

WHAT IS TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)...?

The TOD is governed by the Leander Smart Code, unlike the rest of the City which is governed by the Composite Zoning Ordinance. In the Smart Code, emphasis is placed on the location and public interface of development, i.e. "Form", rather than the use of the property. The Smart Code is based upon New Urbanism principals designed to create traditional pedestrian-oriented communities with neighborhoods and town centers with a mix and integration of residential, commercial and retail uses. For more information or for an application & checklist, contact the Urban Design Officer.

In 2004 the City of Leander and Capital Metro, jointly, undertook an economic analysis to determine what planning approach would best serve the N E quadrant of Leander and a possible rail stop. (see Gateway Planning Group) This "Phase 1" resulted in a market study and comparative analysis of an urban design vs. current development patterns. It was determined that the urban approach and use of the SmartCode would realize twice the ultimate tax base or \$2 billion rather than \$1 billion at build-out. The City then proposed a partnership with the major landowners to develop a Masterplan and adopt code to entitle their property for an urban plan.

When the City of Leander created the code and plan for the Transit Oriented Development District (TOD) it took a bigger step than many realized. A 2300 acre plan that will contain over 30,000 people, ultimately, brings with it, many moving parts. Moving parts that are not typically part of the suburban development that characterizes most of Williamson County and Central Texas.

Technical issues that address the utilities, roadway design, drainage, water quality, street connections, access to existing and proposed State roadways, electrical connections, location of transformers, no-parking areas along the urban streets for fire and emergency vehicles, design of alleys in urban settings, design of alleys in residential settings, curb radius and disabled access, and many over highly detailed configurations and permutations that must all be considered and deliberated before the first urban plans are approved and built.

Policy issues such as: maintaining an affordable home as the urban values climb; how to encourage green building; how to maintain a diverse architectural style that maintains its class and character; how to encourage developers and landowners to cooperate on product types and projects; how to partner with the State of Texas on roadway, water and water quality issues; how to partner with Williamson County on roadway, court, indigent health care and drainage issues; how to assure the existing residents of Old Town Leander the vision and development of the TOD will benefit their needs and desires sooner rather than later; how to incorporate important civic opportunities for churches, performance centers, activity centers, and other critical services for the poor and infirm; and many other considerations that realizes the potential of TOD.

These moving parts are the technical and social issues that must be addressed as the TOD starts its journey skyward. They are the type of design issues and policy considerations that keep engineers and planners awake at night. Not so much with worry or concern but with the excitement of an opportunity that seldom comes.....to build a new town. To build a new town that avoids some of the mistakes or inconveniences that are present in other, existing urban areas in Texas and throughout America.

Urban Awards:

2006 Envision Central Texas Stewardship Award. – Best Planning Effort

2007 Congress on New Urbanism Inaugural Driehaus Form-Based Codes Award