# PLAZA SALTILLO TOD STATION AREA PLAN









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Development





PREPARED BY: PB PLACEMAKING FOR THE CITY OF AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT



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All participants in the planning process who live, work, and own or rent property in and around the Plaza Saltillo TOD District.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PLAZA SALTILLO TOD STATION AREA PLAN









# ES

# PLAZA SALTILLO TOD STATION AREA PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

The first Capital MetroRail line is under construction with passenger service to begin at the end of 2008. The 32-mile Red Line will connect downtown Austin to Leander on existing rail tracks with nine initial stations planned. The City, in support of the Capital Metro "All Systems Go!" Long Range Transit Plan, initiated a broad public engagement effort to develop station area plans around several of these future MetroRail stops. The first station areas to undergo the station area planning process were Plaza Saltillo, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK), and N. Lamar Boulevard/Justin Lane (a.k.a. Crestview Station).

New development that takes advantage of its location near transit is often referred to as "Transit-Oriented Development" (or TOD), and it is an important part of the City's goal to manage growth in ways that reduce reliance on automobile use, promote transit use, walking and biking, and create lively and safe areas around transit stations. The City of Austin developed the TOD station area plans to leverage this significant public transit investment to achieve these broad community goals.

To realize these benefits, the City first adopted a TOD Ordinance, which identified specific station area boundaries, interim land use and design requirements, and a commitment to develop station area plans. Planning for the Plaza Saltillo TOD was begun in February 2007 by a team of consultants led by PB Americas. Public education and involvement meetings were held over the course of the next ten months to draft a plan that incorporated TOD principles and best practices and was shaped by the community input gathered throughout the planning process. The planning work was integrated with a professional assessment of market conditions and finance, affordable housing, and basic public infrastructure facility needs. The plan includes recommendations for open space, street and other infrastructure improvements, and affordable housing and is intended to guide future development and the provision of public improvements.

The implementation strategy describes a variety of key actions that will contribute to the successful redevelopment of the station area. The responsibilities for implementation not only rest with the City, but its agency partners, development community, and citizens. A primary element of the implementation program is the Plaza Saltillo TOD Station Area Regulating Plan. It is based on *Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed Use of the Austin Code*, which applies citywide. The Regulating Plan provides development standards with a specific focus on the context of the Plaza Saltillo Station Area and the vision articulated in this plan.

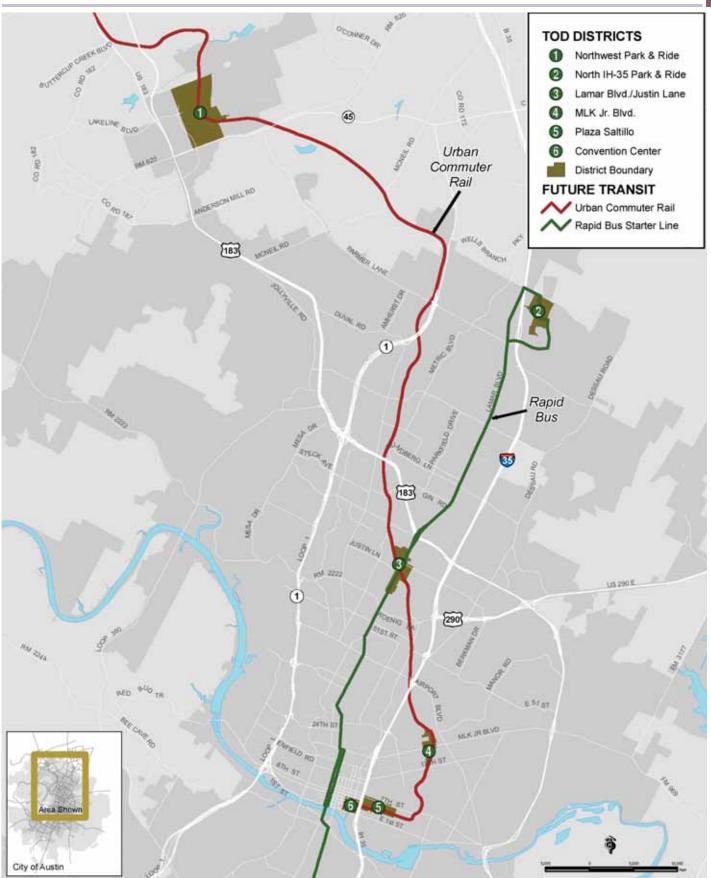


FIGURE ES.1: TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) DISTRICTS

# ES

The Plaza Saltillo station planning area was identified in the TOD Ordinance to include the area generally bounded by E. 3rd Street to E. 7th Street and between I-35 and Chicon Street. It includes portions of three Neighborhood Planning Areas – Central East Austin, East Cesar Chavez, and Holly.

