



Policy Tool: Comprehensive Transit-Oriented Development Strategy

Example: San Leandro CA Downtown Transit-Oriented Development Strategy

Summary: Communities can develop comprehensive strategies to preserve existing affordable housing and produce additional affordable housing in neighborhoods near existing or planned transit stations and then follow up to ensure their implementation.

While transit stations are operated by transit agencies, land use and economic development planning for the neighborhoods around those stations is controlled by the municipality. Comprehensive planning for transit-oriented development (TOD) therefore requires the active engagement of local government.

In 2007, the Bay Area city of San Leandro, California completed a Downtown Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Strategy designed to foster transit-oriented development and revitalize downtown San Leandro. Grants to support the planning process were made by the regional metropolitan planning organization, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and the Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority. The extensive community engagement process included a Downtown TOD Citizen Advisory Committee appointed by the City Council and community meetings that ultimately involved hundreds of residents.

Almost two-thirds of all rental housing in San Leandro is located within a half mile of the local Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station. Residents were concerned that, as the properties near transit increase in value, owners would increase rents and displace current renters. San Leandro's strategy for mixed-use and mixed-income transit-oriented development therefore emphasizes rental housing preservation and identifies sites for future development of as many as 3,000 housing units over the next twenty years, including both market-rate and affordable housing.

The San Leandro strategy includes a number of efforts to increase affordable housing near the downtown BART station. For example, the city will use dollars from in-lieu fees paid

by developers within the downtown TOD zone under its inclusionary zoning ordinance to subsidize affordable housing adjacent to the BART rail station. The city has also lowered parking ratios for the entire TOD to a maximum of one space per unit to make new affordable housing development more feasible. In addition, the plan identifies specific sites for future housing development and commits the city to both target existing resources to the area near the transit station and aggressively pursue additional resources for affordable housing production.

In March 2009, the San Leandro City Council unanimously approved the first new for-rent affordable housing project under the TOD zone strategy. The 100-unit Alameda will be developed by nonprofit Bridge Housing as part of a larger project called The Crossings, which will also include 200 units of market-rate apartments developed by Westlake Development. The Alameda will be the first new apartments in San Leandro geared toward low-income families built in over twenty years; 40 percent of the units will have 3 bedrooms to accommodate larger families.