

TO: Knoxville City Council

FROM: South Knoxville Neighborhood and Business Coalition

The South Knoxville Neighborhood and Business Coalition (SKNBC) is an organization supporting and advocating for the neighborhoods, businesses, and residents of South Knoxville since 2010. SKNBC currently represents the shared voices of neighborhoods and businesses including Colonial Village, Island Home Park, Lake Forest, Lindbergh Forest, Old Sevier Community, South Haven, South Woodlawn, Southside Waterfront, Vestal Community, and the South Knoxville Alliance of Businesses.

While SKNBC supports the vital services Helen Ross McNabb Center provides and recognizes that more treatment facilities are needed to fight substance abuse issues, it is NOT appropriate to locate this facility in the most central core of a community neighborhood.

SKNBC does not support the request to rezone the historic South High property to Institutional.

SKNBC supports retaining the RN-5 zoning for the property.

First – The zoning of this property is a *land use issue* not a City-wide policy ordinance.

The intent of this property should not be based on a specific applicant's anticipated use. We believe Planning Staff's recommendation to deny the sector, one-year plan amendments, and rezoning request are correct. This parcel is not appropriate for uses allowed in Institutional zoning which allows uses that are not compatible with a parcel in the middle of an established neighborhood. Zoning outlasts individual buyers and sellers – that is the point of zoning.

This property has ONLY been zoned for Residential use since South High School was open. This property has never been zoned anything other than residential. No developer/applicant should change that.

Zoning matters. Other than density/scale, there is no Permitted use difference between RN-5 and RN-1, aside from Independent Living. So, if Institutional zoning can haphazardly replace RN-5, then it can replace RN-1? And, if RN-5 is ignored, why can't a small-scale Institutional use replace a single-family home?

If no zoning matters, then public input doesn't matter, and regulations don't matter. If City Council wants to address this use in all Residential neighborhoods, then do so, proactively, with public input and consider a city-wide policy change. Do not spot-zone a property where all of South Knoxville has consistently voiced its desire for this community: Residential use.

Please do not ignore the zoning regulations. Developers, residents, and everyone rely on them. Zoning is only equitable if it is the same for everyone.

You can be *for* social services, but you can do that *without* ignoring zoning. We are *for* social services in South Knoxville, and *for* consistent zoning. Be *for* social services and *for* neighborhood planning. The applicant can expand its services without displacing a community's future. More, more, more is not justification for ignoring zoning and community input.

Please honor the community input that Lindbergh Forest has consistently provided for this site through every stage of zoning-related matters for 30 years. Honoring that is honorable.

Second – Lindbergh Forest has been vocal, consistent, and committed to Residential use of this site for more than 30 years.

Lindbergh Forest residents have consistently made clear their desire for this property to be residential.

- When this historic neighborhood treasure was falling into ruin, the neighborhood raised funds to fortify the structure and saved it. After watching the structure literally fall into ruin, with boarded up windows and a degrading roof, the neighborhood rallied and raised funds to fortify the structure so that hopefully, at some point, it could still be saved. Community input saved this property for RESIDENTIAL use.
- Lindbergh Forest worked with Knox Heritage to save the building for RESIDENTIAL use, because the property should be preserved. This is an historic asset to the Knoxville community, particularly to the neighbors and residents (many who attended the school and want it to continue to be a gathering place).
- In 2012, the City was able to lend some support, investing in the structure to further stabilize it, and begin a series of public input sessions to solicit the community's ideas and interest in what would work best for this property. - here's link to article: <https://bit.ly/3N2AEkh>. The community stepped up again, giving their ideas and input, clearly stating the desire to remain RESIDENTIAL.
- Lindbergh Forest wants this site to remain a part of their community that is integrated with the neighbors, the schools, and shares its history. RESIDENTIAL senior living was a top suggestion, filling all of these categories.
- The community trusted the City's leadership to execute this process. An RFP was developed and awarded to a developer. The property was awarded as part of a PILOT that specifies a RESIDENTIAL use.

Lindbergh Forest has been the only consistent thing about this site, and the message has been clear: Residential use. This desire for Residential use has been clear and explicit over 30 years through the following:

- Community fundraising to save the building.
- Multiple sector plans.
- Multiple one-year plans.
- County auction to initial buyer included clawbacks for RESIDENTIAL use.
- Residential use requirements were included in the PILOT RFP.
- Residential use is in the current PILOT agreement.
- Vocal support for RN-5 rezoning for South High Senior Living.
- Input during Recode for RESIDENTIAL use.
- One message to any new potential buyer: RESIDENTIAL use.

