requirement for vertical mixed use in the town center district may be a disincentive and drive development to other sites in Alcoa or outside the city altogether. An option to promote mixed use without requiring such may be to offer incentives such as increased densities, a broader range of permitted uses, financial assistance with structured parking, and streamlined development review (e.g., site plan review by staff only, not by the planning commission as is now required by Chapter 1, Section 14-111).



### **High-Activity Nonresidential Uses at Street Level**

Most town center zone districts encourage incorporation of high-activity nonresidential uses such as retail shops and restaurants at street level—particularly in the in the core subdistrict. Such activity is also encouraged along pedestrian street frontages.<sup>9</sup>

However, in some cities where there is substantial market demand, regulations require new mixed use or nonresidential development in the core subdistrict to incorporate high-activity nonresidential uses such as retail shops and restaurants at the street level of building facades that abut pedestrian street frontages, streets of pedestrian walkways connecting to the transit station, or public spaces adjacent to the transit station.

An in-between alternative would be to offer incentives to developments that incorporate high-activity nonresidential development at street level. Such incentives might include an expanded list of permitted uses, density bonuses, and expedited project reviews.

#### *Alcoa Ordinance Audit:*

See discussion in the section above on mixing of uses which raises similar issues.

### **ACCESSORY USES/STRUCTURES**

It is also important to consider carefully accessory uses and structures that will be allowed in the town center zone district. Noted below are important accessory uses that are often encouraged subject to special conditions or others that are discouraged, but allowed subject to protective standards. Low-intensity accessory uses and those that are auto-oriented are often prohibited in the core subdistrict. These include uses like drive-through facilities, large parks and recreation areas, large surface parking lots, and outdoor storage.

- **Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)**

Usually allowed in both the Core and Ring Subdistricts as they promote higher residential density and compact development, but subject to standards relating to size limitations.

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<sup>9</sup> Pedestrian street frontages are those street frontages with a high level of pedestrian activity and interaction with adjoining development is particularly necessary or desired to define and enhance the character of the town center district. Examples of street frontages that may be designated as a pedestrian street frontage include, but are not limited to, street frontages close to or extending from a transit station, street frontages that have or are intended to have a “Main Street” character, street frontages with a high level of retail sales and service-oriented office uses, and frontages opposite commons, outdoor gathering spaces, or other public open space.

- **Automatic Teller Machine (ATM)**

Walk-up ATMs are often allowed in both subdistricts but subject to standards designed to avoid obstructions to pedestrian movement along sidewalks, through public use areas, or between parking areas and building entrances. Drive-up ATMs might be allowed by conditional use in the ring subdistrict.

- **Drive-Through Service**

Often prohibited in the core subdistrict as being at cross-purposes with the important goal of walkability. If allowed in either subdistrict, vehicular access to and from the drive-through facility is usually restricted to a street other than a pedestrian frontage street. A minimum number of on-site stacking spaces are often required to avoid blocking sidewalks and bicycle/street traffic.

- **Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Station**

EV charging stations are sometimes required in town center parking lots and structures. These spaces are typically reserved for the charging of electric vehicles only. Such reserved spaces are required to be posted with signage identifying the spaces as reserved only for the charging of electric vehicles, amperage and voltage levels, any enforceable time limits or tow-away provisions, and contact information for reporting non-operating equipment or other problems.

EV charging station equipment must be located so as not to interfere with vehicle, bicycle, or pedestrian access and circulation, or with required landscaping/screening.

- **Home-Based Business**

Standards for home-based businesses (or home occupations) commonly limit the area devoted to the business, require the person conducting the business to be an occupant of the home, limit the number of nonresident business employees, restrict on-site sales, restrict customer and delivery traffic, and regulate signage, outdoor storage and noise. In keeping with the mixed-use character of town center districts and to minimize trip generation, communities should consider encouraging home-based businesses by relaxing some of these standards—particularly typical zoning ordinance standards that limit the business to less than 20-25 percent of the dwelling unit's total floor area and prohibit nonresident business employees.

- **Outdoor Display and Sale of Merchandise**

A pedestrian-friendly town center district depends on substantial interaction between sidewalk pedestrians and fronting retail sales and service uses. Outdoor display and sale of merchandise contributes to that interaction and should be allowed, but controlled to address potential adverse visual impacts, safety concerns, and impediments to pedestrian traffic. Standards typically address how much of a front façade may be occupied by outdoor display (e.g., 50%), a

minimum clearance area to allow passage of pedestrians (e.g., five feet), limits on attaching goods to a building wall, and display height limits (e.g., eight feet).

- **Outdoor Seating (as accessory to Eating/Drinking Establishments)**

Outdoor seating for restaurants and other eating/drinking establishments can contribute to the pedestrian activity and interaction desired in town center districts—particularly outdoor seating on or next to the sidewalk. However, experience shows that standards are often needed to address impacts and concerns associated with such an accessory use. These standards often address hours of operation (to avoid impacts on nearby residential units), controls on sound/noise, obstruction of pedestrian movement, use of the public sidewalk for seating, and quality of outdoor furniture.

- **Outdoor Storage**

Although generally prohibited in town center districts as a principal use, many principal uses allowed in the district may need some degree of accessory outdoor storage. Standards should be considered to ensure outdoor storage areas do not adversely affect the visual character of the district. Such standards might address location of the outdoor storage (e.g., rear of building only) and screening.