#### PLAN ORGANIZATION

The consultant team, informed by community input throughout the planning process, developed the Plaza Saltillo TOD Station Area Plan, which:

- Is summarized below and described in more detail in Chapter 1;
- Includes an implementation strategy described in Chapter 2;
- Followed transit-oriented design principles and Austin planning policy as described in Chapter 3;
- Featured an inclusive public involvement process as described in Appendix A; and
- Utilized background information and studies presented in the Appendices.

#### PLAN SUMMARY

The Plaza Saltillo TOD Station Area Plan includes three primary elements:

- Land Use and Design Concept Plan, which describes the desired land uses and development characteristics in the TOD.
- Circulation Concept Plan, which identifies the functional and design elements for streets and walkways.
- Open Space and Trails Concept Plan, which describes the important open space components of the TOD.

The concept plan maps and summary of the key elements are presented on the following pages.

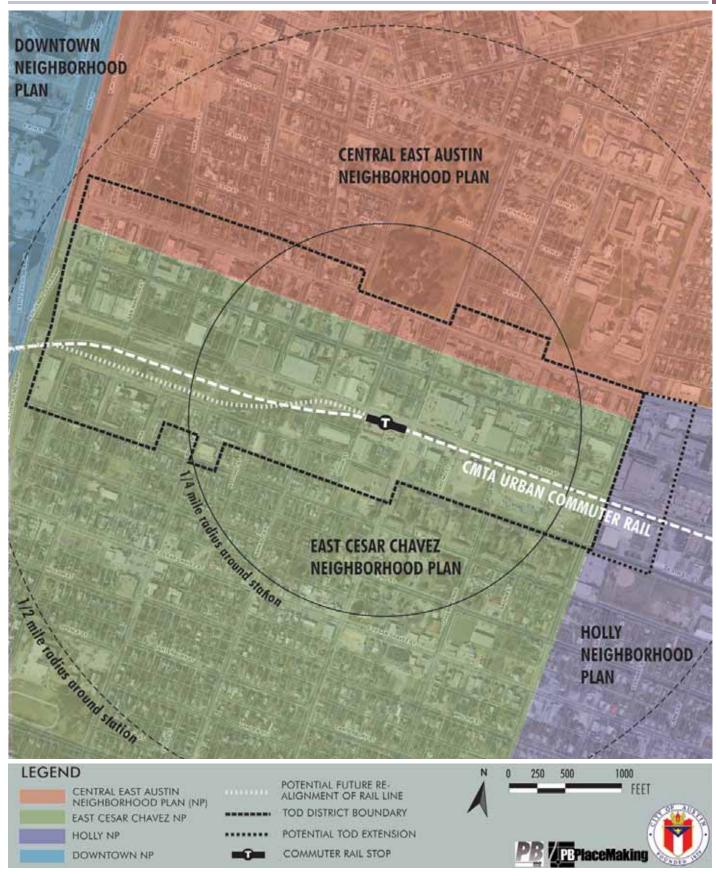


FIGURE ES.2: LOCATION MAP OF PLAZA SALTILLO WITH NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNNING AREAS

#### LAND USE AND DESIGN CONCEPT PLAN

The Land Use and Design Concept for the Plaza Saltillo TOD Station Area Plan includes four land use designations:

• TOD Mixed-Use. This is the highest density designation, which encourages urban-style development including active ground floor uses with commercial, office, or residential uses on the upper floors. Residential densities may exceed 45 units per acre if a specific level of affordable housing is provided. Moderate height bonuses up to 60 feet may also be granted with additional affordable housing. These areas are located in the closest proximity to transit and are intended to become neighborhood centers.



• Corridor Mixed-Use. This allows a slightly more liberal mix of uses compared to TOD Mixed-Use. These properties are farther from the transit station and have less of an urban character compared to TOD Mixed-Use. Normal residential densities may reach 45 units per acre, and additional density may be permitted when affordable housing is provided.



• Live/Work Flex. This encourages ground floor business activity with residential units on the upper floors. Residential uses are required and a ground floor business is optional. Residential densities range from 17 to 45 units per acre, and additional density may be permitted when affordable housing is provided.



• Low Density Residential. This designation also provides a transition between the higher density center of the station area and surrounding neighborhoods. Residential densities range from 9 to 16 units per acre.



