

A GUIDE FOR EVALUATING  
**TRANSIT ORIENTED  
DEVELOPMENT**  
**NEAR VALLEY METRO RAIL**



# WHAT IS TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)?

TOD is development that is near light rail stations and supports walkable neighborhoods, public transportation, and a mix of uses such as housing, jobs, shops, restaurants and entertainment.

# WHY IS TOD IMPORTANT?

TOD helps build vibrant, safe and livable communities, supporting traditional neighborhood design by bringing people closer to the places and things they want to do every day. These neighborhoods provide for a lifestyle that's convenient, affordable and active, and creates places where our children can play and our parents can grow old comfortably.

In this brochure, you will get the tools you will need to evaluate the quality of new developments in your community – giving you the opportunity to decide for yourself whether or not it will be a good addition to your community.



# SIX PRINCIPLES TO EVALUATE DEVELOPMENT ALONG LIGHT RAIL



## NEAR THE LIGHT RAIL.....4

Projects should ideally be within ¼ mile of a light rail station, and no more than ½ mile from one.



## CONNECTED TO NEIGHBORHOODS.....5

Developments should provide safe and inviting routes for walking, biking and transit of all kinds. These routes and pathways give quick and easy access to nearby amenities.



## PROVIDE HOUSING CHOICES.....6

Housing should appeal to all income levels and offer choices for all family types and individuals.



## COMPACT DEVELOPMENT .....7

Developments support light rail and provide the added housing, office space, retail and other uses to support a healthy community and economy.



## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION.....8

Developers and cities engage the community in the planning and decision making process, ensuring that projects meet the needs, values and desires of the community.



## DESERT FRIENDLY DESIGN.....9

Projects should be designed with the local environment in mind, and should use water and energy carefully.

### QUICK FACT

THE \$20 MILLION SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FUND, FUNDED BY LOCAL INITIATIVES SUPPORT CORP. (LISC) AND RAZA DEVELOPMENT FUND (RDF) ENCOURAGES, LEVERAGES, AND GUIDES DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY, EQUITABLE TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENTS NEAR HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT.



## NEAR THE LIGHT RAIL

Projects should ideally be within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile of a light rail station, and no more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from one.

Life near light rail:

- Is healthier. Regular users lost almost seven pounds in the first 12-18 months after Charlotte, North Carolina's system opened, and they reduced their chances of becoming obese by 81 percent.<sup>1</sup>
- Can cost less too. The American Public Transit Association calculates that riding public transit saves about \$828 per month. That's \$9,986 per year.<sup>2</sup>

## QUICK FACT

RESIDENTS LIVING NEAR LIGHT RAIL LIVE LONGER, DRIVE LESS, EXERCISE MORE AND ARE GENERALLY HEALTHIER.<sup>3</sup>

## CHECKLIST ITEMS

- This project is within  $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile (better) or no more than  $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile (good) of a light rail station
- It is easy and safe to walk or ride a bike to and from the light rail station from the project



## CONNECTED TO NEIGHBORHOODS

Developments should provide safe and inviting routes for walking, biking and transit of all kinds. These routes and pathways give quick and easy access to nearby amenities.



These paths offer:

- Ease and safety for people, bicycles and other vehicles
- Enough street and sidewalk lighting to make them inviting and create a sense of safety when walking
- Enough shade to make your walking and biking experience more enjoyable, easy and healthy overall
- Places to rest such as benches that are well protected from street traffic

Developments should face the street to be part of the neighborhood and not be walled or fenced off.

PHYSICAL CONNECTIONS CREATE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS, AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS IS A MUCH STRONGER PREDICTOR OF QUALITY OF LIFE THAN INCOME OR EDUCATION.<sup>4</sup>

**QUICK  
FACT**

## CHECKLIST ITEMS

Public paths and sidewalks:

- Are lit at night
- Offer shade during the summer
- Have seating
- Are pleasant to walk along
- Are connected to other paths, bike lanes and transit
- Main entrances face the street



## PROVIDE HOUSING CHOICES

Housing should appeal to all income levels and offer choices for all family types and individuals.