- **Parking Structures**

Parking structures are a preferable alternative to surface parking lots, particularly in the core subdistrict. However, to ensure that they do not disrupt the pedestrian-friendly environment along a designated pedestrian street or adversely affect the visual attractiveness of the district, communities often adopt standards that require a certain percentage (e.g., 50 %) of the street-level frontage contain commercial uses and impose design standards on the remainder. These design standards often require incorporation of features such as masonry columns, windows, decorative wall inserts, and awnings.

- **Small solar and wind energy collection systems**

In keeping with their sustainability goals advanced by mixed-use development, many communities have adopted standards that remove barriers to accessory use small-scale solar and wind energy collection systems.<sup>10</sup> These standards typically clearly define where such systems can be located (e.g., roofs and on accessory structures in rear yards) and maximum height. So cities also provide solar access protection so that later development cannot entirely shade an existing solar collection system. Some communities have gone farther by requiring

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<sup>10</sup> Small solar collection systems are usually defined as those with a rated capacity less than 10 kilowatts. Small scale wind collection systems are usually those with a capacity less than 100 kilowatts.

that a certain percentage of homes in a development be solar-ready, that is, have wiring and plumbing installed to accommodate small solar collection systems. Such standards might be appropriate in a ring subdistrict where lower density housing might be appropriate.

Small wind collection systems tend to be more problematic in town center zone districts since to be efficient they must be permitted at a height substantially above existing trees and structures. If allowed, key issues include minimum setbacks (in case a tower should collapse), noise, location, color, lighting, and signage.

Alcoa Code Audit:

*Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs):* The E-3 Mixed Use Zone District does not address the subject of accessory dwelling units. However, Subchapter 2.21 of the zoning ordinance contains a number of provisions that would appear to prohibit some types of ADUs. Section 14-2.2103 prohibits any building to the rear of a main building to be used for residential purposes. Furthermore, accessory structures are not allowed to be used for residential purposes (Section 14-2.2110(2)). The city should consider allowing ADUs in the town center zone district, particularly if single-family homes are allowed.

*Home-Based Businesses:* The E-3 Mixed Use District specifically allows live-work units. Additionally, “customary” home occupations are allowed in all three of the city’s base residential zone districts subject only to a limit that they not exceed twenty-five percent of a dwelling’s total floor area. The city should consider tailored home-based business standards for the town center zone district that permits home-based occupations but adds additional safeguards related to limits on number of employees, hours of operation, and similar compatibility issues. Also, it would be helpful to better define a “customary” home occupation in a town center context.

*Small Solar and Wind Energy Collection Systems (WECS):* The zoning ordinance does not contain any standards related to small-scale solar systems. There are many models and examples from communities across the United States that cities can draw upon in considering applicable regulations to promote solar power.

With regard to WECS, although it is unlikely that many WECS would be erected in a town center zone district, there are currently no standards in the zoning ordinance. This would most likely prohibit them for commercial uses and to generate power for multi-family buildings, the most likely candidates (For example, conical systems might be erected on top of mid-rise office buildings). The city should assess the wind-generation potential in the town center area. If there is potential, the city might consider tailoring WECS regulations that would permit them on commercial and multi-family buildings.

**TEMPORARY USES/STRUCTURES**

As with principal and accessory uses, use-specific standards should be considered for temporary uses that are particularly important to achieving the purposes of the town center district. Important uses to consider and potential issues are discussed below:

- **Farmers' Market**

At first blush, a farmers' market might be thought of as taking up land area that might be better used for the higher-intensity buildings that are so important to establishing a town center district as a pedestrian-oriented activity center. But such markets can contribute substantially to generating the social interaction that is equally important to establishing the identity and character of a town center, as well as to local food production that is important to the sustainability of the community and its residents. If a farmers' market occurs in parking areas or public open space at times when such areas are not otherwise used, it can add to the vibrancy of a town center zone district.

- **Food Truck**

Food trucks are becoming increasingly popular in urban and suburban communities and can significantly contribute to a town center district's character as pedestrian-friendly and a center of activity. However, without appropriate standards, food trucks can become a nuisance. Standards commonly applied to food trucks include permissible locations, hours of operation, signage, outdoor seating, and waste disposal. According to RTPD staff, the City of Knoxville currently has underway a pilot program to regulate food trucks in certain locales. This program may provide some useful guidance for other communities in the region.

- **Street Vendor**

Street vendors have long been deemed the epitome of an active urban pedestrian sidewalk. However, like food trucks, they can become an annoyance if not carefully controlled. Common zoning or licensing standards include limits on the size of carts, signage, and location/obstruction of pedestrian ways.

Alcoa Ordinance Audit:

While the city's mixed-use zone district allows farmers' markets by conditional use permit, the city should consider specific performance standards that address location, maximum size, hours of operation, type of agricultural products and goods that can be sold, parking, and appropriate signage.

The terms *Food Truck and Street Vendor* do not appear in the Alcoa Zoning Ordinance

## INTENSITY AND DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS

This important issue addresses features of development such as residential densities, block and lot standards, setbacks, and height.

A hallmark of town center zone districts is increased density of residential development and intensity of commercial projects to support the transit and create a lively living atmosphere. In some communities,



minimum residential densities are imposed to preserve key retail locations and those near transit stops. Permissible lot coverages are usually high to foster compact growth and open space requirements are typically reduced, with space-saving alternatives such as rooftop gardens and plazas encouraged. To promote denser, more compact development minimum height standards are often featured and maximum heights of up to six stories and more are allowed in suburban locations.

Block standards usually promote shorter blocks that encourage walking, while minimum lot areas are usually reduced to promote smaller residential units and businesses. Front setbacks are in many cases entirely eliminated to encourage buildings to be brought up to the street which helps create a more pedestrian-oriented environment. Deeper setbacks may be allowed in the ring subdistrict, particularly for residential developments.