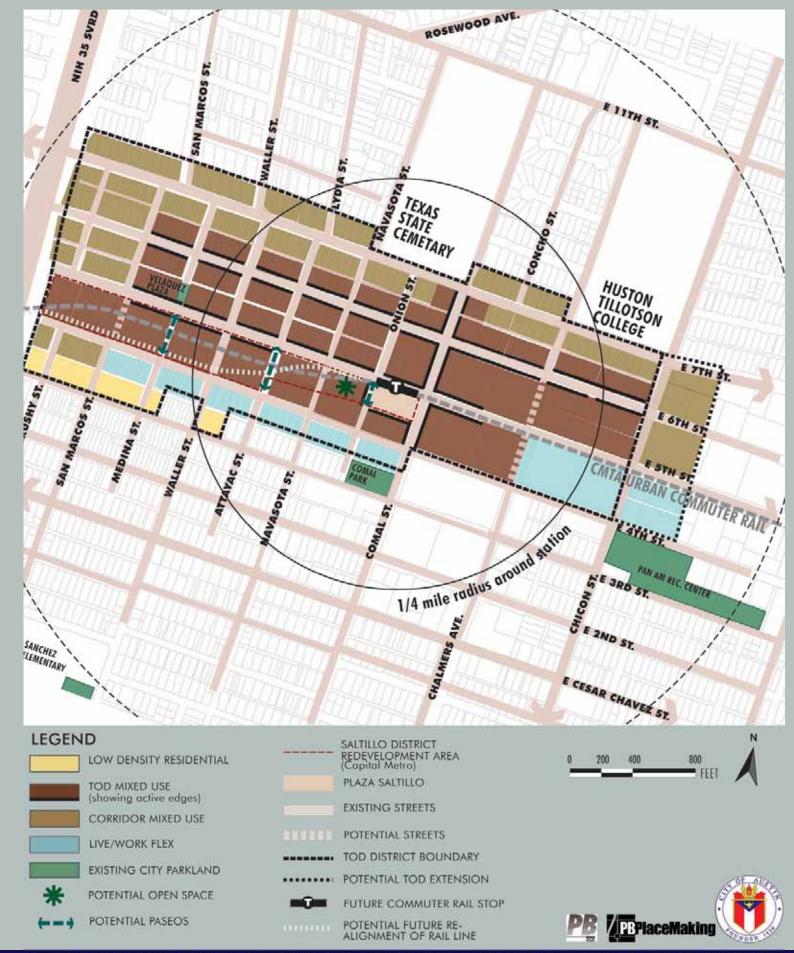
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#### LAND USE AND DESIGN CONCEPT PLAN

The Land Use and Design Concept Plan includes the following primary elements:

- 1. High density mixed-use development concentrated near the Capitol Metro station along E. 5th and 6th Streets. This would be the center and primary pedestrian activity area in the station area.
- 2. Active edges, which create a more lively and pleasant pedestrian environment by requiring that buildings along specific street frontages be built up to the sidewalk with the ground floor designed to accommodate active business uses. The active edge designation is only used with the TOD Mixed-Use designation.
- **3.** Corridor mixed-use development that allows an urban form. This is slightly more auto-oriented than the mixed-use areas along E. 5th and 6th Streets.
- 4. Live/work uses where small businesses would be allowed with residential units above. This is in response to neighborhood support for this type of use and for creating a transition between the higher density core and the lower density neighborhoods surrounding it.
- **5. Low Density Residential** uses in the southwest portion of the TOD to provide a transition to existing single family homes that face the TOD district.

#### LAND USE AND DESIGN CONCEPT PLAN



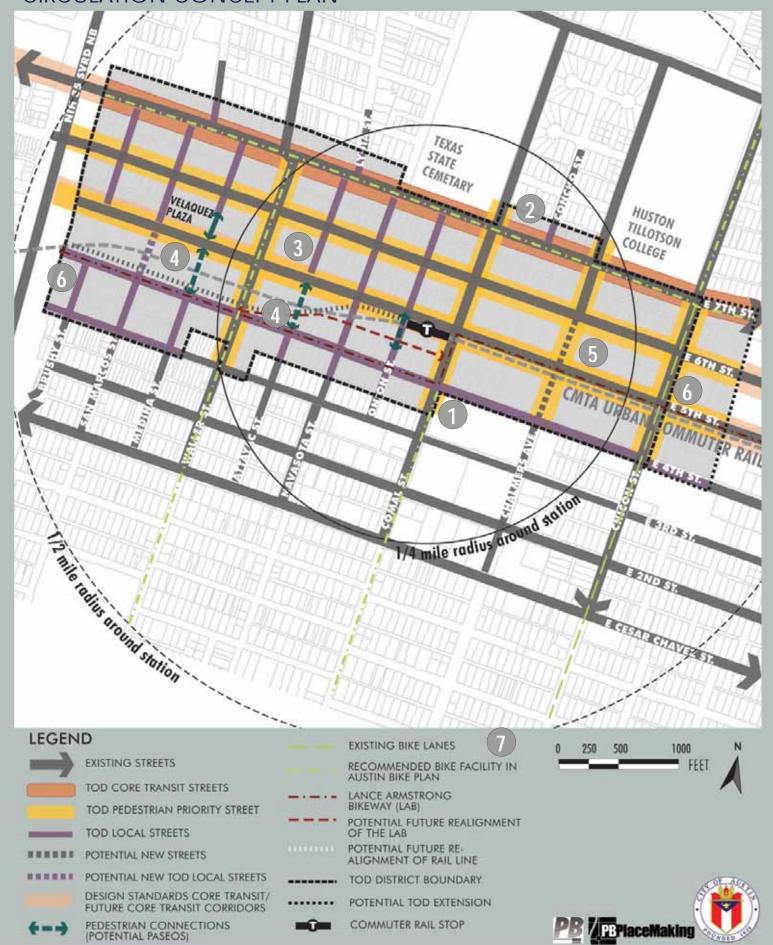
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#### CIRCULATION CONCEPT PLAN

