



## *Meeting Minutes*

February 5, 2015 (10:00AM – 3:00PM)  
West Palm Beach City Hall, Flagler Gallery

### Brief Overview

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The Southeast Florida Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Working Group is an informal group of participants, from various agencies and organizations, whose purpose is to work together to foster the creation of TOD in Southeast Florida in a cooperative, collaborative, effective, and efficient manner.

After brief introductions and announcements, participants shared individual updates on TOD-related efforts. Participants engaged in a facilitated working session to identify next steps for a stakeholder survey, which the group had identified in the November 2015 Working Group meeting as the first of seven key action items to pursue in 2016.

After the working session, City of West Palm Beach planning staff presented a brief history of the City's TOD planning efforts, reviewed current initiatives, and discussed the City's future TOD vision. After the presentation, participants toured key sites of current and future TOD projects throughout Downtown West Palm Beach.

### Key Themes and Takeaways

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The group affirmed the need to focus on outreach to local governments, specifically targeting local government planning staff and elected officials. After debating potential approaches, the participants agreed the survey activity should be the first step in a larger outreach effort to engage and educate local governments. The group agreed the survey should **target local government planning staff**, and it should ask planners **what has prevented their cities from moving forward with TOD**. The survey results will provide better direction for the subsequent outreach effort, including topics for inclusion.

The City of Hollywood is a good example of a local government comprehensively preparing for TOD, and can serve as an example to frame discussions with local governments in subsequent outreach efforts.

TOD planning efforts in the City of West Palm Beach have included the designation of a TOD District and charrette visioning process, consolidation of parcel ownership in line with the TOD vision, and complementary investments in connector trolley service, pedestrian connectivity and streetscape enhancements. The 'Transit Village' development at the Tri-Rail station was approved last August.

## Next Steps

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Facilitators will coordinate with Working Group participants on the development of the single question survey. The survey will ask local government planning staff to identify the challenges within their municipalities that they face in pursuing TOD.

## Agenda Items

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1. Round Table Updates
2. Working Session on TOD Stakeholder Survey
3. Presentation on TOD in the City of West Palm Beach
4. Walking Tour of West Palm Beach TOD

## Participants

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1. Ana Aponte, City of West Palm Beach
2. Kevin Fischer, Broward County
3. Alex Hansen, City of West Palm Beach
4. Larry Hymowitz, FDOT District 4
5. Christian Londono, Palm Tran
6. Steve Mackey, Urban Land Institute (Mack Industrial)
7. Hanna Matras, City of Boynton Beach
8. Amanda Parker, City of Boynton Beach
9. Jorge Perez, Palm Beach County
10. Vielka Quintero, City of Hollywood
11. Nick Sofoul, Broward County Transit
12. Lynda Westin, South Florida Regional Transportation Authority

### Facilitators:

- Jessica Dimmick, Renaissance Planning Group
- Nicole Estevez, Renaissance Planning Group
- Shane Laasko, Renaissance Planning Group

The Southeast Florida TOD Working Group is open to anyone interested in attending. If you are interested in joining the TOD Working Group, please contact Jessica Dimmick, Renaissance Planning Group at [jdimmick@ciesthatwork.com](mailto:jdimmick@ciesthatwork.com) or 561-404-7261x304.

## Detailed Meeting Notes

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### **AGENDA ITEM #1: ROUNDTABLE UPDATES**

The **Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)** recently adopted two of three elements for the Florida Transportation Plan. The Florida Transportation Plan defines the future vision for Florida's transportation system. It also identifies the goals, objectives, and strategies that will guide transportation decisions over the next 50 years. The two adopted elements include the Vision Element and the Policy Element. The third is the Implementation Element, set for adoption later this year.

FDOT adopted a Complete Streets Implementation Plan. The Plan aims to integrate a Complete Streets approach into future FDOT practices, decisions, and investments. The Plan outlines an implementation framework and process, and proposes a two-year schedule for its implementation.

FDOT recently met with the City of Delray Beach to introduce to them the TOD Readiness Tool. FDOT and the City of Delray Beach applied the Tool to the City's Tri-Rail station area. The TOD Readiness Tool is now available online at [www.PlanForTransit.com](http://www.PlanForTransit.com).

The **City of Boynton Beach** completed a comprehensive plan amendment that establishes a Downtown TOD District. The new TOD District allows a 25 percent increase in density in the Downtown in anticipation of a future Tri-Rail Coastal Link station. The City collaborated with SFRTA on demographic, economic, and market analyses for the area. Coordination with, and blessing from, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity was essential in approving the amendment.