The sample table below sets forth intensity and dimensional standards that are most appropriate for moderate-intensity suburban town center districts. The standards in this table should be considered a starting point for consideration of the intensity and dimensional standards appropriate to various town center districts in the host community, based on the character of the community, existing development area, and existing and planned development in areas surrounding the town center district.

It might be appropriate to add provisions offering an intensity or density bonus to developments that incorporate features important to the town center character to an extent beyond that required by these standards. Such bonuses could allow new development to exceed the maximum density, maximum floor area ratio, maximum structure height standards set forth in Table 2 if, for example, it:

- Provides affordable or workforce housing units,
- Offers public amenities beyond that required by development standards,
- Is designed to qualify for LEED certification,
- Is a vertically mixed development with residential uses on upper floors above street-level retail sales and service and service-oriented office uses,
- Delivers any other development feature important to establishing and maintaining the character of the town center district.

There are many ways to draft intensity/density bonus provisions. Such provisions need to specify the particular type and level or extent of development features that qualify for a bonus and quantitatively relate them to a particular type and level of bonus. If multiple types or levels of features are to qualify for multiple types or levels of bonuses, it is probably best to use a point system. Each type and level of a qualifying feature is assigned a certain number of points, and each type and level of bonus requires a minimum point total.

**TOWN CENTER MIXED-USE  
DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS**

<b>Table 2: Sample Intensity and Dimensional Standards</b>			
Subdistrict:	Town Center Core	Town Center Ring	
Use:	All Uses	Nonresidential & Mixed-Use	Residential
<b>Block and Lot Standards</b>			
Block length (min   max)	200 ft   400 ft	400 ft   800 ft	400 ft   800 ft
Lot area (min)	1,500 sf	3,000 sf	5,000 sf <sup>1</sup>
Lot width (min)	20 ft	30 ft	50 ft <sup>2</sup>
<b>Intensity</b>			
Residential density (min   max) <sup>3</sup>	15du/ac   35du/ac	n/a	7.5du/ac   17du/ac
Floor area ratio (FAR) (min   max) <sup>4</sup>	0.75   4.0	0.5   2.5	n/a
Lot coverage (min   max)	60%   100%	40%   85%	n/a   70%
Open space (min, as % of lot area) <sup>5</sup>	5%	15%	20%
<b>Building Placement</b>			
Build-to line (min   max) <sup>6</sup>	0 ft/12 ft	0/20 ft	0/20 ft
Building width in build-to zone (min, as % of lot width) <sup>5</sup>	80% <sup>7</sup>	70% <sup>7</sup>	50% <sup>7</sup>
Front setback (min) <sup>8</sup>	0 ft	0 ft	10 ft
Side setback (min)	0 ft	0 ft	5 ft <sup>9</sup>
Corner side setback (min)	0 ft	0 ft	0 ft
Rear setback (min)	0 ft	0	5 ft
<b>Height</b>			
Structure height (min   max) <sup>10</sup>	2 stories   6 stories	1 story   4 stories	1 story   4 stories

Table 2: Sample Intensity and Dimensional Standards			
Subdistrict:	Town Center Core	Town Center Ring	
Use:	All Uses	Nonresidential & Mixed-Use	Residential
	25 ft   75 ft	15 ft   60 ft	15 ft   60 ft
<p>NOTES: sf = square feet; ft = feet; du = dwelling unit; ac = acre; % = percent; n/a = not applicable</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1,500 square feet for townhouse lots.</li> <li>2. 20 feet for townhouse lots.</li> <li>3. Applicable to residential-only development.</li> <li>4. Applicable to nonresidential developments and mixed-use developments (including their residential components).</li> <li>5. Open space may be located on rooftops and on decks or porches as well as in ground-level plazas, courtyards, lawns, and gardens.</li> <li>6. Applicable only along pedestrian street frontages.</li> <li>7. The remaining build-to zone street frontage may be occupied by outdoor gathering spaces, driveways, pedestrian walkways, or surface parking located to the sides of buildings.</li> <li>8. Applicable only along street frontages other than pedestrian street frontages.</li> <li>9. Not applicable to townhouse lots except where abutting a lot containing or designed for a single- or two-family dwelling.</li> <li>10. Both story and feet standards apply.</li> </ol>			

Alcoa Ordinance Audit:

The E-3 Mixed Use Zone District contains a number of excellent provisions designed to foster denser, more urban development desirable in a town center. These standards, set forth below, can be a good starting point for drafting a town center district:

- Maximum building setback of 12 feet from property line which helps to create a pedestrian-friendly streetscape and shopping environment. Outdoor eating allowed in front of buildings between setback line and building façade.

- No minimum side setbacks except if structure adjacent to a different zone district or buildings detached. This promotes a town center that is compact and walkable.
- Buildings must be a minimum of two stories and can go up to five stories which helps create a more urban, compact development and allows higher intensity/density of development. Additional stories are allowed by conditional review.
- The allowed density for residential units is approximately 40 units/acre for mixed-use buildings, which will support significant residential development in the town center.

