Done! County Planning Commission adopts new subdivision regulations

On March 10 the Kenton County Planning Commission voted unanimously to adopt new subdivision regulations for all Kenton County jurisdictions; those new provisions became effective at midnight that night. This is the first time a comprehensive rewrite of the regulations has been pursued since they were put into effect originally in 1978.

This vote completed a year-long effort by staff, the Kenton County Mayors’ Group, and a committee of the planning commission that began with four overriding goals: to produce a document that is efficient to use for developers and staff alike; to provide greater design flexibility for developers and ultimately the buying public; to promote better coordination with other governmental agencies that play a role in the subdivision review and approval process; and most importantly, to provide greater taxpayer protection.

The public effort began when staff posted the initial rough draft of the document online for review in December 2010. Since that time staff and a committee of planning commissioners worked through hundreds of suggested revisions made by various stakeholder groups such as the Home Builders Association and Engineering Society.

“It was a primary concern of the planning commission committee to be open to all the comments that stakeholders wanted to present,” said Scott Hiles, CPC, PDS’ director of infrastructure engineering. “Members knew that the process would be grueling but they wanted all of the groups that participated to understand that they had a voice and that their suggestions were given proper consideration.”

As this process to reach consensus moved forward, the final draft began to take shape slowly, with the exception of the proposed standards for streets and the earthwork that supports them.

“There was a major disagreement between the groups with respect to street design,” said Hiles. “The rest of the document was coming together, but no one could agree on common ground when it came to streets and particularly the drainage improvements that were needed to make them last.”

Providing new and improved street design standards was the reason for one of staff’s original and arguably most important goals—greater taxpayer protection.

“When streets fail prematurely, it’s the taxpayers that ultimately pay to fix them,” said Hiles. “Creating a set of regulations that resulted in better streets to preclude premature street failures that must be borne by the taxpayer was one of the motivations for this whole project.”
In response to the impasse on street design, Planning Commission Chair Paul Darpel challenged a group of engineers along with representatives of the Kenton County Mayor’s Group and the Home Builders Association to tackle the issue. The group, made up of Henry Fischer, Jim Viox, Ted Vogelpohl, Joe Kramer, and Mark Brueggemann, began work in the middle of 2013 and presented its final recommendations to staff in late 2014. Those standards were endorsed by both the Mayor’s Group and planning commission committee.

“The planning commission committee and all involved were impressed with their work,” said Darpel. “They did exactly what we asked them to do. To reach consensus on such a difficult topic was no easy task. The planning commission has a great deal of appreciation for their effort and the results they achieved.”

The consensus reached on street standards was the last piece of the puzzle staff needed to move the regulations on to a public hearing and adoption. The new regulations are now viewable online and staff is available to answer questions.

### Erlanger City Council vote approves Commonwealth Station form district

On March 3 the Erlanger City Council voted to approve Commonwealth Station map and text amendments. The approval of these issues will pave the way for mixed use development adjacent to the interchange of Commonwealth Avenue with I-71/75. The new regulations are a step intended to improve the look and feel of the gateway to Erlanger.

The city initiated the Commonwealth Station project in 2012. Over the course of two-and-a-half years, a group of dedicated residents, business owners, and city staff met monthly to consider the community’s vision for the 42 acres of land on Commonwealth Boulevard across from the city building. That vision was then translated into regulations designed to encourage expanded uses, increased density, smaller setbacks, and architectural consistency.

“This is a very positive step for the community,” says Andy Videkovich, AICP, PDS senior planner and project manager. “This code does not infringe on property owners’ rights to use and develop their property in an economical way. Rather, it speaks to the city’s expectation that development provide an enticement for people to want to live, work, and play in Erlanger.”

Very careful consideration was given throughout the process to give deference to existing land owners. The area currently contains a number of buildings and uses that provide needed services to the adjacent community. In recognition of the impact some of the new regulations could have on an existing property owner, several rounds of changes were made to the application and processing sections of the new code prior to its adoption.

“The vision for Commonwealth Station is long-term,” says Videkovich. “Changes will occur over time, and this code is just one tool to encourage that change. It will also take work by the residents, city staff, and city elected officials to stand by this code and its vision for it to be successful.”

Form-based codes have become popular nationally and locally as an alternative to traditional zoning codes. Traditional zoning codes focus primarily on the separation of land uses, to the detriment of the public realm created by such codes. Form-based codes are community vision-based and focus on an integrated built form.