Developments should include the following:

- A good number of housing types that can accommodate the needs of families and individuals
- Attractive choices that welcome and invite people of all incomes, ages and abilities
- Areas that are safe and visible during day and night

### QUICK FACT

HOUSING AND TRANSPORTATION COSTS ARE CONSIDERED AFFORDABLE IF THEY DON'T EXCEED 45% OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME. CURRENTLY, VALLEY FAMILIES AVERAGE 54.8%.<sup>5</sup>

## CHECKLIST ITEMS

- This project offers housing for people of low to moderate income households
- Doorways are wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs in most areas
- Front doors and entryways can be entered without steps



## COMPACT DEVELOPMENT

Developments support light rail and provide the added housing, offices, shopping and other uses to support a healthy community and vibrant economy.



Projects should:

- Be a little taller, with more floors
- Be clustered together, or stacked in multistory developments
- Integrate with live/work options (mixed-use) now or in the future
- Transition well to the surrounding community, taller along the main streets

CITIES AND DEVELOPERS MEASURE DENSITY OF HOUSING IN A MEASUREMENT CALLED 'DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE,' USUALLY NOTED AS 'DU/ACRE.'

**QUICK  
FACT**

## CHECKLIST ITEMS

- Allows more people to live and work near light rail
- Increases neighborhood amenities
- Does not feel imposing when walking by
- Fits in well with the neighborhood, while increasing density



## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Developers and cities engage the community in the planning and decision making process, ensuring that projects meet the needs, values and desires of the community.

Developers should:

- Engage the community in design meetings to discuss the needs and expectations of local residents
- Talk about what elements are missing from the neighborhood
- Develop a relationship with community groups to learn how the project can be beneficial to the developer and the community
- Locate businesses that are willing to be identified with the project either by being early tenants or partners in the project

### QUICK FACT

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PROJECT'S SUCCESS AND FAILURE. IT PROVIDES IMPORTANT INSIGHT, INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE.<sup>6</sup>

## CHECKLIST ITEMS

- Community members are engaged in early planning and design meetings
- Community members remain involved as project moves forward
- Local businesses, clubs and groups are invited to be involved in the project





## DESERT FRIENDLY DESIGN

Projects should be designed with the local environment in mind, and should use water and energy carefully.



Projects should:

- Use less water and energy, and cost less to maintain
- Provide cool spaces with shade for comfort
- Include solar power as much as possible
- Offer selected recycling bins for paper, glass, metals and plastics
- Collect rain water when possible for landscaping
- Reuse grey water for watering plants

**EFFICIENT SITE DESIGN PROVIDES INVITING SPACES TO CONGREGATE, ALLOWS EASY ACCESS TO ADJACENT DEVELOPMENT, AND PROVIDES A SENSE OF SAFETY.**

**QUICK  
FACT**

## CHECKLIST ITEMS

- Uses less energy and costs less to own or maintain
- Uses less water
- Provides shade and cool spaces during the hottest months
- Collects rainwater

# CHECKLIST ITEMS

Use this checklist when evaluating a project in your area. You may make copies of it for future projects or download additional checklists at: [slhi.org/tod](http://slhi.org/tod).



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# BECOME INVOLVED IN TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Learn more about walkable communities

- [Walklive.org](http://Walklive.org)

How walkable is your neighborhood?

- [Walkscore.com](http://Walkscore.com)

Bikewalk.org's Walkable Communities Guide

- [bit.ly/BikeWalk](http://bit.ly/BikeWalk)

HUD's TOD overview

- [bit.ly/HUdtod](http://bit.ly/HUdtod)

Reconnecting America's TOD resources

- [bit.ly/TOD101](http://bit.ly/TOD101)

Center for Transit-Oriented Development

- [ctod.org](http://ctod.org)

TOD University – Enterprise

- [bit.ly/TODUniv](http://bit.ly/TODUniv)

The Sustainable Communities Collaborative

- [sustainablecommunitiescollaborative.com](http://sustainablecommunitiescollaborative.com)

Reinvent PHX

- [reinventphx.org](http://reinventphx.org)

## SOURCES

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# LIGHT RAIL IS ROLLING – YOUR COMMUNITY IS ON THE MOVE.

Get up to speed on  
what's happening next  
with this guide.



## EVALUATING TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT NEAR VALLEY METRO RAIL



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