However, to fully implement the town center vision, the city should consider several code additions:

- Establishing minimum residential densities (e.g., 15 units/acre), especially in key locations in the core area.
- Significantly reducing the minimum (400 feet) and maximum (1,200 feet) block lengths specified in the subdivision standards (Article III.B). Shorter block lengths promote more pedestrian-oriented, walkable developments.
- Drafting tailored open space standards that are more urban-oriented. Currently, 10% of a project area must be dedicated to open space if the site is more than 5 acres (Section 14-2.1307(4) and the general open space design provisions of the subdivision standards apply. This will make compact development in the core very difficult. Options for open space might include roof-top gardens, plazas, and similar urban open space features.
- Development compatibility standards other than the current buffer and landscaping regulations that are suburban in nature (wide buffers with trees and shrubs). Consider design standards (e.g., building step backs where multi-story buildings are close to residential neighborhoods), use transitions (reduced densities and tighter use controls near existing residential), and operational compatibility (outdoor lighting controls to reduce impact on nearby residential).

## **DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN STANDARDS**

Most town center and mixed-use zone districts contain development and design standards to promote and ensure high-quality development that promotes an active, safe pedestrian environment. Key issues include access and circulation, off-street parking, and building design among others.

### **ACCESS AND CIRCULATION**

Access and circulation standards in town center districts usually address pedestrian and bicycle as well vehicular circulation.

- **Connectivity**

A well-connected system of streets, bikeways, and walkways is essential to a vibrant town center—both to ensure convenient access between all major origin and destination points within and surrounding the district as well as to promote the level of access and circulation needed to establish the district as a vibrant mixed-use activity center. To this end, standards are often included to require that internal vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation systems of new development be designed to allow cross-access with development on adjoining lots. One approach to ensure such cross access is to require easements allowing vehicular, bicycle, or pedestrian cross-access between adjoining lots, along with agreements defining maintenance responsibilities of the property owners, to be recorded in the appropriate municipal land records.

Because there may be practical site constraints or other reasons such as traffic safety to require connections among adjoining lots, provisions might be included allowing the city to waive or modify the above requirement.

- **Vehicular Access and Circulation**

Some town center mixed-use districts include standards intended to limit sidewalk-disrupting curb cuts. Such standards sometimes encourage or require a network of rear alleys for access, especially for smaller lots. Curb cuts may also be prohibited along any pedestrian street frontage and allowed along other street frontages only if vehicular access cannot be provided from an alley or cross-access easement. Driveway curb cuts may also be limited in width (e.g., 24 feet) with a minimum required distance from a street intersection (e.g., 50 feet) or another curb cut (e.g., 100 feet).

- **Pedestrian Access and Circulation**

Mixed-use district regulations often incorporate standards to ensure a leading mobility role for sidewalks and other pedestrian walkways in the town center. Along pedestrian frontage streets,<sup>11</sup> where the highest level of pedestrian activity is expected and/or encouraged, wider sidewalks are usually needed to accommodate higher volumes of pedestrian traffic and the outdoor dining, street furniture, and other pedestrian amenities that serve the pedestrians. Minimum standards often require sidewalks of from six to ten feet wide with an appropriate pedestrian “clear zone” that is unobstructed by any permanent or nonpermanent object for a

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<sup>11</sup> As noted earlier, pedestrian street frontages are those street frontages along which a high level of pedestrian activity and interaction with adjoining development is particularly necessary or desired to define and enhance the character of the town center district.

minimum width of five feet and a minimum height of eight feet. At least one walkway from an adjacent sidewalk is typically required for each pedestrian entrance to a building.

To further encourage pedestrian activity, some town center districts require that where maximum block lengths exceed those in Table 2 that pedestrian cut-through walkways be provided to adjacent blocks or to adjacent transit stations, schools, recreational facilities, community facilities, or commercial developments.

Designating streets in a town center zone district as “pedestrian street frontages” can be an important way to apply special building placement, form, and design standards discussed below along certain streetscapes where promoting and accommodating pedestrian activity is of greatest importance to the success of the town center district. Most pedestrian street frontages are likely to be located within the core subdistrict. The ring subdistrict is likely to contain some strongly pedestrian-oriented streetscapes (especially along streets forming a gateway into the core), but not all streetscapes in that subdistrict typically need be pedestrian-oriented.

Alcoa Ordinance Audit:

The E-3 Mixed Use District contains some excellent provisions related to access and circulation:

- The street design standards in Section 12-2.1302 are well-suited to walkable mixed-use development in a town center. (We suggest these standards should be removed from the Definition section and included in a separate section on access and circulation.)
- Section 14-2.1307(3) contains specific guidance regarding pedestrian and bicycle circulation (e.g., mandatory sidewalks, minimum sidewalk widths, bicycle lanes).
- Section 14-2.1308 requires street-facing, prominent building entries which is a pedestrian-friendly requirement.
- Section 14-2.1307(2c) prohibits curb cuts on primary streets which enhances pedestrian safety and supports walkable commercial areas.

Other provisions that should be considered to enhance access and circulation for all modes of transportation include:

- As noted above, significantly reducing the minimum (400 feet) and maximum (1200 feet) block lengths specified in the subdivision standards (Article III.B). Shorter block lengths promote more pedestrian-oriented, walkable developments.
- Requiring an overall pedestrian/bicycle circulation plan beyond street and sidewalk specifications as part of the site planning process.
- Establishing standards for cross access between developments sites, particularly in the ring subdistrict where larger retail establishments with big parking lots might be located.

- Limitations on curb cuts on non-primary streets, particularly those designated as pedestrian-oriented.

### OFF-STREET PARKING

Excessive surface parking undermines the pedestrian-oriented character of a town center district. Off street surface parking is also expensive—often \$5,000-\$10,000 per space. Thus it is important to make sure minimum off-street parking requirements are indeed “minimum” and reflect the reduced vehicular trips and parking demand inherent with mixed-use development or where mass transit is available as an alternative means of transportation.