The Circulation Concept Plan for the Plaza Saltillo TOD Station Area Plan includes the following primary elements:

- 1. An integrated street and pathway network to provide safe and convenient travel for all modes.
- **2. TOD Core Transit Corridor** design standards for E. 7th Street, which require wider sidewalks and enhanced pedestrian facilities to support existing and planned transit service and redevelopment activity.
- 3. TOD Pedestrian Priority Streets, which are also required to have enhanced pedestrian facilities because they will serve as the primary pedestrian routes in the station area. E. 5th, E. 6th, Waller, Comal and Chicon Streets and Chalmers Avenue are so designated.
- **4. New pedestrian connections** on Medina, Attayac, and Onion Streets to provide easier access between the E. 7th Street corridor, the station, and the neighborhoods to the south. For larger blocks on the east side of the TOD, these types of connections are also highly encouraged to break-up the large block structure and improve connectivity and efficiency for all modes of transportation.
- **5.** A new TOD Pedestrian Priority Street to connect the northern and southern segments of Chalmers Avenue to enhance circulation and convenience for all modes.
- 6. Lance Armstrong Bikeway as a key east-west bicycle connection through the station area.
- 7. On-street bicycle facilities to encourage bike riding and make it safe and efficient to ride around and through the TOD. A direct route from the Station Area to Town Lake and the trail system is recommended along Comal Street with signage indicating the pathway.

#### CIRCULATION CONCEPT PLAN



#### OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS CONCEPT PLAN

The Open Space and Trails Concept Plan for the Plaza Saltillo TOD Station Area Plan includes the following primary elements:

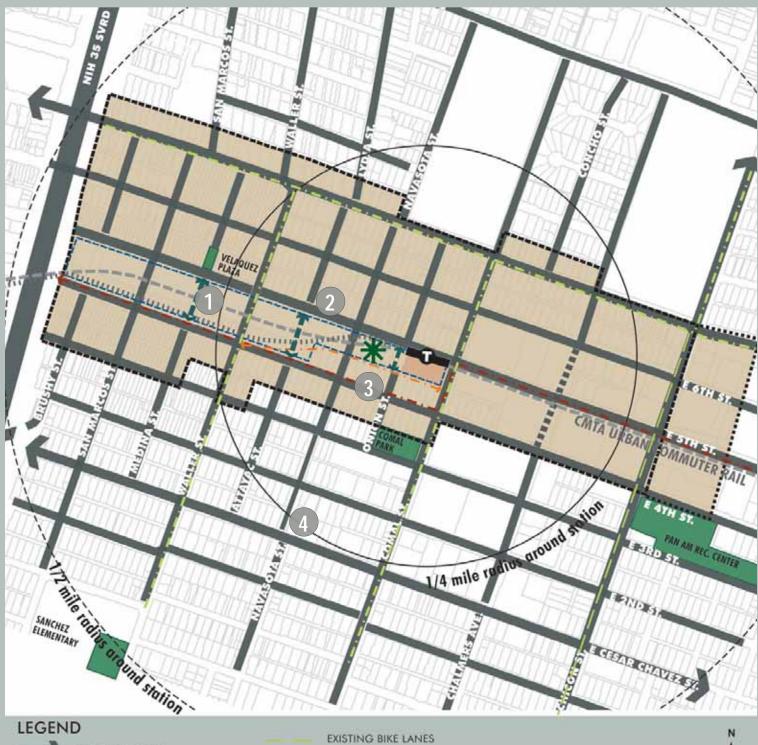
- 1. Paseo Parks to provide linear open spaces to complement the pedestrian connections on Medina, Attayac, and Onion Streets and to link-up with existing park space in and around the TOD. Paseo parks could provide a number of open space functions and meet various needs, from a passive sitting/gathering space with benches, fountain, and public art, to a grassy area for active play, to a playscape for young children. Paseos are also strongly encouraged on larger blocks on the east side of the TOD between Comal and Chicon Streets.
- 2. **Pocket park** to the west of the station to provide convenient active recreation opportunities for local residents. The park is recommended to be a minimum of one-half acre.
- 3. Lance Armstrong Bikeway as an integrating element to help tie the paseos, pocket park, and other local open spaces together with this pathway connection and to link the TOD via bicycle to Downtown and deeper East Austin.
- **4. Comal Street-Lady Bird Lake Pathway** to provide a direct connection via Comal from the Station Area to Lady Bird Lake and the Town Lake trail network. Signage along the route is recommended as a wayfinding device and to publicize the presence of the on-street path and connection.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Chapter 2 Implementation describes a variety of important steps the City, its agency partners, and development community should take to realize the full potential of the station area:

- **Planning and Administration**. The critical element is the formation of an inter-agency working group and designated staff to oversee all implementation activities.
- Transit-Oriented Development Catalyst Projects. Catalyst projects, both public infrastructure and private development, will be necessary to stimulate market and development interest in the station area.
- Circulation and Streets. Street improvements, including pedestrian facilities and amenities, can have a dramatic positive impact upon a place's identity and can create the framework for creating a truly transit-oriented development that is less auto-dependent.
- Open Space and Trails. Building upon the natural resources in the area, integration of the Parks and Recreation Department in planning and development review decisions, and creation of usable open spaces are essential.
- **Supporting Infrastructure.** Key public-private investments will need to be made to support the development proposed.

#### OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS CONCEPT PLAN







**EXISTING STREETS** 



POTENTIAL STREETS



EXISTING CITY PARKLAND



POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE



PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS (POTENTIAL PASEOS)



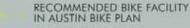
PLAZA SALTILLO

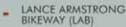


SALTILLO DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT AREA (Capital Metro)



**EXISTING BIKE LANES** 







POTENTIAL FUTURE RE-ALIGNMENT OF THE LAB



ALIGNMENT OF RAIL LINE



TOD DISTRICT BOUNDARY

POTENTIAL TOD EXTENSION



COMMUTER RAIL STOP







## CHAPTER 1

#### TOD PRINCIPLES AND PLANNING POLICY











#### WHAT IS TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)?

TOD is a strategy available to help manage growth and improve the quality of life in Central Texas. TOD provides communities with an alternative to low-density suburban sprawl and automobile-dependent land use patterns.

TOD seeks to align transit investments with a community's vision for how it wants to grow, creating "livable" mixed-use, denser, walkable "transit villages." A successful TOD will reinforce both the community and the transit system.

In general, people living and working in TODs are more likely to walk, use transit, and own fewer cars. TOD households are twice as likely to not own a car and own roughly half as many cars as the "average" household. At an individual station, TOD can increase ridership by 20 to 40 percent and even cause significant change at a regional level. People who live in a TOD are five times more likely to commute by transit than other residents. Locations next to transit can enjoy increases in land values over 50 percent in comparison to locations away from transit stops.

"Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is moderate to higher density development, located within an easy walk of a major transit stop, generally with a mix of residential, employment and shopping opportunities designed for pedestrians without excluding the auto. TOD can be new construction or redevelopment of one or more buildings whose design and orientation facilitate transit use."

California Department of Transportation TOD Study Technical Advisory Committee, January 2002.

#### TOD DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The City of Austin Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department prepared a TOD Guidebook to create a shared understanding of TOD and also to identify the major design principles and factors for success. Transit-oriented development may be summarized by using four key principles, which define the essential characteristics of all successful TODs:

- 1. Greater density than community average
- 2. A mix of uses
- 3. Quality pedestrian environment
- A defined center

These four principles directly influence the land use, circulation, and design concepts of the Austin station area planning as well as the Regulating Plan elements that support it.

A common thread running through the TOD principles is the importance of establishing a unique neighborhood identity that is memorable. Improvements in public spaces, ranging from civic buildings, plazas, and streets to street signs, light fixtures and standards, specific street tree species, and pedestrian area paving materials can be used to create a unique sense of place for different city neighborhoods. Austin has many historic and emerging areas that are known for their physical character and design sensibilities. The TOD is intended to enhance the character of the overall area and the neighborhood plans that the Plaza Saltillo Station Area is a part of will be very informative in this regard.

- 1. Orenco Station. Hillsboro, OR
- 2. Addison Circle. Dallas, TX
- 3. Biscayne Blvd. Miami, FL

#### 1. Greater Density than the Community Average

A key ingredient for walkable communities and support for transit is having sufficient residential densities to reduce walking distances between residences and other destinations, including commercial services, schools, parks, and transit. The following elements contribute to appropriate density for transit supportive land uses:

- Densities that are higher than the community norm are located within 1/4 to 1/2 mile of transit.
- Structured parking is used rather than surface lots in higher density areas.
- Site design for major projects allows for the intensification of densities over time.

