

Policy Tool: Community Benefits Agreements



Example: Longfellow Station Community Benefits Agreement (Minneapolis, MN)

Summary: When community coalitions negotiate community benefit agreements with developers of transit-oriented and other development projects, cities often incorporate the terms into their development approvals and therefore ensure that the deal is legally binding.

As defined by the Partnership for Working Families, a community benefit agreement is “a project-specific, negotiated agreement between a developer and a broad community coalition that outlines the project’s contributions to the community and ensures community support for the project.” CBAs were developed to ensure that developers receiving government benefits, such as tax increment financing, could be held accountable to generate the project benefits that were promised. Benefits addressed in CBAs may include living wages, local hiring and training programs, affordable housing, environmental remediation and funds for community programs.

Perhaps the best example of a CBA focused on ensuring both affordable housing and transit orientation is that negotiated by the Longfellow Community Council (a citizen participation group for the Longfellow, Cooper, Howe and Hiawatha neighborhoods) in Minneapolis for a mixed-use complex called Longfellow Station. The project’s being developed by Capital Growth Real Estate for the abandoned Purina Mills site across from the 38th Street light rail station on the Hiawatha Line and would consist of 197 housing units and 10,000 square feet of retail space.

The Longfellow Station CBA was signed in February 2008 after two years of negotiations. While the affected neighborhood is largely middle-class, the portion of the neighborhood along the transit corridor is the most economically disadvantaged part and contains the highest concentration of rental units. The CBA requires at least 30 percent of the Longfellow Station housing units to be affordable, which exceeds

the city’s 20 percent requirement. A mix of unit sizes will be provided, with family-size units having access to green space (Soursourian, 2010).

The Longfellow CBA is notable for focusing on reducing vehicle use and promoting alternative transportation. For example, the CBA requires the developer to provide free one-month transit passes to residential tenants and offer on-site transit fare purchase. The development must also include bicycle storage and parking as well as dedicated parking for car sharing. The development will have limited parking for personal automobiles and those spaces will be leased separately from residential units.



For additional information: www.communitybenefits.org/section.php?id=155
<http://communitybenefits.blogspot.com/2008/03/longfellow-cba.html>