

Community Character Manual

FACT SHEET

History & Purpose

The *Community Character Manual* (CCM) is a functional plan component of Nashville's *Concept 2010: A General Plan for Nashville and Davidson County*. Created and adopted in 2008, the CCM has three main functions:

- To explain and institute the Community Character Policies that will be applied in each Community Plan;
- To provide direction for the creation of implementation tools such as zoning; and
- To help shape the form and character of open space, neighborhoods, centers, corridors and districts within a community.

The CCM replaces the Land Use Policy Application (LUPA) document that was adopted May 27, 2004 and that also served the same function – a functional plan component of Nashville's *Concept 2010: A General Plan for Nashville and Davidson County*.

CCM will replace LUPA because it discusses in greater detail how to shape a community's character through detailed design principles, where LUPA only discussed density and land use, and contained very vague design principles.

Basics

- The CCM explains the community character policies which are derived from the general policies outlined in *Concept 2010: A General Plan for Nashville and Davidson County*.
- The community character policies found in CCM will be used to inform rezoning, subdivision and other planning related decisions (capital improvement budgets, surplus properties, and special exceptions). The adoption of the CCM will not change existing zoning entitlements.
- As Community Plans are updated, amended, or as new Detailed Design Plans are created, the community character policies within CCM will replace the Land Use policies found in LUPA. The existing LUPA policies will remain and will be used to judge development proposals until they are replaced with a community character policy. The Transect Category will not change unless or until a community plan is update, amended or as new Detailed Design Plans are created.
- The CCM is based on a planning tool called the Transect. The Transect is an ordering system, which calls for elements of the natural and built environment to be consistent with the character of the Transect Category that they are within. Those categories includes: T1 Natural, T2 Rural, T3 Suburban, T4 Urban, T5 Center, T6 Downtown, and D District. The community character policies within each Transect Category are then organized by community elements: Open Space, Neighborhoods, Centers, and Corridors. The community character policies also include policy intent; the policy is intended to preserve, enhance, or create the desired character within the community.

Amending Community Character Policy

The process for amending the community character policy found in CCM is similar to amending the land use policy found in LUPA. If you are interested in *changing* the Community Character Policy on a piece of property by amending the Community Plan, first consider the following:

1. The Transect Category you believe the property should be categorized as (T1 Natural to T6 Core or D District).
2. The Community Element you are trying to provide (open space, neighborhood, center or corridor).
3. Select a Community Character Policy from the policies available in that Transect Category for that Community Element to make your application to amend the Community Plan.

Benefits of the Community Character Manual

Benefits for Developers

During the development of the CCM several comments were heard from the development community. The comments were received and incorporated into the development of the CCM, which resulted in a product with several benefits for the development community.

“(I) used LUPA as an education tool for clients and neighbors...”

The CCM is written to be an educational tool that the development community may use to inform neighbors and clients.

“(Land Use) Policies need to be revised to reflect current density and land costs...”

The community character policies in CCM define appropriate densities, but encourage density and intensity to be based on either the character of the surrounding community or the envisioned character established in the community plan.

“More detail (is needed, such as) graphics, photos for infrastructure and neighborhood types...”

Photos, graphics and charts have been incorporated throughout the CCM. Photographs are used to show examples of development, appropriate building types, and to illustrate the design principles contained within each community character policy. Other graphics and charts are used to help illustrate the organization of the document.

Benefits for Residents

During the development of the CCM several comments were heard from residents and neighborhood leaders. The comments were received and incorporated into the development of the CCM, which resulted in a product with several benefits for residents and neighborhood leaders.

“Add check list for design standards (and) policies...use (them to hold) developers accountable... ”

The CCM contains detailed design standards that are written to fit the character and form of the Transect Category and Community Element. The design standards are all pertinent elements of site design and development which residents may use to have an open dialogue with developers on proposals that affect their community. The design principles include: Access, Block Length, Building Form, Connectivity (Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Vehicular) Density / Intensity, Landscaping, Lighting, Parking, Service Area, and Signage.

“LUPA does not fully address community design standards – buildings don’t always fit the character of the community.”

The CCM focuses on preserving, creating, or enhancing existing or envisioned community character and form, rather than focusing on purely density and land use as its predecessor LUPA did. The result is policy and planning principles that will inform development, creating design that fits the character of the community.

Benefits for Planning Commissioners and Council Members

More certainty when making land use policy recommendations...

The community character policies establishes the preservation, creation or enhancement of the character of development as desired by residents during a community plan update. The CCM policies provide additional guidance when determining the appropriateness of land use policy and other planning related recommendations.

More detail design guidance is included to better inform zoning, subdivision, and other planning related decisions...

The CCM has a greater level of detail that will be useful in informing zoning decisions - particularly design based zoning and other tools such as Specific Plan zone district, Urban Design Overlays, and Planned Unit Development - and subdivision requests.