The City of Boynton Beach will implement TOD specific design guidelines for the Downtown TOD District as part of its Redevelopment Plan update. The design guidelines will correlate with the 25 percent density increase within these Districts. The Redevelopment Plan update is scheduled to be completed in the Fall of 2016. Additionally, the City is developing Complete Streets Guidelines that will also include TOD specific elements. The City anticipates a completion date of January 2017 for the Complete Streets Guidelines.

Steve Mackey from the **Urban Land Institute** presented an update on the City of Delray Beach's Congress Avenue Task Force. The Task Force aims to revive and increase activity along the Congress Avenue corridor, west of the existing Downtown core. Downtown Delray Beach is currently built-out, the immediate surroundings offer vacant and underutilized land that presents development and economic opportunities for the City. The Task Force is building momentum to increase activity by encouraging TOD along the Tri-Rail station.

The Tri-Rail station is adjacent to 20-acres of Palm Beach County owned property. This presents an obstacle for the Task Force, as the County and the Task Force have misaligned visions for the future development for this property. The County hopes to use the property for a future facility expansion, while the Task Force envisions a TOD. The City of Delray Beach is willing to work with Palm Beach County to negotiate terms and start development on these 20-acres. The City of Delray Beach and the Task Force are vetting development alternatives for this property, including a public-private partnership between the County, private developers, and the City of Delray Beach. This government component presents a unique take on TOD in the region.

City of West Palm Beach staff shared a similar experience with Palm Beach County owned property. The County has a 25-year facility expansion plan in place for its properties. The expansion plan aims to preserve the land in the condition that it was acquired in anticipation for future expansion. The County must follow strict security measures that limit the options for development design and function. It is difficult to integrate TOD designs with County-owned property without flexibility in design regulations.

The **City of West Palm Beach** is coordinating with FDOT on a two-phase railroad connector project taking place within the City to join the CSX and the FEC tracks. The connector will enable the extension of Tri-Rail to the northern portion of Palm Beach County, and allow a shift in freight to CSX track from the FEC track. Phase One consists of rehabilitating existing tracks and will be complete by the end of 2016. Phase Two consists of adding new tracks for the bi-directional connectors. FDOT will need to acquire 13 to 14 parcels, either partially or entirely, in order to add the new tracks. The second phase will take two to three years to complete.

The railroad connector project is located in Northwood, a heavy industrial neighborhood, that lies within the boundaries of one of the two Community Redevelopment Agency areas in the City. The City intended to allow a flexible industrial land use around this area and include a transit station on city-owned parcels. However, FDOT determined that a station near the connector is not ideal. There is a planned Tri-Rail Coastal Link station 20 blocks north of the connector, near 45<sup>th</sup> Street. FDOT anticipates a higher ridership with a station along 45<sup>th</sup> Street versus the Northwood neighborhood. This is primarily due to 45<sup>th</sup> Street's proximity to I-95, as it enhances the regional accessibility for users.

**Broward County** is in the final stages of the **Broward Next** process - an effort to update Broward County's comprehensive plan and land use plan. The new draft plan is undergoing quality control revisions to ensure consistency across all of the elements. The update to the transportation element will allow local government flexibility in determining mobility assessments and monitoring. Broward County regulates land-use over municipalities, and this update will allow municipalities to tailor land development to meet their needs.

**Broward County Transit** staff announced that the Broward County Commission is having a workshop on February 16, 2016 to discuss a referendum that would establish an additional local funding source using a one cent sales tax for transportation and infrastructure. If implemented, the one cent sales tax would generate \$316 million in its first full year and \$3.5 billion over 10 years. These funds could only be used for transportation related improvements. Currently, the County does not have a plan in place that details funding allocation by project. If the Broward County Commission approves a resolution to put the referendum on the ballot, residents will be able to vote on the upcoming Election Day, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

ULI recently met with the **City of Hollywood**, and the City is well prepared to welcome TOD with the anticipation of a Tri-Rail Coastal Link station in its Downtown. The City adopted zoning regulations that encourage TOD and prepared parcels for immediate development. The City is engaged in a proactive marketing strategy to attract private developers' interest in investing in the City. This effort has a lot of political backing and is receiving positive feedback from developers thus far.

**Palm Tran** is coordinating with BrightLine, formerly known as All Aboard Florida, in respect to providing bus services to BrightLine's West Palm Beach station. The preliminary station designs and structure placements make bus access challenging with tight turning radii. Closer coordination may help identify the options and feasibility of the buses accessing the station. Palm Tran is hoping that the Brightline transit station will help increase overall ridership. Representatives from Broward County Transit and the City of West Palm Beach expressed similar concerns with the BrightLine station, as details on bus and pedestrian accessibility appear vague in the preliminary designs provided.

