

AUSTIN'S TOD PROCESS

The **Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Ordinance** established a 2 Phase process for identifying the location, boundaries, and then codification of implementation for a TOD.

Overview of the TOD Phasing Steps

Phase 1: Identifying TOD Districts

- TOD District locations and boundaries are established.
- A TOD Profile is identified for the District (See below for TOD Profiles).
- Category Zones are designated within each District. These include Gateway, Midway and Transition zones.
- Interim regulations affecting such issues as land use, parking' and building setbacks are applied as an overlay to the properties within the TOD district boundaries.

Phase 2: Station Area Planning & Regulating Plan

- A Station Area Plan (SAP) outlines tools and incentives that encourage Transit Oriented Development patterns and design characteristics. The SAP addresses affordability goals through an affordability analysis and feasibility study.
- The SAP is adopted through the Neighborhood Planning Process and replaces the Interim Regulations established in the Phase I overlay.
- The SAP incorporates any existing Neighborhood Plan vision into the vision for the TOD and acknowledges recommendations for land use and community improvements.
- The Regulating Plan accompanies the SAP and builds, refines, and codifies the implementation tools outlined in the adopted SAP.
- The Regulating Plan is adopted by Ordinance into the Land Development Code and each property within the TOD boundary is rezoned with a TOD base zoning. Design standards, land use designations, water quality controls, etc, provided in the Regulating Plan supercede the Land Development Code and Neighborhood Plan.



Phase 1 Process

TOD Districts are broken down incrementally in scale beginning at a regional level to establish location and locally to address surrounding communities and abutting neighborhoods.

The Regional Perspective

The TOD Ordinance established districts around 1) selected stops along the **Capital Metro MetroRail** and 2) Park & Ride locations, linking **Capital Metro's MetroRapid Bus Transit**. These locations are listed below:

Original TOD Districts established in 2005:

- The Northwest Park & Ride
- North IH-35 Park & Ride
- Lamar Blvd./Justin Lane
- MLK Jr. Blvd
- Plaza Saltillo
- The Convention Center

Additional TOD locations added through amendments in 2006 (Boundaries TBD):

- Oak Hill (No. 20060309-057)
- South IH-35 Park & Ride (No. 20061005-052)
- Highland Mall (No. 20061005-052)

Sensitivity to the Community

The location and boundary of a TOD are further tailored to be sensitive to land use and projected density within the larger surrounding community.

- Neighborhood Center TOD - located at the commercial center of a neighborhood, it contains the lowest density of the District profiles.
- Town Center TOD - located at a major commercial, employment, or civic center, it contains moderate densities relative to other District profiles.
- Regional Center TOD - located at the juncture of regional transportation lines or at a major commuter or employment center, it contains greater densities relative to other District Profiles but less than in a downtown TOD.
- Downtown TOD - located in a highly urbanized area, it supports the highest density of all District Profiles and is intended for high-rise development.

Creating Connections with Adjacent Neighborhoods

Category Zones help create transitions between development directly adjacent to a Transit Station and existing neighborhoods surrounding the TOD boundary.

- Gateway Zone – The area immediately surrounding the station platform where passengers enter or exit transit vehicles; typically 300-500 feet from the edge of the station.
- Midway Zone – The area between a gateway zone and a transition zone.
- Transition Zone – The area at the periphery of the TOD district boundary, which abuts adjacent neighborhoods.

Phase 2 Process

In Phase 2, a Station Area Plan (SAP) is created to provide a vision and plan tailored to the specific context in and around each TOD. Building on the District Profile and Category Zones established in Phase 1, the SAP addresses appropriate land use strategies, urban design standards, zoning recommendations, and implementation strategies to realize the vision. The SAPs are oriented toward the future, but are based in reality. The SAP takes into account what is financially feasible and responsive to citywide goals and market forces, while still being reflective of the vision of the TOD and its principles.

Objectives of the Station Area Plan

To create a vision for the development of properties located within the SAP Boundary.

- To establish permitted and conditional uses.
- To prescribe and recommend site development tools.
- To stipulate requirements for street, streetscape, and public area improvements.
- To include a housing affordability analysis and feasibility review that describes potential strategies for achieving housing affordability goals.
- To include consideration of public and civic art in or near transit stations.

10 Elements of a Station Area Plan

1. *Community Vision* -The vision is developed through an educational and participatory planning process. This process uses tools such as informational lectures, public workshops, and smaller stakeholder meetings to isolate major themes expressed by the community. These themes are used to craft an overall vision for the TOD, which acts as the foundation for the development of the SAP and its accompanying Regulating Plan.
2. *Urban Design* -The SAP recommends design standards that affect sidewalk and building placement, sidewalk width, building articulation, relationship of buildings to the street, and more. These design standards are more rigorous than those included on other portions of the Land Development Code. However, in providing regulations that promote walkability, multiple modes of travel, a mix of housing, quality open space, and more, the SAP is able to steer development in a direction that supports the community vision while promoting interconnected neighborhoods and communities.
3. *Connectivity* -The SAP encourages dense development at activity nodes such as Transit Stations, providing much needed mobility options for the community, including young people, the elderly, and people who not own or prefer not to own cars. Additionally, the SAP develops an integrated street and pathway network to ensure safe and convenient travel for all modes of transportation. This network encourages additional streets to make smaller, more manageable blocks for people traveling on foot. The network also includes enhanced connections to existing and proposed trail systems, encouraging access to recreational opportunities, while on-street bicycle lanes and facilities make bike riding safer and more efficient.