Although one may read about desired density numbers based on ridership levels needed to support certain types of transit service, there is not one-standard density level appropriate and suitable for TOD. What is critical is that the development and transit are linked and that it is convenient and safe for pedestrians to move throughout the TOD. A very dense yet poorly designed development is not a successful TOD.







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- 1. Vancouver, B.C.
- 2. Santana Row. San Jose, CA





#### 2. A Mix of Uses

One of the most visually distinguishable features of a TOD is the active streetscape, which is oriented towards pedestrians. A mix of uses is required to create multiple destinations around the transit station, which helps to generate pedestrian traffic. An active, lively environment can change the perception of distances, making destinations seem shorter and more walkable. A transit-supportive environment includes a mixture of residential, commercial, service, employment, and public uses making many trips between destinations shorter and more walkable. In addition:

- First floor uses are "active" and oriented to serve pedestrians.
- Multiple compatible uses are permitted within buildings near transit.
- A mix of uses generating pedestrian traffic is concentrated within walking distance ( $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile) of transit.
- Auto-oriented uses, such as service stations and drive-through facilities, are limited or prohibited near transit.



## 1

- 1. New York City, NY
- 2. City Place. West Palm, FL
- 3. Ft. Lauderdale, FL
- 4. Orenco Station. Hillsboro, OR

#### 3. Quality Pedestrian Environment

Vibrant communities, with or without transit, are always convenient and comfortable places for pedestrians. There are a number of components that contribute to a quality pedestrian environment:

- Buildings and primary entrances are sited and oriented to be easily accessible from the street.
- Buildings incorporate architectural features that convey a sense of place and relate to the street and the pedestrian environment.
- Amenities, such as storefront windows, awnings, architectural features, lighting, and landscaping, are provided to help create a comfortable pedestrian environment along and between buildings.
- The site layout and building design allow direct pedestrian movements between transit, mixed land uses, and surrounding areas.
- Most of the parking is located to the side or to the rear of the buildings.
- Sidewalks are present along site frontages, which connect to sidewalks and streets on adjacent and nearby properties.
- Street patterns are based on an interconnected grid system that simplifies access for all modes.
- Pedestrian routes are buffered from fast-moving traffic and expanses of parking.
- Trees sheltering streets and sidewalks are provided along with pedestrian-scale lighting.
- Buildings and parks are used to provide a focal point or anchor for key areas or intersections.
- Secure and convenient bicycle parking is available.













2

3

- 1. Birkdale Village, Charolette, NC
- 2. Clarendon. Arlington, VA
- 3. Addison Circle. Dallas, TX
- 4. Core Center Edge Diagram Illustrates development patterns in a TOD



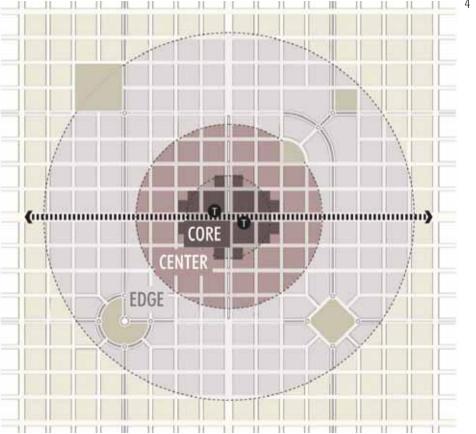




#### 4. A Defined Center

Transit is particularly successful in communities and neighborhoods that have defined centers, offering multiple attractions and reasons for pedestrians to frequent the area. Having different zones with distinct characteristics also helps to create a sense of place. This sense of place may be created by including at least several of the following attributes:

- The density and buildings are highest in the core near the transit station, moderating somewhat in the center that is within ¼ mile of the transit station, and ultimately transitioning in the edge to match the character of surrounding development approximately ½ mile from the station.
- Buildings are located closer to the street and are typically taller than the surrounding area.
- Buildings are primarily oriented to the street with windows and main entrances.
- Parking is less predominant, being located to the rear and in parking structures. Parking requirements are reduced in close proximity to transit, compared to the norm.
- Sidewalks are wider than in lower density areas, and offer pedestrian amenities, such as street trees, benches, kiosks, and plazas.