**Palm Beach County** is improving pedestrian connectivity along the Military Trail corridor from Lake Worth Road to Southern Boulevard. The pedestrian connectivity effort consists of improving ramps and overall accessibility to the sidewalk network. This corridor has one of the highest public transit ridership rates in Palm Beach County.

## **AGENDA ITEM #2: WORKING SESSION ON TOD STAKEHOLDER SURVEY**

At the November 2015 TOD Working Group meeting, participants identified several actions the group was willing to undertake to move TOD forward in the region. Participants agreed a key first action would be to conduct a survey of TOD stakeholders. Results from the survey would provide insight on

the region's experience with TODs and would identify challenges and topics the stakeholders want more information on. The Working Group would use this information in a subsequent education and outreach effort, which could be a combination of in-person workshops, remote webinars, online resources, and potential panel forum events.

Prior to the February 2016 Working Group meeting, facilitators provided the group with two documents for their review:

1. TOD Roles and Responsibilities Survey Results
2. Developer and Lender Perspectives on TOD Readiness Memo

At the February 2016 Working Group meeting, facilitators reviewed the concept of a TOD stakeholder survey, and initiated a working session to refine the purpose of the survey, define the audience, and brainstorm a list of potential questions.

### General Outcomes

**The group agreed the most important stakeholders to reach out to are local governments – both elected officials and city planning staff.**

After debating potential approaches, the participants agreed the survey activity should be the first step in a larger outreach effort to engage and educate local governments. The group agreed the survey should **target local government planning staff**, and it should ask planners **what has prevented their cities from moving forward with TOD**. The survey results will provide better direction for the subsequent outreach effort, including topics for inclusion.

The following sections provide additional discussion points related to the survey and outreach effort from the February 2016 Working Group meeting.

### Potential Survey Audiences

Facilitators encouraged participants to identify other audiences the survey could target. Participants identified the following potential survey audiences:

- Developers
- Local Government Planning Staff
- Politicians
- Designers
- Lenders
- Transit Users
- Residents
- Commercial Retailers

Participants openly shared ideas for each audience type identified and debated the merits of reaching out to different audiences. The group agreed the most important stakeholders to reach out to are local governments – both elected officials and city planning staff.

#### *Developers and Lenders*

Participants referenced the memo on developer and lender perspectives, and noted that a survey to developers and lenders would be redundant with the work already conducted. Participants

suggested facilitators use the findings from this previous effort to identify more specific survey questions for developers.

Participants discussed several key findings from the developer and lender outreach effort:

1. Developers are more likely to invest in TOD if the political climate is steady.
2. Developers would like to reduce the number of back-and-forth iterations involved in design approvals.
3. Developers find it helpful when local governments have concept plans with visualizations that illustrate the desired scale, intensity, and character. These visualizations provide guidance to developers on the aspects of design that cities are willing to approve.
4. Developers expressed a desire for land consolidation. Having many small parcels with many individual owners does not incentivize development.

### *Transit Users*

Ana Aponte noted that transit users are an important audience for the survey. Their feedback may help the Working Group understand why transit is, or is not, frequently used. Planning and developing for high densities may not be a fruitful effort if the region remains auto centric.

Nick Sofoul noted that Broward County Transit has conducted several surveys to transit users. The survey responses are consistent across the multiple efforts. Generally, transit users would like reliable and frequent service with longer spans of service, including weekends. Nick Sofoul added that a lack of funding makes it difficult to address these concerns. The group agreed that these concerns cannot be addressed in isolation as there are other interconnected elements to take into consideration, such as land use, urban design, and parking requirements.

### *Local Government Planning Staff*

Participants discussed the value of targeting planning staff. Local governments are key in guiding the development market. Having a TOD regulatory framework in place will incentivize development, to an extent.

Although most planning staff are knowledgeable in TOD principles and its benefits, the Working Group would benefit in understanding why some local governments have not pursued TOD. This could help identify additional areas of outreach to planning staff.

### Subsequent Educational Outreach

Steve Mackey suggested the group conduct educational outreach to **local government staff on policies and regulations** that encourage TOD. Amanda Parker agreed with Mr. Mackey's suggestion, and added that another component should include educating **politicians** on **TOD concepts**. TOD is a holistic planning approach and it involves a multitude of elements. Outreach to politicians could focus on defining TOD's in this holistic approach.

Hanna Matras mentioned that the perception of political stability directly affects development activities. The importance of **having a unified vision and stable political environment** could be another potential topic to discuss with local government staff and elected officials.

