



Planning vibrant, sustainable transit-oriented developments

Inclusive land-use policies and planning can kick-start successful TOD



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Seeing transit's potential to become a catalyst for economic development, cities across the country are considering how they might create walkable, high-density, mixed-used communities centered around high-quality transit. What many may not realize is that transit alone doesn't ensure successful place-making.

Cities and states that implement transit-oriented development (TOD) successfully are incorporating inclusiveness to create places where people want to live, work and play. Here are six key steps to consider as you think about TOD in your community:

1. **Plan all aspects of development.** Successful communities are built on a holistic approach.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, a TOD ordinance passed in spring 2019 sets design standards to give transit passengers a complete experience – before, during and after their transit rides. Policies and planning to attract businesses, amenities and residents to the station area limit auto-centric use and emphasize networks of streets, sidewalks and bicycle ways to provide safe, convenient station access.

2. **Solicit partnerships from all sides.** Good relationships with residents, stakeholders and private developers drive successful TOD.

Kansas City, Missouri's, permitting process allows the Kansas City Streetcar Authority to have early, proactive conversations with private developers along the route to coordinate safety, traffic and right-of-way management. The Authority also works closely with the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority to coordinate service and ensure the streetcar

works as part of an integrated, regional transportation system.

3. **Include housing for all.** A mix of residential prices and sizes that include affordable housing will attract a more diverse workforce to better serve existing employers and encourage entrepreneurship and new businesses to locate along the transit route.

Charlotte's TOD ordinance aims to encourage private developers to include affordable housing by offering density bonuses that can be redeemed for building-height increases above city ordinance limits.

Fueled by federal grant money, Raleigh-Durham's and Milwaukee's TOD studies focused on equitable growth. They looked at policies to support existing business and affordable housing to ensure that future transit investments would support all populations. The policies and development strategies in Milwaukee also include establishing tools to maintain housing and business affordability to mitigate displacement.

4. **Promote equitable growth.** Planning, zoning regulations and funding mechanisms that are built around transit investment should strive to preserve existing neighborhoods, communities, homes and businesses.

In Milwaukee, land-use development plans attract businesses that can provide jobs that are accessible to existing residents. New developments are expected to bring added density to support new transit investments, yet preserve neighborhood character, and spur growth for the entire community.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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5. **Value capture to invest in transit.** Value capture is a tool to help local communities use increased tax revenue from TOD to help pay the local share for the transit infrastructure investments.

Portland was one of the first cities to institute value capture when they used a Local Improvement District (LID) incremental value to pay for the initial streetcar starter route in the early 2000s with 100% local funds.

Missouri has enabling legislation that allows for Transportation Development Districts (TDD). Kansas City has successfully created two TDDs, where voters within the district approved a 1-cent sales tax and a special assessment on real estate to support the streetcar program.

6. **Think beyond fixed rail.** TOD can work with bus rapid transit (BRT).

While fixed rail has traditionally been the primary focus of TOD, some cities are now looking to BRT to build successful TOD. Houston, Minneapolis, Atlanta, Indianapolis and Kansas City are evolving their bus routes from coverage-based models to focus on high-capacity urban corridor models to help drive better efficiencies and increased ridership. Keying in on high performing transit corridors with enhanced service, such as BRT, allows agencies to more effectively serve the greatest number of potential riders. When BRT is able to provide context-sensitive service, customer-focused amenities and more robust, frequent and predictable service, the service can convey a greater sense of permanence that is more likely to attract developers, resulting in TOD.

In addition, New Jersey's popular Transit Village program, once considered only by cities with rail systems, now is receiving applications from communities with robust bus services and transfer capabilities in their downtowns or central areas.

Land use is key

Transit supported by land-use policies and planning that include all aspects of development, serve all populations, benefit all parties and consider all transit systems will create vibrant places to live, work and play for years to come. ■