How minimum parking requirements for a town center area relate to generally applicable parking standards elsewhere in a zoning code depends on several factors. These include the type, intensity, and character of the district as well as how well the generally applicable parking requirements themselves reflect current-day parking demands in the particular community. A 2008 Transportation Research Board report found that multifamily housing near transit stations produce an average of 44 percent fewer daily vehicle trips that ITE trip generation rates predict for the same land uses not located near transit and that ITE trip generation rates “over-park” transit-oriented developments by as much as 50 percent. Subsequent studies indicate that actual vehicle trip counts in mixed-use smart-growth sites in California average about 56 percent lower than those estimated by ITE trip generation rates. A 2011 parking policy study for Montgomery County, MD, recommended baseline parking space requirements for residential (1.2 per unit), office (2.25 per 1,000 sf), general commercial (1.25 per 1,000 sf), restaurants and bars (1.75 per 1,000 sf), hotels (1 per guest room), and events-based uses (1 per 1,000 sf). Transit-oriented development guidelines for Atlanta propose minimum/maximum parking space requirements for multifamily residential near transit stations (0.75/1.25 per unit, other residential (1.0/2.0 per unit), office (1.5/2.5 per 1,000 sf), retail and restaurant near transit stations (0/3.3 per 1,000 sf), and other retail and restaurants (1.75/3.3 per 1,000 sf).

Given that most of these studies focused on more urban communities than Alcoa and the lack of mass transit in the region, we suggest the city carefully consider percentages that represent less of a reduction for a suburban mixed-use district.

- **Vehicle Parking**
  - a. Minimum:** Consider reductions in minimum off-street parking requirements (e.g., 25% in the core and 15% in ring), provided the development application includes a study demonstrating that because of the development’s specific location, nature, or mix of uses, there is a reasonable probability the number of parking spaces actually needed to serve the development is less than the minimum required.
  - b. Maximum:** To promote compact development and reduce impervious surfaces that increase stormwater runoff, communities are increasingly adding maximum limits on parking to their zoning ordinances. Such maximums are particularly important in town center districts to

where large surface parking lots make such areas much less pedestrian friendly. A common maximum is 125% of the minimum requirement. As an incentive to build parking garages rather than surface parking lots, some jurisdictions exempt any structured parking spaces from this limitation.

Alcoa Ordinance Audit:

The E-3 Mixed Use District does provide credit for any on-street parking adjacent to a development towards off-street parking requirements, but defaults to the generally applicable parking requirements in Section 2.22. Compared to parking requirements in successful town center mixed-use developments, they appear to be excessive. For example, each multi-family unit must provide two off-street spaces and one space is required for every 300 square feet of office use. The city should consider tailoring parking requirements for the town center district that reflect reduced demand, particularly in the core area. Maximum parking limits should also be adopted to prevent extremely large lots in the ring subdistrict.

- **Off-Street Parking Arrangement and Design**

These standards are intended to ensure that off-street parking does not undermine a town center district's pedestrian-friendly environment—especially in the district's core and along its most pedestrian-oriented street frontages. Relevant topics include:

1. **Location:** To promote compact, pedestrian-oriented development, town center districts often restrict parking to the rear or side of buildings. Others require that parking structures be wrapped with commercial uses at the ground level. More flexibility might be allowed in the ring subdistrict by, for example, allowing one bay of parking in front of buildings except on designated pedestrian street frontages.
2. **Break-Up of Large Parking Lots:** Large expanses of pavement can seriously detract from the goals of a town center district. One approach to soften their visual impact is to require that large surface parking lots be broken up in to smaller “modules” that contain 50 or fewer spaces each and are visually divided by landscaped islands, fences, and buildings.
3. **Pedestrian Walkways Through Parking Areas:** A standard that often goes hand-in-hand with breaking up large parking lots noted above is one that calls for a clearly identified pedestrian route between parking areas and the primary pedestrian entrance(s) to the building(s) served by the parking areas, or to a pedestrian walkway providing direct access to the primary building entrance(s).

Alcoa Ordinance Audit:



Section 14-2.1307(2) of the E-3 Mixed Use District does require that all off-street parking spaces be located at the side or rear of principal buildings. Parking spaces in non-accessory parking garages must be located on upper stories or below ground. The city should consider extending this standard to accessory parking garages as well and expanding it to require that the ground floor of all parking garages in the town center core be wrapped with commercial, civic, or institutional uses to maintain a lively pedestrian environment. Also, with regard to the last issue highlighted above, the zoning ordinance does not appear to require pedestrian walkways through parking areas.

- **Bicycle Parking**

Bicycles can be an important alternative transportation mode in town center districts. Many communities require bicycle parking facilities such as racks or lockers for larger developments. Some require larger office buildings to provide showers for use by bicyclists and multi-story residential structures to have covered parking in an underground garage. As an incentive, credit might be given towards vehicle off-street parking requirements (e.g., one space for every 5 bicycle parking spaces to a maximum of 5).

Alcoa Ordinance Audit:

The general parking standards in Section 2.22 of the zoning ordinance require provision of bicycle parking in new developments. The city should consider requiring indoor bicycle parking and storage facilities for residents of multifamily residential buildings.

- **Alternative Parking Arrangements**

Most modern zoning ordinances incorporate standards that provide flexibility in how a developer can comply with off-street parking standards. They are generally applicable throughout a community, but are mentioned here to emphasize the greater need for such flexibility in town center districts, where higher development intensities and the focus on pedestrian friendliness make such flexibility even more important. Types of alternative parking arrangements that might be considered for the town center include:

1. **Shared Parking**—allowing adjacent uses to share parking, particularly uses where maximum demand is at different times of the day or week (e.g., a church and movie theatre).
2. **Off-Site Parking**--counting off-street parking spaces located on a lot separate from the lot containing a proposed development but within walking distance.
3. **Deferred Parking**—permitting deferral of construction of some percentage of the off-street parking required upon submittal of a study demonstrating the need will be less than the minimum required, and land is reserved if additional future parking is required.

