

Platform

President's Corner

By JOHN ROBERT SMITH
PRESIDENT AND CEO

Nothing better illustrates the breadth and reach of the issues Reconnecting America is involved in than the topics discussed in this issue of

our newsletter. And as I look forward to our continuing work, I welcome



Chris Yake, Reconnecting America's new project director. Chris' background in transit-oriented development will be of great benefit to our team as we continue to fulfill our mission of transforming promising ideas into thriving communities.

Yake, who comes to us from Portland Metro's TOD program, has worked across the country on TOD at all scales, from long-range regional visioning to station area planning and down to on-the-ground transit and development projects.

TOD Series Adds Families Into The Mix

By ELIZABETH WAMPLER
PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

Through collaboration with the Center for Cities & Schools¹ (CC&S), CTOD will soon publish an educational and action-oriented guidebook for integrating families and schools into planning for transit-oriented development.

The report, TOD 205: Families and Transit-Oriented Development, is the seventh in the series of FTA-sponsored reports explaining the best practices of transit-oriented development.

Successful, equitable TOD districts should include not only households with a diversity of incomes but also a diversity of types.

Families with children represent one important type of household that can accrue many benefits from living near transit. However, recent TOD projects have often catered to young professionals, empty nesters or other households without children. These have been seen as

the strongest market segments for transit-oriented housing.

This trend is changing as communities around the country recognize the need to accommodate a wider variety of households near transit.

Families with children are an especially important market segment to attract to transit-oriented neighborhoods. Not only can they receive many benefits from living near transit, but the amenities that can attract families to transit-oriented neighborhoods can make these places more attractive for all people and help make our regions more competitive.

These family-friendly elements are captured by the definition of a "complete community": a place with high quality educational options, access to quality housing and jobs, parks and recreation, retail and grocery stores, health care, and transportation options.

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TOD and Families ...

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Complete communities must also be inclusive of households of all incomes. And because neighborhoods with all of these amenities can come with a high cost premium, special attention must be paid to ensure these communities remain affordable to families of various compositions and incomes.

Building complete communities around transit requires new partnerships and approaches to investment and implementation. The booklet, “TOD 205 – Families and Transit-Oriented Development: Creating Complete Communities for All,” outlines how TOD planning can integrate planning for the elements of a complete community.

How TOD Can Support Family-Friendly Communities and High-Quality Education

High-quality educational opportunities are one of the most important factors that families consider when choosing a place to live. TOD can enhance those opportunities as well as non-educational amenities if the planning process is done in tandem with community planning. The second half of the booklet describes a series of steps communities can undertake to meld these two fields and provides snapshots of communities across the country successfully achieving synergies between high-quality education and TOD. These steps include:

- Know your educational landscape
- Engage school stakeholders, families, and young people in transportation and TOD planning
- Create a shared vision linking community, regional, and educational prosperity
- Support a family-friendly complete community through comprehensive services and desirable amenities

10 Core Connections between TOD and Families

1. School quality plays a major role in families’ housing choices.
2. A wide mix of housing unit types is needed to attract diverse families.
3. School funding is intricately related to the housing unit mix.
4. Student participation in afterschool activities may depend on transit access.
5. Children with multimodal transit alternatives can access the increasing landscape of school options.
6. Teachers benefit from mixed-income TOD that incorporates workforce housing.
7. TOD design principles support walkability and safety for children and families.
8. The mix of uses and transit connectivity inherent in TOD can bring family-serving amenities and services closer to residential areas.
9. Integrating schools with TOD planning provides opportunities for the shared use of public space.
10. TOD offers opportunities for renovating and building new schools in developments, which draw families.

- Align bricks-and-mortar investments in community assets
- Maximize access to opportunity through affordable transportation options
- Institutionalize ongoing innovation

1 The Center for Cities & Schools is an action-oriented think tank whose mission is to promote high-quality education as an essential component of urban and metropolitan vitality to create equitable, healthy, and sustainable communities for all. 