Several participants suggested that **case studies** are a great way to educate both planning staff and politicians. Case studies can:

- Provide comparable examples from similar cities

- Help planning staff and politicians understand the missing components within their municipalities
- Identify ways to achieve TOD – the “how”

Planning staff may be anecdotally aware of achieving a TOD, but may not have the guidance on how to execute it.

There are cities whose focus is not on TOD because their transportation options are very limited. For example, the Town of Lake Park has one bus route within its limits. TOD may not be a priority to cities that lack the “T” in TOD. However, there are several cities who are not directly impacted by the new Tri-Rail Coastal Link stations, and they are preparing to move forward with development once the stations are in place. The Urban Land Institute provides a TOD Preparedness workshop for such cities. At times, the transportation component of a TOD may not be anticipated for many years, but the city is willing to move forward with transit-supportive development.

Alex Hansen cautions that if there is not a transportation component as part of a development then it should not be marketed as a TOD. Educating planners on the marketing of developments and developing skills to identify development market trends may help improve the overall perception of TOD.

### Using the City of Hollywood as an Example

Several participants noted the City of Hollywood is an excellent example of a local government that is “doing everything right.” The City has modified its zoning code; it has a designated Regional Activity Center in the county’s future land use plan; the City’s politicians are “all on the same page;” the City has prepared the parcels for consolidation; and the City’s Economic Development Department is actively marketing the area to developers.

The group agreed it would be worthwhile to reach out to various local governments across the region and engage them in conversations about TOD, using the City of Hollywood as an example. The survey could ask the local governments what barriers are preventing them from setting up an ideal political and regulatory environment that is conducive to TOD. The group discussed ways to educate local governments on key factors that led to market demand in successful case studies. *The goal of these conversations would be to help elected officials understand the importance of good planning principles (not just TOD), and to talk with city planning staff about the barriers that are holding them back.*

### Immediate Next Steps

Participants proposed that the Working Group participants and partners should help identify the initial survey question. The question responses should be in the form of ranking responses or providing multiple choices. Participants agreed that open-ended questions may not provide a clear direction on next steps.

Facilitators will coordinate with participants via email to begin identifying the question and potential responses.

### **AGENDA ITEM #3: PRESENTATION ON TOD IN THE CITY OF WEST PALM BEACH**

*The following paragraphs provide an overview of the presentation. The PowerPoint slides will be available on the TOD Working Group website.*

Ana Maria Aponte, Urban Designer for the City of West Palm Beach, provided an overview of the TOD efforts the City of West Palm Beach has experienced. Additionally, the presentation reviewed the ongoing TOD initiatives within the City and discussed the City's future vision.

Planning and development efforts in Downtown West Palm Beach have followed TOD principles since 1994. Though not originally packaged as TOD, the efforts have always aligned with creating a transit oriented Downtown. In 2007, the City adopted a Downtown Master Plan which included the designation of a TOD District.

The TOD District is composed of approximately 32 acres of vacant parcels. The parcels are owned by various government entities which presents a challenge in coordinating development efforts and land negotiations. This area is an existing transportation hub, it includes a Tri-Rail, a Palm Tran, an Amtrak, and a Greyhound station. The boundaries of the TOD District include Banyan Boulevard to the north, Sapodilla Avenue to the East, Fern Street to the South, and Tamarind Avenue to the West.

The TOD District is in close proximity to two main commercial corridors and employment centers, including Clematis Street, City Place, and the Clearview employment district.

In 2005, the City hosted a charrette in an effort to define a clear vision for the TOD District. The charrette provided recommendations and analysis on various topics such as urban design, finances, housing, commercial and residential developments, and regional mobility. The vision became known as the "Citizens' Master Plan." This effort served as the foundation for the District's designation in the 2007 Downtown Master Plan.

Since 2007, the City has achieved progress towards implementing the TOD District. Recent negotiations and transactions have consolidated parcel ownership in favor of progressing with the TOD vision. The City has improved transportation mobility, with enhancements to the Palm Tran transfer station adjacent to the Tri-Rail station, and the addition of two trolley routes that circulate around the Downtown.

There are two free-of-charge trolley routes, the yellow route and the commuter route. The yellow trolley route connects the main commercial centers, Clematis Street and City Place. The commuter route connects to the Tri-Rail station and loops around the Downtown area. The commuter route is partially-funded by the Job Access and Reverse Commute program and is targeted to service transit commuters. The trolley services approximately 582,000 passengers per year, and 140,000 of those passengers use the commuter route.

The integration of the BrightLine station into the Downtown enhances the transportation element of the overall TOD vision. It is also encouraging additional land development to occur. However, the City is experiencing several drawbacks. The City's street network is designed in a grid pattern, which enhances the overall accessibility into and out of the Downtown areas, but the construction of the BrightLine station will require the closure of two east-west streets, affecting the grid pattern. This does not align with the "Citizens' Master Plan" vision, however the City is vetting alternatives to mitigate the effects of the street closures.

