Planning for TOD & “transit-ready” compact urban development in Austin

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What is TOD?

Most definitions include:
- strong transit connection (designed to facilitate use of transit)
- moderate to high density
- mixed use
- pedestrian-oriented
TOD Principles

1. Greater density than community average
   - Within ¼ - ½ mile of transit stop
   - Allow for intensification over time

2. Mix of uses
   - Active ground floor
   - Multiple compatible uses near transit
   - Limited or prohibited auto-oriented uses
TOD Principles

3. Quality pedestrian environment throughout
   - Sidewalks!
   - Connectivity
   - Buffering pedestrians from traffic
   - Building placement & design
   - On-site parking to rear or sides

4. Defined center
   - Density & building height is generally greatest closest to transit stop
   - Buildings oriented to street
   - Wider sidewalks
   - Public spaces
Why are we talking about it?

• Austin’s population doubles every 20 years – expecting a million new people in Austin area in the next 20.

• Traffic congestion and air quality is worsening and commute times are increasing.

• People want mobility choices & have access to daily needs without the use of a car.

• Many people are preferring to live in diverse and lively urban environments

• There is a desire to conserve resources and live more sustainably.

• We have made long-term investments in rail and rapid bus systems.
Land Use, Urban Design & Transit

- Role of land use and urban design in making transit successful

- And… fixed transit can influence private investment decisions - encouraging walkable compact mixed use developments.
How does the City of Austin encourage TOD?

- **Land Use, Urban Design, Transportation and Infrastructure Planning** in response to and in anticipation of transit systems.
- **TOD regulations** (urban design stds/zoning)
- **Public /Private partnerships** and planning on City and State-owned land
- **CIP projects** (sidewalks, bike facilities, water, ww, etc. in support of TOD).
- **Urban Rail** concept planning & preliminary engineering
Planning for future development
2002: Envision Central Texas
(Regional Planning)

- For 2 years conducted workshops, surveys and community outreach with thousands of people.
- May 2004 - Envision Central Texas Vision released
- People concerned about how growth has occurred in our past and are looking for a different way to approach the growth in our future.
- Support for more compact development
Downtown “Great Streets” Program
(Planning, Regulations, & CIP)

• Goal to transform downtown streets and sidewalks into great public spaces
• Financial assistance for improved streetscapes
  – Wide sidewalks, benches, lighting, trash cans
  – Underground utilities
  – Sidewalk café’s
  – Public art/place-making
University Neighborhood Overlay
(Planning & Regulation Changes)

- West campus is being transformed
- Development bonus incentives
  - City grants additional height and FAR
  - Developer meets streetscape & design requirements
  - & provides affordable housing (either on site or fee-in-lieu)
Public/Private Partnerships
The Triangle - State-owned land
Public/Private Partnerships
Mueller – former Austin airport
2000-?: Neighborhood Planning
(Planning & Regulation Changes)

- Neighborhoods identified areas where mixed-use development was desired
- Areas rezoned to allow for mixed-use (but not require)
- ...but often individual property development was still single-use
- ...and not well-integrated together
- and thus didn’t achieve outcomes desired by neighborhood.
Capital Metro Long-Range Transit Plan

Nov. 2004 - Referendum passes

- Local Bus Service
- Express Bus
- Rapid Bus
- Commuter Rail
- Urban Service
- Regional Service
- Circulators
2004: City’s TOD program initiated
(Planning & Regulation Changes)

• May 2005: TOD Ordinance adopted (interim regs & framework for station area planning)
  – Vertical mixed-use buildings permitted
  – Restricted uses (auto-oriented)
  – Min. and max setbacks
  – Parking reductions
  – Building entrances required on principal street with transit
  – 50% Window glazing requirements
2007-2009: Station Area Planning
(Planning & Regulation Changes)

20-30 year “vision” created for area around 4 commuter rail stations

**Principal elements:**

- Land use
- Circulation
- Open space
- Infrastructure
- Affordable housing
- Implementation
- Design-based regulations
Circulation Concept

- Improves local circulation for transit, auto, bike, pedestrians
- Direct connections between sites
- Pedestrian-oriented Streets
- Safe and efficient ped/bike crossings across busy arterial streets
- Smaller block sizes
# Pedestrian-oriented Design Stds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street type</th>
<th>Street tree/furniture zone</th>
<th>Clear zone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOD Core Transit Corridor</td>
<td>8 feet</td>
<td>7 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOD Pedestrian Priority Street</td>
<td>7 feet</td>
<td>5 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOD Local Street</td>
<td>5 feet</td>
<td>5 feet</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Connectivity and Access

Block size
- 660’ maximum block length
- 1,800’ maximum block perimeter

On-site circulation
- Pedestrian connections for long blocks
Streets designed for all transportation modes
Parking

• Reduce off-street parking minimums to prevent “over parking”