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#### **BENEFITS OF TOD**

By implementing TOD and coordinating investment in transportation and land use projects, communities can make significant progress toward improving their quality of life. The extent to which this progress is made depends largely on the type and quality of transit service available as well as the primary characteristics of the TOD. Ten major benefits from TOD are:

- 1. Providing mobility choices. By creating "activity nodes" linked by transit, TOD provides much needed mobility, including options for young people, the elderly and people who do not own cars or prefer not to drive.
- 2. Increasing public safety. By creating active places, which are busy through the day and evening and providing "eyes on the street", TOD helps increase safety for pedestrians, transit users, and many others.
- 3. Increasing transit ridership. TOD improves the efficiency and effectiveness of transit service investments by increasing the use of transit near stations by 20 to 40 percent, and up to five percent overall at the regional level.
- 4. Reducing rates of vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Vehicle travel has been increasing faster than population growth. TOD can lower annual household rates of driving by 20 to 40 percent for those living, working, and/or shopping within transit station areas. Recent research shows that automobile ownership in TOD is approximately one-half the national average.
- 5. Increasing disposable household income. Housing and transportation are the first and second largest household expenses, respectively. TOD can effectively increase disposable income by reducing the need for more than one car and reducing driving costs, saving households \$3,000-4,000 per year.
- 6. Reducing air pollution and energy consumption rates. By providing safe and easy pedestrian access to transit, TOD can lower rates of air pollution and energy consumption. TOD can also reduce rates of greenhouse gas emissions by 2.5 to 3.7 tons per year per household.
- 7. Helping protect existing single-family neighborhoods. TOD directs higher density development to appropriate areas near transit, thereby reducing pressure to build higher density development adjacent to existing single-family neighborhoods.
- 8. Playing a role in economic development. TOD is increasingly used as a tool to help revitalize aging downtowns and declining urban neighborhoods and to enhance tax revenues for local jurisdictions.
- 9. Contributing to more affordable housing. TOD can add to the supply of affordable housing by providing lower-cost and accessible housing, and by reducing household transportation expenditures. It was recently estimated that housing costs for land and structures can be significantly reduced through more compact growth patterns.
- 10. Decreasing local infrastructure costs. Depending on local circumstances, TOD can help reduce infrastructure costs (such as for water, sewage, and roads) to local governments and property owners by up to 25 percent through more compact and infill development.







#### **AUSTIN'S TOD POLICY CONTEXT**

#### The Transit-Oriented Development Ordinance

Station area plans are influenced by existing plans and policies adopted by the Austin City Council. Most important is the Transit-Oriented Development Ordinance adopted by the City Council in May 2005. The ordinance established a two-phased implementation process for TOD districts. The first phase, now completed, accomplished the following:

- Created four TOD types and designated a TOD type for each of the stations;
- Developed TOD districts around the stations to delineate between areas appropriate for redevelopment and established neighborhoods that would be protected;
- Created a TOD overlay zoning district for each station area;
- Adopted interim development regulations relating to use, site development standards, and parking as part of the TOD overlay zone; and
- Established a station area planning process.

The second phase involves the creation of station area plans that, when adopted, will replace the interim TOD Ordinance regulations. The Plaza Saltillo Station Area is designated as a Neighborhood Center TOD. This type of TOD is located at the commercial center of a neighborhood(s).

The TOD Ordinance requires a housing affordability analysis and feasibility review as part of all station area plans, which describes potential strategies for achieving specified affordable housing goals. A housing affordability analysis was undertaken concurrent with the station area planning described in this report, and it is summarized in Chapter 3.

#### City of Austin Design Standards

In addition to the TOD Ordinance, the Austin City Council amended the City's Land Development Code in 2006 to add Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed Use. This portion of the Land Development Code, which applies city-wide, includes design standards, which "aim to strengthen Austin's unique character and help buildings to better function in Austin's environment." The majority of the design standards are based upon several defined roadway types to help ensure a cohesive development pattern along city streets, and reduce the inconsistent development form that can be the product of various zoning districts, which abut them. Subchapter E includes standards for site development, building design, and mixed-use.

1. Neighborhood Plans around the Plaza Saltillo TOD district.

2. Central East Austin Neighborhood Plan.

As a first step towards implementing the Plaza Saltillo TOD Station Area Plan, a Regulating Plan (a.k.a. TOD Zoning) was developed with a specific set of land use and urban design standards. Subchapter E is designed to implement many of the land use and design objectives as the TOD station area plans, such as creating a more enriching pedestrian environment and ensuring that buildings relate better to the street. Therefore, it provided the foundation for the specific Plaza Saltillo TOD. The Plaza Saltillo TOD standards in the Regulating Plan are tailored to help implement the land use, circulation, and urban design elements of the station area plan and replace the citywide Subchapter E standards within the TOD planning area.



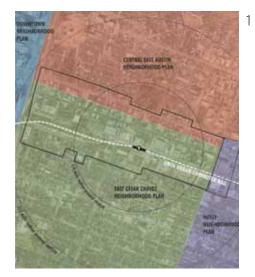
The planning area is characterized by a range of residential, commercial and industrial uses. Mixed-use zoning also generally applies to the area. Residential neighborhoods border the planning area on the north, south and west.