Pedestrian connectivity between Clematis Street, City Place, and the TOD District is lacking. Though the street network provides connectivity, the area in between is desolate and not pedestrian-friendly. The City was awarded several grants to improve connectivity. Funding from one grant will improve Tamarind Avenue and Fern Street by integrating a Complete Streets model that enhances the pedestrian and bicycling environments.

A second grant funded pedestrian improvements at the Tri-Rail station. These improvements enhanced the pedestrian and bicyclist experience at the station with the addition of shade, bicycle racks, a plaza, and improved connectivity from the Tri-Rail station to the Palm-Tran transfer area.

A third grant aided the streetscape enhancements along Clematis Street from the Tri-Rail station to Sapodilla Avenue. Clematis Street offers a direct connection from the station to the commercial activity, however the stretch of road that connects both locations lacked basic elements giving the impression of a 'long, endless walk.'

In terms of development, the City approved the development of a 'Transit Village' adjacent to the Tri-Rail station last year. The 'Transit Village' will feature 1.1 million square feet of hotel, retail, commercial, and residential buildings. The effort is led by private developer, Michael Masanoff. This development is a positive direction for the City to achieve its TOD vision.

### *Discussion*

A participant asked if there is statistical information that shows whether the improvements to the Tri-Rail station has a direct impact to the trolley ridership. The commuter trolley was not in place prior to the improvements to the station, so there is no ridership data to help determine impact. However, the West Palm Beach Tri-Rail station has experienced an overall increase in ridership.

Steve Mackey asked if the proximity of the Transit Village and Tri-Rail station to the BrightLine station may have impacts in ridership for either transit system. Lynda Westin responded that the need for transportation in the region is strong enough to support both systems. The proximity of both stations and complementing developments should act as a feeder system to one another. Both efforts should be successful, since the need exists. Ana Aponte added that nestling in TOD activity around each station may be key in reducing a competitive environment.

Hanna Matras commented that low gas prices may encourage a continuation of suburban living and add to traffic congestion. She posed the question of how could people shift to use public transportation with low gas prices.

Ana Aponte mentioned that Downtown West Palm Beach is experiencing congestion challenges. The denser the Downtown area becomes the more congestion arises. However, she believes that a shift may eventually occur from personal vehicle to public transportation.

Alex Hansen added that in the case of Downtown West Palm Beach, most residents also work in the area. Providing a diversity of uses and amenities in proximity to each other may eventually result in less driving for daily necessities.

Nick Sofoul asked if the construction of BrightLine's maintenance yard requires coordination with the City in respect to buffers. Alex Hansen clarified that the maintenance yard is located on 15<sup>th</sup> Street which is 3 blocks north of the Downtown's edge. Though the site is located within the City's boundaries there is little coordination between the City and this development.

Jorge Perez asked if there is progress in making Okeechobee Boulevard a pedestrian-friendly street. Alex Hansen mentioned that there are planning efforts in place along Okeechobee Boulevard within the Downtown area to enhance the pedestrian crossings. The enhancements include increasing the median width to minimize the pedestrian crossing length traversing Okeechobee Boulevard, as well as lighting improvements. The plans are in the review stages with FDOT.

Steve Mackey asked what is driving the development efforts in the Northwood neighborhood and asked for clarification on what is driving the development in this area when compared to the vacant parcels in the Downtown core. He added that there is speculation of an increase in density in this area.

The City of West Palm Beach has several mixed-use districts; the Northwood neighborhood is one of these districts. Alex Hansen clarified that there is little development happening in the neighborhood, rather there are a lot of land transactions occurring which is driving speculation on development activities. The City is currently developing new regulations for the Northwood neighborhood. Mr. Hansen anticipates that development activity may occur faster in the Currie district as regulations for this district were adopted last year. In terms of an increase in density, these districts are floor-area-ratio (FAR) based. Floor area ratio is the total square feet of a building divided by the total square feet of the lot the building is on. The FAR allows flexibility on where density occurs.

#### **AGENDA ITEM #4: WALKING TOUR OF WEST PALM BEACH TOD**

Working Group participants took part in a walking tour of Downtown West Palm Beach. Alex Hansen and Ana Aponte guided the tour, which included Clematis Street, City Place, the future station for BrightLine (formerly All Aboard Florida), and the Transit Village property at the existing Tri-Rail station. Mr. Hansen and Ms. Aponte elaborated on many discussion points from the previous presentation.