• Encourage shared parking

• Provide on-street parking & community parking facilities

• Require better off-street parking design - screening parking & encouraging structured parking be “wrapped” by a building
Land Use Concept Plan

- Central Activity Node around Lamar/Airport intersection
- Mixed use potential along Lamar north and south of station
- Residential and live/work along some TOD edges
- Active edges at central node
Pedestrian-oriented streets

• Provide wide sidewalks and an improved streetscape

• Build to the street; create a continuous building presence at the sidewalk edge along streets

• Provide shade and comfort for the pedestrian at the street level
**Open Space Concept Plan**

- Can build more densely with less private space if have good quality common open space

- Make parks accessible to new and existing residents

- Connect to existing surrounding parks and destinations
  - Network of shaded streetscapes, bikeways & boulevards connecting area amenities

- Rails with trails
2006: Citywide Design Standards (Regulations)

- LDC Subchapter E: Design Standards & Mixed Use
  - Design-based code
  - Codifies private responsibility for shaping the “public realm”
  - Substantially raised the bar for how development addresses pedestrians
  - Provides incentives for vertical mixed use development on “Core Transit Corridors”
2006: Citywide Design Standards (continued)


2. Site Development Stds
   - Sidewalk and Building Placement Standards
   - Connectivity/Maximum Block Sizes
   - Lighting, Screening of Equipment & Utilities
   - Private Common Open Space Req.

3. Building Design Standards
   - Window Glazing
   - Shade and Shelter
   - Building Design Options

4. Vertical Mixed Use

5. Definitions
CIP PROJECTS
(better City dept. coordination)

- Sidewalk improvements to existing streets in urban core
  - Sidewalks Master Plan
  - TOD, Great Streets, UNO stds
  - Capital Metro ¼-cent funds
- Street reconstruction
  - Public Works Dept. coordinates with Urban Design division early in street reconstruction design
- Water/Wastewater systems planners aware of areas poised for higher density
  - City can cost-share to oversize when first developments are constructed
- Parks & Rec Dept. has defined pocket parks as urban parkland option
- Bike lanes added when streets are repaved and re-striped.
Development Bonuses

Development bonuses are given in certain special districts in trade for additional community benefits for that district:

• University Neighborhood Overlay (west campus)
  – Bonus: Height, FAR, setbacks
  – Benefits: streetscape, “local uses”, design, affordable housing

• Downtown (interim)
  – Bonus: FAR
  – Benefits: Great Streets, design, affordable housing, community benefits fund $

• Design Standards – “Core Transit Corridors”
  – Bonus: FAR, bldg coverage, min. site area, setbacks waived; parking relief
  – Benefits: vertical mixed use bldg, ped-oriented commercial spaces, affordable housing on site

• 3 TODs & NBG
  – Bonus: Height, FAR, compatibility waiver
  – Benefits: Affordable housing (& collector streets in NBG)
Urban Rail Initiative

RECOMMENDED RAIL PROJECTS:
- 15.3-mile streetcar system
- Mostly dedicated-running system
- 700-foot extension of Red Line to Brazos St.

2 OVERLAPPING ROUTES:
1. Seaholm - Mueller: 6.7m (10-minute headways)
2. ABIA - UT: 9.9m (10-minute headways)
   - Downtown/Capitol/UT
   - Long Center (Evenings and Weekends)
2009: Corridor Planning
in anticipation of future rail
The Desired Transformation
Planning Challenges

- Increased height and density
- Status quo mindsets (City and public)
- Existing zoning entitlements
- Gentrification and displacement fears
- Very little public land – City is not developing projects - heavily reliant on private development to meet TOD goals
- City investment vs. private dev. incentives vs. private development requirements
- Planning, development of regulations, and site development are long processes
So where are we now?

- Commuter rail about to begin
- New regs in place in 3 TODs and NBG
- New citywide urban design stds
- Seeking funding for and building CIP projects
- TOD under construction on public land
  - Triangle, Mueller, Seaholm
- Private TODs under construction
  - Crestview station, Domain, MLK TOD, smaller developments along “Core Transit Corridors” (S. Lamar, Riverside Dr., etc.)
- Planning for the next rail line(s)…
- Several City Council Members, Planning Commissioners and our State Senators & Representatives are proponents of TOD
“2/3 of the built environment in the year 2040 did not exist in the year 2000…”

- Conference: 2009 New Partners for Smart Growth (Albuquerque)
- Speaker: Arthur Nelson, PHD, FAICP, University of Utah
Questions??

City of Austin TOD Program & Station Area Plans
www.ci.austin.tx.us/planning/tod/

North Burnet/Gateway Neighborhood Master Plan
www.ci.austin.tx.us/zoning/north_burnet.htm

Capital Metro All Systems Go! Long Range Transit Plan
http://allsystemsgo.capmetro.org/

Austin Urban Rail Initiative
www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/dap_urban_rail.htm

City of Austin Planning & Development Review Dept., Urban Design Division website
http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/urbandesign/