

# INTRODUCTION

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Figure 1: East Knox County Strategic Direction

## EAST KNOX COMMUNITY PLAN STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The East Knox Community Plan brings together the best targeted growth and preservation strategies to preserve and enhance the area's rural character and landscape. The Strategic Direction directs growth to the most appropriate areas and increases the number and type of land development and protection tools available to all private landowners.



### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The East Knox Community Plan is a guide to maintain the connection to the land and keep its people connected amidst change and growth. The East Knox Community Plan's Strategic Direction provides guidance for the community to act in a way that maintains that connection.

### WHAT BROUGHT US HERE

In December 2015, the Metropolitan Planning Commission and the Knox County Commission approved two requests presented by the Development Corporation of Knox County (TDC) to allow for development of the Midway Business Park at the Midway interchange along I-40. The first, from the East County Sector Plan, was a request to amend from LDR (Low Density Residential) and O (Office) to BP (Business Park - Type 1) the property located north and south sides of Thorn Grove Pike and the east and west sides of Midway Road. The second request was for a rezoning from A (Agricultural) and CA (General Business) to EC (Employment Center) for the property located on the north and south sides of Thorn Grove Pike and to the east and west sides of Midway Road.

The process and plans leading up to the Midway Business Park, the sector plan amendment, and the rezoning have been divisive and the response to how the community moves forward varies. Some continue to resist any type of business development at the interchange through lawsuits and other means. Others have recognized that the business park has achieved final approval and have shifted their energy to minimizing the impact of development. Still others are supportive of the business park and believe that the park is an important link in Knox County's economic development system.

When the Knox County Commission approved both requests following the recommendation for approval by the Metropolitan Planning Commission, they also added a number of conditions through a third motion, including a \$50,000 allocation from the County Mayor's office, **"to make sure the county has a suitable plan in place to protect the character of the area."** The East Knox Community Plan is the resulting first step to ensure that East Knox County has a plan that presents options for how to protect the character of the area.

## DEFINING RURAL CHARACTER

What makes a place rural? Is it rolling hills and undeveloped open space? White picket fences running down a narrow two-lane road? Small communities? River views? Farmlands? The qualities that make up rural character are hard to define, easy to spot, and often a perception that is unique to the individual. Whatever it is that makes much of East Knox County rural, many of these qualities are at risk of disappearing. As growth pressures spread, the new and typical suburban-style development that gets built looks out of place. Protecting the character of the area requires one to first look at the existing rural character - the defining features of East Knox County.

Combined input from the July 2016 Community Meeting at the Carter Center, the stakeholder committee and planning team tour, and previous plan review reveals the features most people agree are the area's defining rural characteristics. Once it is understood what the community means by "rural character", it becomes easier to protect what is valued. The recommendations presented in this document are the first steps for a coordinated rural character protection plan.

## GROWTH MATTERS, TOO

Separate from proposed development projects in East Knox County, the question of how the area maintains its rural character remains relevant given the anticipated

growth of Knox County and the region. According to East Tennessee Index (ETIndex), Knox County will grow by 38 percent between 2010 and 2040, bringing the 2040 population to 597,596 people. This means Knox County needs to accommodate 66,000 new households as well as provide the services, schools, jobs, and infrastructure to support the new households. East Knox County does not have the tools in place to absorb a portion of the County's growth in a pattern that respects the area's traditions and natural, rural, and historic features and the area is therefore vulnerable to undesirable development patterns.

Figure 3: Population Growth in Knox County & the Region

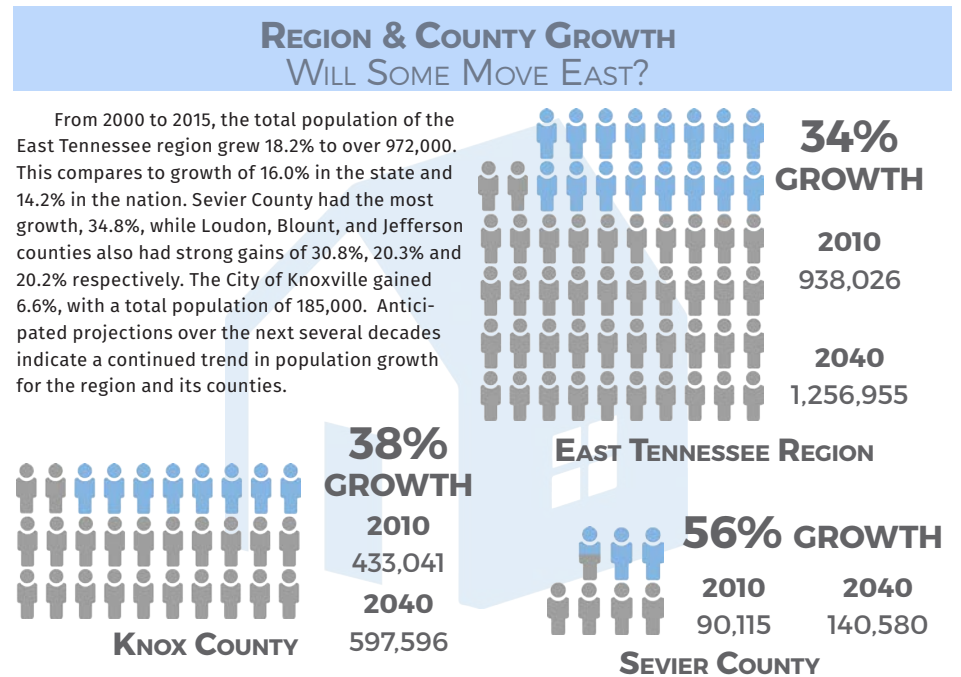


Figure 2: Rural Character Features as Defined by Community Input

RURAL CHARACTER FEATURES	
Parks	Visible Signs of Agriculture (Barns, Tractors, Silos)
Winding Country Roads	French Broad River
Native Landscaping	Creeks and Streams
Fields and Farmland	Community Churches
Forested Areas	Community Centers
Historic Structures	Community Schools
Hillsides	Open Fields
Rural Businesses	Community Businesses

Figure 4: Rural Character Images

# THE RURAL CHARACTER OF EAST KNOX COUNTY WHAT WE LOVE & HOPE TO PRESERVE

