

Transit-Oriented Development
Community Symposium and Tour
January 6-7, 2009
Input Summary

The following is a summary of input collected during a community forum on Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). The forum followed a symposium and neighborhood tour on the subject of TOD. Participants were invited to provide insights and recommendations per several pre-determined questions around which their input is organized below.

1. What opportunities does transit-oriented development present to position neighborhoods and the region? What are the primary barriers or challenges.

Opportunity

- TOD increases property values quicker than strip or ramp development
- Leads to investment... housing, retail development, revitalize main streets while increasing mobility and connecting communities
- Smart use of space, resource efficient, contributes to public health and quality of life
- Transit riders are able to reduce percent of household income spent on transportation (in dense, walkable, even low-income areas, consumer spending is more by 30-50% per square mile than auto-dependent communities as a rule
- Position neighborhoods as more attractive as a component of larger corridors
- Competitive advantage by decreasing congestion and environmental impact
- Increased ridership ...contributes to community revitalization and vice versa (and decreases congestion)
- Mixed use, accessibility, walkability, peace, jobs, sense of place
- Serve as an attractor and prepare the city for future wave of growth, change image
- Position city in national marketplace for long term growth and leader/exemplary (green, transit friendly)
- Create a healthy balance of resources and balance regional growth
- TOD as a economic allocation tool for creating priorities
- TRID/TOD creates opportunity and "hook" to work across community lines
- Connectivity among disparate neighborhoods to create a more regional development focus
- TOD as opportunity to re-populate neighborhoods or to shore up what is already going on
- Walkability of hillsides linked to TOD is opportunity to repopulate slopes
- Rehab areas that have "good boxes" vs. sprawl
- Blight is opportunity...consolidate land in blighted neighborhoods -- assemble properties/bank land TOD is a product
- Regional connection of high speed rail to other metros

Barriers/Challenges

Physical/Market/Demographics:

- Right-of-way/ownership conundrum
- Delinquent ownership and blight
- Cost/funding/the market/no growth in region
- Population loss, migration, density
- Aging demographic and aging infrastructure
- Too much housing stock, not enough demand...how to target
- Geography/topography
- Racism and cultural barriers

Leadership and Planning:

- Lack of long-term vision/planning/leadership (will power and authority and inability to think regionally)
- Lack of political leadership in the region to make public transportation a priority and insufficient advocacy (lack of buy-in to existing regional and county comp plans)
- Silos in planning and operating point A to B vs. whole community approach
- Lack of coordination
- Short-term shovel-ready mentality on out-dated development strategy in face of changing priorities
- Present land use patterns and outdated plans, zoning, land use, density
- Politics, protecting turf, fragmentation, timeframes (developer = 2 years; transit = 4-30 years)
- So many partnerships to navigate
- TOD has only been focused on retail...needs more offices/businesses to too, tie to good jobs
- Car culture vs. public transportation; misperceptions and lack of familiarity with transit
- Misconceptions and lack of understanding/familiarity with existing transit system
- Need for density to support public transportation
- City lacks a transit as well as comprehensive land use plan
- Parochial communities

Assets

- Existing corridors with already many characteristics lending to TOD
- Existing neighborhoods built on past transit lines
- PAAC Connect 09 transit development plan
- 20/20 Transit Vision (SPC), Project Region (LRP of SPC), Allegheny Places (Allegh. Co.), county comp plans
- Al Biehler is Chair of ASTHO, Governor is Chair of NGA: leverage roles in policy
- Market is moving in the TOD direction

2. What needs to be in place to capitalize on these opportunities? What kinds of collaborations or coalitions can address the barriers and challenges? How would these be structured and deployed for success?