4. **Valet and Tandem Parking**—allows use of valet and tandem vehicle parking to meet the minimum number of parking spaces requirement but only in accordance with a valet agreement that is approved by the city and includes provisions ensuring that a valet parking attendant will be on duty during hours of operation of the uses served by the valet parking.
5. **On-Street Parking**—counts on-street parking spaces adjacent to a development towards off-street requirements where the on-street parking spaces are located along the development site’s street frontage or within a specified distance (e.g., 150 linear feet of walking distance) from the primary entrance of the proposed use.
6. **In-Lieu Payment to Municipal Parking Fund**—A community may decide to promote mixed-use development by taking more control over the provision of parking in the town center district. One approach is to allow the developer to make an in-lieu payment into a municipal parking fund. The local government then uses such funding to building a parking structure or well-situated surface parking lot. This option provides a way whereby a development contributes to meeting the parking demand it creates, but the municipality determines where and how the needed parking will be provided. It is important that the community make sure the parking for which in-lieu payments are made is in place by the time the paying development is occupied. RTPPO staff reports that the City of Knoxville has promoted downtown development by constructing parking garages which is another option Alcoa may want to explore.

Alcoa Ordinance Audit:

Section 14-2.2201(1) of the zoning ordinance contains a number of provisions that will provide off-street parking flexibility in the town center district:

- On-street parking adjacent to a development counts toward the off-street requirement.
- Shared parking is allowed among uses in developments owned and managed by one entity. The city might consider expanding this as outlined above for separate developments through contractual arrangements.
- The planning commission is given latitude to reduce parking requirements in specified instances such as when a car- or ride-sharing program is adopted for a development, the applicant is in a redevelopment area or submits a parking study establishing a reduced parking demand.
- Off-site parking is permitted if within 800 feet of the development.

These provisions are a good start for flexible parking requirements in a town center district and should be expanded as outlined above.

**BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS**

Town center and mixed-use zone districts often contain building design standards intended to promote those streetscape characteristics that are conducive to the active pedestrian environment so important to the success such districts. They need to be tailored to reflect the town center district's context relative to the community as a whole, the existing neighborhoods and development that surround the district, and the existing and desired character of development within the district. These standards commonly address the following aspects of building design.

- **Building Massing and Form**

Larger mid-rise mixed-use buildings may be desirable in the core subdistrict, but they will need to be designed carefully to ensure they maintain a pedestrian scale at street level and contribute to the desired character of the area. Standards might be considered that reduce the perceived mass and scale of the building by incorporating some of the following design elements that are consistent with the development's architectural character:

1. Variations in roof form and parapet heights;
2. Pronounced (as least one foot deep) recesses and/or projections in the wall plane;
3. Distinct changes in texture and/or color of wall surfaces;
4. Pilasters that are at least eight inches deep and at least eight inches wide, and have a height equal to at least 80 percent of the facade's height;
5. Ground level arcades, awnings, or similar overhangs;
6. Second floor galleries/balconies;
7. Cornices;
8. Projected and recessed entries;
9. Vertical accents or focal points; or
10. Enhanced window treatments.

- **Building Entrances**

Communities often adopt standards to ensure easy, safe access by pedestrians to buildings and support a pedestrian-oriented character. Examples include requirements to have clearly identified building

**Building Massing and Form**



**Primary Building Entrances**



entrances that face the street, at least one street-level entrance for tenants in multiple-tenant commercial spaces, and a maximum spacing between building entrances on larger buildings (e.g., 75 feet).

**Windows/Doors/ Transparency**

Transparent facades along pedestrian-oriented street frontage are highly advisable to create an interesting pedestrian experience and encourage window shopping. Standards to accomplish this goal typically require a minimum percentage of the facade area be comprised of transparent window or door openings to allow views of interior spaces and merchandise. Minimum percentages might vary by location, as follows:

<b>Table 3: Minimum Building Facade Transparency Requirements</b>	
Abutting or facing a pedestrian street frontage	50%
Facing a transit station	35%
Facing a public gathering space	35%



Some cities also prohibit high reflective glass on front façade window and door openings counting toward meeting this transparency requirement.

- Parking Structures**

See discussion of design standards for parking structures in the Accessory Use section of this document. These standards would apply to parking structures as both primary and accessory uses. They are intended to accommodate parking structures as a preferable alternative to surface parking lots, but ensure that that they do not disrupt the pedestrian-friendly environment along a pedestrian street frontage or adversely affect the visual attractiveness of the district.

Alcoa Ordinance Audit:

Section 14-2.1308 of the E-3 Mixed Use District contains some modern building design standards often seen in successful town center mixed-use ordinances such



as:

- Requiring pedestrian-friendly building entrances that face the street.
- Ground floor transparency/window regulations that specify a minimum of 60% of the street-facing building façade between two and eight feet be clear windows. Moreover, product display windows may be no more than three feet above the adjacent sidewalk.

The city should consider supplementing these provisions with standards relating to building massing and form and parking garage design as outlined above.