#### **Neighborhood Plans**

The boundaries of the Plaza Saltillo TOD intersect three neighborhood planning areas. The specific goals of each plan that relate to transit-oriented development are highlighted below:

Central East Austin Neighborhood Plan has eights goals, which relate to this plan:

- Goal 2 Create housing that is affordable, accessible, and attractive to a diverse range of people.
- Goal 3 Promote new development for a mix of uses that respects and enhances the residential neighborhoods of Central East Austin.
- Goal 4 Promote opportunities to leverage positive impacts and encourage compatibility from civic investments.
- Goal 5 Create a safe and attractive neighborhood where daily needs can be met by walking, cycling or transit.
- Goal 6 Improve bicycle, pedestrian, and transit access within Central East Austin and to the rest of Austin.
- Goal 7 Respect the historic, ethnic and cultural character of the neighborhoods of Central East Austin.
- Goal 8 Enhance and enliven the streetscape.
- Goal 9 Ensure compatibility and encourage a complimentary relationship between adjacent land uses.







- 1. East Cesar Chavez Neighborhood Plan.
- 2. Holly Neighborhood Plan.





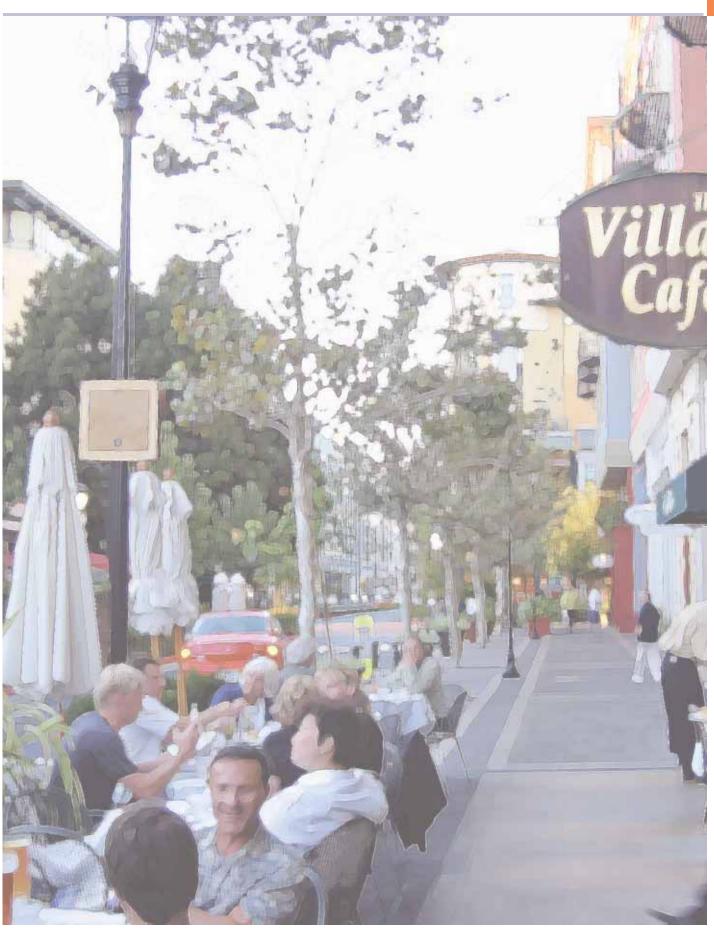
**East Cesar Chavez Combined Neighborhood Plan** has seven goals, which relate to this plan:

- Goal 1 Provide zoning for a mix of businesses and residential land uses in commercial areas.
- Goal 2 Ensure that new structures, renovations and businesses are compatible with the neighborhood.
- Goal 3 Create and preserve physical features and activities to reinforce the neighborhood's cultural identity and history.
- Goal4 Improve vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic safety on neighborhood streets.
- Goal 5 Make better use of 4th and 5th Street rail corridor.
- Goal 6 Improve and promote mass transit service in the neighborhood.
- Goal 12 Attract or develop businesses that serve essential neighborhood needs.
- Goal 16 Provide opportunities for cultural arts, recreation and leisure activities.

#### **Holly Neighborhood Plan** has eight goals, which relate to this plan:

- Goal 1 Promote a variety of housing options for a mixture of different incomes.
- Goal 2 Encourage opportunities to address compatibility between different residential, commercial and industrial uses.
- Goal 4 Insure adequate pedestrian safety and access to major destinations such as schools, shopping centers and parks.
- Goal 5 Insure adequate transit connections throughout the neighborhood.
- Goal 6 Maintain roadways and alleys for safe and efficient travel for pedestrians, bicycles, transit and autos.
- Goal 7 Preserve the neighborhood's historical and cultural character.
- Goal 8 Maintain and enhance existing parks and parkscapes.
- Goal 9 Preserve the quality of the public space in the neighborhood.

The above neighborhood plans will be amended when the Plaza Saltillo Station Area Plan is adopted by the City Council to reflect the most recent planning effort that has occurred for the properties within the Plaza Saltillo TOD District.



TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT STATION AREA PLANNING