Third – Institutional zoning includes uses that are not compatible with RN-5 which is why they are two distinct zoning categories.

In its current usage and zone, the historic structure is an integrated part of the Lindbergh Forest neighborhood. It can be visited and engaged with and appreciated by *anyone*. This has always been an important aspect of the neighborhood's wishes for the property. It was originally a public school, a resource for the community.

When KCS closed the school, the property was no longer available to the neighborhood, a "closed corner," in essence. Its disuse created a separation and obstacle to the residents living right around the structure because no one could use or access the building. This circumstance continued until the opening of South High Senior Living.

The property was once again available for tours of the historic structure, for events with the neighbors, with the Dogwood Elementary School children, and with Cecil Webb participants.

If the rezoning takes place, the Institutional zone contains – by right – options that will once again take the property away from the community. For example, in Institutional, a drug rehabilitation facility can operate, by right. This is by special use in RN-5. Note the difference. In the existing zone, this particular use requires a special review and permission, as it recognizes that not all RN-5 locations would be ideal for a drug rehabilitation center. This zone provides this consideration to residential neighborhoods, such as Lindbergh Forest. If the zone is changed to Institutional, that protection disappears.

And if such a use was to occur, or other uses that are allowed in Institutional (which are also by right), such as a broadcasting facility with antennas, the property will once again be taken away from the community. It will no longer be a structure that can be engaged by and integrated into the community, because the usage – a drug rehabilitation center – provides services that are **private and protected**, closing off the access to the neighbors, the school kids, and the persons who engaged the civic process as requested. They will no longer be able to have community meetings inside, attend social functions and community activities, or foster cross-generational learning between some of our youngest elementary kids and our most senior residents. No more holiday celebrations or open door meet and greets. All of that stops and the property is once again lost from the community, the community that worked hard to save the structure...not just for its existence but for the neighborhood and South Knoxville's use. If rezoned Institutional, it is no longer a residential asset but a property only available to a very specific subset of persons. There is an incredible bounty of uses in RN-5 that will continue to serve both the neighborhood's wishes and the community's needs. Please recognize that we want this property to be integrated into the neighborhood, not a "closed corner."

Fourth – Zoning reflects public input and community values.

The amount of contortions being promised or requested are indicative of a problem, a square peg in a round hole. The applicant is asking not only for a rezoning but a sector plan amendment, and a one-year plan amendment (such a short time after Recode), and even on top of those significant requests promises of special deed restrictions and accommodations are becoming the “answers” to the community’s concerns. Why are people working so very hard to force something on a neighborhood when it has repeatedly, for 30 years now, through numerous community input sessions, said abundantly clearly – Lindbergh Forest and South Knoxville neighborhoods want a public process they can trust and want this historic property to remain residential.

Knoxville-Knox County Planning, Knoxville Mayors, and Knoxville City Council members all tell residents to “get involved in zoning,” “provide your input,” “be proactive and consistent,” “honor the sector plans and one-year plans.” For 30 years, Lindbergh Forest and South Knoxville have done what has been asked. Now, please honor that commitment by honoring the commitment of zoning to residents. Lindbergh Forest participated, please don’t erase that. Please show us it mattered.

In response to the neighborhood’s desire to keep the property zoned RN-5, the answer from the developer has been, “It doesn’t matter. We’re going to pursue rezoning no matter what.” How does this reflect collaborative process? How does this reflect the importance of community input? If City Council allows this rezoning to take place, how can citizens trust the City or its elected officials when they ask for community engagement?

South Knoxville residents continue to speak consistently and clearly – we want this property, which is embedded in the middle of a proud South Knoxville neighborhood, connected to three education/youth centered organizations, and integral to the future of this community to remain residential.

Please listen to the Planning Staff. Residential zoning protects the neighborhood’s character, and it is what the community has consistently voiced as its desire.

Be honorable. Stand by the City’s commitment to public input. Lindbergh Forest saved this property. We’re not asking you to do so. We’re asking for you to support this neighborhood as they realize the vision of their neighborhood, again.

This is about community planning and zoning, not buyers and sellers. Please take a stand for community input. Take a stand for zoning equity. Take a stand for Lindbergh Forest.

This is about what a community is for, not what it is against. Please stand with South Knoxville neighborhoods and say that no applicant is more important than proactive, consistent community input for the quality of life they desire.

Respectfully,

Representatives to the South Knoxville Neighborhood and Business Coalition