### **OUTDOOR GATHERING SPACES AND COMMUNITY AMENITIES**

To be a vibrant activity center, a town center district must foster social interaction among the people who live, work, and visit the district. The provision of outdoor gathering spaces and other community amenities are thus as essential an element of transit-oriented development as landscaping and parking. However, large expanses of park-like open space typically required of suburban developments may be undesirable in the core subdistrict because they separate uses and make compact development more challenging. Moreover, if transit is available, the typical high cost of land near a transit station may make provision of large tracts of open space financially infeasible. As an alternative, communities should consider encouraging or requiring alternatives forms such as plazas, squares, courtyards, and rooftop or community gardens that are accessible to the public and furnishes with benches/seating areas, shade structures, raised landscaped planters, public art, decorative shelters for transit riders, and similar features.

#### *Alcoa Ordinance Audit*

Alcoa has established an enviable system of trails and open space throughout the community. While there are numerous references to open space in the zoning ordinance, almost uniformly they are oriented towards open space for recreational and natural area preservation purposes in a suburban context. For example, section 14.2-1307 of the E-3 Mixed Use District requires 10 percent of any site to be dedicated to open space and defaults to the generally applicable open space requirements in the Standards for Land Subdivision. The city should consider alternative open space standards outlined above for the town center zone district.

A particular challenge for the Alcoa West Plant site will be the extensive floodplain that runs through the western portion of the property. It may provide an attractive amenity for the town center, but buildings should be laid out in a fashion so that it does not separate key elements of the development.

### **STREET TREES**

Street trees have an important role in making a street frontage pedestrian-friendly in terms of moderating the immediate climate, providing separation from vehicular traffic, and defining the streetscape as one of a “complete street.” Many communities require new developments to plant

street trees at a specified interval (e.g., every 50 feet) along a development's frontage that may be used by pedestrians. Maintaining a diversity of species and avoiding monocultures is an important standard many communities have adopted in their landscaping ordinances.

Alcoa Ordinance Audit

The E-3 Mixed Use District regulations contain detailed standards for provision of street trees that can be utilized in a new town center district. (Section 14-2.1307((6)a)

**RELATIONSHIP TO SURROUNDING DEVELOPMENT/COMPATIBILITY**

Where a town center district with mixed-use and higher intensity development is located next to or across the street from established low-intensity neighborhoods of single- or two-family homes, residents and owners of those homes may see town center development as a threat. Cities should consider standards designed to help ensure new town center development is compatible with the adjacent single family neighborhoods and reduce potential opposition by neighborhood residents and property owners.

Techniques to enhance compatibility include requiring the perimeter of a mixed-use development to have the least intense uses or development density, incorporate height step-backs so that portions of buildings adjacent to or facing an established neighborhood are similar in height, face porches, balconies, and outdoor activity areas away from existing homes, provide additional screening for parking and mechanical equipment, and place additional controls on lighting such as full cutoff shielding.

Alcoa Ordinance Audit

The E-3 Mixed Use District and generally applicable buffer and landscaping requirements in the zoning ordinance rely mainly on vegetated buffers and fencing to establish transitions between potentially incompatible uses. The new town center district should include a compatibility section that provides a range of more effective options to protect the neighborhoods that border the Alcoa West Plant site.

**COMPLEMENTARY NON-CODE ISSUES**

While standards and regulations set forth in a city zoning code can be a significant factor in whether a mixed-use town center is successful, there are a host of non-code issues that must be tackled in concert with any regulatory updates.

**Market Demand Analysis**

Experience demonstrates that communities that are working to create town centers must carefully analyze the economics of real estate development and market demand for various uses—residential, commercial, institutional, and civic. Only then can they plan for a realistic mix of uses in the town

center. They must also evaluate potential competition locally (e.g., shopping centers in nearby jurisdictions, office parks such as Pellissippi Place).

A solid market analysis can help a community and developer position the town center to be viable in the local and regional market. Evaluating area needs is necessary, so a market study must be conducted for both regional and local markets. This is an age of specialty marketing, thus it is important to understand the area's demographics and what market will be served. The assessment can help identify what might be missing in area stores and housing, for example, and define an appropriate niche.

Communities must also grapple with the challenging issue of whether they will target commercial and residential uses in the town center or let it spread out throughout the city which may dilute demand in the town center and lengthen the development horizon. Bottom line is that while there are many exciting physical design and code issues involved in creating a lively place, ultimately success of a town center rests heavily on solid economic foundations.

### **Financing And Incentives**

Town center financing mechanisms show a great variety and creativity – often involving a combination of public and private mechanisms. Typically the bulk of overall development costs are assumed by the developer. When public funds are used, they typically are used for infrastructure, streets, street furniture, landscaping, lighting, and sometimes land acquisition. Alcoa is in an enviable position to shape the planned town center in a creative fashion since it and the State of Tennessee will be contributing substantial funding for transportation and other site infrastructure improvements.

Financing mechanisms for city center development or redevelopment vary widely from place to place. Some are built entirely with private funds. Other utilize mechanisms such as tax increment financing, construction of publicly owned facilities such as parking structures, the use of business improvement districts, special taxes, tax credits, grants, and federal funds (e.g., transportation).

As discussed earlier, regulatory incentives such as density/intensity bonuses, removal of unnecessary regulatory hurdles (e.g., excessive parking requirements), and expedited processing can all have an impact on the financing equation.

### **Planning and Management**

Involving local citizens in the planning process helps ensure awareness of, and support for the town center and can produce a better project with community support in the long run. Public meetings, focus groups, neighborhood consultation, and other community involvement methods have been incorporated into the planning process in successful projects. This is particularly important when, as often the case and is true in Alcoa, the town center has more intensive, taller development than

surrounding neighborhoods. Then compatibility, both in design and operations (e.g., lighting, noise, access and traffic) is a critical issue.