4. **Open Space** - The SAP recognizes that integrated, well designed, and accessible open space is critical to achieving the vision of the TOD. In particular, the higher density and compact character of TOD development requires an approach to open space that recognizes the different needs of TOD inhabitants. Denser, more urban communities require more urban open spaces such as plazas, private open space, storm water gardens, water efficient landscapes, on-site renewable energy systems, and landscape methods that can reduce the urban heat island effects. On the other hand, more residential districts should be connected with open space such as pocket parks, which provide open space at a more local level. The SAP recognizes the different needs of varying areas within the plan and includes specific regulations based their needs.
5. **Land Use and Density** - Providing a mix of uses in close proximity to one another is vital to the prosperity of a TOD. The SAP analyzes existing Land Use and Zoning within the SAP boundary. The analysis covers current land use trends such as undeveloped or vacant properties and existing zoning including those developed through existing Neighborhood Plans. After reviewing the existing land use patterns, the SAP will recommend land use designations that encourage an appropriate mix of residential, commercial, retail, office, etc. as well building height, FAR, and housing densities to support transit in the area while integrating the TOD into the surrounding community.
6. **Sustainability** - Achieving a sustainable future means meeting the needs of today without compromising the needs of the future. Under this philosophy, we can work to build more live-able communities. A primary goal of the City of Austin TODs is to promote development and re-development in areas well supported by transit. Compact and connected development will help Austin and the Region address continued population growth in Central Texas. Additionally, setting sustainability goals for the built environment is an important component of an environmentally responsible community. Promoting sustainability in Austin's TODs requires active measures to protect against unwanted environmental impacts. The SAP sets specific goals for green building, renewable energy, and sustainable technologies and incorporates these measures into the larger community vision for the SAP.
7. **Affordability** - Including affordable housing in TODs can provide lower-income households with improved transportation access to employment and services. Reduced transportation costs can improve the ability of low income families to afford housing payments. The TOD Ordinance adopted in 2005 specifically states that apart from "Outside Community Preservation" and "Revitalization" zones, the SAP shall include an affordable housing analysis and feasibility review that describes potential strategies for achieving a goal of "at least 25 percent of new housing in each TOD to serve households at the following income levels: home ownership opportunities for households at or below 80 percent of median family income and rental housing opportunities for households at or below 60 percent of median family income." For individual units integrated in a larger residential development, the 25 percent is further broken down depending on whether the units will be owned or rented. By meeting affordability requirements, the development is afforded increased site entitlements which may include increased height, a waiver of compatibility standards, or increased FAR.

8. Infrastructure Assessment - Some of the TODs are located within existing urban environments, while others are located in or near currently undeveloped areas of the City. The TOD encourages density and connectivity, but acknowledges the necessity of infrastructure support for this type of development. The SAP provides an analysis of existing conditions including water, wastewater, and storm water systems, which can identify future needs and methods for addressing flood, water quality, and erosion issues.
9. Financial Analysis - Projects incorporating denser development with increased multi-modal connectivity tend to have higher construction costs than those with less dense and less connected development patterns. TODs located within a moderate financial market may require additional economic support to offset what could be higher construction costs. The SAP evaluates market conditions within each TOD and then evaluates financial strategies that can be applied to realize the TOD vision. Some financial tools include the creation of parking districts, the assembly of a development site that can be sold or leased at a discount to developers, and catalyst projects. In particular, catalyst projects can be used to demonstrate creative approaches to tackling issues such as affordable housing, infrastructure costs, and parking and serve to stimulate subsequent development to provide mixed-income and market-rate residential projects. In addition, the SAP provides a future financing implementation plan that takes into consideration a range of market issues. The implementation plan provides a wide range of options for public/private partnerships which use existing City department resources and may suggest new staff.
10. Implementation Plan - The adoption of the SAP will not automatically implement the community vision developed early on the SAP process. It is the first of many coordinated steps which will need to be made over several years. The implementation of this plan along with other TODs surrounding the proposed Capital Metro Rail stations is expected to support ridership on the Capital Metro Rail and take full advantage of this public transit investment and the development potential of the station area. Successful implementation of the plan will require strong partnership between Capital Metro, the City, other governmental agencies, the private sector, and the community.

Regulating Plan

Once the SAP has been adopted through the Neighborhood Planning Process, a Regulating Plan is developed. The Regulating Plan defines Subdistricts and Roadway types within the SAP boundary. The property's subdistrict defines standards such as permitted land use, density requirements, and height limitations. The Roadway type designates such standards as sidewalk width, building frontage requirements, and location of building entrances. Once adopted, the Regulating Plan supersedes the Land Development Code and Subchapter E requirements and serves as the development regulations for properties located within the SAP boundary.

To date, three (3) of the TODs have gone through both Phase I and Phase II of the TOD Process and have adopted Station Area Plans and accompanying Regulating Plans.

These TODs include:

- [Plaza Saltillo TOD Regulating Plan](#)
- [MLK TOD Regulating Plan](#)
- [Lamar/Justin TOD Regulating Plan](#)