More information on form-based codes can be found online at the Form-Based Codes Institute ([formbasedcodes.org](http://formbasedcodes.org)).
When planners from around the country gather in Seattle next month to learn about the latest innovative professional techniques and tools, *Direction 2030* will be part of the program. *Direction 2030* is Kenton County’s new comprehensive plan and is completely web-based—the first completely digital comprehensive plan in the region.

The online plan will be presented by James Fausz, AICP, PDS principal planner, as part of a panel discussion to educate other professionals about the benefits and challenges of digital documentation efforts. Other presenters on the team include Justin Goodwin from MKSK in Columbus, Ohio, Devayani Puranik from the City of Dublin, Ohio, and Emi Randall, AICP, from the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI).

“Throughout the creation of our regional web-based plan, we researched what others were doing and there wasn’t much out there to research,” explained Randall. “All of the presenters on our team have learned from each other about this new and interactive way to provide information to the community. We thought there were likely others around the nation who would be interested in the topic and we are all very excited to share our experiences with planners from across the country.”

The group will present and exhibit the *Dublin Ohio Community Plan*, OKI’s *How Do We Grow from Here?*, and Kenton County’s *Direction 2030* comprehensive plan. The anticipated program includes how the plans originated, technical aspects of how the websites were created, live demos of the websites and interactive maps, and time for questions from the audience.

“One of the major goals we wanted to accomplish with our *Direction 2030* project was to think differently about how content was conveyed, specifically looking at the document’s finished form,” said Fausz. “We haven’t been able to find many examples of other online plans outside of the three we will be presenting so we think there is going to be a lot of interest in our session.”

Their session, *No Hard Copies; Creating Web-Based Plans*, will be presented as part of the American Planning Association’s “The Planning Office of the Future” series. This series examines a variety of topics that relate to the planning profession in a constantly changing world of new technologies and evolving expectations from the community.

### UC planning students want to engage the public on KY 536 land use issues

An important part of any public sector planning effort is the engagement of residents and incorporation of their feedback into the final recommendations. The KY 536 land use study project being undertaken by planning students from the University of Cincinnati (UC) is no different. A new and innovative approach for public engagement will be used to gather input for this critical effort.

New technology makes it possible for citizens to have their voices heard in pioneering ways. PDS, in conjunction with UC’s College of Design, Art, Architecture, and Planning will embark on an online public engagement effort for the KY 536 student project. While online public engagement has been used by PDS in the past, it has never been used as the only platform for public feedback.

This new engagement effort will allow residents to provide feedback when convenient to do so. This effort will commence later in March. Additional information will be disseminated via this newsletter, the [PDS website](http://www.pds.com), and social media platforms prior to the beginning of the project.
... for whatever it’s worth...

Plannersweb.com has just posted an introductory-level series on a form of zoning that is becoming increasingly popular across the country. Several cities in Kenton County have adopted this new approach to creating vibrancy within their communities. (See above about a district the City of Erlanger just approved within the past month.)

Mary Madden and Joel Russell (respectively Chair and Executive Director of the national Form-Based Codes Institute) provide a look at how form-based zoning codes work, and how they differ from conventional zoning.

This four-part series is available at no charge. The first part is available here and you'll find links to the other three parts in the left sidebar... for whatever it’s worth.

Views expressed here do not reflect an official position or policy of PDS. The hyperlink is presented here to provide input for those interested in land use planning issues.

Calendar Events

**PDS Management Board**
Monthly Business Meeting
Wednesday, March 25 at 5:15 p.m.
Commission Chambers, PDS Building, Fort Mitchell

**Pendleton County Joint City-County Planning Commission**
Monthly Business Meeting
Monday, March 30 at 7 p.m.
Pendleton County Courthouse, Falmouth

**Kenton County Planning Commission**
Monthly Public Hearing and Business Meeting
Thursday, April 2 at 6:15 p.m.
Commission Chambers, PDS Building, Fort Mitchell

**PDS Management Board**
Monthly Business Meeting
Tuesday, April 7 at 5:15 p.m.
Commission Chambers, PDS Building, Fort Mitchell

For more meeting and event information, check out our [online calendar](#).

* Banner photo provided by Tri-ED

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**PDS**
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[Social Media Icons]