Capacity and Coordination

- Well organized community development groups and leaders
- Linkages between community plans and organizations and funding to support
- Neighborhood coalitions, even across municipalities
- Coordinate efforts; collaboration
- Intergovernmental collaboration, regular meetings to set up and implement plans
- Include transit in comprehensive plan
- School districts "education policy is housing policy"
- Centralize TRID efforts
- Need shared vision: Transit Vision Plan, Project Region/LRP, comp plans, congestion management plan
- SPC needs to lead not follow; no projects placed in TIP that do not meet the criteria found in the PennDOT Smart Transportation Guidebook (March 2008)
- Have to be strategic as there is insufficient funds for all place approach
- Use TOD as a smart development tool vs. pitting communities against each other
- Need pub./private partnership legis. to permit operation/maint. of design build for transit and highways
- Need focus on complete streets and livable communities
- Engage employees in TOD vs. own separate transit/shuttle systems, also employer assisted housing
- Incorporate health impact of transportation decisions
- Asset mapping
- Comprehensive community plan promoting equity among neighborhoods

Infrastructure

- Better utilize existing transit via: enhanced stops, way-finding signage, schedule posting, use technology to transmit real time information on next bus
- Public education of existing public transportation system and more PR (assign higher value to the system)
- City-wide large scale bike sharing program
- Bike racks on all buses and at bus stops
- Need seamless transfers
- Realistic parking requirements
- Pursue intermodal opportunities
- Build off/include river transit in overall plan, i.e., boats, ferries, kayak

Zoning/Planning

- All communities should have sidewalk (and other pedestrian scale) ordinances that are TOD oriented
- Relax parking requirements
- Synchronize land use & transportation planning, development, funding (prerequisite for federal funding)
- Have to take regional approach - funding depends on SPC prioritization and transit fair share vis a vis highway funds
- Create TOD zoning districts and bonuses/incentives for TOD

3. What are priorities for next action steps?

Approach

- Utilize sustainable development framework for its systems approach to livable communities (health, energy, food, equity, housing, open space, transportation, economic development, green building and jobs, climate, land use, etc.)
- Strengthen communication, continue dialogue, more/regular similar forums (SPC and Sustainable Pittsburgh)
- Develop an organization or mechanism for managing these efforts as a whole
- Determine how to measure success with right criteria
- Explore many possible solutions rapidly/cheaply vs. expect to make all decisions via a grand plan
- Embrace the many bottoms-up efforts in neighborhoods and support and spread the best
- Address one real TOD success story/demonstration project.. focus all resources on the place that has biggest chance for success in the shortest time, i.e., E. Liberty or the 3 hubs identified by the city...a. figure out exactly what is needed, b. raise funds needed, c. present complete package to developers

Planning

- Secure buy-in to existing plans (20/20 Transit Vision (SPC), Project Region (LRP of SPC), Allegheny Places (Allegh. Co.), county comp plans
- Determine accountability methods to ensure compliance with Project Region, Allegheny Places, 20/20 Transit Vision, etc.
- SPC to adopt livable community initiatives and funding for smart growth, regional TOD plan
- Need broad brush regional TOD strategy and be specific with targeted (not all nodes are equal)
- Integrate planning functions of Port Authority (Connect 09 transit development plan) with city/county
- City needs to develop a clear intention, clear goal in measurable terms (comp plan and transit plan)
- Direct development along existing transit routes
- Create regional TRID committee or council

Funding

- Revise/amend 2004 TRID legislation to fund TRID... bundle funding sources in new ways
- Obtain TRID funding

- Obtain region's portion of federal stimulus funds
- Increase gas tax or charge auto drivers a per mile fee
- Continue investing in long-term infrastructure, e.g., drink tax
- Long term funding for public transportation in general (Act 44 falls short)

Organizing

- Clear intent and goals
- Building/incentives for neighborhood coalitions
- Ensure community representation
- Empower a guiding organization to lead to comprehensively address
- Leadership championing the project(s)
- Involve elected officials
- Educate the leadership of the effort to complexities of planning, programming, funding transit
- Think locally, lobby nationally
- Conduct a national TOD site visit
- All public officials should ride the bus/bike to work for a week
- Build a list of all possible stakeholders and assess capacities and connect them:
 - health, unions, CDC's, housing, faith
 - university/medical/employers
 - engage/strengthen realtor networks
 - schools
 - developers
 - policy organizations: SPC, URA, city planning, Sustainable Pittsburgh, Allegh. County Econ. Develop., human/social service, UCP, CDCs, developers/private industry/chambers, Allegheny Conference, Port Authority, Bike Pittsburgh, Friends of the Riverfront