

An Overview of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

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Transit-oriented development requires a mix of land uses with high job density per square foot of land, housing with a higher minimum density than currently existing, and the design and siting of buildings and walking areas that promote pedestrian movement, safety and an appealing environment. TOD is a way to locate people near transit services and to decrease their dependence on driving. The purposes of TOD are to reduce the use of single-occupant vehicles by increasing the number of times people walk, bicycle, carpool, vanpool, or take a bus, streetcar or rail.

The Metropolitan Council describes what TOD looks like:

TOD makes more efficient use of land and public infrastructure. There is a compact mix of complementary uses in a walkable environment adjacent to transit stops and centers.

Homes, businesses and open spaces are designed in compact patterns of 60-125 acres. Transit stops are within a quarter to half mile, readily walkable by residents and employees who work in the area. Single family homes, condos, townhouses, etc., range from 12 units per acre in suburban areas to 60 units per acre in central business districts. A complementary mix of land use offers a variety of places and things to do within a compact area. Single and multi-family homes are within an easy walk of neighborhood scale shopping such as retail and restaurants, child care, libraries, post offices, parks, gathering places and open spaces.

Building and public infrastructure are designed to favor landscaped public spaces, and people walking, using transit or bicycling. Building entrances face streets and transit stops. Parking is behind buildings, in structures or underground, in shared facilities. A grid with narrow streets is designed to be pedestrian-accessible and well lit, with lower speeds.

How to Measure or Quantify TOD

The Met Council analyzes the component elements of TOD, including density, floor area ratio (FAR), land use mix, frontages (street facing percentages), set backs, transparency (window and door openings), etc., to provide quantifiable guidelines. Below is a brief summary of some of the key elements of TOD taken from the Met Council publication ***Planning More Livable Communities with Transit Oriented Development***. The Lexington Library has several copies of this 160 page handbook. It is available to be purchased for \$10 through the Met Council, which will provide one free copy to all organizations by calling (651) 602-1140.

Location:

The shape of the TOD should be configured such that all areas within the TOD have easy pedestrian connections to the transit stop and the central Core of mixed-uses. Size of TOD minimum: ¼ mile radius is 63 acres; ½ mile radius is 500 acres.

Mix of Land Uses:

Mix of uses: Mixed uses – 10% to 40% (Minimum of 5,000 feet of retail)
Employment – 20% to 50%
Residential - 20% – 50%
Civic Uses - 10% parks, plazas, recreation, government

Block Size:

Block size In all TODs, a highly connected street pattern with smaller blocks is encouraged, in order to shorten walking distances between destinations. The maximum block size for residential uses is 3 acres within the TOD, for employment is 4 to 7 acres. A 4-acre block is about 300 by 600 feet, somewhat smaller than the typical Twin Cities block. A 7-acre block is about 500 by 600 feet.

Frontage and Setback:

Frontage: minimum of 65% to 75% of street-facing buildings
Setback: 0-10 feet

Transparency:

Transparency: 40% (percentage of building façade with windows, doors, or display windows)

Density:

Minimum jobs per acre: 100 for commercial development at transit stop

The Transportation Policy Plan states that employment and education goals should be at least 50 employees or students per acre, with at least 10,000 jobs or students in at least one concentrated area along the corridor.

New Jersey guidelines state minimum commercial development of 150 employees per acre to support rail or other high capacity service, and 40 employees per acre to support local bus service.

Residential: Minimum densities: 20 per acre; Maximum block size 4 acres; minimum frontage of street block with street-facing buildings 65%; setback 5-20 feet

FAR (Floor Area Ratio – building square footage divided by lot square footage):

Typically, the Met Council is recommending a minimum FAR of 2 to 3 for all types of land uses.