The local jurisdiction must also have a strong working relationship with the developer or developers. As a more unique land use, town centers require a high degree of communication regarding such issues as access, street specification, or design standards. Both entities need to work cooperatively on siting, infrastructure, signage, parking, and similar issues.

A town center will also require top quality management and event programming once the project is in place. Planning for this should begin early and not wait until the development is well underway. There are a variety of models in other communities ranging from management by the developer, by a public/private cooperative venture, or an association of business owners.

## Definitions

These are definitions relating to these mixed-use, transit-oriented development districts, which should be located with the ordinance's other definitions.

### Block Face

Properties abutting one side of a street or public right-of-way and lying between the two nearest intersecting streets or rights-of-way, or intersecting right-of-way and railroad right-of-way, unsubdivided land, water course or municipal boundary.

### Build-To Line

The minimum and maximum allowable setback of a building from the abutting street.

### Build-To Zone

The area between the minimum and maximum build-to lines.

### Community Garden

A private or public facility for cultivation of fruits, flowers, vegetables, or ornamental plants by more than one person, household, or family.

### Cross-Access

Vehicular access provided between the vehicular use areas of two or more adjacent development sites or parcels that is intended to allow travel between the sites without the use of a street. Cross-access may also refer to bicycle and pedestrian access.



### **Density**

The total number of dwelling units (excluding accessory dwelling units) located or proposed on a lot divided by the lot area as expressed in acres).

### **Drive-Through Service Facility**

A facility used to provide products or services to customers who remain in their vehicles, whether through a window or door in a building, a machine in a building or detached structure (e.g., ATM), or via a mechanical device (e.g., a pneumatic tube system). In addition to the pick-up window or door, drive-through service facilities also may include remote menu boards and ordering stations. Use types that commonly have drive-through service include banks, restaurants, specialty eating or drinking establishments, and drug stores.

### **Electric Vehicle Charging Station**

A vehicle parking space that is served by an electrical component assembly or cluster of component assemblies (battery charging station) designed and intended to transfer electric energy, by conductive or inductive means, from the electric grid or other off-board electrical source to a battery or other energy storage device within an electric vehicle. A Level 1 charging station is a slow charging station that typically operates on a 15- or 20-amp breaker on a 120-volt Alternating Current (AC) circuit. A Level 2 charging station is a medium charging station that typically operates on a 40- to 100-amp breaker on a 208- or 240-volt Alternating Current (AC) circuit. A Level 3 charging station is an industrial grade charging station that operates on a high-voltage circuit to allow for fast or rapid charging.

### **Farmers' Market**

A public market held in a structure or open area, where farmers sell produce and other farm products they have grown, gathered, or raised directly to consumers. A farmers' market may be a principal use, occurring regularly for all or most of the year, or a temporary use, occurring only occasionally or periodically for only a limited time period during the year.

### **Floor Area Ratio (FAR)**

The gross floor area devoted to nonresidential and non-dwelling uses on all floors of all buildings located or proposed on a lot by the lot area.

### **Food Truck**

A licensed, motorized vehicle or mobile food unit in which food or a beverage is cooked, prepared, and served for individual portion service to the general public.

## **Height**

The vertical distance between the average elevation of the existing or proposed finished grade at the front of a structure to the highest point of a flat roof, to the deck line of a mansard roof, or to the mean height between eaves and ridge of a gable, hip, cone, gambrel, or shed roof.

## **Home-Based Business**

A business, profession, occupation, or trade that is conducted within a residential dwelling unit for the economic gain or support of a resident of the dwelling, and is incidental and secondary to the residential use of the lot.

## **Live-Work Unit**

A structure or portion of a structure combining a residential dwelling unit for one or more persons with an integrated work space principally used by one or more of the dwelling unit residents.

## **Mixed-Use Development**

Development containing two or more principal uses from different use classifications (Residential, Public and Institutional, Commercial, or Industrial) or from two or more significantly different use categories within the same use classification (e.g., offices and retail sales and services), where the uses are functionally integrated and share vehicular use areas, ingress/egress, and pedestrian access. An example of a vertically integrated mixed-use development might be a building with retail sales and serve uses at ground level, offices (including institutional offices) on second and third floors, and multifamily residential dwelling units on upper floors. An example of a horizontally integrated mixed-use development might be an office/industrial park containing office buildings side-by side with buildings housing light industrial or industrial support uses.

## **Parking Structure**

A structure, or a portion of a structure, composed of one or more levels or floors used exclusively for the temporary storage of motor vehicles. A parking structure may be totally below grade or partially or totally above grade, with levels either being open to the sides (deck) or enclosed (garage). A parking structure may be a principal use of a lot or accessory to the principal use of the lot.

### **Setback**

The shortest horizontal distance from a lot line of a lot to the nearest point of a structure on the lot. Front, side, corner side, and rear setbacks are measured from the front, side, corner side, and rear lot lines, respectively.

### **Shopping Center**

A building or a group of connected or freestanding buildings under single or multiple ownership that contains retail goods and service uses serving the needs of a neighborhood, community, or regional customer base. A shopping center is designed, constructed, and operated on an integral and coordinated basis, with common parking, pedestrian movement, and ingress and egress.

### **Street Vendor**

Any person or persons selling or offering for sale products on a street, sidewalk, or alley.

### **Walkway**

Any improved pedestrian accessway that is separate from vehicular accessways and traffic. Walkways include sidewalks alongside streets and off-street paved walkways and graded trails with durable surfacing.